



Earth-Kind

Texas AgriLife Extension Service

Coming Events

Details on pages 10-12

- Gardening 101
July 19, 2011
- Preparing for a Fall Vegetable Garden
July 26, 2011
- Gardening 101
August 16, 2011
- The Beauty and Benefits of Native Plants and Grasses
August 23, 2011
- 2011 Fall Gardening Seminar
August 27, 2011
- Fall Plant Sale October 1, 2011

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G.I.G.

Get It Growing

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



Volume 5 Issue 4

July/August 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.

From the Editor:
Donna Murray

I will not repeat or bemoan the current weather conditions of which we are all aware. I'm looking at this as a test, weeding out those plants and practices which are not sustainable. Low maintenance is high on most everyone's' priority list and the tough survivors of this growing season will be the ones I'll put in the spots vacated by plants requiring coddling.

Observing my own garden, it's not surprising that the Earth-Kind roses (Belinda's Dream, Mutabilis, Monsieur Tillier) are doing well. Not as many repeat blooms as in prior years but the plants look healthy. Texas Superstars (Moy Grande Hibiscus, Turk's Cap, Dwarf Mexican Petunia, and Plumbago to name a few) are also tolerating the heat and limited water. I had thought New Gold Lantana over used, but it's looking good now when more exotic plantings have turned up their toes.

Pass along plants like the daylily shown here are also taking the beating and staying with me. This came from my husbands grandfathers' garden in Oklahoma about 30 years ago.



Double orange daylily (*Hemerocallis fulva* "Kwanso")

Grandpa Al dug them up for me in early summer and tossed them in a burlap sack, where they stayed for about two weeks before I could plant them. There's two reasons they have been shared by generations-pretty but tough. Even now they are alive and well, reminding me of the special person who shared them, and that works for me.



Elmer Krehbiel sharing vegetable gardening knowledge garnered from years of experience and study.

Congratulations to Elmer Krehbiel. 2011 marks 15 years of writing gardening articles for *The Eagle* newspaper and 18 years as a Master Gardener. Dr Krehbiel also gives several programs and demonstrations each year. We are fortunate to have him available to share, so willingly, his experience.

Veggin' With Elmer

Elmer Krehbiel-Brazos County Master Gardener

Dr. Krehbiel has written a weekly article for the Eagle for over 15 years and has been a Master Gardener 18 years. A valuable gardening resource, he shares his knowledge for growing a productive vegetable garden.

General vegetable growing:

Growing summer vegetables requires special management. This summer the temperatures during July are expected to average 5 degrees hotter than what we saw in June, and August temperatures should be about the same as June.

What strategies could a gardener consider ?

1. Summer vegetable crops (okra, southern peas, winter squash, watermelons, eggplant and peppers) need the soil temperature moderated. Gardeners should apply a light colored mulch about 3 inches deep and wider than the expected root zone of the plants.

The soil must contain sufficient moisture for the crops to grow and mature. The best methods of irrigation are to not wet the plants, that is, drip hose or soaker hose under mulch. If sprinklers are used, water should be applied only during early morning hours.

2. Many gardeners consider the summer-fall season more productive for vegetable crops, than the spring-summer crops. The temperatures become cooler for the plants and gardener to care for the crops. The crops mature with brighter color and stronger

flavor.

Before July 15: Tomatoes, pepper and eggplants should be seeded, or healthy tomato and pepper plants pruned, or healthy tomato plant tips rooted; or during August, purchase from local garden centers your eggplant, pepper and tomato plants.



Brazos County Vegetable Planting Guide at website: www.brazosmg.com <<http://www.brazosmg.com>> . Fall dates are listed for all vegetable crops to seed or place seedlings in the garden.

3. To prepare for the fall garden, a soil test report will indicate what amendments to apply before planting. The soil fertility, pH and organic matter should be suitable for the vegetable crops that you plan to grow. Soil testing information at website: www.soiltest.tamu.edu <<http://www.soiltest.tamu.edu>> , or e-mail soiltest@ag.tamu.edu <<mailto:soiltest@ag.tamu.edu>> .

Horticulture Newsgram

OFFICE OF BRAZOS COUNTY | JUNE 2011



Improving Lives. Improving Texas.

Jr. Master Gardener Vermiculture

In March, the BCMGA Youth Gardening Committee hosted a Vermiculture workshop for 29 youth and 10 parents at the DIG Pavilion.

Master Gardener and Composter, Margrit Moores gave a talk, stressing the importance of reducing garbage so that landfills don't fill up so quickly. In this hands on workshop, 8 MGs showed how to make a bin and care for red wiggler worms. Attendees learned that worm castings are an excellent natural garden fertilizer, that improves soil structure. In all, 21 bins were made.

