Texas Cooperative EXTENSION The Texas A&M University System

Brazos County Master Gardener Association

TEXAS MASTER GARDENER

Brazos County Master Gardener Newsletter

Gardening News for the Brazos Valley
Volume 1, Issue 7

Editor: Donna Murray
September/October 2007

From the Editor;

I have a new hat. A duty of the Brazos County Master Gardener Association Media Chairman is Editor of the BCMG Newsletter. Being new to the job, the first order of business was to find the appropriate hat. The search was on for a fedora. A Perry White, Clark Kent type of hat with the Press pass stuck jauntily in the band. I found the hat, affixed a "Garden Press" tag, wore it to the next BCMG meeting, and we're off.

I would like to thank our previous editor Laura Biddle for the great job she has done. Laura invested many hours bringing us timely and useful information and I have benefited from each issue.

In looking to the future, I hope to include articles written by Brazos County Master Gardeners with research and fact based information, a view of up coming BCMG events, recap of what we've been doing, and some things just for fun. We will be trying, keeping or discarding, different ideas and features. I invite your comments and suggestions. brazosmg@ag.tamu.edu

In this issue

Earth-Kind Rose Symposium

By Charla Anthony
Horticulture Assistant, Brazos County

A rose may be a rose by any other name, but if it is an Earth-Kind rose, it is not just any old rose. An Earth-Kind rose has undergone rigorous testing and proven to perform consistently, require little care and is tolerant of pests.

Earth Kind is an important designation given to select roses by the Texas A&M University Agriculture program. Teams of horticultural experts test and evaluate the roses. In trials of three to five years, these roses are never sprayed, never fertilized, rarely pruned and in some cases are watered only in the first year. According to Gaye Hammond, President of the Houston Rose Society, "these are roses for working people. Earth-Kind roses are not hard to grow, do not require spraying every few days and are not picky about their soil conditions."

Area residents have a special opportunity on October 13, 2007, to attend an Earth-Kind Rose Symposium, sponsored by Texas Cooperative Extension in Brazos County and the Brazos County Master Gardeners. Developing and maintaining a beautiful home landscape poses unique challenges in the Brazos Valley, because of the alkaline soil commonly found in the region, along with high levels of sodium in the water. *continued page 2*

Earth-Kind Rose cont. from page 1
Wise plant selection and careful attention to improving environmental conditions through site selection, soil preparation, plant care, and efficient irrigation practices are essential.

Symposium topics will address these issues by featuring the Earth-Kind principals of practical soil management, efficient irrigation, and effective landscape management to successfully grow not only these specially designated roses, but other ornamental plants as well. Speakers include Dr. Steve George, Extension Horticulturist and coordinator of the Earth-Kind program, Gaye Hammond, Mark Chamblee, Chamblee's Rose Nursery, Tyler, and Beverly Welch, Arbor Gate Nursery, Tomball.

Participants will see first-hand how effective the Earth-Kind approach to landscape management can be. The all day symposium, to be held at the new Brazos County Expo Center, includes tours of a national Earth-Kind rose research site at the Brazos County Extension office and of an Earth-Kind Southern Brigade demonstration site with hundreds of roses. The "Earth Kind Rose Brigade" is a group of dedicated amateurs helping to conduct advanced field testing of experimental rose selections.

If you want beautiful easy-care roses, this symposium is for you! Cost of the symposium is $60 with pre-registration required by October 1. Registration forms, agenda and additional information may be obtained by calling the Extension office, 979-823-0129. Information is also available through the Brazos County MG website http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/brazos

Gardenline: Your Garden Questions Answered

What can I grow here with our soil and water? When can I plant a tree? My grass has turned yellow. What do I do? When can I plant roses? Your garden questions will be answered during "Gardenline", a public service provided at no cost to all citizens of the Brazos County.

