

The Seedling

Newsletter of the Northwest Louisiana Master Gardeners Association

An Affiliate of LSU Ag Center

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MG ACTIVITIES

BRINGING IN THE BULBS

Our second annual Heirloom Bulb Sale will be from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Sept. 27. There will be 40 varieties of heirloom bulbs (over 5,000 total) to sell this year. We'll be offering some hard-to-find bulbs unavailable last year such as white spider lilies, yellow spider lilies, parrot and Texas snow flurry (hardy) glads, oxblood (red schoolhouse) lilies, pink oxblood lilies, George Davidson crocosmia, copper lilies and old-fashioned tiger lilies – to name only a few of our collector's items.

If you missed some of the old Southern bulbs last year, we're bringing them back in greater numbers for this year. Included in this list are brodiae, Philippine lilies, arum, red spider lilies, ipheion, rain lilies, scilla peruvania, Spanish bluebells, St. Joseph's lilies, pink surprise lilies, star of Bethlehem, and swamp lilies. Some of the old-fashioned daffodils available will be butter and eggs, hoop petticoats, Sir Watkins, Thalia, and Van Scion. Aysen Gillespie is donating some of her wonderful poppy seeds, and Donna Shope promises some more of her beautiful crinum. Dutch iris and wildflower seeds are other new additions this year.

Bulbs will be arriving throughout September, so the "bulb bagging" work days for the sale will start soon. We'll be sending email notices on the dates and time for you to volunteer. There will be many opportunities to earn volunteer hours as we get ready for the sale as well as during the sale.

The success of the sale still depends largely on the bulbs donated by you, the Master Gardeners. **We need your extra bulbs for this year's sale!** Most bulbs will bloom better if they are not too crowded – hence the need to dig and divide after several years. The trick is being able to FIND them after the foliage dies, so please don't forget to mark the site.

Bring your bulbs to the Carriage House. Be sure to complete an information sheet (available in the office) identifying the type and number of bulbs you are donating.

Since these bulbs do so well in our area (heat and humidity) and come back year after year, this is a great way to support sustainable gardening. So come and bring your friends and neighbors to RTM on Sept. 27 to see our wonderful heirloom bulbs.

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and Molly Rankin

Mary Catherine Googe

MG ADVANCED CLASS

Thirteen students have completed the first advanced Master Gardener class in Youth/Community Gardening Training. Six were Master Gardeners: Donna Shield, Catherine Jack, Martin Bourgeois, Marie Toles, Debbie Burton and Pat Barron.

Participants attended four 2 ½ hour class sessions and then did 10 hours of hands-on training by helping instructor Grace Peterson with lessons she taught at SPAR centers. Peterson taught the sessions on gardening, and Vicky Chesser, LSU AgCenter dietitian, did the one on nutrition.

They accompanied the SPAR youth on field trips to community gardens and to the Pioneer Heritage Center. Two groups visited the Red River Research Station, and three went to a farm off Jefferson Paige Road.

Peterson plans to offer the course again next summer, perhaps sooner if there is interest. Cost is \$10 to Master Gardeners, who commit to 18 hours of volunteer work with youth or community gardens (in addition to the annual Master Gardener commitment).

Donna Shield sent this report on the course:

Youth/Community Gardening Training, offered to Master Gardeners by Grace Peterson last summer, was a first-of-its-kind training class. The class was also open to anyone interested in helping with youth and community garden projects. Topics covered include biology, ecology, entomology, planting and harvesting, food safety, nutrition, communication and leadership skills.

The youth we met, junior high and high school-age, proved to be tuned in, enthusiastic and eager to begin their gardening experiences. Many had gardening stories to share from their grandparents.

While the course emphasized the nutritional aspect of various fruits and vegetables, the actual food sampling became a wonderland of discovery. Most if not all of the students had limited exposure to variety in food choices due to low incomes and even homelessness. Some were leery about sampling unfamiliar foods, but were quick to bounce back after the good tastes burst through. They wanted their own gardens and had the confidence to plant them based on their likes and dislikes. The garden plan diagram they drew proved that their interest and enthusiasm were real. Interaction with the participants was extremely positive, and the teachers were very well received. The younger groups were “touchy-feely” and very loving.

The field trips to various community gardens and points of interest proved very helpful in understanding the complete gardening process. There is plenty of new information for the teachers to absorb as well. Okay, so I didn't already know that for every silk on an ear of corn, there is a kernel on the cob!