MG Intern, Anh Nguyen said "It was neat to see the parents working side by side with their kids. I believe they had a great time bonding and learning, thanks to Extension." Other volunteers added that it was a lot of fun to participate. Thanks to Anna Dean, Youth Gardening Director and her team for doing a great job!

The workshop concluded with a tour of the DIG.



Did you know.....

- Vermiculture is an easy way to compost organic waste.
- A pound of worms can consume a pound of organic waste each week.
- Worms can eat more than their own weight in food everyday



Texas AgriLife Extension Service- Brazos County
 2619 Highway 21 West, Bryan, TX 77803
 Tel. 979.823.0129
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 Website: brazosmg.com



CRAPE MYRTLE

Lagerstroemia spp. (lah ger STRUM ee a)

Roy Vaughan-Brazos County Master Gardener



“Their extensive use as ornamental roadside plantings attests to their low maintenance success in native soils and drought prone summer heat.”



Crape Myrtle blooms
Photos by Debbie Nelson

Is it a tree, or is it a shrub? For Crape Myrtle the answer is yes! This heat-loving king of color comes in all sizes, from less than 2' to more than 20', blooms all summer in a wide range of brilliant colors, and thrives in the Brazos Valley.

Editor's note: Early pruning done correctly will train the plant to be a single trunk or multi-stemmed tree or shrub. Attention to the mature size when selecting the variety will eliminate the need to prune to limit size. Once the shape is established “resist the urge to prune, as those left unpruned bloom sooner and heavier than those that are heavily pruned, an effect known as “crape murder” or “crapicide.””
<http://www.brazosmg.com/plants-for-our-region/trees>

Texas A&M horticulture expert, Doug Welsh covers everything one needs to know about the versatile plant in his award winning *Texas Garden Almanac*. He tells a fascinating story of how in the early 1960's two species, *L. indica* from China and *L. faurei* from Japan, were cross bred to pro-

duce offspring superior to either parent. The National Arboretum in Washington D.C. has continued producing new hybrids with improved pest resistance, wider color choice and variety of mature size. Dr. Welsh's book has a useful chart to guide your selection of size, color and pest resistance. He points out that their extensive use as ornamental roadside plantings attests to their low maintenance success in native soils and drought prone summer heat.

My two favorite plant gurus, Wm. “Bill” Welch and Greg Grant, team their wit and wisdom in a must-have new book, *Heirloom Gardening in the South*. They dedicate 9 pages to Crape Myrtle lore with great pictures showing the virtues of the graceful natural shape and the choice of size and color.

Each fall a volunteer community group, Keep-Brazos-Beautiful, offers a wide variety in their plant sale, and area nurseries and garden centers also have offerings of this bullet-proof beauty.

It's hard not to be successful with Malabar Spinach *Basella rubra*

Donna Murray-Brazos County Master Gardener



Once established, Malabar spinach is easy to grow as it is tolerant of both drought and rainy conditions. If allowed to produce seed some consider it invasive. The original seedlings for the plants pictured came from a fellow Master Gardener several years ago. Never purposely replanted, volunteer plants in this vegetable bed are thinned or transplanted to other areas each spring.

Grown locally as an annual, it should be direct seeded when all danger of frost has passed and night temperatures are above 60° F. Plant seeds 1 inch deep, 1 inch apart, and thin to 1 foot apart. A fast growing vine, it produces best when trellised.

Malabar spinach is in the Basellaceae (Madeira-vine) family, not the spinach family (Amaranthaceae). True spinach is a cool season crop whereas Malabar, native to tropical Asia, is considered a warm season crop as it is extremely heat tolerant. There are two main species: *Basella alba*, with green stems and small white flowers and *Basella rubra*, with red stems and small pink flowers. Both have thick, fleshy edible leaves. The red stemmed species is particularly attractive as an ornamental.

Harvest 6-8 inch stem tips throughout the growing season to eat raw. When cooked in a manner similar to cool season spinach, it has a moist sticky texture that is useful as a thickener in soups and stews, much like okra.

Garden Line Question and Answer

Kayron Dube-Brazos County Master Gardener

Question selected from those ask of the Brazos County Master Gardeners that man the Gardenline desk each Wednesday from 9am-1pm. Call Gardenline at 979-823-0129 or email brazosmg@brazosmg.com.