Each Wednesday, beginning September 5, from 9AM to 1 PM, when you call the Brazos County Extension Office at (979)823-0129, a Master Gardener will research your question and give you an answer based on the unique garden challenges we face in our county. Master Gardeners have gone through extensive training on various horticultural topics and are certified to disseminate information supported by Extension and research of Texas A&M University.

It is our mission as Master Gardeners to bring you quality, relevant, and accurate information on your gardening concerns. So, write down the number and keep it handy so when a pesky insect invades or something is not quite right with your garden, you can pick up the phone and give us a call.

Gardenline: Wednesdays 9-1
979-832-0129, email:
brazosmg@ag.tamu.edu

Summer Gardening Series at the Library

Kathy Glaze, Master Gardener
Education Chairman

When we first came up with the idea of a series of summer programs, we determined 1) it would be much too hot to be working outside in the garden and 2) we could be inside learning of new things to try in our gardens during cooler weather. Who would have thought the program series was actually to escape the rain!!!

Our first program by Charla Anthony featured an overview of the Junior Master Gardener program. We had fun with a JMG activity called "Secret Smells". The JMG curriculum, Literature in the Garden, features Plantzilla by Jerdine Nolen. Youth attending the program made their very own JMG "Clean Air Neck Pet" necklaces. Quoting Plantzilla "We will be breathing a little easier with all that extra oxygen."

The next week our summer gardening series featured Master Gardener Judy Schafer who shared Native American legends about Texas native plants. Did you know where trees got their hair? Judy did a wonderful job telling stories that included interesting displays of plants and Indian artifacts.

The third program of the series was given by Master Gardener Sally Hughes. Boy!! I'd like to visit her garden some day!!! Sally told us how we could have a year round cut flower garden. She displayed two beautiful flower arrangements made with materials from her garden that she generously donated for door prizes. There were a couple of lucky folks there! *Editors Note: See a related article, Growing Cut Flowers, in this issue of the Newsletter for more details*.

And last, but certainly not least, Master Gardener Autumn Harry gave an interesting program on growing your own gourds and what you can do with them. I had no idea that gourds came in so many shapes and sizes!! Or that you could make so many things out of them. Autumn brought some of her beautiful gourd art pieces for-everything from an incredible nativity scene to loofa soap. So, look for us next year when it's too hot (or wet) to be working in the garden, and join us for some gardening fun at the library.

Editors Note: The "Summer Gardening at the Library" series of four programs was offered free to the public and held at the Bryan Public Library. The programs were given by Brazos County Master Gardeners and Charla Anthony the Brazos County Extension Horticultural Program Assistant.

Benary Zinnia
Zinnia elegans

Cut Flower Gardening

(Recap of Master Gardener Sally Hugh's presentation on July 26, 2007, at the Bryan Library by Master Gardener, Suzanne Milstead)

If you missed our, "Flower Power" program, then you missed a presentation filled with the who, where, when, and how's of cut flower gardening. Just like you get a vegetable or herb from the garden, you can do the same with flowers.

For successful flower production, flowers must receive at least six hours of sun, much like roses. Raised beds with amended soil of compost or new garden mix are a must. Sally does not use chemicals for pests and attributes that to healthy plants growing in the right conditions- good soil, lots of light, and selected plant varieties that grow well in our USDA Zone 8B. In Brazos County flowers can bloom almost year round so plan for successive plantings. Plants that have grown well for Sally include Byzantine Gladiolus, sweet peas planted in November, larkspur, herbs and ferns for greenery, upright verbena, poppies, sweet William, zinnia (Benary), sunflowers, bachelor buttons, salvia, purple gay feather (bulbs available at home centers), purple fountain grass, butterfly bush, cockscomb, American beautyberry, oxblood lilies and many others.

Conditioning and handling the flowers for arrangements take just a little care. Sally suggests cutting early in the morning and take along a bucket of water. Plunge the flowers into water immediately after cutting. When arranging, recut each stem and place in a vase of water with preservative added. Change all the water frequently and add more preservative. (Do a Google search for homemade floral preservative if you don't have a commercial blend.)

