

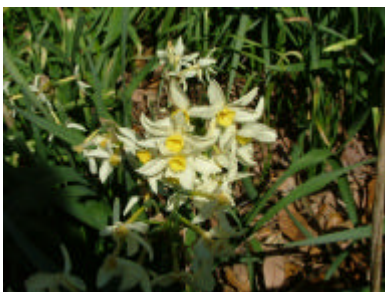
Henderson County Master Gardener

“The Inside Dirt”

Narcissus – Daffodil – Jonquil

Nina Ellis

At this time of year, it seems there is much confusion as to the correct name given to spring-flowering bulbs whether white, yellow, or a combination of both. It may come as a surprise, but they are all in the family Narcissus. The first to come into bloom, around December 1, are paperwhites, which are generally sold to force into bloom indoors. Their many-clustered blooms are white with white cups and have an overpowering scent. They are known as *N. papyraceus*.



Usually after the first of March, the “look alike” paperwhites begin making their presence known. These are *N. tazetta*. They differ in appearance by their white petals and small yellow cups which sometime fade to white, and have a delightful fragrance. There are many of these bulbs to be found in old plantings. Around old house-sites you will probably find *N. tazetta italicus* and *N. tazetta* “Grand Primo Citroniere.” However, these are not usually available from the bulb trade. Some of the best that are available today are: Grand Primo, Avalanche and Erlicheer, a fully double flowered form.

About this same time, the tiny, sparsely clustered, yellow-flowered, sweet-scented *N. jonquilla* begin blooming on roadsides and gardens, as has been its custom for hundreds of years. These bulbs naturalize readily and may cover open areas creating a delightful landscape. The name “jonquilla” means little rush, easily identified by its narrow dark green foliage. These bulbs are sometimes available at special heirloom bulb sales. Look for bulbs of Texas Star, Sweetness and Treviathian, all jonquil hybrids that do well in our area.

The term “daffodil” is customarily used to identify large-trumpet, single flower bulbs. The first of these to bloom is the “Lent Lily”, *N. pseudonarcissus*, aptly named as it

comes into bloom after the first of February. This charming bulb has a history that goes back to the 1500’s. It is in fact the bulb referred to by the poet, William Wordsworth, in his poem, “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud.” The Lent Lily is one parent of many large trumpet daffodils available today. It is recognizable by twisted, pale-yellow petals and yellow trumpet.



To my knowledge, at the present time they are not commercially available. If these bulbs are available from a friend they will multiply rapidly by increase in bulbs and by making viable seed.

Blooming at the same time as *N. jonquilla* is *N. campenelle*. This is a natural cross between *N. jonquilla* and the Lent Lily. *N. campenelle* is much larger and more robust than *N. jonquilla*, and usually has two to four blossoms to each stem. This bulb multiplies only by increase in bulbs, as it is a sterile hybrid. They continue to increase year after year in our area to let us know that spring is on its way.

To be successful with narcissus in our area the bulbs need to be dry and allowed to bake during our long, hot summers as they are of Mediterranean origin. This means keep them away from sprinkler systems. These bulbs MUST be allowed to mature after blooming. They can be unsightly, but resist the impulse to mow or cut the foliage to be assured of blooms the next year. To quote my friend, Greg Grant, “you may mow in May”.

Chinese Ground Orchid

Jean Brewton

Did you know that there is an orchid that you can grow outside in the ground here in Henderson County? These

are true orchids, and unlike some other bulbs that need to be lifted and stored over winter, the only lifting you will need to do is when friends and family convince you to share these beautiful plants. The name of this orchid is *Bletilla striata* but it also goes by the names of Chinese ground orchid and hardy orchid.

These orchids are not only grown for their exotic bloom but also for their lovely strap like foliage that arc gracefully from two to three feet tall canes. The leaves range in color from light to medium green based on the amount of sunlight the plants receive.