Garden Line volunteers have fielded many questions during the past few months. The majority have been about vegetables – why don't my tomatoes bloom, why are my cucumbers misshapen and bitter, what do I do about spider mites? Many of the issues we are seeing in our gardens and lawns are drought related and as Brazos County Master Gardener, Hugh Magers says, "could be easily solved by a good old fashion rain".

Now that spring gardening is coming to a close it is time to ready our garden beds for the fall. Compost old plant material and don't forget to protect your garden soils from our brutal summer Texas sun. The most productive garden soils are those that are alive, teeming with microbial life. Excessive heat and lack of moisture desiccate the soil food web.

The following sites have the basics of composting.

<http://www.brazosmg.com/demonstration-idea-garden/composting>

<http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/publications/landscape/compost>



Basella rubra
Photo by Donna Murray

"Malabar spinach is easy to grow as it is tolerant of both drought and rainy conditions"



Malabar spinach covering a 5 ft. wire snowman
Photo by Donna Murray

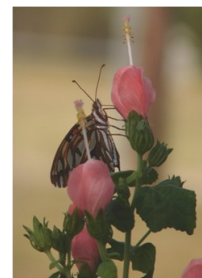


One of several types of compost bins in use at the D.I.G. See our website (listed at left) for others.

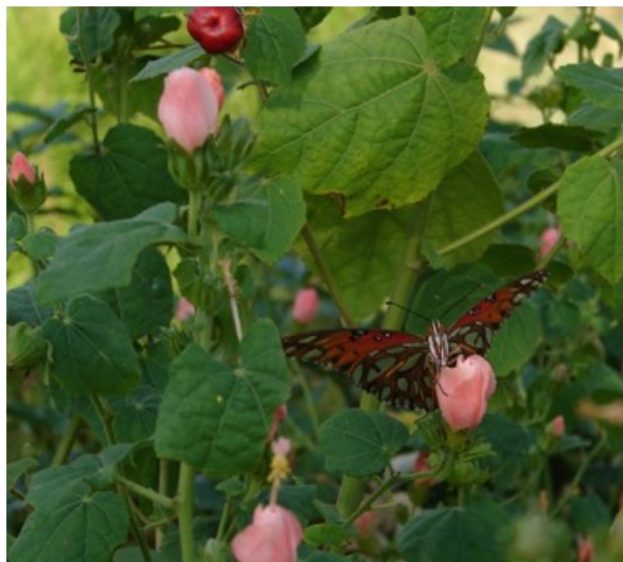
Turk's cap named new Texas Superstar

Robert Burns

Photos shown were taken in Brazos County garden by Donna Murray



Turk's cap varieties with red and white flowers have been grown in Texas for generations. But a new hybrid variety, "Pam Puryear," named in honor of one of the first female graduates of Texas A&M University, has pink flowers. Because both new and old varieties of Turk's cap are tough and versatile plants, they have been designated Texas Superstars for 2011.



To be designated a Superstar, a plant must be not just only beautiful but perform well for consumers and growers throughout Texas, Pemberton said. Superstars must also be easy to propagate, a requisite that ensures designers are not only widely available throughout Texas but reasonably priced too.

"It'll grow in full sun, full shade, wet soil, dry soil, alkaline soil and acid soil — it's a pretty dang amazing plant," said Greg Grant, formerly with AgriLife Research and now with Stephen F. Austin Gardens. "Plus, (when you learn) it attracts hummingbirds and butterflies, and has semi-edible fruit, you'd think, heck, why isn't everyone growing it."

Turk's cap even shows a lot of resistance to the popular herbicide, Roundup, though it comes by it naturally and has never been genetically modified for this resistance, as cotton, corn and other crops have been, Grant said. "It'll show a little color change when you spray it with Roundup, but it won't kill it," he said. "It's an amazingly tough plant."

COLLEGE STATION — Gardeners, hummingbirds and butterflies have it made in the shade with Turk's cap, the newly designated Superstar by Texas AgriLife Research.

And "made in the sun too," as the plant tolerates full sunlight as well, said Dr. Brent Pemberton, AgriLife Research horticulturist and chair of the Texas Superstar executive board.

"It's a native plant, native to South Texas, and is a magnet for butterflies and hummingbirds," Pemberton said. "It's extremely drought-tolerant and will thrive in dry soils. It does very well in the shade but will take quite a bit of sun, so it is a very versatile plant; something that is pretty well adapted all over the entire state."

The Turk's cap native to Texas generally has dark green leaves and cherry-red or white flowers that look like miniature Turkish turbans, hence the name. But thanks to Grant, and Pam Puryear gardeners today have more choices for cold-tolerant varieties.