Sally also suggests that gardening information specific to Texas may be found in "Texas Gardener" and Neil Sperry's "Gardens" magazines both of which recommend flower plantings by season. Catalogs that she likes are Johnny's Selected Seeds, Burpee, and Wildseed Farms. One unique feature of Johnny's is notations recommending seeds for cut flower gardens. I also utilize the Aggie Horticulture Update on a monthly basis for plant suggestions. http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/extension/newsletters/hortupdate/tamuhort.html

While many gardeners hate to cut our blooming flowers, remember that just like picking your vegetables, flowers are to be picked and enjoyed. Most flowers will actually produce more flowers while the cut ones can be enjoyed up close in a favorite vase in your home.

Master Gardener Interns Share Skills with Bush Camp Participants

By Judy Campo
Brazos County Master Gardener Intern

Five Brazos County Master Gardener Interns continued their own education at Bush Summer Camp on three consecutive Wednesdays in July. Joann Wheeler, Mark Penny, Karen Osborne, Brenda Isgitt, and Judy Campo along with Brazos County Master Gardeners Jay Pritchard and Caroline Burch, discovered just what it was like to hold a dozen or so corks under the water at the same time. The "corks" were students from the community who were attending the week long camps. Each day of the camp was devoted to a different course of study, with Wednesdays dedicated to plants and gardening.

Joann Wheeler, chairman of the junior activities committee had gathered an array of activities for the participants to build, color, cut out, mix, make, and enjoy. Beginning with a hamburger plant, students also made a sombrero, a plant necklace, and an American flag with leaf rubbings, a humming bird feeder, and camouflaged insects. They gathered insects with a bug sucker they assembled and fashioned a three dimensional plant, complete with all the essential parts. Visitors to the Bush Library were entertained with a plant rap by the campers and they made delicious camp ice cream.

Junior Master Gardeners participated by reading books and leading the children through a "gas guzzlers" activity designed to illustrate how natural resources are disappearing. The Junior MG's were busy in all aspects of the activities, helping the children gather supplies and cleaning up after each project.

The activities engaged each child in the world of plants and their importance to us as fellow travelers on this planet. Children left with many products and are hopefully much more aware of the plants around them. The Master Gardener Interns, Junior Master Gardener's, and Master Gardener's look forward to next summer and more "corks" to happily hold down.

It's Not Too Late!

Fall planting guide for vegetables at
http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/brazos/fplanting.html

TEXAS BLUEBONNETS -- TEXAS PRIDE

JERRY M. PARSONS, STEVE GEORGE AND GREG GRANT
TEXAS COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

LORE OF THE BLUEBONNET

Bluebonnets have been loved since man first trod the vast prairies of Texas. Indians wove fascinating folk tales around them. The early-day Spanish priests gathered the seeds and grew them around their missions. This practice gave rise to the myth that the padres had brought the plant from Spain, but this cannot be true since the two predominant species of bluebonnets are found growing naturally only in Texas and at no other location in the world.

As historian Jack Maguire so aptly wrote, "It's not only the state flower but also a kind of floral trademark almost as well known to outsiders as cowboy boots and the Stetson hat." He goes on to affirm that "The bluebonnet is to Texas what the shamrock is to Ireland, the cherry blossom to Japan, the lily to France, the rose to England and the tulip to Holland."
Read about the Legend of the Pink Bluebonnet.

TEXAS HAS FIVE STATE FLOWERS?

As our state flower, bluebonnets have a most interesting history. Texas actually has five state flowers, more or less, and they are all bluebonnets. Here is how it happened.

In the spring of 1901, the Texas Legislature got down to the serious business of selecting a state floral emblem and the ensuing battle was hot and heavy. One legislator spoke emotionally in favor of the cotton boll since cotton was king in Texas in those days. Another, a young man from Uvalde, extolled the virtues of the cactus so eloquently, noting the hardy durability of the plant and the orchid-like beauty of its flowers, that he earned the nickname of "Cactus Jack" which stuck with him for the rest of his life. He was John Nance Garner and later became vice president of the United States.

