

Brazos County Master Gardener Newsletter

Gardening News for the Brazos Valley
Volume 2, Issue 1

Editor: Donna Murray
January/February

From the Editor;

In this new year, filled with new resolutions, new plans and plants, I hope our newsletter will be a part of your gardening life. We continue with our series of locally native plants to use in your home landscape. This installment is flowering plant and perennials. The author of the weekly Garden Line column and Brazos County Master Gardener shares some of his tips for successful gardening. Getting ready to fertilize your lawn? Be sure and read the article on page 7 & 8, note highlighted sections 3 & 8. New in this issue is a section spotlighting a planting or feature in a Brazos County Master Gardeners yard.

I invite your comments and suggestions. brazosmg@ag.tamu.edu

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New Year's Resolution: Store Lawn Chemicals Safely

December 31, 2007

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COLLEGE STATION - While most plants go dormant in the winter, the chemicals that many people use for gardening remain active. That's why a Texas Cooperative Extension horticulturist urges people to winterize pesticide storage areas.

"Now is the perfect time to prepare a safe holding area for these materials," said Dr. Don Wilkerson, Extension horticulturist and EarthKind advocate. "This is important for environmental protection, human and pet safety, and for maintaining the effectiveness of the chemicals and fertilizers."

He said EarthKind is Extension's program for focusing on environmental stewardship in the urban landscape. Wilkerson said a storage area for lawn and garden chemicals should be:

- Secure from children and pets.
- Well ventilated.
- Lit well for product label reading.
- Dry and not prone to flooding.
- Large enough to separate spacing for herbicides, insecticides and fertilizer.
- Enclosed so that spills can be quickly cleaned.
- Protected from temperature extremes.

He also noted that flammable liquids should be stored outside living areas and away from any potential ignition sources. An attached garage, for example, may not be the best place for this type of product.

Chemicals should be kept in the original container, Wilkerson added, and never mixed in an empty food container.

"An updated storage inventory allows for keeping track of what has been placed in storage and also helps in planning purchases when spring arrives," he said. "Make a record of the product name, active ingredient, date of purchases and date/volume stored."

Storage problems can be minimized, Wilkerson suggested, if a person uses the list to plan ahead – buying only the amount of product that is needed for a season. "Small containers that seem expensive may actually be the most economical over time if larger amounts do not have proper storage," he explained.



*Rosemary growing in
Sandra Williams' garden*

Herbal Highlight

Sandra Williams
Brazos County
Master Gardener

Rosemary

Rosemarinus officianalis is an herb whose piney scent is familiar to most of us and enjoyed by many. Various cultivars, both upright and recumbent, grow well and are hardy in our climate in the Brazos Valley. The cultivar may produce flowers which are white, pink, deep blue or any mixture of those hues. Some varieties flower here in late winter or early spring. I have one little plant which flowered mid-summer. It may have been a stress response or its own unique life cycle. Time will tell.

Rosemary originated in Mediterranean regions and has been used for thousands of years for a wide variety of purposes—culinary, ceremonial, medicinal, and spiritual and so forth. Its folklore is rich with stories and some of its uses would seem a little bizarre to us. From the *Banckes' Herbal* comes the promise (?) that if one were to make a box of its wood and smell it, it would preserve one's youth. I won't be rushing out to cut down the shrubs any time soon!

As a culinary herb, rosemary works well with pork, lamb, poultry and roasted vegetables, in combination with other herbs or alone. Try using cleaned and water-soaked rosemary twigs as skewers for barbecuing meats or vegetables. Chop it fresh or use it dried. It is a good addition to marinades and pairs well with lemon.

Elmer's Garden Management, Part II
Dr. Elmer Krehbiel
Brazos County Master Gardener

Editors' note: Dr. Krehbiel has written a weekly article for The Eagle for over 11 years and has been a Master Gardener 14 years. Elmer's Vegetable Varieties was Part I of this series and may be found in the Nov/Dec issue.



Dr Krehbiel working in his vegetable garden

Before my wife and I have purchased a home, the sunlight, drainage, and soil were determined favorable for the landscape and garden. Friends consider me a frugal gardener and starting with good site conditions saves me labor and expense.

