



Earth-Kind
Texas AgriLife Extension Service

Coming Events

- Gardening 101
January 18, 2011
- Vegetable Gardening Demonstration
January 25, 2011
- Color Trends for Gardens
January 25, 2011
- Earth-Kind Gardening Seminar
January 29, 2011
- Gardening 101
February 15, 2011

Inside this issue:

Ready, Set, Grow: Learn About Gardening	2
What's Happening at the D.I.G.	3
Improving Landscape Soils	3
January Events	4
February Events	5
Brazos County Master Gardener Association Resources	5
Brazos County Master Gardener Association Information	6

G.I.G. Get It Growing

Brazos County Master Gardener Newsletter
Gardening News for Central Texas Brazos Valley



Volume 5 Issue 1

January/February 2011

The Brazos County Master Gardeners have planned informative and entertaining seminars and programs so check the calendar on our website at www.brazosmg.com. We will continue to add new features and information on our website, so visit it often. We invite your comments and suggestions. Contact us at brazosmg@ag.tamu.edu

From the Editor

Donna Murray

New year, new look. We hope that you enjoy the new look and feel of the G.I.G. We will still be bringing you good gardening information and news of our association. Our website is also undergoing renovations and will be available soon. Webmaster, Mike Chandler, and the web-site team has been working diligently to make the site an even better gardening resource. Watch for the "unveiling". Until then the current site is there for you to access.

There are events already on the schedule for 2011. But check the website cal-

endar regularly for Demonstration Idea Garden



'Pinks' photo from the garden of
Debbie Nelson
Brazos County Master Gardener

demos. These are scheduled closer to the event because of weather and the garden tasks it affects.

Before Spring Arrives

As we wait for spring it is a good time to evaluate how to improve our garden design. If you rely solely on perennials and annuals which die back, the winter garden can look pretty bleak. This can be improved with hard-scape features (pathways, arbors, fencing) and evergreen trees and shrubs or deciduous plant material with interesting bark or sculptural branching. Winter gives us the opportunity to look at the "bones" of the garden and with good bones the garden will be improved year round.

Master Gardener, Jack Cranford-Brazos County Extension's 2010 Volunteer of the Year for Agriculture-Natural Resources

Brazos County Master Gardener, Jack Cranford received the Volunteer of the Year award for Agriculture-Natural Resources from the Brazos County Leadership Advisory Board on November 15, 2010.

His nomination read: "In every step of the development of the Brazos County Master Gardener Demonstration Garden, Jack was always the first one there and last to leave, always with the right tools and

skilled know-how to do the job.

Never seeking recognition, title or even thanks, Jack is now planning what's next.

All who enjoy association with Extension or even come to visit the AgriLife Extension Service office and the adjacent Demonstration Idea Garden are benefited by the beautification he has brought about."

Awards are presented

annually by the Board to recognize the outstanding contributions of volunteers in the Brazos County Extension program committees.

Congratulations to Jack, who since certifying as a Master Gardener in 2007, has contributed many hours in support of Texas AgriLife Extension programs and demonstrations.

Ready, Set, Grow: Learn About Gardening

Charla Anthony, Horticulture Program Assistant at Texas AgriLife Extension, Brazos Co.



Brussel sprouts at the Demonstration Idea Garden. Learn about growing vegetables at the Feb 18 Gardening 101 class.

“Central Texas Gardeners face unique challenges to develop and maintain a beautiful landscape.”



Earth-Kind rose Belinda's Dream

Central Texas gardeners face unique challenges to develop and maintain a beautiful landscape. They must select plants wisely and pay careful attention to improving environmental conditions through site selection, soil preparation, plant care and efficient irrigation practices.

In 2011, Texas AgriLife Extension's Brazos County Master Gardeners will host events providing the know-how to have an attractive landscape using Earth-Kind environmentally friendly methods.

Earth-Kind Gardening 101

A series of 10 classes, Gardening 101 is designed to offer information tailored specifically for the Brazos Valley. These monthly classes, ideal for beginning gardeners, will teach everything from how to amend soil and grow healthier plants to tips for selecting the best spot for a vegetable garden.

Each session will address a particular aspect of gardening in the Brazos Valley. In the **Jan. 18** class, learn how to add amendments to develop fertile soil for abundant vegetables and colorful flowers. Also find out “when to do what” in a month-by-month gardening tasks overview.

In the **Feb. 15** class, get the scoop on what you need to know to grow your own vegetables. Other class topics are habitat gardening, lawn care, composting, ver-

miculture (composting with worms), drip irrigation, rain-water harvesting, trees, fall vegetables and the best plants for our area.

How do you know whether these classes are right for you? You will find the class beneficial if you are a beginning gardener or a casual gardener. Others likely to enjoy the class may have gardened successfully in another state or city but find Brazos Valley conditions challenging.