But the National Society of Colonial Dames of America in Texas won the day. Their choice was *Lupinus subcarnosus* ("generally known as buffalo clover or bluebonnet,"

stated the resolution) and it was passed into law on March 7 without any recorded opposition.

And that's when the polite bluebonnet war was started.

Lupinus subcarnosus is a dainty little plant which paints the sandy, rolling hills of coastal and southern Texas with sheets of royal-blue in the early spring. But some folks thought it was the least attractive of the Texas bluebonnets. They wanted Lupinus texensis, the showier, bolder blue beauty which covers most of Texas and gives inspiration to many an artist.

So, off and on for 70 years, the Legislature was encouraged to correct its oversight. But the wise Solons of Capital Hill weren't about to get caught in another botanical trap, nor did they want to offend the supporters of *Lupinus subcarnosus*. They solved the problem with typical political maneuvering.

In 1971, the Legislature handled the dilemma by adding the two species together, plus "any other variety of bluebonnet not heretofore recorded", and lumped them all into one state flower.

Among the many things the Legislature did not know then was that the big state of Texas is home to three other species of Lupines and the umbrella clause makes all five of them the state flower. And, if any new species are discovered, they automatically will assume the mantle of state flower as well.

The five state flowers of Texas are:

1. *Lupinus subcarnosus*, the original champion and still co-holder of the title, grows naturally in deep sandy loams from Leon County southwest to LaSalle County and down to the northern part of Hidalgo County in the Valley
2. *Lupinus texensis*, the favorite of tourists and artists, provides the blue spring carpet of Central Texas. It is widely known as THE Texas bluebonnet.
3. *Lupinus Havardii*, also known as the Big Bend or Chisos Bluebonnet, is the most majestic of the Texas bluebonnet tribe with flowering spikes up to three feet. It is found on the flats of the Big Bend country .
4. *Lupinus concinnus* is an inconspicuous little lupine, from 2 to 7 inches, with flowers which combine elements of white, rosy purple and lavender. Found sparingly in the Trans-Pecos region, blooming in early spring.
5. *Lupinus plattensis* sneaks down from the north into the Texas Panhandle's sandy dunes. It is the only perennial species in the state and grows to about two feet tall.

TAKING THE MYSTERY OUT OF SEED GERMINATION

September and October are the months for planting cold hardy fall annuals which bloom profusely the following spring. A number of spring- blooming wildflowers germinate in the fall, their tops remaining small and inconspicuous while developing a massive root

system throughout the winter, then provide us with a riot of color during April and May. The bluebonnet is one of these.

Although heat is needed to germinate the seed, cool weather is needed to develop the bluebonnet's root structure.

To ensure rapid, high percentage germination, the bluebonnet seed has to be treated to remove inhibiting properties of the seed coat which otherwise prevent water uptake and the initiation of growth. This process of seed treatment is referred to as scarification. Seed which has been properly scarified will germinate within 10 days after planting in a moist soil. Seedlings of scarified seed are also more vigorous.

PLANTING POINTERS

For years, wildflower lovers have planted bluebonnet seed and wondered what happened to the beautiful spring bloom which they expected.

First of all, if common bluebonnet seed is used which has not been chemically treated (scarified), one doesn't have much chance for success. The germination of non-scarified seed is sometimes less than 20 percent. This means that assuming you do everything correctly (pest control, optimum moisture), one could only expect, at best, 20 seeds to grow out of every 100 planted using non-scarified seed. Also, one can't even expect all of those 20 seeds to sprout simultaneously as sprouting may occur over a 30 day period. The availability of chemically scarified seed solves this age-old problem.

To avoid possible problems with seed germination, many people will want to use transplants instead. Transplants, being older, tougher plants, are much easier to handle and establish. The transplant is also easier to space so that stand establishment in formal plantings is assured.