There are several major and a few minor factors that determine how successful flower, fruit, herb, and vegetable gardens can be. The basic condition of your soil should be adjusted until suitable and address the minor things as they come up.

Basic Soil Condition

* **Drainage**-It must be adequate or easily adjusted for our traditional landscape, fruit and vegetable plants. To improve the drainage I have dug a ditch less than a foot deep near the property line on both sides of the lot.

* **Soil Texture**-I evaluate with a sharpshooter: the soil samples were analyzed for the pH, fertility and organic matter before I started any planting. With the results of the soil tests I first applied 16 cubic yards of mushroom compost/mulch. Later, 10,000 pounds of Bryan compost were applied as mulch and 750 pounds tilled into 3-flower beds (it was too salty). During the last 14 years, I have had 4 additional soil samples from this yard analyzed, applied about 100 bags of cattle and sheep manure and a few bags of fertilizer and gypsum. Within last 12 years, up to 50 bags of oak leaves that were collected from curbs, coffee grounds from shops, shredded plant residue, and kitchen vegetable scraps were used to make compost. The compost was tilled into the flower and vegetable beds.

OTHER MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

* **Planting**-Before sowing seeds or setting plants, the planting guides, almanac, moisture/temperature of the soil and

temperature/velocity of the air are considered. After planting, the soil should be kept moist, to improve seed germination and until the small plants are established.

* **After Planting**-Mulch was applied around large plants and along the rows of small ones to retain moisture, stabilize soil temperature and prevent some weeds. Plastic jugs buried between larger vegetable plants were used to apply water and fertilizer to their root zone.

* **Lawn**-The grass is cut with a mulching attachment on the rotary mower. After several years, some fertilizer/sulfur and gypsum has been applied. Recently, only 1 pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet before the fall growth has been needed. The lawn was watered if a tool could not be pushed into the soil. Then water was applied with a soaker hose allowing water to soak down to 12 inches deep.

* **Plant Diseases**-The number and value of a few plants was usually less than the cost of disease treatments. If parts of a plant were diseased, it was pruned and the diseased portion trashed, not composted. If most of the plant was diseased or infested with insects, it was trashed. Then I would plant a different crop, or fallow the area until the next season.

Additional Tips

* After the flower and vegetable plants mature and their produce harvested, they were usually shredded for composting.

* The bell peppers were grown in cages, fed each month, pruned down August 1st to 20 inches tall and maintained, yielding excellent fall crops.

* July was the best time to till the soil each week to eliminate many nematodes.

* Some years, heat-tolerant variety of tomato plants set during June or July were productive. Other warm-season crops were started early to mature during September and October.

* Cool-season crops were not started in the fall until the soil temperature was below 80 degrees F.

* The spring-summer crops were started according to the planting guide. It can be surprisingly early when you should starting seedlings and set out plants. Check the Brazos County Vegetable Planting Guide at <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/brazos/Home.html> for our area.

We've included this section again in case you didn't *Clip and Save* from the last issue.

Clip and Save

Elmer's current favorite vegetable varieties for 2008 Planting

Asparagus: UC-157

Bush Beans: Derby

Pole Beans: Smeraldo & Kentucky Wonder

Beets: Red Cloud & Red Ace

Broccoli: Early Dividend & Premium Crop

Cabbage: Golden Acre & Early Jersey Wakefield

Carrots: Scarlet Nantes & Chantenay Red Core

Cauliflower: Snow Crown & Snowball Y Improved

Corn, Sweet: Legend/Y & Sugar Bun/Y

Cucumber, slicing: Sugar Crunch

Lettuce, Semi-heading: Buttercrunch & Bibb

Melons, cantaloupe: Ambrosia & Super 45

Onions: TX Grano 1015-Y

Peas, English: Mr. Big & Little Marvel

Peas, Snap: Super Sugar Snap

Peas, Southern: California Blackeye No. 5 & Texas Pinkeye Pepper, Sweet

Pepper, Bell: Golden Bell & Red Beauty

Potato, Irish: Kennebec

Radish: Cherriette & Cherry Belle

Spinach: Space & Melody

Squash, summer: Sweet Gourmet Zucchini

Tomato, large: Big Beef & Surefire

Tomato, medium: Bush Celebrity & Sunmaster

Tomato, Small: Husky Cherry Red & Supersweet 100.