The course is a win-win situation for all involved. If you are looking for an opportunity to make a difference in someone's life, try this!

BE EARTHKIND

Goals of the EarthKind landscape management program are conservation of water, minimal maintenance and reduction of the use of pesticides – in other words, less cost and less work.

Steve Chaney, Tarrant County, Texas, horticulturist, described the EarthKind program (trademarked by Texas A&M) at the third World of Gardening program, presented July 30 at the Klima Center, American Rose Center.

Chaney's emphasis was on bed preparation. “There is no long-term substitute for proper soil building. If your soil to poorly drained, too acidic or alkaline, compacted or low in organic matter, no amount of fertilizer will help. Build your soil first.”

He gave these steps for clay soils:

1. Work in three inches of expanded shale
2. Work in three inches of finished, plant-derived compost
3. Raise your beds six inches above surrounding soil
4. Crown the bed (make it higher in the center) for drainage

Add compost once, Chaney said, before planting; then add mulch once or twice a year so that it is three inches deep. His preferred mulch is ground-up trees, not aged. "They are trees in the morning, mulch in the afternoon."

The latter part of his talk was on EarthKind roses, a designation given by the Texas A&M Agricultural System to flowers that meet these criteria:

1. They are easy to grow.
2. They grow in any soil, even alkaline.
3. They are drought- and heat-resistant.
4. They rarely have disease, insect or mite problems.

Use of EarthKind-approved roses by the city of Wichita Falls reduced irrigation, pesticide use, need for fertilizer and labor. Chaney reported. The roses do have needs: eight hours of full sun a day, good air movement around the bushes, and no sprinkler irrigation in the evening or night (wet leaves attract fungi).

Best-known of EarthKind roses is Knockout. Others are Marie Daly, Madame Antoine Mari, Mutabilis, New Dawn, Perle d'Or, Sea Foam, Souvenir de St. Anne's, Spice, The Fairy, Lafter and Mrs. Dudley Cross. (A listener commented that New Dawn's thorns are annoying.)

Chaney brought a number of plants, and David Helms auctioned them to members of the audience, adding \$64 to the MG treasury.

Horticulturist and authority on compost Malcolm Beck will be the final WOG speaker of 2008. He will be at the Klima Center of the American Rose Center in mid-October (date uncertain at press time).

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

River Farm is 25 splendidly landscaped acres of lawns and gardens just a short distance south of Washington, D.C. I've enjoyed several visits to this property once owned by President George Washington. It is a BioMecca of sorts, offering Master Gardeners brilliant plant life specimens through their cycles of life year round. The extraordinarily well kept grounds are complemented by the sweeping views of the Potomac. It is totally breathtaking -- gardens where you can discover a secluded nook and sit down, take a deep long breath and exhale any troubling burdens. Visit River Farm if you can.

This year, we celebrate 10 years of unparalleled community service by a non-profit organization. The Northwest Louisiana Master Gardeners have much to be proud of as we carry the educational torch in this gardening Olympiad. Let's continue to stretch ourselves to reach extraordinary heights of achievement in our next 10 years of existence. Gardening will evolve; its popularity will also increase, and our focus on resource conservation will lead to a greener Earth. What you are doing now is vital – helping and motivating others with their gardening interests. You are making a difference with every hour you volunteer, every seed you nurture, every tidbit of advice you provide. Be proud.

My strategic vision goals include sharing our benchmark ideas and learning what other Master Gardener programs have done successfully. Along these lines, I need your assistance. River Farm is headquarters to the American Horticulture Society. The AHS has a wonderful website for Master Gardeners and state links, http://www.ahs.org/master_gardeners/index.htm.

Please take the time to peruse the links to the various Master Gardener sites throughout the United States. Take note of ideas and projects you think would work for us. The website is friendly, and it's fun to click on a state and learn about other Master Gardener programs. I'm a real believer in learning from others. Tell me what you discover, and I'll share my discoveries as well!

Finally, let me express my gratitude for the confidence you have placed in me as your president. I am taking the reins of a well-oiled machine, and I am grateful for all the hard work and dedication it took to get us here. Although we have many challenges to overcome with the economy, environmental problems, and socioeconomic issues, we also have clear opportunities to make gardening our instrument of grace.