One way to ensure successful bluebonnet bloom from seed or transplants is to plant them in an ideal location. Bluebonnets will not perform well if grown in the shade or in an area which receives less than 8-10 hours of direct sunlight. If grown in a shaded area, the plant will be tall and spindly with few blooms.

Bluebonnets will thrive in any soil as long as it is well drained. If you are plagued with a sticky clay soil, try building raised (6 inches or more) planting beds and amending the soil with 3-4 inches of organic matter (compost, tree leaves, spoiled hay, etc.) Don't keep the soil too wet; just keep it slightly moist. Remember that once plants become established (two or three weeks after planting), they are drought tolerant and one of Texas' toughest natives.

When actually planting bluebonnet seed, **FORGET THE IDEA OF JUST THROWING OR SCATTERING THE SEED IN THE GRASS**! Much bluebonnet seed has been wasted as bird feed using this scattering technique. The seed MUST be lightly covered or raked into the soil. In naturalized fields of bluebonnets, the seed is

gradually covered by washing soil and defoliation of weeds and grass, **BUT IT IS COVERED BEFORE IT ACTUALLY GERMINATES.**

When planting a bluebonnet transplant, be careful not to plant it too deeply. You will notice that all of the leaves arise from a central crown-like structure. This crown should not be buried, otherwise the plant will rot.

Major enemies of seedlings and transplants are small, nocturnal menaces referred to as pillbugs, roly-poly's, sowbugs, and several other names which should not be mentioned in polite company.
These hungry devils can devour plants overnight. Many times the devastating onslaught does not occur immediately after planting. To ensure seedling and transplant survival, it is wise to broadcast pillbug bait around the newly established or emerging plants and do so weekly during the first month after planting.

Bluebonnet planting time is also important. Many people wait until they see bluebonnet plants blooming in the spring to begin planting. **IT'S TOO LATE** to plant transplants in the spring. Fall is the optimum time! The sooner in the fall (beginning in September) chemically-scarified seed and transplants are planted, the larger the plants will grow in the spring and subsequently more bloom will occur. Chemically-scarified seed should be planted no later than September 15 in North Texas (Dallas-Ft. Worth) and Thanksgiving in South Texas (San Antonio). Transplants should be planted no later than Halloween in North Texas; Valentine's Day in South Texas.

BLUEBONNET CULTURE AT A GLANCE

- Plant in full sun, in soil which drains well and doesn't stay wet for long periods of time.
- Utilize transplants or chemically scarified seed
- Barely cover seeds with soil, don't bury the crown of transplants
- Water seeds only on the day of planting and transplants only when the top one inch of soil dries
- No applications of fertilizer are required but are helpful and will cause more abundant bloom
- Interplant with pansies and other annuals for winter-long color
- Don't overeater!

UNDER CONSTRUCTION

GARDENING WITH KIDDOS

This feature will contain a garden related activity to do with kids. When I share an interest with my grand children, I get to see it new again, through their eyes. I know I gain as much, or more from our outdoor escapades as they do. We hope the coming articles will help you share your gardening knowledge with a youngster.

Apples, Not delicious but, "To Die For"

Donna Murray
Brazos County Master Gardener

Apples belong to the genus *Malus* in the rose family *Rosaceae*. The orchard apples of today are thornless and have been bred for larger, sweeter fruit than the wild species. Being a good source of minerals such as potassium and iron, and vitamins E and A, the English saying "An apple a day keeps the doctor away" is well earned. However, if you are peeling your apple before you eat it, the compost bin is getting the majority of the nutrients. They are concentrated in the area just beneath the skin.

In many cultures apples were used medicinally and many legends are connected to its health giving properties. Customs of love and fertility have centered on the fruit of the apple tree, according to Fred Hageneder, author of *The Meaning of Trees.* Someone being "the apple of my eye" means they are loved or favored. Adam and Eve, Snow White, and Johnny Appleseed are just a few of the names I grew up with that leap to mind when I think about apples.