Although the foliage is attractive from early spring until late fall when the plants go dormant, it's the blooms that truly make these orchids a treasure. Each bloom spike produces six or more flowers that resemble a slightly nodding diminutive *Cattleya* orchid. *Bletilla striata* is a gorgeous deep pink. I have found it to be the easiest to grow. *Bletilla striata* 'rosea' is a light pink with a deeper pink ruffled throat, where as 'alba' leans more to white. There is even a form in yellow. The spring blooming spikes have long lasting flowers that open a few at a time so the plant stays eye catching for weeks.

I have grown these delightful little orchids in pots for years and have had them in the ground for the past ten years. They thrive in well-drained soil with full sun to part shade.

Like most orchids they do not like a lot of fertilizer and only require moderate moisture. These hardy jewels multiple steadily forming large clumps in just a few years, but they are by no means invasive. After flowering seedpods are often formed, but since the seed is very difficult to germinate, it is best to remove the flower stalk when the blooms are gone.

To purchase these marvelous orchids go to the Internet and type in the name, *Bletilla striata*. There are several companies that specialize in this orchid species and its relatives. But don't be afraid to buy them from reputable

'Dutch' bulb catalogues. My first three bulbs came from such a source twenty years ago.

Succulent Superstitions

Margaret Rands

I was in California recently and visited many gardens and museums. Most of these gardens had a small area with a succulent bed that I found to be quite interesting. Succulents are not only low maintenance but attractive. This rekindled my love for these plants.

One of the tour guides explained that some succulents have a fascinating history. She told us that they have been used on roofs since the Middle Ages. Although they are now used primarily for ornamentation, they were originally planted to fix gaps between thatch or tile roofs and to protect the home from evil. In earlier centuries, feuding families plucked the protective plants off each other's roofs, believing they left the homes vulnerable to a natural disaster and the families unguarded against demons and sorcerers.

The succulent we know as hens and chicks was sacred in the belief that it was associated with thunder, the Nordic god Thor and the Roman god Jupiter. Charlemagne, during his medieval rule, decreed that succulents be planted on every structure in his empire. Maybe the real reason that succulents like hens and chickens are beneficial is they are naturally fire resistant, and slow down the spread of flames, something we might take into consideration today.

Pecan Pie Bars

Linda Benton

Cookie crust:

3 cups flour

1½ cups sugar

1 cup butter

½ teaspoons salt

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. To form crust, cream the butter with the sugar and then add the flour and salt. Blend until the mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Press firmly and evenly unto a greased 15x10-inch baking pan with sides. Bake 20 minutes.

(continued on page 3 see "Filling")

A Letter from the President

Jane Fox

We are excited beyond belief that April 29th will be our 10th Annual Spring Conference and Plant Sale. If you haven't already purchased your tickets find a Master Gardener or go by the Extension Office and save your place. We are looking forward to being at the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center again this year and treated to a great dinner by Chef Jackson from the Edom Bakery. Our plant sale will begin promptly at 6:00 and dinner will be served at 6:30. Plan time to visit our vendors and see what is new in the area.

The best part of the evening will be our speaker, Steve Huddleston, Senior Horticulturist from the Fort Worth Botanical Garden. Steve is the author of Easy Gardens for North Central Texas and also writes for Neil Sperry's GARDENS magazine. You can also hear him on Neil Sperry's lawn and garden show on KRLD radio or on the cable TV show entitled Your Garden. Steve is a native of Tulsa, OK and a graduate of Oklahoma State University with a M.A. degree from the University of Arizona. He grew up with parents and grandparents who enjoyed gardening and working in the yard and followed them around since the age of 3. By the 9th grade, he knew he wanted to be a landscape architect.

His topic for the evening will be Plants That Are Adaptable, Sustainable, Native, Friendly and Beautiful. Any Texan who has ever killed a plant or anyone who doesn't like a lot of yard work but enjoys the beauty of a garden will appreciate his common sense approach to planning and maintaining a garden.