The classes will be held monthly, January through October, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at the Larry J. Ringer Public Library in College Station. Come to one or attend them all. Cost per class is \$10 per person with pre-registration preferred, but walk-ins welcome. For a complete schedule, go to the website <http://brazosmg.com>.

Earth-Kind Gardening Seminar

If you look over your yard and fantasize about beautifully designed flower beds filled with fantastic color, a fragrant herb garden or delicious vegetables to sustain your kitchen, this seminar is for you. Featuring four outstanding speakers and topics, this all-day event - 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. - Jan. 29 at the Brazos Center in Bryan costs \$50 per person and includes refreshments, lunch and handouts.

Topics include **Earth-Kind roses**, which Gaye Hammond of the Houston

Rose Society says are “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.” Hear about Earth-Kind roses and the latest developments in their research from this rose expert.

Also being covered at the seminar is **effective landscape design**, which integrates “built elements” -- such as fences, walkways and arbors -- with plant combinations and placement so they're all complimentary. Get the tools to create a beautiful and enjoyable landscape from Master Gardener Andrea Fox, Master of Landscape Architecture, as she describes how to discover what you have, what you want and where to put it.

The third seminar topic is **growing and using herbs**, a presentation by Ann Wheeler, former owner of an herb farm. She will reveal the secrets to growing herbs and share from her experience living in Great Britain.

The remaining subject is **growing vegetables**, which is a healthy, cost-effective and rewarding pursuit. Joe Masabni, Texas AgriLife Extension Vegetable Specialist, will tell how to plan your garden and grow the best vegetables.

Pre-registration for this event is requested by Jan 25. Registration forms, agenda and additional information are available at <http://brazosmg.com>. Or call the Brazos County Extension office at 823-0129.

What's Happening at the D.I.G.

Demonstration Idea Garden

Located at 2619 Highway 21, adjacent to the Texas AgriLife Extension, Brazos County office

Demonstration gardens are places to test, teach and learn. Brazos County Master Gardeners in 2007 began a renovation of their demonstration garden, the D.I.G. Funded by the Brazos

County Master Gardener Association, donations and in-kind contributions, the D.I.G. will be a place to see and learn about plants that are best suited for the Brazos Valley, as well as com-

posting, recycling, rainwater harvesting, water conservation and more.

January

Demonstrations being given on planting early spring vegetables at the D.I.G.



The Veggie Team demonstrating planting seeds for early cool season vegetable crops at the D.I.G..

Improving Landscape Soils: *Crucial to Long Term Success...*

<http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/earthkind/docs/pubs/soilimprovement.pdf>

“Given the time, effort and money required for most landscape projects, it’s important to get off to the best start possible. That begins with proper soil improvement. This certainly isn’t the most exciting or glamorous aspect of a landscape project - but it may be the most crucial for ensuring long-term success.

Proper soil preparation begins with an assessment of the current physical and chemical characteristics of the soil(s) you’ll be working with. More often than not - gardeners usually think about the chemical aspects first like fertilizers, root stimulators, soil additives and alike. Sure, these are important - but it’s the physical properties of a soil that can make or break a landscape planting. For optimum growth, plant roots need a good balance of air and water. These characteristics are determined by the soils aeration, drainage and water holding properties.

Why is this important?

Landscape soils that hold too much water typically result in landscape plants having root health problems. A significant lack of oxygen in the soil can also result in root disease, nutrient defi-

ciencies, deterioration of root systems, and ultimately plant death.

Landscape soils that do not hold adequate amounts of water require frequent irrigation, are subject plants to drought stress and possibly damage from salt buildup.

Conducting a “Hole-Test”

One of the best ways to determine a soils aeration, drainage and water holding capacity is to conduct a “hole-test.” Here are the basic steps:

Using a post-hole digger or sharp shooter shovel, dig a hole 6” – 8” in diameter and 2’ deep.

Fill the hole approximately ½ full with water. Note the time. Determine how long it takes for the water to drain from the hole.

Use the following guidelines to interpret results from the hole-test:

< 15 min = Excessive drainage.

Consider adding organic matter to increase the soil’s water holding capacity. 15 – 30 min = Adequate drainage and water holding properties. Modifications not required for planting trees, but adding organic matter will still benefit most landscape planting for flowers and shrubs.

30 min = Poor drainage.

Consider raised beds or incorporating coarse textured soil amendments (compost, bark mulch, expanded shale) to increase aeration and drainage.

Here are some additional thoughts and reminders regarding landscape soil improvement.

Be sure to use organic matter that is thoroughly decomposed (compost, bark mulch). Raw wood materials (shavings, chipper material) require nitrogen (N) to break down and often out-complete plants for available N in the soil. This can result in weak, stunted growth. If raw materials are use, additions of N fertilizer will reduce the negative impact on plants.

The best organic matter for use in landscape soils has a good distribution of coarse and fine particles, ranging from pea-diameter to pencil-sized pieces. The finer the organic matter, the greater the water holding characteristics.

