

# The Seedling

*Newsletter of the Northwest Louisiana Master Gardeners Association*

*An Affiliate of LSU Ag Center*

[www.lsuagcenter.com/nwlamg](http://www.lsuagcenter.com/nwlamg)

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## COMMUNITY GARDENS

Last summer, the Red River Coalition of Community Gardens (RRCGG) embarked on a revolutionary venture in the Stoner Hills neighborhood. On April 20, 2009, 50 volunteers showed up at the rear pavilion of Valencia Recreation Center to create the first community garden in a city park. Earlier that week, a local company had broken ground, removing the grass and creating a tilled planting area on each side of the stone pavilion. Lex Plant Farm and Garden Center installed the water system.

With the support of staff from SPAR, Lowe's employees, teachers from Stoner Hill Elementary, local businesses, members of Northwest Louisiana Master Gardeners and the LSUS AgCenter, Valencia youth worked diligently to give the garden its shape and character. Using wooden stakes and string, they laid out the details of the garden and formed the individual plots. They built 17 raised plots, including rows, beds, and walkways, and added compost to each.

Planting day was June 26, soon followed by emerging seedlings of purple hull peas, okra, cucumbers, squash, collards, pumpkin, cantaloupe and watermelon. The youth have enjoyed harvesting their fresh vegetables and tasting new ways to

prepare the foods. The first harvest of cucumbers and zucchini was consumed raw with much enthusiasm and a few comments that the taste "could be improved with a little Ranch Dressing." Cooks prepared peas and stewed okra to allow the youth a chance to enjoy their own vegetables in a healthy meal. Some students reported that their parents cooked the vegetables they took home. The students are planning their fall garden and have begun planting new crops.



**Three community garden veterans became honorary Master Gardeners at the September meeting. They are on the front row, from left, Ruby Small, Rosie Chaffold and Margret Myles. On the back row are Don Toppett, Michele Wiener, Denyse Cummins and Grace Peterson.**

The Valencia Youth Program, an organization of some 20 young gardeners, has classes every Thursday afternoon to enrich their knowledge and skills. Teachers are Deborah Coleman, Grace Peterson and Leshon Williams. The classes – including nutrition, food safety, ecology, leadership and business – will qualify them to receive certification for their vegetable garden through the Junior Master Gardeners Golden Rays Series. They have even had classes on advertising and entrepreneurship to hone their business skills. They hope to provide fresh healthy vegetables for their families and, eventually, to market the vegetables to members of their community.

The Valencia Community Garden is the first of its kind in Louisiana and a model for future gardens. It will be used as a guide to creating and maintaining more gardens in SPAR areas throughout Shreveport and eventually the rest of the state. A new garden in Camp Forbing was started in October. Using the model of Valencia's garden, Shreveport is breaking new ground in its development of gardens that will significantly reduce the "food deserts" in many communities.

- **Mary Dumars**

**NOTE: Master Gardener volunteers are needed to help with the Valencia Youth Garden, which is an approved Master Gardener project. Please contact Grace Peterson for more information: 741-7430 ext. 1503 or [gpeterson@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:gpeterson@agcenter.lsu.edu)**

## MG ACTIVITIES

### GREAT DAY FOR BULBS

What a day for a sale! The temperature started out at 49 degrees at 7 a.m. and stayed in the high 70s and low 80s for the duration of the sale. That's good news and bad news. The good news is that we didn't sweat bullets trying to get set up; the bad news is that the perfect weather was a temptation for our potential customers to go to other events taking place at the same time in the area or stay at home and work in their yards. The weather cooperated (or, as Mary Catherine says, "somebody must have paid the preacher"), and Oct. 3 was the only rainless day on the extended forecast for the next seven days.

Even though the crowd started out smaller than in 2008, people did trickle in steadily and the cashiers stayed busy writing tickets and collecting money. Molly rang the cow bell signaling the start of the sale a few minutes before 9 and the race was on! The bulb committee had managed to purchase enough white, yellow and the new orange spider lilies to meet the needs of the long line of customers wanting to buy them. Some spider lilies remained on the table when the sale concluded at 1p.m.