With our profits from the evening we hope to present another exciting series of free summer workshops. Last year we were able to offer 5 workshops presented mainly by Master Gardeners. We did borrow Chef Jackson who presented his session on Cooking Fresh Vegetables. No one went away hungry! Other sessions covered wildlife management and native prairie grasses, creating a butterfly garden, going natural in your garden, and arranging natural flowers. We welcome your suggestions for topics that interest you and look forward to another great summer series.

Remember that each week is different at the D.R.E.A.M. Garden at the East Texas Arboretum and Botanical Garden. Bulbs are blooming and surprises are happening! The greatest joy lately has been the arrival of blue birds in the house placed in memory of our friend Lena Springer. Even though the monarchs are slow coming this year, we're looking forward to a variety of butterflies and birds among our native Texas plants.

Gazing at Spring

Flowers bloom:
no one
to enjoy them with.

Flowers fall:
no one
with whom to grieve.

I wonder when love's
longings
stir us most-

when flowers bloom
or when flowers fall.

Hsueh T'ao
(768-831)
Jeanne Larsen
Translator

Pecan Pie Bars

(continues from page 2)

Filling:
4 eggs
1½ cups light corn syrup
1¼ cups sugar
3 Tablespoons butter
1½ teaspoons vanilla
2½ cups chopped pecans
Combine eggs, corn syrup, sugar, butter, and vanilla and beat well. Add pecans. Spread evenly over hot crust. Bake 25 minutes or until set. Cool before slicing. Yields 4 dozen.

Try Gardening in Containers

Rich Hirsch
County Extension Agent
Henderson County

Many people living in urban areas would like a garden but feel that lack of space limits gardening activities. Regardless of where you live, an enjoyable and productive vegetable garden is possible by using containers. A “micro-garden” or container garden can be an attractive part of an urban home or apartment, whether on a windowsill, patio, rooftop, balcony or doorstep.

Texas has its cold weather in short intervals during the fall. Container-grown, mobile vegetables can be easily protected from “blue-norther” cold snaps by moving them to warmer locations such as a garage. Protecting plants during these periods enhances vegetable production.

What can be grown on a doorstep? Most vegetables grown in typical backyard gardens also grow well in containers under favorable growing conditions. The most important factors for successful container gardening are sufficient sunlight, proper moisture, adequate fertility and, perhaps most important of all, tender loving care.

Most vegetables grow in containers, but some are more suitable than others. Since limited space encourages container gardening, the gardener should grow vegetables that will produce a large quantity of food for the amount of space and time required. Crops for container gardening include tomatoes, peppers, eggplants, squash, leaf lettuce, herbs and green onions. To add color to a patio or windowsill try red-leaf lettuce, red cabbage or flowering kale.

Various containers, including bushel baskets, drums, gallon cans, wooden boxes, washtubs and plastic trash cans, are suitable for growing plants. Container size should vary with plants and space available. Plant smaller vegetables in 8 to 10-inch pots and larger crops such as tomatoes, peppers and eggplants in 3 to 5 gallon containers.

Good drainage is important when growing vegetables in containers. A 3 to 5 gallon container should have at least four drainage holes.

After obtaining a container fill it with a commercially prepared potting mix sold at local garden centers. A real advantage of prepared potting mixtures of “soils” is that they do not contain native soils. When soils are eliminated, problems such as fungus, root rots and nematodes also are eliminated.

Many suitable types of soil mixes are available for growing vegetables in containers. A “synthetic soil” is ideal as it is disease and weed-free, holds moisture and yet is well-drained and lightweight. Make your own by mixing 10 tablespoons of limestone, 5 tablespoons of 0-20-0 (superphosphate) and 1 cup of garden fertilizer such as 15-10-10 or 10-10-5 to 1 bushel each of vermiculite and peat moss.

