

The Seedling

Newsletter of the Northwest Louisiana Master Gardeners Association

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MG ACTIVITIES

COMPOST GURU COMING

Malcolm Beck of San Antonio, author of books and articles on composting, will be the last World of Gardening speaker of 2008. He will be at the Klima Center, American Rose Center, at 10 a.m. Wednesday, Nov. 5. Make reservations with Lou Osburn, lou@nokout.com or 869-1526.

Beck's talk is called "Understanding Plants and Working with Nature in Your Garden." He was for several years the owner and manager of Garden-ville, an organic farm with a marketing center. He is the author of *The Secret Life of Compost*, *Texas Organic Vegetable Gardening*, *The Garden-ville Method* and *The Texas Bug Book*. See an article by him below in "Potpourri" section.

BULB SALE BASH

The second annual Heirloom Bulb Sale in late September was a big success. It was hard to believe that the 2008 sale could be any better than the first one in 2007, but it was!

Maybe it was the perfect cool, clear and sunny weather, a pleasant reprieve from the storms of Gustav and Ike a few weeks before. Maybe it was in response to a recent bulb talk at the Barnwell and stories by Joe White and Kathy Rowell in the *Times*. Whatever the reason, the crowd started gathering at 7:30 a.m. and grew to a throng of more than 300 by opening time, 9 a.m.

Tables had been lined with bags and bags of bulbs, gathered or purchased since March. Many hours had gone into accumulating just the right bulbs to attract people interested in Creating a garden with hard-to-find Southern heirloom bulbs.

The most popular item: White and yellow spider lilies. After five minutes they were gone.

After 35 minutes most of the tables were decidedly vacant of the white bags that lined the table at the beginning of the sale. Besides the spiders, the most popular item seemed to be crinum. This was probably the biggest surprise. Prices ranged from \$5 to \$15 per bulb. Thanks, Donna Shope, for your sales skills!



**Peggy Bennett Packs
After Sale**

Aysen Gillespie's poppy pictures attracted a lot of attention and sold a lot of seed packs. In addition to poppies, there were other fall seeds: larkspur and sweet peas. Of a combined 400 packs, all but a few larkspur seed packets sold.

All told, the Bulb Sale made a profit of nearly \$12,000, more than double the profit from the 2007 sale. The average amount spent per person was \$43.50. At least 353 people, one German shepherd and our neighbor-hood kitty cat were present for the sale. The customer who arrived earliest was a young man and his son (in a red wagon) from Marshall.

The funniest story at Saturday's event was related by a prominent Methodist minister who told us his interest in *Lycoris* started as a young boy when one day he heard his father shouting from the front yard to "come see how pretty the naked ladies are." He nearly knocked himself out trying to get to the window.

How can our sale in 2009 top this? Well, Vivian Kennedy reportedly dug bulbs from a road ditch on Sunday, one day after the sale. So, she's pumped and ready for the challenge!

Perhaps Wiley Hilburn, journalism professor at Louisiana Tech and writer for the *Times*, said it best when he talked about red spider lilies: "They're new and nostalgic at the same time." We believe that's true of all Southern heirloom bulbs, and that is why they're so popular.

A great big thank you to all the Master Gardeners who helped make this sale a success. You were great to work with.

- **Molly Rankin and Mary Catherine Googe**, co-chairs of the Bulb Sale

GARDENING AS FUN

Anything as organized as a numbered list is probably anathema to Felder Rushing, Mississippi gardener and entertainer, but here are some of the points he made in a recent talk in Shreveport:

1. You can have as many wind chimes and bottle trees as you like.
2. You can plant any color next to any other color.
3. If you're not in your garden every day the sun is shining, something is wrong.
4. You don't have to have your soil tested.
5. Composting is good. The rules are, first, Quit throwing stuff away and, second, Pile it up somewhere.



Rushing spoke in October at the Gathering of Gardeners, sponsored by the Grounds Board of the State Exhibit Museum and the Master Gardeners.

Felder Rushing He illustrated his philosophy of gardening (apparently, keeping maintenance to a minimum and pleasure to a maximum) with slides of his yard in Jackson; upon moving there several years ago, he killed all the grass in the front yard, hauled in large rocks, and installed native plants and a small waterfall. There are also 10 bottle trees, three round decks, a bowling ball, and a split rail fence so attractive that it's been on the cover of *Southern Living*.