But, can you grow them here? I had never really considered cultivating them, assuming the required chilling hours made them a northern fruit. Chilling hours are the hours when the temperature is between 32º and 45 º F.

I have seen apple trees in this valley and eaten of the fruit. And it was good. The success of growing apple trees yielding fruit begins with selection of low chilling hour varieties. Anna (requires 200 hours) and Dorsett Gold (requires less than 100) are two recommended varieties that Joyce Brooks, a Brazos County Master Gardener, is growing and equally important, eating fruit from those trees. These two varieties should be planted together for cross pollination. Ein Sheimer, Mollie's Delicious and Gala are also shown to be suitable for our growing area, Zone 5 on the *Stone Fruit Varity Zones for Texas* map found at http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/extension/fruitgarden .

Other cultural requirements for apple production are sun for most of the day, or for maximum fruit production, all of the day. Good drainage is a must. Any area that has standing water for more than 24 hours after a rain is not good apple real estate. If that is what you have, raised beds could be an option. Soil preparation and planting are the same as for other trees. The details for planting, pruning, and training may be found at http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/extension/homefruit/apple/apple.html . When buying your future healthy snack/apple pie source, resist the end of summer 50% off sale. You get what you pay for, and an impulse buy is an investment in

frustration. I speak with experience in this area and try to avoid the whole, it's so cheap and maybe I can save it, thought process by not even going to the "reduced for quick sale" area. Buy recommended varieties from a reliable source.

This whole article came about because the afore mentioned, Joyce Brooks, told me she had an apple recipe "to die for ". Joyce has won ribbons and rosettes that attest to her culinary talent. I have asked for deliverance from the sixth deadly sin of envy with regards to Joyce. Her gardening aptitude is evident in the varieties of fruit and vegetables she grows, and tonnage produced in her home garden. However when she bakes, I just enjoy. I've included the Upside-Down Apple-Pecan Pie recipe she shared with me. I think I gained a pound just reading the name.

Upside-Down Apple-Pecan Pie

13 inch circle of aluminum foil
2 tablespoons soft butter or margarine
½ cup pecan halves
½ cup packed brown sugar
Pastry for 9 inch, 2 crust pie
¾ cup granulated sugar
2 tablespoons flour
1 teaspoon cinnamon
½ teaspoon nutmeg
6 cups pared, thin-sliced tart apples

Line 9 inch pie pan with foil circle, leaving 1 inch over hanging edge. Spread butter over foil in pan. Press pecan halves, rounded side down, on foil. Sprinkle brown sugar evenly over nuts and buttered foil.

Ease 1 prepared crust over nuts and brown sugar in pie pan. Stir together granulated sugar, flour, cinnamon and nutmeg, mix lightly with apples and turn into pan. Cover with tip crust (with slits cut in it), seal and flute edges. Turn up over-hanging foil edge. Bake at 450 º F for 10 minutes. Reduce temperature to 375 º F and bake 35 to 40 minutes or until apples are tender. Allow pie to stand 5 minutes after removing from oven, then invert onto serving plate. Serve warm.

Did you know?

Texas Cooperative Extension has an on-line bookstore.

This is a great resource for publications, many of them free. Gardening is only one of the subjects covered in their wide-ranging line up. Check it out at http://tcebookstore.org/ .

TEXAS TURF TIPS

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It's Time For Brown Patch!

The fall season usually brings rainy, humid, and cool conditions which are favorable to many lawn diseases—especially brown patch. This disease decreases overall turf quality and can be quite stressful to your grass. Most turf species are susceptible, especially St. Augustine grass, zoysiagrass, and centipede grass.