- **Scotty Rogers**

GREEN THINGS

“BEYOND HOSTAS”

The full title of the talk by Russell Studebaker, Tulsa horticulturist, at the recent Southern Region Master Gardener Conference was “Beyond Hostas: Other Socially Acceptable Shade Perennials.” Here are some of his suggestions:

Spring Ephemerals

Snow trillium, *Trillium grandiflorum*

Japanese bleeding heart, *Dicentra spectabilis* ‘Gold Heart’

Shooting star, *Dodecatheon meadia*

Herbaceous Perennials

Lenten rose, *Helleborus xhybridus* (dry shade)

Spiderwort, *Tradescantia* ‘Sweet Kate’

Chinese hardy orchid, *Bletilla striata*

Foam flower, *Tiarella cordifolia*

Goat's beard, *Aruncus dioicus*

Ferns

Japanese painted, *Athyrium nipponicum*

Northern maidenhair, *Adiantum pedatum*

Arborvitae fern, *Selaginella braunii*

Ground Covers

Chinese ginger, *Asarum splendens*

Creeping buttercup, *Ranunculus repens*

Ragwort, *Senecio obovatus*

Golden groundsel, *Senecio aureus*

Strawberry begonia, *Saxifraga stolonifera*

Taller Shade-Lovers (18 inches and up)

Wild impatiens, *Impatiens capensis*

Cardinal flower, *Lobelia cardinalis*

Columbine, *Aquilegia canadensis*

Hardy begonia, *Begonia grandis*

TOP 10 PLANTING MYTHS

We've all heard these:

1. Dig a deep planting hole. NO – dig the hole no deeper than the root ball of the plant. This prevents settling and root suffocation. A shallow by wider planting hole is best, as it encourages roots to grow horizontally where conditions are most favorable.
2. Place rocks, gravel or broken clay pots in the bottom of the planting hole. NO – an abrupt textural change creates a drainage problem and provides no assistance.
3. Add peat to the hole. NO – adding peat or other organic matter reduces root growth and access to water in the surrounding soil. Peat is helpful only where soils are alkaline and the plant benefits from soil acidification.
4. Cut plant top back to compensate for root loss. NO – leave the top alone. A plant runs on energy, and any reduction in foliage reduces root growth.
5. Do not fertilize newly planted plants for the first year. NO — a plant under nutrient stress will produce fewer roots. Plants run on energy, and nitrogen in moderate amounts is nearly always helpful.
6. Add phosphorus to the soil to stimulate root growth and flowering. NO – phosphorus is beneficial to a point but then interferes with uptake of iron and other micronutrients. It is energy produced in green plant parts that supports root growth and flowering.
7. Add lime or other calcium sources to get soil pH to 6.5 or 7.0. NO – Nearly all plants grow better in moderately acid soil, pH 4.5 to 5.5
8. Water the new plant once, and lawn sprinklers will provide sufficient water thereafter. NO – a newly planted plant, especially one grown in a container, requires light but frequent watering until roots grow out into the surrounding soil.
9. Water is water and I need not be concerned. NO – water contains an array of dissolved minerals. Many water sources contain sufficient calcium, sodium or bicarbonates to change soil chemistry and affect plant growth over time.
10. Stake every new tree securely. NO – staking reduces stem diameter growth and root growth. Staking should be done only with particularly tall plants in windy conditions. All stakes should be removed after one growing season.
 - **Carl Whitcomb** of Lacebark Research, Stillwater, Okla., at Southern Region MG Conference, Oklahoma City

MORE ABOUT ROSES

Master Gardener Lou Osburn will teach “Sustainable Rose Gardens” through the LSUS continuing education program from 10 a.m. to noon on three Saturdays: Oct. 11, 18 and 25. First meeting is on campus; second and third meetings will be at the American Rose Center.

Register by calling LSUS at 798-4177, or go to <http://ce.lsus.edu/> Cost is \$59 if you register by Sept. 26.

OUT AND ABOUT

OKLAHOMA TOURING

The highlights of the 2008 Southern Regional Master Gardeners' Conference in Oklahoma City in June included several bus tours of local attractions. I was lucky enough to go on two of these bus tours. Both were wonderful, but my favorite was the all-day tour to Greenleaf Nursery and the Lavender Hill Farm & Winery.