In some situations it will be more beneficial to construct a raised bed to achieve the optimum physical characteristics for plant growth. See our Fact Sheet on “Raised Bed Construction” for more details.”

“Soil improvement can be the most time consuming and costly part of a landscape project. When you’re done, few people will appreciate the effort spent on this part of the project.

HOWEVER – the results are typically worth the investment in terms of overall landscape performance, water conservation, and long-term success.”



Mixing compost into the Demonstration Idea Garden vegetable bed before planting in spring.

January
BCMGA

Gardening 101

Larry J Ringer Library

Gardening 101 sessions are held the 3rd Tuesday of the month

6:30-8:30pm Jan 18, 2011

Soil and Amendments; EarthKind methods to improving your soil

Kayron Dube, Master Gardener

Achieving gardening success begins with your soil. Discover which EarthKind practices can help to improve your soil.

Month to Month Landscape Maintenance

Suzanne Milstead, Master Gardener

Using EarthKind methods to maintain your landscape year round

\$10 per seminar Registration encouraged. Form for all Gardening 101 sessions available at brazosmg.org.

“Color Trends for Texas Gardens”

Brazos Center-Room 102

3233 Briarcrest Drive Bryan, TX

7:00pm-8:00pm Jan 25, 2011

Bill Welch, Ph.D., Professor and Texas AgriLife Extension Service
Landscape Horticulturalist
Dept of Horticultural Sciences, Texas A&M University

Program begins at 7:00pm; doors open at 6:45pm

(Please respect that a "for members only" business meeting of the Brazos County Master Gardener Association precedes the program)

“Walk and Talk” in the DIG

Demonstration Idea Garden
Brazos County Extension
office

2619 Highway 21, Bryan,
TX

**10:30am-11:30am
Jan 25, 2011**

Master Gardeners will demonstrate vegetable planting for cool season crops.

Earth-Kind® Gardening Seminar

Brazos Center

3233 Briarcrest Drive Bryan, TX

8:30am-3:00pm Jan 29, 2011

Earth-Kind® Roses

Gaye Hammond, Houston Rose Society

Vegetable Gardening

Dr. Joe Masabni, AgriLife/TAMU

Garden Design

Andrea Fox, MLA, BCMG

Herb Gardening

Ann Wheeler, Log House Herbs

Cost is \$50 and includes handouts, snacks, and box lunch. Please register by Jan 25.
Registration form available at brazosmg.org.

February
BCMGA

Gardening 101

Larry J Ringer Library
Gardening 101 sessions are held the 3rd Tuesday of the month
6:30-8:30pm Feb 15, 2011

From the spring Vegetable Garden to the Table the Earth-Kind® Way

Kate Kelly, Master Gardener
Bed Preparation, Recommended Vegetable Varieties, Planting and Maintenance Timetables.

\$10 per seminar Registration encouraged.
Form for all Gardening 101 sessions available at brazosmg.org.

Brazos County Master Gardeners Speakers Bureau

Brazos County Master Gardeners can help you find a knowledgeable speaker on a wide range of gardening topics to give a program to your club or organization. Whether the purpose of your program is to inspire or inform, our Speakers Bureau is a great starting point to find speakers who can educate, motivate, and keep your organization on the right "garden path". Our clients trust us to present environmentally sound horticultural principles and practices. We offer presentations on many topics, including those listed below.

Texas Superstars

Home Landscaping

Poisonous Plants

Container Gardening

Color in the Landscape

Gourds

Butterfly Gardening

Rainwater Harvesting

Composting

Vegetable Gardening

Turf Management

Pests You Can Conquer

Propagation

For further information call 979-823-0129, email: brazosmg@ag.tamu.edu

Gardenline: Your Garden Questions Answered

Each Wednesday when you call Texas AgriLife Extension, Brazos County 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 distribute 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

979-823-0129, email: brazosmg@ag.tamu.edu



2011 Brazos County Master Gardener Association Executive Board

Officers

President-MiChal Hall
Vice President-Nilah Wright
2nd Vice President-Carol Drees
Treasurer-Debbie Nelson
Assistant Treasurer-Leslie Johnson
Secretary-Sarah Shelby
Immediate Past President-Roy Vaughan

Committee Directors

Demonstration Idea Garden-Andrea Fox
Community Outreach-Robert Moore
Education-Susan Smith
Media-Donna Murray
Youth Activities-Anna Dean

Brazos County Master Gardeners are volunteers, trained by Texas AgriLife Extension in research-based horticulture, landscaping, soil improvement, water conservation, and other areas pertaining to gardening. Through the Brazos County Extension Service, we serve our fellow citizens by sharing this knowledge in community outreach and education – newsletters, demonstrations, youth and adult programs, exhibits and the Brazos County Master Gardener website.



Brazos County Master Gardeners is a program of AgriLife 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.

If you are interested in sharing our newsletter with a friend or **subscribing online** to the e-newsletter, go to www.brazosmg.com. Please contact us with comments and suggestions, at brazosmg@ag.tamu.edu.