It is best to transplant healthy plants into containers rather than seeding. Purchase transplants at local nurseries or grow at home. When transplanting, avoid injury to young root systems.

Plants growing in containers require adequate fertility for vigorous growth and high yields. For best results, prepare a nutrient solution and periodically water the plants with it. Many good commercial fertilizer mixes are available for solutions. Always use a water-soluble fertilizer to avoid excessive salt build up in the container. Need for watering with the nutrient solution varies but generally two or three times per week is adequate. As plants mature, more frequent watering may be necessary, perhaps even daily. Use plain home tap water at least once a week to leach out material that accumulates in the soil mix.

Artificial mixes or “soils” are deficient in fertilizer elements so mix slow release fertilizer pellets into potting mixes and supplement periodically with water-soluble fertilizers on a weekly basis. Slow release types are not necessary if water soluble fertilizers are used regularly.

Vegetables grown in containers are susceptible to attack by insects and diseases. Inspect plants periodically for foliage-feeding insects as well as disease. Timely applications of approved fungicides and insecticides are helpful if insects and diseases become serious problems.

Container grown plants are completely dependent on the grower for correct amounts of water and nutrients. A garden plant can be neglected for several weeks and “Mother Nature’s” water and nutrients will carry the plant

through, but do not neglect the container plant for even a day or the plant will be dead and dried up by harvest time.

WOW! Looking Forward To A New Year

Wayne Stafford

You may ask - why WOW? It's not an acronym, but a recall of my first visit to the DREAM garden this spring when I beheld this yellow beauty. WOW!! This is just the beginning of another year of great treats in the DREAM garden.



Initially a trial rose garden the Henderson County Master Gardeners' plot at the Athens Arboretum could now better be designated as an East Texas cottage garden. The new description reflects the style that Margaret Dansby, Linda Benton and the other Master Gardeners have tried to achieve over the last few years.

The acronym DREAM garden stands for Demonstrate, Research, Educate, Apply, and Maintain. This is still the goal of the garden, but we are trying to achieve this with a cottage garden look. The focus is to use a mixture of interesting plants that do well in the East Texas environment providing a garden with year round interest.

Desert-willow (*Chilopsis linearis*) is an impressive bloomer. The cultivar in the Master Gardeners' cottage garden is called "Timeless Beauty." It is a multi-stemmed tree that is very drought tolerant. It is related to the catalpa tree and the trumpet vine. The fragrant orchid-like flowers attract butterflies



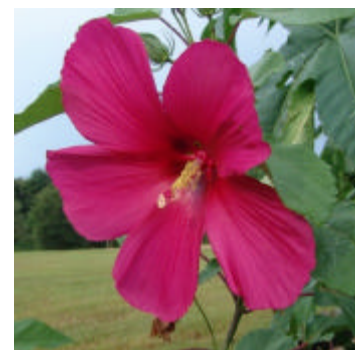
and hummingbirds. A lovely bonus is that it blooms continuously through the summer.

Chinese purple hat, also called parasol flower is an unusually pretty plant. A tender perennial it is only supposed to take temperatures down to 32 degrees, but it produces a lot of pretty bloom, it may be an alternative to the tropical hibiscus. Master Gardeners made several cuttings to test the ease of propagation.



Moy Grande, the Texas superstar giant hibiscus, is always a favorite. Its huge pink blooms can be as large as a dinner plate.

These are just a few favorites. You will see more outstanding plants each time you visit. The best way to see the garden is to come often. You'll be saying, WOW!!



WOW !!

Henderson County Office
2nd Floor, Courthouse Annex
101 E. Tyler St.
Athens, TX 75751

Henderson County
Master Gardener Association

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Jane Fox	President
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The Henderson County Master Gardener Association is sponsored by the Henderson County office of Texas AgriLife Extension Service which is a part of the Texas A&M University System. Its objectives are to increase knowledge of gardening to its members and the general public, and to provide the community with information on good gardening practices.

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