For additional vegetable varieties and planting guide go to <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/brazos/Home.html>. It has been recently renovated by Master Gardeners, Elmer Krehbiel and Mike Chandler, and is now up to date and easier to use.

HINTS and TIPS



LOSE YOUR TOOLS?????

I am forever trying to find where I left my tools. I solved the problem by using bright orange tape on the handles. Now they are easy to spot. You can also spray paint them a bright color.

Submitted by BCMG Autumn Harry

Lawn Fertilization for Texas Warm-Season Grasses: 10 Point Checklist

D. Chalmers, J. McAfee and R. Havlak,*

1 Balance the lawn you would like with level of work and inputs. Management levels can be broadly defined as:

Low – the minimum level of management required to maintain turf density;

Moderate – management required for enhanced visual appearance and quality; and

High –management needed for lawn areas with greater expectations (highly visible, recovery from traffic/use)

2 Measure your lawn and refer to its size when buying lawn care products. Those who know the size of their lawn are less likely to purchase and apply too little or too much fertilizer. It’s the first “step” to measured lawn care! Start by measuring each lawn section in square feet. Then add up the sections to arrive at the total size of the lawn in square feet. This publication will recommend fertilizer application by the amount of product to apply per 1,000 square feet.

3 Soil Test every 2 to 3 years, it is easy to do and inexpensive. This test kit is available through your local County Extension Office or can be found by visiting <http://soiltesting.tamu.edu/>

Note: see upcoming events for Soil Testing Offer

4 Select fertilizer nutrient analysis (also called grade or ratio) based on soil test recommendations. If you do not have a current soil test, apply N using a fertilizer analysis ratio (the three numbers that appear on the fertilizer package) that is 4 to 6 parts N, 1 part P2O5 and 2 to 4 parts K2O. Get a soil test before your next fertilizer application to determine future needs.

5 Match annual nitrogen application program to your grass type and level of work and inputs. Nitrogen levels differ for each warm season grass type. Base the use of a low, moderate or high annual nitrogen program on grass needs (Table 1) and expectations. The annual nitrogen program amounts are split into a number of single applications of 1 pound of nitrogen or less per 1000 sq ft. These programs are:

Low Annual Program: Apply nitrogen during the spring and/or fall. This program works where 1 or 2 applications are deemed adequate.

Moderate Annual Program: Builds upon the “Low Level Program” applications with one additional

supplemental summer application to improve turf density and quality.

High Annual Program: Builds upon the “Low Level Program” applications with 2 to 3 supplemental summer applications to enhance quality as needed.

6 Know how much fertilizer to apply in any single application by using Table 2.

Find the fertilizer analyses in the first column,

Select an application of 1/2 or 1 lb per 1000 sq ft

Find the number of pounds of fertilizer product to buy for each 1000 sq ft of lawn area opposite the N analysis in your fertilizer.

The fertilizer analysis listed in Table 2 leave P2O5 and K2O blank. P2O5 and K2O needs are best determined by soil test. Refer back to #4.

Table 2. N rates based on fertilizer and N rate.

Amount of fertilizer to apply		
N per 1000 sq. ft.		
Fertilizer Label	1/2 lb N rate	1 lb N rate
6-?-?	8.3 lb	16.6 lb
8-?-?	6.2 lb	12.5 lb
9-?-?	5.5 lb	11.1 lb
15-?-?	3.3 lb	6.6 lb
20-?-?	2.5 lb	5 lb
21-?-?	2.4 lb	4.8 lb
29-?-?	1.7 lb	3.4 lb

7 Know how to buy the right amount of fertilizer no matter what the analysis. Using a 40-pound bag of 16- 4-8 as an example, the percentage and pounds of each nutrient supplied in the 40 lb bag is just multiplying 40 lbs by the percent in decimals (0.16, 0.04, and 0.08):

Nitrogen = 16 % (0.16 x 40 lbs = 6.4 lbs N)

Phosphorus = 4% (0.04 x 40 lbs = 1.6 lbs of P2O5)

Potassium = 8% (08 x 40 lbs = 3.2 lbs of K2O)

At the 1 LB of N per 1000 sq ft rate you could treat 6,400 sq ft of lawn with the 40 lb. bag. If you know fertilizer analysis and lawn size you can use the fertilizer calculator on the web at:<http://aggie-turf.tamu.edu/aggieturf2/calculators/fertsheet.html>

8 Know when to first apply fertilizer in spring.

The first application of fertilizer should be made after the second mowing of the lawn grass (not weeds!).