- **Sara Burroughs**

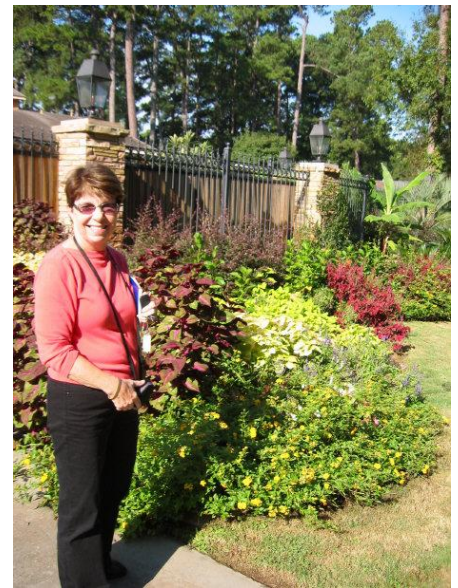
GARDENS CHOSEN

Six gardens for Le Tour des Jardins 2009 will be announced at the January meeting of Master Gardeners. The selection committee in October chose five homeowners' gardens and one professionally designed one, according to Margie Caplis, Le Tour director.

“We viewed a total of nine homeowners’ gardens and three professional gardens. The garden selection committee had a difficult time choosing between them. The choice of gardens has been wonderful. How lucky we are to have so many beautiful gardens in our area!” she said.

Other committees will start work in November. The first meeting of the subcommittee chairmen and co- chairs will be at 10 a.m. Nov. 14 in the library of the RTM Center.

“Budgets for each committee will be reviewed, equipment will be checked and replacements ordered if needed, plaques ordered and presented, vendors and artists contacted, publicity information prepared and sent to the *Times*, posters printed and distributed, tickets designed and printed, maps designed and prepared, head garden guides chosen and garden guides signed up. Committee chairmen will be deciding how many volunteers they will need and requests for volunteers will be announced,” Caplis said.



Caplis at Prospective Garden

“Please let us know if you would like to help and be ready when someone calls you. We are especially looking for assistants to work with the artist coordinator and the garden guide coordinator as well as someone to help check equipment at this time. Don’t forget to mark the weekend of May 2-3, 2009. Your help is vital to making this popular event a great success. There will be signup sheets at the meetings or you can email margiecaplis@bellsouth.net if you want to volunteer. Let’s make Le Tour des Jardins 2009 the best ever.”

GREEN THINGS

ON CONTAINER PLANTS

Many gardeners love their container plants to death, overwatering them and ruining the soil with too much fertilizer. It’s often difficult to know what supplementary nutrients have already been added to the potting soil, so be conservative. Instead of following the application guidelines on the fertilizer package to the letter, start slowly and see how the plants respond. You can always add more later.



Excess fertilizer is not just too much of a good thing. The buildup of salts can burn your plants to death by robbing them of moisture. To do the job correctly, here are four factors to keep in mind:

1. **Container size** – a petite window box will obviously need less frequent fertilization than a larger container (say, one that is 2 feet square or bigger).
2. **Plant requirements** – Vegetables and annuals are of the live-fast-die-young school. They must produce flowers or fruit or both and set seeds in one summer, and that makes them hungry. Herbs, especially woody perennial types like thyme, rosemary and oregano, prefer a lean soil similar to that of their native hilltops above the Mediterranean. And larger perennials and trees will benefit from a once-a-year

application of fertilizer in the spring, with perhaps a **Mexican** booster in midsummer.

Petunia

3. **Timing** – Spring applications are usually best. Resist adding fertilizer much after late July, since it can cause a spurt of weak new growth that will be zapped by fall frosts.

4. **Fertilizer type** – Synthetic fertilizers provide larger quantities of nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium, but many gardeners consider them the equivalent of junk food; they provide a rush of energy, but not one that can be maintained for long. Organic plant food like cottonseed meal, blood meal, fish emulsion and manure break down more slowly and remain available to the plant longer, increasing the natural activity of microorganisms in the soil.

From *The Dallas Morning News* website, Sept.19, 2008

POTPOURRI

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Here are **Malcolm Beck's** observations on the relationship between the health of the soil and the physical and mental health of humans, from his website, www.malcolmbeck.com.

