



Can You Dig It

Newsletter of the Piney Hills Master Gardeners of Louisiana

Publisher Kathy Love

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Special Spring Edition, 2007

Spring is always a busy time of year and especially so for members of the Piney Hills Master Gardeners. Many activities are underway and new projects are always in the making. So sit back and take a few minutes to enjoy this "Special Edition" of "*Can You Dig It.*"

Trails and Trellises Annual Garden Tour Scheduled for May 19

After experiencing success with the first Trails and Trellises garden tour last year, members of the Piney Hills Master Gardeners are looking forward to this year's Garden Tour to be held Saturday, May 19 beginning at 9:00 a.m. The gardens will be open until 4:00 p.m. This year three gardens will be featured in Minden and two in Haughton. An added feature this year will make it easier to purchase a ticket the day of the tour for those who have not purchased one in advance. Members will be manning the phones at the Extension Service office the day of the tour. Tickets can be purchased there or at one of the specified gardens. Tickets purchased in advance will be \$10.00 compared to \$12.00 if purchased the day of the tour. Tickets may be purchased by calling the Webster Parish Extension office, 318 371-1371 or from

any member of the local Master Gardener group.

Don't forget to register at the gardens for door prizes furnished by the following businesses: Ace Hardware, The Butterfly Garden, Cone's Farm & Garden Mart, Culpepper Nursery, Minden Farm & Garden, TG's Nursery, all in Minden and Haughton Farm & Garden and Hilltop Farm & Garden, both in Haughton. Please shop at the businesses that help to support us.

Another added feature this year will be a plant sale at the home of Judy & Mitch Burge.

The five featured gardens this year are:

Judy & Mitch Burge, 321 Bodcau Dam Road, Haughton

In a serene setting of rolling pastureland, Master Gardener Judy Burge has designed a true heaven on earth. The largest of her themed gardens, the Angel Garden, is inhabited by angels of all sizes and personalities. As you walk the path, you will find the Four Seasons surrounding a fountain sparkling in the light. Beyond the Angel Garden be sure to visit the Schoolhouse Garden, the Western Garden and the Daylily Garden.

Carolyn Mills, 330 Bodcau Dam Road, Haughton

Across the road from Judy & Mitch is another lovely garden where bluebonnets are the focal point. Carolyn has filled her

1 ½ acre garden with three types of grasses, sago palms, bottle brush, lantana, and countless other plants. The bright colors and delicate textures delight the senses as visitors wander the garden or rest under the pergola beside the pool.

Debbie & Terry Gardener, 209 Woodhaven, Minden

Mr. and Mrs. Gardener have created a masterpiece in their back yard reminiscent of the New Orleans Garden District. A graveled pathway leads to a secluded corner filled with hibiscus, salvia and begonias. A brick patio surrounds a wonderful pool and an unusual outdoor fireplace. A French Quarter styled carriage house surrounded by lush green shrubs further enhance this Southern Louisiana style setting.

Becky Marvin, 168 Chrislo Drive, Minden

Mature azaleas worthy of Bellingrath create secluded paths and hideaways in the tranquil cottage garden of Becky Marvin. The soothing sound of falling water welcomes you as you cross the quaint bridge over the koi pond. Be sure to notice the bronze statue of playing children. The trail leads to a rose-covered arbor and over-flowing perennial beds.

Pat Powell, 200 SheDaisy Trail, Minden

The garden of Master Gardener Pat Powell reflects her interest in unusual plants. The paths through the country setting define the many small areas that are punctuated with garden art, seating areas and interesting water features including a whimsical bathtub and “history” wall. The pleasing effect is of a tamed wilderness full of iris, amaryllis, azaleas, daylilies and much more.

4-H Garden Contest

One project everyone looks forward to is the 4-H Garden Contest. 4-H Club members from around the parish must plan, plant and maintain a 10 x 10 foot garden. Gardens are judged on a number of criteria, including originality, plant knowledge and care of the garden. Winners will receive a ribbon, as well as cash prizes. This year, the winners will be recognized at the Master Gardener graduation service.

Nominations needed

Nominations are needed for the 2008 Trails and Trellises Garden Tour. If you know of someone whose garden you would like to nominate to be on the tour you may contact Marjorie Thomas as 927-5283.

We Just Keep Growing!

A new Master Gardener class will begin on June 5th, marking the fourth year since the organization of the Piney Hills Master Gardeners. Approximately 10 new applicants will attend the classes taught by knowledgeable experts on topics such as botany, weed control, fruit trees, lawn care, and numerous other subjects. The classes are so enjoyable that current Master Gardeners attend as many lectures as possible. If you are interested in attending a Master Gardener class in the future you can call Joan Smith at 949-2100.

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Half the interest of a garden is in the constant exercise of the imagination.

Mrs. C.W. Earle

Will Work for Plants



An enthusiastic group met in Gibsland, Louisiana to help dig up and divide several varieties of jonquils at Celia Jones' Bulb Farm and replant them at Sally's Field, a project of Master Gardener, Sally F. Martin. Members were rewarded by taking home bags of freshly dug bulbs. One of the named bulbs to find a new home is *N. x intermedius*, "Texas Star." Many heirloom plants are on the endangered list and this bulb is one of the rarest. An enduring, cottage-garden classic in the South, this tough little wildflower was once painted by Redoute' for Napoleon's garden-loving Empress Josephine. It's a wild cross of *N. jonquilla* and *N. tazetta* – so of course it's fragrant – and its old names include "Etoile d'Or" and "the Cowslip Cupped."