This indicates the grass is actively growing and can readily use applied nitrogen. This is usually about 6 weeks after the average last spring frost date.

9 Know if additional fertilizer is needed between spring and fall applications. Space any supplemental N applications at least 45 to 60 days apart. Newly established, previously neglected, or higher maintenance lawns can benefit from such applications.

10 Know when to apply the last fertilizer application in the fall. N application is important during this period to increase density to resist winter weeds, improve fall color and spring recovery. Modest nitrogen rates (1 lb per 1000 sq ft or less) provide benefit, and reduce potential nitrogen carryover and potential leaching during winter months.
Recommended last dates for fall nitrogen fertilizer application for College Station is November 1.



Gardening with Kiddos

Donna Murray Brazos County Master Gardener

Winter restricts the gardening activities you can do with your kiddos but this can be accomplished on even the nastiest day. The results may be viewed from the comfort of your window with a cup of hot chocolate. Visiting granddaughter, Michelle, and I mixed it up over the holidays. One was hung in the backyard and some sent back to NE Texas with her. I look forward to comparing bird sightings over the next couple of months.

Suet for the Birds

Provided to the Brazos County Master Gardeners by Jim Anding during his presentation on Birds in the Brazos Valley

- 3 cups cornmeal (yellow or white, you pick)
- 1 cup flour
- 1 cup quick-cooking or old-fashioned (not instant) oatmeal
- 1 cup sunflower heart (optional)
- 1 cup coconut (optional)
- 1 cup crunchy peanut butter
- 1 cup lard

Combine dry ingredients. Melt peanut butter and lard. I melt it in a glass pitcher in the microwave for about 2 minutes. (When I do a double batch I heat it for 3-4 minutes.) Mix well with the dry ingredients. It can be shaped into balls by hand or with a cookie scoop or it can be pressed into a rectangular container and then cut into whatever size and shape you need. I use a small Styrofoam coffee cup with a Popsicle stick in the middle. Let them sit out a few minutes to harden a bit. (I keep them in the freezer)

Note from Jim Anding: If the birds don't seem to notice it, don't despair. When I first started I hung some suet balls off the back porch. They hung there for many months until they were covered with black mold. One day I looked out and the chickadees were pecking away at it. I put some fresh out and they have gobbled it up ever since. All my birds love it. It brings in red-bellied and downy woodpeckers that I wouldn't have otherwise.

Gardenline: Your Garden Questions Answered

Each Wednesday 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

Landscaping with Native Plants

A series on using native plants in local landscapes

FLOWERING PLANTS, PERENNIAL

Color In the Landscape



By Judy Schafer

Research by Judy Schafer and Sandra Williams

Brazos County Master Gardeners

Flowering plants add color and interest to our landscapes. They can attract bees and butterflies

and hummingbirds to our yards. Perennials are plants that will last several seasons in the landscape. Some perennials have a longer life than others. Some are grown from bulbs, some from cuttings and some from division of the root system, some from seed.

Yarrow *Achillea millefolium* Imported, naturalized Spring bloom, fern like foliage almost all year. White flowers, pink flowering will also grow here. Can be aggressive. Medicinal plant. The yellow does not do well here.

Frogfruit *Phyla incisa* This small plant is a low growing ground cover. Small white flower cluster blooms most of summer, host plant for some butterflies. (fun, just for the name!)

Green-flowered Milkweed *Asclepias asperula* Food plant for Monarch Butterfly. Seen along road sides and pastures. Interesting green/white bloom with purple center markings in clusters.