Earth, the only planet known to support and sustain life, is home to many beautiful, fascinating and wonderful forms of life. The vast majority of these life-forms, both plant and animal, follow their instincts and live their lives in harmony with nature.

Humans, on the other hand, have free will as well as instincts. They have the freedom to be stupid, to be jealous, envious, and greedy. They can choose to make war on their own kind, pollute the environment, abuse the earth and other creatures living on it, and even allow abuse and erosion to destroy the thing that supports all life -- the soil.

Along with free will, humans were also given superior intelligence. Why haven't we used this intelligence to learn the ways of living in harmony with the environment and our own species? Could it be that the body that houses and nourishes our thinking and learning brain requires better nutrition than it is receiving?

Animal life is programmed to seek out the most nutritious foods for both body and brain. Humans have the free will to decide whether or not to properly nourish their bodies. Poorly nourished people have unsatisfied cravings, suffer from allergies and degenerative diseases, and find their thinking and reasoning powers impaired. As a result of these problems, lack of nourishment affects not only the persons involved but also their associates and people with whom they interact.

The undernourished person is irritable, discontented, and unhappy. They have less and less ability to think their way out of their problems. Could it be that many politicians, lawyers, judges, teachers, parents and students are not nourishing their bodies and minds sufficiently to support sane and logical thinking?

We have vast knowledge of the history of mankind, but for some reason our supposedly superior intellect has not used this knowledge. Nations are still fighting nations. Neighbors are still killing neighbors. Now even school children are killing school children. Where do we look for the answers?

Dr. Lowdermilk's studies, published in *Agriculture Bulletin No. 99* in 1939, tells how soil neglect, erosion, deforestation, and overgrazing have toppled empires and wiped out civilizations. At the same time, he learned that careful stewardship of the earth's resources and soil conservation measures have enabled other societies to flourish for centuries.

The body (brain included) must be properly nourished to be healthy and sound. All life on earth is nourished by a thin layer of soil. The quality of that topsoil is maintained by soil life's ability to use energy from decaying organic matter and minerals from decaying rock.

Greed has caused humans to allow much of the food-producing soils around the world to fall below par in organic matter and mineral content. The quality of our topsoil determines the quality of the air we breathe, the water we drink and the food we eat. If the quality of the top soil is allowed to degrade to any degree, the life it supports degrades to the same degree.

In the 1930s, Sir Robert McGarrison, M.D., of England, carried on an elaborate experiment using more than 2000 clinical animals under controlled conditions. The rats in one group were fed a near perfect diet. They grew large, were healthy, lived long and were docile and affectionate. The rats in the other group were fed a more common diet of polished rice,

condiments, very little milk or vegetables. The diet was chiefly refined foods. This poorly fed group were sickly, nervous, vicious and short-lived. They had many of the diseases common to man.

In the 1950s, Warren Walker did a similar test, using a big group of pigeons. Half were fed polished rice; the other half were fed brown rice. The pigeons who ate white rice eventually got five degenerative diseases, stopped reproducing and started dying prematurely. The pigeons fed brown rice lived a normal, full, healthy and reproductive life. One unexpected outcome was that the pigeons on the polished rice became irritable and discontented long before any clinical ailments appeared.

In 1963, I did an experiment similar to Mr. Walker's, except I used baby chicks instead of pigeons. I fed one group on white bread and the other group on whole wheat bread. The chicks eating white bread quickly became sick, irritable and discontented. They began dying on the 13th day and by the 17th, they were all dead. The chicks who ate whole wheat bread never became discontented or irritable. I kept them on the whole wheat diet until full grown. They were normal and healthy. I released the hens to our laying flock, and we baked the rooster for Thanksgiving dinner.

Beginning in 1957, my wife and I and our five children ate only natural, unrefined foods, most of which were produced on our own organic and mineral-rich farm. We had no doctor bills. Our children never missed school because of illness. The teachers reported that they were well behaved, and they all did well in school. Because of my own and other diet studies using animals, I was interested in how diet related to health and behavior in people. I paid close attention to my children, my sisters and brothers, and other people I knew well. I noticed that diet does affect, not only health, but human behavior as well.