Low Maintenance Gardening

Low maintenance gardening means a beautiful garden with minimal labor. This can be done with careful planning. Good design is a crucial element.

First you should determine the type of soil. In sandy soils, the roots of plants penetrate readily, but the water and nutrients drain away quickly. Clay soil is made up of tiny, flat particles which compact, making it hard for roots to grow. It holds water, causing drainage problems. Silt soil has particles

larger than clay, but smaller than sand. Silt lacks air space. Loam is the ideal soil. It contains equal parts clay, silt, and sand. It retains nutrients, air and moisture.

The most accurate way to determine what your soil type is and what minerals it contains or lacks is to do a soil test. Another way is to add organic matter to your garden such as compost, peat and manure. Check the ph of your soil by doing the soil test or buy a soil test kit at the garden center. A ph of 6.5 – 7.0 is best for most plants. If the soil is acidic, add a little lime. If it is too alkaline, add sulfur.

Light is an important factor. All plants need a certain amount of light. Check your yard, morning noon and evening, spring, summer and fall. Select plants suitable for the amount of light you have. You may add light by trimming up your trees if your garden is in a wooded lot, or you can add shade by building trellises or planting large shrubs or small trees.

Choose plants wisely. Plant sun-loving plants together in a sunny spot. Plant shade-loving plants in a shady area, water-loving plants in moist areas, and plants that prefer dry conditions should be planted in well drained soil.

A lush, weed-free lawn requires a lot of time and care. It requires applications of reduce the time spent of on caring for a lawn, you might hire a service to cut and spray or you can reduce the size of the fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides. To lawn area. Another option is to add flower beds filled with low maintenance perennials, shrubs and flowers or put in ground covers under trees. Add walks and patios or decks. An irrigation system is a plus. Water only as needed. You may consider drip irrigation or soaker hoses. Avoid shallow watering. Water deeply but

infrequently. Deep watering encourages the roots to grow deeper in the soil.

Mulch can reduce the amount of water by holding in the moisture. Mulch helps with weed control. Two or three inches of mulch helps eliminate most weeds. Pine straw, pine bark, cypress bark and leaves are common organic mulches.

Some easy to grow annuals are impatiens, lobelia, marigold, petunia, portulaca, salvia and wax begonia.

Low growing shrubs are azalea, dwarf Japanese holly, boxwood, spirea and viburnum.

Low maintenance perennials include balloon flower, blackeyed susan, butterfly weed, coralbell, daylilies, hen and chickens, hosta, lavender, purple coneflower, thrift and yarrow.

Plan your low maintenance garden well and enjoy your creation.

Submitted by Ann Meares

The person who sows seeds of kindness enjoys a perpetual harvest. Wishing to be friends is quick work. But friendship is a slow-ripening fruit. Aristotle

Angels Unawares

There is a scripture from Hebrews 13:2 that says, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."

Such may be an appropriate description of the group that gathered at Meadowview Nursing home to begin planting an "Angel Butterfly Garden." The project, under the direction of Joan Smith has been in the making for many months. Trees were removed to provide ample sunlight and room for the garden. Terry Gardener of TG's Nursery and Landscape graciously provided the manpower and materials to begin preparation of the flower beds and even donation of plants. Master Gardeners have also donated and planted many varieties of flowers that will attract butterflies. Quietly overlooking the lovely area will be a special angel donated by Mr. and Mrs. Derald Kirkland in memory of her daughter, Judy. Residents will surely delight in the beauty of the garden and visitors are welcome at any time.

How to get plants for free!

One of the thrills of gardening is watching plants multiply so that you have more plants to place in your flower beds or to share with friends. Now is the ideal time to propagate azaleas because you can use the cuttings where you've trimmed the plants back. Be sure to trim azaleas immediately after flowering so you don't destroy next years buds. It's as easy as snip, pinch, and protect.

- Start by snipping off a still-new twig.
- Pinch leaves. The just-snipped twig needs time to make roots, but to keep the leaves from drawing water out of the stem, pinch off all but a few leaves on the twig.
- To maintain high humidity so the leaves stay fresh, put the twig in a zip-loc bag half-filled with perlite. The perlite holds water and gives the new roots a place to grow. Keep the bag in a warm, light

place, but out of direct sunlight.
When the roots are ready to supply water to the leaves and keep them alive, move the new plant to a pot or the garden and expose it to direct sun for just a few hours until it toughens and is ready for more.

Have a Question?

Many people do not realize that one of the requirements of a Master Gardener is to volunteer to answer the phone at the Extension Service to help answer questions for problems local gardeners may experience. We are there on Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Give us a call at 371-1371.

A Note from the Editor

Your comments and suggestions are welcomed. You may submit an article or comment by contacting Kathy Love at 318 377-6394 or love7190@bellsouth.net.

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