The first customer was a lady from Many who arrived by 7:15 a.m. She said she was there for the 2008 sale and she knows "the early bird gets the worm." Ten or 12 people arrived before 8 and secured their spots in the spider lily line. One of our early customers perhaps stood too long and about 30 minutes into the sale collapsed near the crinum table. Someone called 911, and the paramedics quickly arrived and attended to her. She eventually got to her feet and proceeded to the check-out table.

The customer who traveled the farthest was a lady from Dallas. She comes to Shreveport every week or 10 days to attend to her elderly dad, and, since she's an avid gardener, the sale was a nice surprise. She bought only white flowers. She was most impressed by the variety of plants offered for sale.

The crinum table challenged the spider lily table for most popular this year, in large part because of Kathy Rowell's excellent "Crinum Crazy" story that appeared Sept. 26 in the *Times*. More than a few customers came to the table waving their copies of the newspaper article and wanting to purchase a bulb or two or three. Thanks go to Dianne Mercer, who took the unenviable position of crinum expert at the table usually manned by Donna Shope (who was away on vacation this year). Dianne handled the task with great success. We had only 10 or fewer crinum bulbs remaining at the close from the 100 we started with.

There was the usual mix of young and old, dogs on leashes, chatter and exchange of gardening stories. In a group of avid gardeners, you get a lot of useful information and ideas for next year's sale. There's always someone who knows "where

parrot glads grow in large numbers” or about “grandma’s plants on the old homesite” or invitations to visit a new nursery. The enthusiasm of the shoppers makes the Master Gardeners who get this event together think about maybe doing it again next year. The months and months of preparation are tiring, and we have to rest up before we want to bag another bulb!



**Curtis Williams keeps bulbs in order.**

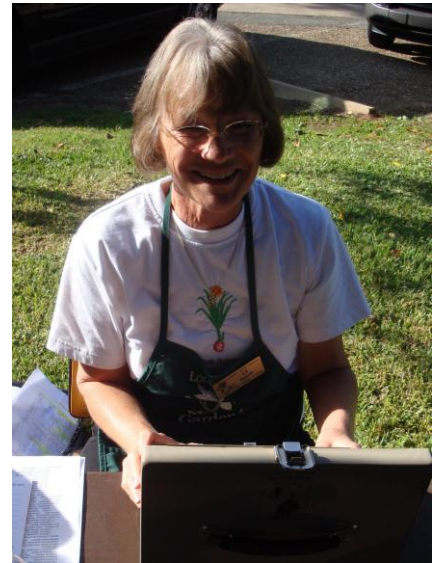


**From these humble beginnings crinums will come.**

Aside from the love of bulbs and the fun of making desirable bulbs available in a common place for others to snap up, the next best part of the bulb sale is the numbers – How many people did we reach and how much money did we make?

The number of shoppers was between 270 and 300. One out of every two shoppers spent over \$50. Master Gardeners spent \$2,139 at the pre-sale on Oct. 1 (this was only 15 to 20 shoppers). The profit from this sale will be between \$12,000 and \$13,000 after the final computing.

The difference between this year’s sale and the previous two sales is that we did not sell out. We ordered more bulbs than in 2008, and we had 566 bags of bulbs or pots of rain lilies and copper lilies remaining at 1 p.m. Some were sold at the meeting Oct. 14, and what’s left can be put in a “nursery bed” to save for next year’s sale.



**Cashier Lil Appel takes a break.**

The sale was successful in many ways. The weather was wonderful, the crowd left happy, Master Gardeners volunteered their help in large numbers. We always try to learn from our mistakes from year to year to make each sale a happy event. We could use a few more cashiers next year. We’ll review our pricing on a few bulbs that didn’t sell well. We won’t order as many spider lilies next year. We’ll look for another supply of crinums. We’ll consider buying environmentally friendly shopping bags and not use so many plastic ones. We’ll keep “paying the preacher” and hope for sunny skies and cool temperatures.

When all is said and done about the Bulb Sale of 2009, we can only compare it to the LSU/Georgia game that was played shortly after the bulb sale ended. It started out slowly and was a cliff-hanger but we came out on top! Go Tigers! Go Bulbers!