Evening-Star rain Lily *Cooperia Drummond* Amaryllis Family White Lilies that appear after summer rains, a little larger white bloom than the Copper Lily. Can be toxic to livestock. This grows from a bulb.

White prickly Poppy *Argemone albiflora* Plant grows to 3 feet with large white poppy bloom. Plant has yellow sap. It is prickly and poisonous.

False Garlic, Crow poison *Nothoscordum bivalve* White cluster of flowers that grow in spring lawns. This is a good flower to put stem in colored water and 'dye' flower another color. It can be seen growing in lawns in the spring.

Datura This plant is toxic. It has large white lily like flowers and is used in many landscapes. There are also available, double yellow and double purple varieties. It is impressive with night time blooms.

Queen Anne's Lace *Daucus carota* (Wild Carrot) These plants have a large umbel of white flowers. They are beautiful waving in the wind along the East Bye Pass in spring. They have been grown in the Holistic Garden on TAMU campus.

Anemone *berlandieri* *Ranunculaceae* **Family** Mostly white but some blue blooms early spring. They can be seen in some lawns.

Cherokee rose This is a beautiful single petal, large, white Rose. It is a fast grower so needs some aggressive management to keep it under control.

'Prairie Rose' *Rosa setigera* Single pink blooms with red hips, easy to grow, drought and cold tolerant, low maintenance.

Dewberry *Rubus trivialis* These plants grow in fence rows and along railroad tracks and in open untended fields. Great to eat fresh and for jelly and cobbler. These can be frozen for later use. Most people would grow "Brazos Dewberry" or a new thornless variety in the home garden. Flowers are white. Important wildlife food.

Turks Cap *Malvaviscus arboreus* Drummond wax-mallow Another good humming bird and butterfly plant. Very easy to grow and will grow in sun or shade. Plant has red flowers and red fruit that are also attractive and good for wildlife. Plant makes a small bush that freezes down most winters but comes back in the spring. There is a larger variety that grows better farther south of our area.

Salvia greggii Long blooming, need to cut back after summer bloom. Sun/part shade.

Flame Acanthus This red flowering plant is popular landscape plant that makes a small bushy shrub to 4 feet tall. It may grow better in sandy soils or improved soils.

Coral Bean *Erythrina herbacea* Perennial shrub like plant. Red tube flowers that never really open then brown beans that open and hold red seeds. The fireman's helmet has larger more showy blooms.

Hibiscus Marsh Mallow-Perennial These members of the Mallow family come in light pink, dark pink and white with a red center. Very showy, large plants. Eye catching in the landscape, each bloom lasts one day. Texas Star hibiscus is red. These plants are hardier than the tropical Hibiscus. These plants grow in saline soils along the coast so will tolerate our local water.

Pavonia Mallow Rock Rose *Pavonia lasiopetala* Lovely dark pink like a small Hibiscus. Withstands dry weather. Blooms in the summer. Tolerates mild winters.

Winecup *Callirhoe involucrate* The maroon one grows here. Seed available from Wildseed Farm

Pink Showy Primrose *Oenothera speciosa* Plants can spread by rhizomes in rich soil. Most common of Primrose plants in our area. Seed are available.

Sensitive Brier *Schrankia uncinata* A pink fluffy ball, low growing. The leaflets close when touched, at night and on cloudy days. *Neptunia lutea* has yellow balls.

Oxalis This small bulb plant makes a good edging plant that comes back year after year. Flowers are pink blooming in spring. *Oxalis amplifolia* is pink with white center. *Oxalis violacea* is pink. *Oxalis dillenii* is yellow and not usually grown in the landscape, a pest in green houses. Red spider mites can be a problem with these plants.

Hemerocallis Daylily **'Kwanso'** **Tawny, Lemon** These are not native to the area but are species Daylilies which grow very well here with very little care in sunny locations.

Wild Onion *Allium mobilense* Blooms in spring with dark pink bloom.

Blue Mist Flower *Eupatorium coelestinum* Wild ageratum This plant spreads like Mint so must be confined to its space. Good nectar plant for hummingbirds and butterflies. Blooms summer into fall. Perennial

Lyre-Leaf Sage *Salvia lyrata* This plant grows early spring in the wooded area by the Extension Office. It is not a showy plant but attractive and hardy, will grow in a shady location.