Brown patch develops rapidly when day-time air temperatures are between 75 and 85 degrees Fahrenheit and affects leaves, stems, and crowns. Turf grasses affected by brown patch normally exhibit circular to irregular shaped patches of light brown, blighted, and thinned turf. Yellowing of the leaves is not uncommon, especially at the edges of the patch. Inside the infected area, the turfgrass may remain green which leaves a "frog-eye" appearance. Leaf sheaths in the infected site also become rotted and water-soaked to the point that a gentle tug of the leaf blade easily separates it from the runner. To prevent this disease from attacking your lawn, pay close attention to your watering habits, thatch accumulation, and your nutrient management program. Several fungicides can also be used for the prevention and control of brown patch.

For more detailed information on "Brown Patch" and recommended fungicides, go to the Aggie-Turf web site at http://aggie-turf.tamu.edu . Click on "Answers 4 You", then "Diseases". Another good site is the Texas A&M Plant Pathology web site at http://plantpathology.tamu.edu .

Take-All Root Rot—An Awful Disease!

Is your St. Augustine grass, Bermuda grass, or zoysiagrass declining in your lawn? Can you literally roll it up like a carpet? You may be fighting an awful lawn disease called Take-All Root Rot.

Just as the name describes, this disease is caused by a root infecting pathogen that likes to attack lawn grasses under stress. The stress could come from a number of things: poor mowing practices, drought stress, extreme wet conditions, poor irrigation and nutrient management programs, thatch accumulation, soil compaction, etc... It is a very opportunistic fungus. No matter what the stress is, this disease waits in the shadows and then vigorously attacks when the stress conditions are present. Symptoms of take-all root rot include: circular or irregular shapes declining turf patches, yellowing and dieing of leaves, rotted or comprised root systems (similar to grub damage, but the roots will not be rotted with grub damage), and damaged stolons (runners). The pathogen is most active in the fall and early winter period but symptoms are often expressed in the spring and hot summer months. Prevention and control of this disease primarily involves cultural practices—in other words, keep the stress off of your lawn and hopefully you will never have to fight this disease! Chemical control with fungicides can also be helpful as well as using sphagnum peat moss at a rate of one 3.8 cubic foot bale per 1,000 square feet. Apply these in the fall and spring seasons.

To learn more about "Take-All Root Rot" and recommended control measures, please click here. Another good site is the Texas A&M Plant Pathology web site at http://plantpathology.tamu.edu .

Potassium—How Important Is It To Your Turfgrass?

Potassium (K) is considered one of the BIG THREE macronutrients when it comes to fertilization of turfgrass. It is the last number listed on the fertilizer bag (i.e. 15-5-**10**) and is a very important nutrient required in the maintenance of a dense and quality turf. Potassium does not influence leaf growth to a great degree but plays a huge role in the ability of turfgrasses to tolerate cold, drought, excessive traffic, salinity, and high temperatures. Other roles for potassium include: activation of enzymes, water regulation in plants, protein synthesis, and CO_2 fixation in photosynthesis.

Potassium deficiencies in turf normally appear as interveinal yellowing of the lower (older) leaves, dieback at the leaf tip, scorching of the leaf margins, and total yellowing of the leaves. Turfgrass plants will appear weakened and wilting/leaf firing will be accelerated. Similar to nitrogen, potassium is highly susceptible to leaching—so monitor your potassium levels closely, especially in sandy soils.

The best approach to determine if you have the appropriate amount of potassium in your soil is to take a soil sample and have it analyzed. If needed, apply the recommended amounts of potassium in the spring and fall seasons. You certainly want to make sure that you have enough potassium present prior to winter to help avoid injury from extremely cold temperatures.

Overseeding—Should You Do It?

Do you like having a green lawn throughout the year? Do you like to mow, irrigate, and fertilize during the winter? Is it appropriate to overseed your lawn for the winter? These are just a few questions that you need to ask yourself before you overseed your turf.