- **Mary Catherine Googe and Molly Rankin, Bulb Sale directors**

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The autumnal equinox has come and gone, and, we hope, the dog days of summer are past us. The mornings are cool and perfect for gardening. The days are warm but not too warm, and the recent rains have invigorated our gardens. Plants that were just barely able to hold on over the long, hot summer are suddenly in full bloom.

I am looking forward to doing my fall chores of planting, sprucing up, and seeding in cooler weather. I am especially looking forward to finding the perfect spot for all the great bulbs that I purchased at the Fall Heirloom Bulb Sale. It was a great success, bringing in more than \$13,500 for the Master Gardeners. Congratulations to Mary Catherine Googe and Molly Rankin and their committee for another great bulb sale. Thanks also to everyone who volunteered for it.

As the seasons go by, so do our annual Master Gardener projects. Now it is time to start thinking about our upcoming 2010 events and fundraisers. Our spring plant sale will be on April 10, and Jolinda Redling and her committee are already hard at work propagating and planting seeds for the plant sale. Be sure to take a peek in the greenhouse and see what they have growing for the sale. Margie Caplis and her Le Tour committee are also working diligently on another year of fabulous gardens.

I look forward to seeing each of you at our general meetings. Don't forget that our December meeting will be our annual Awards Luncheon.

Happy gardening and cooler weather!

- **Michele Wiener**

## WOG TALKS

### DAVE CREECH COMING AGAIN

Dave Creech, director of the Stephen F. Austin Mast Arboretum in Nacogdoches, will finish off the 2009 World of Gardening presentations at 10 a.m. Nov. 4 at the Klima Center of the American Rose Gardens.

His topic is "Making Shreveport Gardening Easy." He will bring plants to auction (for MG benefit) and comment on photos that we have sent of our problem garden areas.

## GREEN THINGS

### COTTAGE GARDENING

The cottage garden is a creation of the English gardener's passion for filling every possible patch of earth in their often tiny city gardens. The perfect cottage garden probably doesn't exist, but one of the aims of the cottage garden is to make sure that there is no room for weeds to grow!

A cottage garden is ideally composed of many flowering perennials. For a better show, plant a minimum of three of each plant... more is better, and group the plants together, rather than separating them like polka dots: a teardrop or paisley shape appears more like a natural drift of flowers. Of course, a featured plant, such as a large shrub or tree doesn't fall under this "rule," and you should have some specimen plantings to add interest... smaller trees such as crepe myrtle, dogwood, Japanese magnolia or Japanese maple can create a lovely under-story effect in a yard that already has large trees. I personally think every yard in Louisiana should have a crepe myrtle or two: they add so much to the garden year round.

As for shrubs, of course the first that springs to mind is the azalea, but don't forget hydrangeas, flowering quince, camellias, buddleia, and hardy hibiscus or rose of Sharon and many others.

Vines can add a lot of vertical interest to the cottage garden, but you have to have something for the vines to grow upon. If you love the long, fragrant panicles of wisteria, be careful! Wisteria is very vigorous, and it can pull the siding off your house. Wild types of honeysuckle, passion vine and trumpet vine should also be used with care, as they are very vigorous, but I believe the newer hybrids are better behaved. Other flowering vines include morning glories, their night-blooming cousin, the moon flower, and jasmines, all of which can be used to camouflage a fence or soften a garden shed.

More delicate is the clematis, which has wonderful showy blooms in the spring, and often repeats in the fall. The clematis has never been known to damage or threaten any structure. There are many trellises and tuteurs commercially available, as well as netting that will help vines cover a fence, chimney or mailbox pillar.

Most cottage gardens have at least one comfortable seat for the gardener to enjoy her work or to rest before resuming her labors, and don't forget ornamental structures such as birdbaths, birdhouses and water features. There really is no limit to what you can do: that's the beauty of cottage gardening... you can make your own rules.

A good rule of thumb is to have shorter plants in the front of your border, with taller plants toward the back, but in keeping with the general philosophy of the cottage gardener, don't make it too regimented. If you have a somewhat elevated or terraced garden, a few cascading plants along the edge make a pretty display and soften the edges of your hardscape.