Prairie verbena *Berbena bipinnatifida* Small purple clusters of bloom, small leaves. Perennial

Obedient Plant *Physostegia* Lavender bloom, Spring and Fall blooming varieties. Common name from being able to push blooms into position by light touch. Sometimes seen growing in road side ditches. Also called False Dragonhead

Lemon Mint, Horse Mint, Monarda citriodora Spike type flower green and white or lavender, grows to 3 feet. Blooms in summer.

Ironweed, Vernonia lindheimeri Tall plant, purple blooms

Ruellia Wild **Petunia** Grows to 2 feet tall, easy to grow. Spreads by seed pods throwing seeds as far as 15 feet. Plants are available in purple, blue, white, and pink. Low growing border type plants are also available.

Pokeweed *Phytolacca Americana* A tall growing plant, reddish stems with large leaves. Grown for berries that are dark purple. Plant is toxic. Berries can be used for dye.

Yellow Columbine *Aquilegia* Good early spring bloomer that will do well in shade or part shade. Will reseed. Short lived perennial so be sure and keep some seedlings.

Mexican Butterfly Milkweed *Asclepias currasavica* This is a background plant, gold and orange flowers that attract hummingbirds and butterflies. Host plant for Monarch and Queen butterflies. This *Asclepias* does not have the long tap root that makes some of the *Asclepias* hard to transplant.

Missouri Evening Primrose Fluttermill *Oenothera missouriensis* Yellow flower opens in afternoon, will grow in dry conditions, full sun, well drained. Seed in fall.

Puccoon *Lithospermum incisum* Trumpet shaped yellow flowers, likes sandy soil.

Mexican Hat *Ratibida columnaris* Dought tolerant, to 3 feet, good cut flower. Comes in several colors and combinations from yellow to red/brown.

Black-eyed Susan *rudbeckia hirta* Yellow petals with brown center. Plants need sun.

Goldenrod *Solidago* Fall blooming. Will not cause hay fever, blooms at same time as ragweed that does cause hay fever. Tall plant.

Copper Lily *Habranthus texanus* Amaryllis Family These golden yellow ‘rain lilies’ appear in lawns after a rain in the summer.

Maximilian sunflower *Helianthus maximiliani* Blooms late summer into fall. Blooms all up and down the stem. This plant makes a colony that can be divided and shared once established. Sunflowers grow well here. They are great for wildlife food in the landscape and do provide nectar for butterflies and hummingbirds. Chickadees and other sunflower seed lovers make a show collecting sunflower seed.

Helenium These are yellow daisy type flowers that grow in fields, parks and roadside. When mowed grow very low and bloom otherwise makes a taller plant that blooms in summer. Sometimes called sneezeweed, bitter weed. A refined variety has been developed for landscapes termed ‘Dekota Gold’.

Ground Cover, Edging plants

Wood Violet *Viola* These pale lavender Violets are small and grow well in shady areas. Could be used as a ground cover plant.

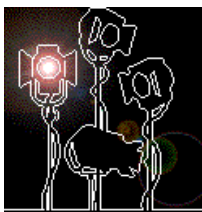
Carolina Buttercup *ranunculaceae* This early spring blooming flower has shiny yellow flowers that hold their color well for pressed flower craft work. They are a perennial. They are also considered toxic.

Wild Onion *Allium canadense* Blooms are white in early spring. Small plant suitable for a border in spring.

Spiderwort. *Tradescantia* The flowers have 3 petals. Purple, magenta, and blue.

Blue-eyed Grass *Sisyrinchium* species Actually a member of Iris family of plants. Will grow in landscape conditions

The above plants are seen growing in our area. Wildseed Farm will have seed for some of these plants and there are a few nurseries in the area that carry native plants. One is located between Smithville and Bastrop. The Hill Country and the Austin area also have nurseries that carry native plants.



In the Spotlight

Favorites in My Fall/Winter Garden
Brazos County Master Gardener, Suzanne Milstead



Big Yellow Sage
Growing in Suzanne's yard.