In the spring of 1999 I bought some chicks from a hatchery and did another test. In this test I fed one group white rice and white bread, the other brown rice and whole wheat bread. Since white bread is now enriched, the chicks on it and white rice survived longer than before. The chicks on brown rice and whole wheat bread, however, also eventually became sick and started dying. According to Dr. Vestal, DVM of Dodd Animal Hospital and Texas Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory,

the chicks on the brown bread and rice were almost in as bad health as those eating white bread and rice. The brown bread and rice chicks were mineral and vitamin deficient except for calcium, and they were also obese. The chicks on white bread and rice were very deficient in minerals and vitamins, except calcium.

Has the quality of our food-producing soils gone down over the past 36 years, or could it be that the chickens we eat and get eggs from are so far removed from nature that they now need medicated feed and vitamin supplements to survive?

Modern studies have many times shown that nutrition has an effect on the behavior of animals and humans. Could the root of all the troubles in the world be from over-processed, de-vitalized, chemicalized foods grown in poor soil? Could these facts be too simple to be understood by our powerful but poorly nourished brains?(Copyright Martin Beck)

HOPE FOR BROKEN POTS

I have an annoying (according to my husband) habit of acquiring chipped – if not downright broken – vintage flower pots that I expect my husband to fix. I'm not attracted to orange clay pots; although they have their uses, the harsh orange color upsets my gardener's eye. What I can't resist are old ornamental pots, urns and planters made of cast concrete or stone.

I find them at estate sales and junk shops. Sometimes they are given to me by friends who don't want the broken pots in their way any longer. That's how I came by a beautifully chipped and naturally aged large, round planter on a square pedestal. It has classical swags on the outside, pale remnants of orchid paint and real bits of green moss. It was broken in two. It's been in my back yard for, oh, about 15 years. Maybe 20. In two pieces, just as I received it.

Until last week. Before my husband left on a two-week canoe trip, I guilted him into trying a new product called Mighty Putty. Since it's purported to be "a powerful bonding epoxy stick that you can mold to any shape and can apply to any surface for an everlasting bond," I decided my broken urn could test the product's claims.

It took my husband about 10 minutes to activate the epoxy, apply it, mold it to conform to the base and position the two parts of the urn into one. Once upon a time, the two parts went back together almost seamlessly. I guess after 20 years of

being moved from one part of the yard to another, the concrete edges eroded and did not fit back together so nicely. But Mighty Putty filled in the missing material so the urn stood upright, instead of looking whomper-jawed. And it cemented the two parts sturdily together so I could, at last, fill it with plants. I prepared to go shopping.

Not so fast, my husband warned. This needs to set and cure, he said. And the bond is not going to be permanent enough to ever move again, he grouched, so be sure you've placed it where you want it to stay. Forever. I deferred my shopping trip for 48 hours. Now, filled with an array of succulents, the planter is a focal point in my back garden.

Don't tell my husband, but I tipped the urn this way and that to see if it would break off at the repair. It didn't. The cured epoxy can be stained or painted to minimize the color of the repair. I'm thinking of painting it with yogurt and buttermilk to see if moss will develop. Or maybe I'll make a gray watercolor and daub it on. Evidence of the fix doesn't bother me, though.

When my husband gets back from his two weeks in the North Woods, I'll have a very heavy, vintage, concrete birdbath (in two parts); an Italian terra-cotta strawberry jar separated from its planter pockets; a chipped, old, carved-stone font from India; a pair of dainty, antique, faux-bois French planters (dangerously cracked); and a new supply of Mighty Putty waiting for him.

- *Dallas Morning News* Home Section website, Sept. 26, 2008

KITCHEN SINK

CANDIED SATSUMA PEELS

These add flavor to scones, cakes, cookies, and pancakes. Just remember to prepare them the night before.

6 medium Satsuma peels

1 cup sugar

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup water

Peel the Satsumas and set the fruit aside. With a knife scrape some of the white pith away. Wash the peels and cut them into $\frac{1}{8}$ inch wide strips.

In a saucepan stir $\frac{3}{4}$ cup sugar and the water over medium low heat until sugar dissolves. Increase heat and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer for two minutes. Add Satsuma peels and simmer for 15 minutes.

Place remaining $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of sugar in bowl and set aside.

Use a slotted spoon to remove the peels from the syrup, and place them in the bowl of sugar. Toss to coat. Cover the bowl and let it stand at room temperature overnight.

These also store tightly sealed in the refrigerator.

- **Brenda McCart**