The amount of sun and shade you have in your garden will determine what plants you will be able to use, but in Louisiana, even a somewhat shady yard can support plants that are designated for full sun in less tropical places. Every cottage garden should have roses, of course, and there are a few that will do well in a somewhat shady yard, such as Le Marque, Souvenir de la Malmaison or the Fairy type of shrub rose... otherwise, where roses are concerned, the sunnier the better.

If you don't know whether your soil is acid or alkaline, get a soil test done through the LSU Ag Center Cooperative Extension Service. For many plants, the soil pH won't make too much difference, as long as it is not too extreme, but azaleas and camellias, among others, do best in soil that is more acid.

When it comes to the color of plants, choose whatever pleases you. After all, it is your garden! Followers of Gertrude Jekyll, the great English garden designer, will have many blues and pinks, and will banish yellows, oranges and other harsh colors. In an area that you view at night, all white flowers make a pretty display. In the harshest summer, the bright reds, yellows and oranges may stand up to the heat better than paler hues, and seem to be compatible with the higher temperatures.

Watering your cottage garden is a big concern for our summers. If you don't have a built-in sprinkler system, don't despair. Soaker hoses work very well; just be sure to coil them near or around the plants closely enough that their roots will benefit, and let the water drip slowly for an extended period of time. Cover the hoses with mulch to extend their life, to preserve moisture and to hide the hoses. These are especially good to use around your roses, which should not have water on their leaves... it encourages black spot.

There are excellent reasons to mulch your garden, the two main ones being to keep down the weeds and to keep the ground moist. There are a few reasons not to mulch, too, though. The most important of these being that mulch not only suppresses weed seeds, but it will also suppress seeds from desirable plants that would otherwise self-seed in your garden,

such as sweet alyssum, columbine, penstemon, purple coneflower, rudbeckia or black-eyed Susan, gaillardia or Indian blanket, stokesia, yarrow, salvias and much more.

Mulch can be expensive to purchase for large gardens. If you want to save money on mulch, consider plants that will self-seed easily. You can mulch around the root zone of your plants, keeping your hoe or weeding tools on the ready for the rest of the planting bed, or let your mulch decay for a few years before renewing it, to give some self-seeding a try.

No garden plant blooms year-round, so every good cottage garden should have an assortment of perennials, biennials, annuals and bulbs. The more talented garden designers also contrast leaf shapes and colors to beautiful affect. Flowers are not the only way to bring color to your garden: don't forget ferns, coleus, caladiums, hostas, Persian shield and artemisia, among other foliage plants that can add color.

Whatever your garden soil or light conditions, you can have a version of an English cottage garden right here in northwest Louisiana.

- **Kitty Estopinal**

## KITCHEN SINK

### HOLIDAY CANDY

One cup shelled salted pistachios (if you start with nuts in the shell, about ½ pound)

12 ounces semisweet chocolate, chopped, so it melts uniformly

8 ounces white chocolate, chopped

¾ cup dried, sweetened cranberries

Preheat oven to 350 F.

Lightly toast pistachios on a baking sheet for about 10 minutes. Allow to cool.

Melt semisweet chocolate in a microwave-safe bowl, uncovered, on medium (50 percent power) for two to three minutes, stirring twice. Remove from microwave oven before they are completely melted, and stir until smooth (the remaining pieces will melt as you stir). Melt white chocolate separately, following the same directions.

In a small bowl, combine nuts and cranberries. Stir half of this mixture into semisweet chocolate. Using a spatula, quickly spread the mixture to about a ½ -inch thickness on a large cookie sheet. Drop the white chocolate by tablespoonfuls over the dark chocolate. With the tip of a butter knife, swirl the chocolates together to create a marbled effect. Sprinkle remaining nut and berry mixture over top and lightly press into chocolate mixture.

Refrigerate the bark for about an hour or until firm, then break it into pieces. Store bark in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to a month. To give as gifts, package in cellophane bags tied with ribbon.

Makes about 1 ¾ pounds.

- From [www.dallasnews.com](http://www.dallasnews.com) Dec. 23, 2008 (adapted from *Family Fun* magazine)