Tithonia, or Mexican sunflower, is one of the best flowers you can grow for attracting butterflies. Blooming in my yard in late summer, on into fall and early winter, a stand of tithonia may attract a half dozen or more butterfly and skipper species with one or more individuals on every single blossom! Heat and drought tolerant, this plant is very forgiving, but may need support as the stems reach 5 to 6 feet. A few packets of seeds easily produce many flowers which can also be used in cut flower arrangements. Snip the seed heads and save for later plantings and you will have a perpetual stand of fiery, orange butterfly favorites.

One of the things that make a fall/winter garden particularly striking is 'salvia madrensis', also called Forsythia sage. Just like its bushy cousin in the north, this tall, 4-6 feet, sends canary yellow spikes of flowers soaring upward attracting butterflies and hummingbirds. It ushers in the fall and blooms until frost when it dies to the ground, but returns magnificently in the spring. Its tall bracks can be snipped and used in flower arrangements as well. It grows in partial sun to nearly full shade, likes well drained soil, regular watering and plenty of space.



Tithonia
Growing in Suzanne's garden.



Chicken And Dumplings

The secret ingredient is Rosemary-see Herbal Highlights on page

Preparation Time: 1 day to several weeks in advance (Depends on constitution of your stomach. If you're queasy about stuff, allow more time between live bird and cooking.)

Items needed for Preparation:

Fishing net-a casting net is excellent
Small group of people-Children increase the fun if not the efficiency
Running Shoes
Leash or Rope
First Aid Kit

The best chicken dishes are made with yard birds, now referred to as "free range" chickens. When the yard birds make walking in the yard similar to tiptoeing through a minefield of odoriferous piles that stick to your shoe worse than gum in a parking lot, it's time to make chicken and dumplings. I prefer this dish to others for yard birds, because the tenderness of the bird is questionable and is in relationship to how long they have been escapees of the chicken coop.

The items needed for preparation are fairly self-explanatory if you have ever witnessed a greased pig chase. Several people are needed to herd the chickens and capture them. A casting net is most helpful. If you don't think these birds can fly you have never been on a rooster roundup. Running shoes are needed, because you will be running, stopping, diving through bushes. Shouting directions is acceptable, however comments on the heritage of your co-herders and "fowl" language does not increase your chance of success. The leash or rope is for pets that will be anxious to assist. Their catch is your loss so tie them up. Be prepared for an afternoon of exercise and fun. Minor injuries may be treated with the first aid kit.

If you are uneasy about the process needed between the catch and the pot, skip the roundup. You should go to the local market and buy a chicken.

Ingredients:

Pot 'o Water
1 Chicken
1 Onion
Bay Leaf

Salt and Pepper
Rosemary
1 Recipe Biscuit Dough

Cook the chicken in a pot of water with salt, pepper, bay leaf, and chopped onion. Remove the chicken, skin, bone and cube the meat. Return the cubed chicken to the liquid. Bring to a boil and drop the prepared biscuit dough into the mixture by spoonfuls. Add 1 teaspoon of rosemary, reduce heat and cover. Simmer about 15 minutes until dumplings are done.



The Winter Garden

Word Search Puzzle

D C C R E A T E P F R O S T C
C V O N S N G B O S M Y V O A
H A U M A D A T S U A R V E T
M R M M P R R E S E E E E Z A
P A R P E O N I I T R C R I L
D O I R F I S O B W D Y A N O
D I O N D I B T I Y S C P A G
U O V R T R R N L T D L E G S
T A A I P E T E I U A E R R D
T H A W D E N G T A E R P O N
N A T U R E E A Y E H T G G I
B E R R I E S L N B D M I I W
P I N E C O N E S C E S Y A M
T N A L P S N A R T E I U Q W
D E R E H T I W I D S B L U B

BAREROOT	ORGANIZE
BEAUTY	OVERWINTER
BERRIES	PINECONES
BIRDS	PLAN
BULBS	POSSIBILITY
CAMPFIRE	PREPARE
CATALOGS	PRUNE
COMPOST	QUIET
CREATE	RECYCLE
DESIGN	SEEDHEADS
DIVIDE	SLEEP
DORMANT	SUET
DREAM	THAW
FROST	TRANSPLANT
HARDINESS	WAIT
MIGRATION	WIND
MAINTENANCE	WITHERED
NATURE	

Contributed by Cindy Bengs, Brazos County Master Gardener

UPCOMING EVENTS

January & February 2008, 6:30-8:30 pm Bryan Public Library Gardening 101

Master Gardener's will present four individual program sessions on basic gardening and landscape management. Ideal for beginning gardeners and homeowners looking for answers to gardening questions in the Brazos Valley. Pre-registration is required.