After three hours (!) heading east from OKC, we arrived at the Greenleaf Nursery near beautiful Lake Tenkiller. The rains we drove through departed, and we arrived to a warm sunny day. Those who think Oklahoma is a vast, windy dustbowl are sadly mistaken. Eastern Oklahoma is in the foothills of the Ozarks, and it is beautiful, lush, green and verging on the mountainous. Greenleaf Nursery covers almost 600 acres of that rolling foothill country. A wholesale nursery, Greenleaf supplies container-grown plants, mostly to independent nurseries throughout the country, and has locations in South Carolina and Texas. The only drawback that I could see was that there were no plants that we could buy directly from them.

Greenleaf does supply some plants to larger retailers. I was impressed that they grow plants to be sold at the Biltmore Estate in Asheville, S.C. Each visitor was given a beautiful ring-bound catalog (that we couldn't order from either!) displaying the many hundreds of plants Greenleaf grows. Greenleaf is very impressive. A member of the staff joined our bus, which was able to navigate the area quite well – a good thing, since walking through the 50+ miles of roads criss-crossing between the large frames would not have been feasible

Greenleaf has hundreds and hundreds of uncovered framed-out areas called blocks where landscape plants were being grown to sale size: thousands of hydrangeas, roses, azaleas, hawthorns, crape myrtles, junipers, Japanese maples and spiral topiaries in rank after rank, and many, many other perennial shrubs and trees. Giant metal hoops remained in place in case covering any block was necessary for shade or cold-protection. Irrigation ditches, using recycled water, ran throughout, and special planting mixes (“soil media”) consisting largely of ground barks and sand is used in the containers.

Greenleaf also has a large propagating shed, where literally millions of cuttings are started each year, and a large number of Quonset huts where the cuttings are set directly into the ground (actually a special medium for growing cuttings). This highly efficient company uses long pieces of 2x4 with dibbles set at specific intervals, so two workers can make the necessary holes for an entire row at one time. The cuttings are then placed in the climate-controlled huts until they are ready to be transferred into individual pots.

A large area of the nursery is devoted to transportation, with large warehouses and platforms where semi-trucks waited to be loaded with plants. The headquarters, formerly the home of the Nickel family, founders of Greenleaf, were beautifully landscaped with examples of the plants available. We were treated to a great barbeque lunch (thanks, Okie Joe's) in a screened party room, and soon after were on our way north, in the direction of Tulsa.

Our next stop was the Lavender Hill Farm & Winery, located off a narrow country road in Stone Bluff. Our bus driver had to leave us at the driveway for a quarter-mile walk (or golf-cart ride) while he left to turn the bus around.

Lavender Hill Farm, we were told, had hosted a very successful annual lavender and wine festival the weekend before our visit, so we weren't able to buy any plants there, either. We were, however, treated to a very interesting and informative talk by the lady who was inspired to grow lavender in Oklahoma after a visit to Provence ten years earlier.

There was close to an acre of lavender growing there, and it was in full bloom. Large areas had already been harvested, but our hostess, Judy Wheeler, told us she always leaves some lavender blooms for the bees and butterflies, which were very active among the blossoms. It was good to see no shortage of bees, many of which came from the owners' beehives. The lovely, clean scent of lavender, and much buzzing, filled the air. The winery was already closed for the day, but the small vineyard was clearly visible across the field

When questioned about growing lavender in Louisiana, we were told that probably Spanish lavender could cope with the heat and humidity of the deep south, and planting in pots rather than the ground would ensure the good drainage needed.

Despite the lack of plants for sale, there was no shortage of other lavender-related items to buy at the shop, from honey, soaps and sachets to books, fabrics, cards and lavender wands.

Arriving back in OKC about eleven hours after we started, I considered the day an experience I would not have wanted to miss. Greenleaf Nursery and Lavender Hill Farm have websites easily reached by Googling their names, with a lot more information than I could possibly remember.

- **Kitty Estopinal**

KITCHEN SINK

VEGETABLE BARS

2 cans of Crescent Rolls
2 8 oz. packages of cream cheese
1 ½ package of Ranch Dressing Mix
8 T. mayonnaise
Broccoli, cauliflower and carrots in 12 oz. bag
Green onions
Tomatoes
8 oz. shredded cheddar cheese

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Press the crescent rolls into a greased 10"x15" baking sheet, and bake until golden brown. Cool completely.

Mix mayonnaise, cream cheese, and dressing mix until smooth. Spread over crescent rolls. Chop veggies very fine and toss together. Spread over cream cheese mix. Top with shredded cheese.

- **Vivian Kennedy**

(Editor's note: these were a big hit at the August meeting.)