Grant used to be a member of Texas Rose Rustlers, a gardening organization dedicated to growing roses and gardening in general. Puryear was also a Rose Rustler volunteer and asked Grant to develop new varieties of Turk's cap.

Texas Superstar is a registered trademark owned by Texas AgriLife Research. More information about the Texas Superstar program can be found at <http://texassuperstar.com/>.

Complete article found at <http://agrilife.org/today/2011/05/25/turks-cap-named-new-texas-superstar/>

Latin Names for Plants, Not Just for Snobs

Anh Nguyen Brazos County Master Gardener Intern



I love juicy fresh *Lycopersicon esculentus* and garlic stir-fried *Spinacea oleracea*. How about you? Or are you groaning what kind of snob would speak like that? I'm sorry, but I'm trying to practice my botanical Latin.

Why should a backyard gardener learn botanical Latin anyway? Here are a few scenarios to consider:



You want to plant bluebells; do you mean Virginia bluebells, *Mertensia Virginia*; or Spanish bluebells, *Scilla campanulata*; or Australian royal bluebells, *Wahlengergia gloriosa*; or Texas bluebells, *Eustoma russellianim*? These species of bluebells are not even close relatives though they all share the same *common* name. Try finding the one that best fits your location without knowing its *scientific* name. As you can see, a little Latin can go a long way.

Do you think "cabbage" has anything to do with "turnip"?



Yes, they are close relatives, and you will immediately know if you call them by their real names, which are *Brassica oleracea* and *Brassica rapa* respectively.



Once you know how one plant is related to another, and you are familiar with the characteristics, then you already know something about its relative. With this knowledge, you can make better plant rotation plans to avoid planting members of the same family in the same spots the next season. Plant rotation in the vegetable gar-

den is practiced to reduce the pathogens, which cause disease, that remain in the soil from crop residue.

Moreover, as each plant has only one scientific name, you can communicate with gardeners and horticulturists across the globe knowing that you are talking about the same plant. The ability for global communication is yours with botanical Latin.



Have you ever asked yourself why "grape hyacinth" is not a hyacinth; why "summer snowflakes" bloom in spring; why "blue flag" is purple and not blue; why here it's "red maple" but over there it's "scarlet/swamp maple"; or—this one is particularly annoying—why "pepper" can mean either a perennial, wood, tropical, coastal vine or an annual, spreading, bushy nightshade? The use of scientific names ends this confusion.

The Latin words and suffixes themselves give you information about plants. For example:

Color: alba – white; coccinea – scarlet; azurea – blue; aurea – gold;

Scent: foetida – smelly; fragans – scented;

Origin: chinensis – China; japonica – Japan; virginiana – Virginia;

Habitat: frigidus – cold; limosus – marshy; aquatic – water; arvensis – field;

Shape: reptans – creeping; gracilis – slender; globosus – round;

Texture: lanatus – wooly; viscosus – sticky; horridus – prickly.

Scientific and legal publications usually refer to plants by their Latin names. If you'd like to read conservation lists, botany research papers, or specimen and plant labels at nurseries

Latin Names for Plants, Not Just for Snobs

Continued from page 7



or seedling sales, you'd better shape up your botanical Latin.

How do I pronounce such daunting-looking words?

The good news is that, unlike English, there are no silent letters in Latin. Once you get past the task of staring a Latin name in the face, you can start breaking it into parts to pronounce each root separately. For example, *Rhododendron* can be broken into *rhodo* and *dendron*, meaning "rose tree."

An authoritative and popular source is the book *Botanical Latin* by William Stearn, who said, "Botanical Latin is essentially a written language, but the scientific names of plants often occur in speech. How they are pronounced really matters little provided they sound pleasant and are understandable by all concerned."

So, have fun with botanical Latin and remember that practice makes perfect. Say it, sing it, shout it, whisper it, play with it, and pass it on. You know what I mean.

I love juicy fresh tomato
(*Lycopersicon esculentus*)
and garlic stir-fried
spinach (*Spinacea oleracea*).



How about you?

Additional Online Resources:

Index of Plants by Latin Names and by Common Names: <http://theseedsite.co.uk/plantindex.html>

Pronunciation Guide for Plant Names: <http://www.finegardening.com/pguide/pronunciation-guide-to-botanical-latin.aspx>

Scientific Names – Aggie Horticulture: http://aggiehorticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/beneficials_intros/beneficials-f_scientific_names.htm



Mosquitoes-Did you Know?