Session I Jan 15: "Soils" & "Design Principals for Urban Landscapes"

Session II Jan 29: "Vegetable Gardening"

Session III Feb 2: "Lawn Care-the Earth-Kind Way"

Session IV Feb 19: "Trees & Shrubs" & "Monthly Landscape Management"

For additional information email us at brazosmg@ag.tamu.edu or call 823-0129, Brazos County Extension office.

Note: Classes are full and we are no longer accepting registration. This class series will be repeated in the future.



February 9th, 2008, Saturday

9 am to Noon

Brazos Center Bryan

\$10 at the door

Registration opens at 8:30am



Tom Leroy, Montgomery County Horticulture Agent, will speak on varieties of fruit trees for the Brazos Valley, including their care, maintenance and pruning.

Dave Whittinger of Dave's Garden, the website "for gardeners...by gardeners". Dave will speak on his favorite topic-heirloom vegetables.



February 1st thru 29th
Love Your Lawn-Test Your Soil
Campaign-Limited Time Offer



What are Brazos Valley residents going to get their lawn or garden for Valentine's Day? With spring just around the corner, now is an ideal time to "send your lawn or garden a valentine" by having your soil tested. Love your lawn by testing your soil for \$6 per sample (regularly \$10).

Why Test Your Soil?

- Take the guesswork out of fertilization – apply what is needed in the quantity needed
- Protect water quality – reduce phosphorous and other fertilizer levels in runoff water

Drop by any of several area businesses and get a soil test packet. Collect a lawn or garden soil sample and return it to the business, along with the completed soil test information form.

- Samples submitted: February 1-14 Test results available – March 1
- Samples submitted: February 15-29 Test results available – March 7

The Urban Soil Campaign is sponsored by the Texas AgriLife Extension Service, Brazos County office and the Extension Soil, Water and Forage Testing Laboratory Soil Testing Laboratory in participation with the following businesses:

- Close Quarters Feed & Pet Supply
- Coufal-Prater, Bryan
- Heirloom Gardens
- Producer's Cooperative Association

This campaign offer is strictly for residential sites and does not apply to crop production, pastures and commercial production sites.

To take advantage of this special offer for residential sites:

- Obtain a test packet from a participating site
- Take soil sample(s) by following instructions in test packet
- Complete submittal form, label and identify each sample
- Enclose check or money order, \$6 per sample, payable to: **Soil Testing Laboratory**
- Return your sample(s) to drop off location with submittal form and payment

Pick up your test results at your drop off site on March 1 or March 7.

Brazos County Master Gardeners
What I Learned in 2007

- ❖ Plumbago flowers can be stuck on ear lobes as earrings
- ❖ Don't caulk the outside of the greenhouse door before a rain storm-it all washes away.
- ❖ There is a Santa Clause and he brought me the tiller I ask for.
- ❖ Get rid of wild aster before it invades the turf.
- ❖ 20 pallets of St Augustine is a lot of grass to water.
- ❖ Don't let all the volunteer basil grow that comes up-it choked the tomatoes and there is no way I could use or give away that much.
- ❖ Sharing plants is so much fun.
- ❖ Take time for yourself!

Brazos County Master Gardener
Association
Officers 2008

Bill Lyles, Ex-Officio
Cindy Bengs, President
Suzanne Milstead, Vice President
Redith Kiser, Recording Secretary
Gary Williamson, Corresponding Secretary
Debbie Nelson, Treasurer

If you are interested in sharing our newsletter with a friend or subscribing to the e-newsletter, contact us at brazosmg@ag.tamu.edu

Brazos County Master Gardeners is a program of Texas *Agri*LIFE Extension. Extension programs serve people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, disability or national origin. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas cooperating.