Overseeding is defined as seeding onto an existing turf, usually with a temporary cool-season turfgrass (i.e.annual or perennial ryegrass), to provide green active grass growth during dormancy of the warm season turfgrass (i.e. bermudagrass). It is used extensively on sports fields and golf courses, and to some extent, on commercial sites and home lawns. Sports field managers and golf course superintendents overseed their turfgrasses primarily to offset the excessive traffic during winter play as well as to have a green, quality turf. But are there negative effects to overseeding? Yes!! Competition between the cool and warm season grasses can be great, especially in the early spring when the warm season turf is trying to re-grow after winter dormancy—often referred to as 'spring transition'. If the spring is cool and wet it will favor the persistence of the overseeded grass at the expense of the re-growth of the warm season grass. Improved turf-type annual ryegrasses typically have a better spring transition than do the overseeded perennial ryegrasses. Many turf managers have been affected by delayed bermudagrass transition. In years that favor continued persistence of the overseeding, there can be significant damage to the bermudagrass turf. Another big negative with overseeding is if the existing turfgrass is "scalped down" to provide a seedbed to favor a quick fall transition to the overseeding turfgrass. This scalping, along with the fall competition from the cool season grass prevents the warm season turfgrass from being able to store the necessary carbohydrates in the fall months. This means the turfgrass is going into winter dormancy in a weaker condition, with less stored reserves to recover well the following spring. Remember, as long as your turf is weed-free, brown (dormant) turf can be beautiful too!!

Upcoming Events

September 28th Junior Master Gardener Teacher Workshop

Bush Presidential Library Museum
For Teachers of Grades 3-5
Registration limited to 30 teachers
Contact the Brazos County Extension office at 979-823-0129 to register.

October 13th Earth Kind Rose Symposium

Brazos County Expo Center - An all day event with expert speakers, tours, and your very own Earth Kind Rose. For more information see the article on pages 1-2 or go to http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/brazos

October 23rd Master Gardener Program-Open to the Public

Brazos Center 7:00PM
Presented by *Mary Ann Pickens*
"Taking All the Right Paths to that Perfect Garden
"A Farce in Many Episodes."
President of The Southern Garden History Society
Past State President of The Native Plant Society of Texas

Mary Anne Pickens is a native of Columbus, Texas, where she now lives and gardens after being away for many years. She is a graduate of the University of Texas at Austin and a former school teacher. She and her husband Bob retired to Columbus in 1992 after living in Houston for many years. They reside on property that has been in Mary Anne's family since the 1830s. Although Mary Anne has always gardened, she became a more serious gardener upon retirement to her family's property. Her garden includes native plants and plants that her grandmother grew.

November 6th 'Special Event' at the Brazos Center hosted by Brazos Country Master Gardener Association

BCMG will host a program by **Chris Weisinger** of *Southern Bulb Company* and **Dr. Doug Welsh** with his soon to be released book "Doug Welsh's Texas Garden Almanac". This will be open to the public with a book sale/signing and bulb sale. Could it get any better than this? See additional information in the next issue.

Brazos County Master Gardeners Guilty Pleasures

Garden related, not X rated

- I love to be with my grandkids in the garden-whether it's harvesting produce, watering, planting, or just playing in the dirt. Oops! I mean soil.
- Aroma-especially at night. Try 4 o'clocks.
- Taking an unscheduled day off from work-just because the weather is too perfect to do anything but garden.
- Watching the humming birds fly
- Working in the yard with my husband
- Eating what I pick in the vegetable patch before it ever gets to the kitchen
- Morning coffee in the garden
- Sneaking up on grasshoppers and snipping them in half with my clippers. Doesn't really reduce the population, but I get a vindictive joy from the hunt and kill.
- Gardening is a great relaxing experience, but sneaks in a little bit of exercise.
- Snoozing in the hammock when the air temperature makes the slightest breeze feel like a caress. Very few days like that, and I grab them.

Brazos County Master Gardener Association
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Donna Murray, Ex-Officio
Bill Lyles, President
Cindy Bengs, Vice President
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Gary Williamson, Corresponding Secretary
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