- They can complete their life cycle in as little as 8 to 10 days
- Eggs may be laid in dry locations that are subject to periodic flooding and remain dormant for many months
- Adult males feed only on nectar, plant juices and other sources of liquid carbohydrates
- Adult females feed periodically on nectar, plant juices, and other sources of plant carbohydrates. However, females of most species require a blood meal as a source of protein before they produce eggs

Visit AgriLife Extension's Mosquito Safari at <http://mosquitosafari.tamu.edu/index.swf>, where you can learn about controlling mosquitoes, behavior and breeding sites, and even go on a backyard interactive safari.

Another resource for control measures and additional mosquito facts may be found at http://insects.tamu.edu/extension/publications/epubs/e_333.cfm

July Events

Follow us on Facebook for event notices and items of interest
www.facebook.com.brazosmg

Gardening 101

Larry J Ringer Library

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

6:30-8:30pm July 19, 2011

“Low Volume-Drip Irrigation”

Lyndon Almand & Cash Reed, Master Gardeners

Learn about low volume or drip irrigation systems, one of the most effective ways to attain significant water savings.

\$10 per seminar Registration encouraged.

Form for all Gardening 101 sessions available at brazosmg.org.

“Preparing for a Fall Vegetable Garden”

Brazos Center-Room 102

3233 Briarcrest Drive Bryan, TX

7:00pm-8:00pm July 26, 2011

Joe Novak, Ph.D., Faculty member, Dept of Horticultural Sciences,
Texas A&M University

The milder days of fall provide an ideal gardening environment for vegetables and gardeners alike. Learn all about year round gardening.

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)

G.I.G.






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 **Gardening 101** 
 Larry J Ringer Library
 Gardening 101 sessions are held the 3rd Tuesday of the month
6:30-8:30pm August 16, 2011

Fall Vegetable Gardening

Dr. Joe Masabni, Assistant Professor at Texas A&M University and Texas AgriLife Extension Service Vegetable Specialist
Employing Earth-Kind Principles to produce tasty vegetables in your backyard.

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

 **“The Beauty and Benefits of Native Plants and Grasses”** 
 Brazos Center-Room 102
 3233 Briarcrest Drive Bryan, TX
7:00pm-8:00pm August 23, 2011

Carolyn Fannon

A published photographer with a lifelong interest in grasses and insects, Carolyn Fannon has been photographing Texas Coastal Prairie for the past 15 years. And, for the last several years, she has photographed areas of The Big Thicket. Carolyn is a member of the Native Plant Society of Texas, Native Prairies Association of Texas, and Coastal Prairie Partnership.

Carolyn’s presentation will include some familiar (and not so familiar) wildflowers, prairie grasses, wild orchids and their plant associations, and pollinators. You will see native plants in a way you may never have seen them before.

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)



**More
Events**




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2011 Fall Gardening Seminar

The Brazos Center-Room 102
3233 Briarcrest Drive Bryan, TX
August 27, 2011

The Bulb Hunter & Heirloom Bulbs

Chris Wiesinger, President/Owner The Southern Bulb Company

Seeing is Believing

Jim Johnson, AAF, AFID, TMFA Distinguished Lecturer, Texas A&M University

Fall Vegetable Gardening

Patty Leander, Travis County Master Gardener, TXMG Vegetable Specialist, *Texas Gardener* Contributing Writer

Earth Systems-Soils

Kayron Dube, DDS, Brazos County Master Gardener

\$50 per person, includes sandwich lunch buffet. Pre-registration preferred by 8/23/2011.



Fall Plant Sale



Brazos County Extension Office
2619 Highway 21 West Bryan, TX 77803

Saturday October 1, 2011

9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Join the Brazos County Master Gardeners at their fall plant sale. A wide array of perennial plants and bulbs selected for Brazos County growing conditions will be offered. Passalong plants from the gardens of local Master Gardeners will also be available for purchase.

A preview talk highlighting growing requirements of available plants and bulbs will be presented from 8 a.m. to 9 a.m. Seating is limited for this special event and offered on a first-come, first-served basis.

Master Gardeners will be available during the sale to answer your plant and gardening questions. Proceeds from the sale will be used to fund community education programs of the Brazos County Master Gardeners, a non-profit association of AgriLife Extension volunteers.

Come early, and don't forget to bring your wagon!

For additional information:
Visit our website: brazosmg.com
Send an email: brazosmg@brazosmg.com
Or call the Brazos County Extension office: 979-823-0129



Garden Line: Your 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@brazosmg.com

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 Gardening-Anna Dean

Brazos County Master Gardener 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.

For further information call 979-823-0129, email: brazosmg@brazosmg.com

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.

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