



**Earth-Kind**

Texas AgriLife Extension Service

# G.I.G.

## Get It Growing

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



Volume 5 Issue 6

Nov/Dec 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](http://www.brazosmg.com). We will continue to add new features and information on our website, so visit it often.

**From the Editor:**  
**Donna Murray**

### Coming Events

Details on pages 8-9

- Accepting applications for 2012 Master Gardener Training Course  
Deadline December 15, 2011
- Gardening 101  
Soil & Amendments and  
Month to Month Landscape  
Maintenance  
January 17, 2012
- Lessons from a Rose Rustler  
January 24, 2012
- Successful Gardening in Challenging  
Climates  
February 18, 2012

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Time to take stock and form a plan. If you intend to replant with what couldn't live this summer, just walk up to the cashier and hand her a check. No need to waste time, effort, and precious water next season by planting ill suited selections. Granted, some casualties, as in the animal kingdom, happened to very young, old, or already stressed even though the species was generally suited to the area. The seminar, Successful Gardening in Challenging Climates, hosted by the Brazos County Master Gardeners on February 18<sup>th</sup> will be a good starting point for understanding what happens to plants in drought conditions and what plants have proven themselves this year. Watch for additional details and registration information.

The Brazos County Master Gardeners are setting up a great year of seminars and programs. Gardening 101 will be offered again in 2012 as a once a month series of how-to information, presented by Master Gardeners. Selected programs following the monthly Brazos County Master Gardener business meetings

will also be open to the public. Free access to experts speaking on a variety of gardening topics-what a deal. Other opportunities will be available so check the calendar on our website regularly, subscribe to the event notification e-mail that is sent monthly, or see our Facebook for event notices.



Texas Red Oak *Quercus texana* dresses for fall

This is my last issue as editor. The goal was to provide proven gardening information specific to our area and have some fun. My thanks to all the Master Gardeners who were instrumental in reaching that goal and thank you for reading and using the information provided. MiChal Hall, editor for 2012, brings a wealth of talents to the job and I look forward to other Master Gardener challenges.



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

“During the cooler fall, vegetable plants should grow faster with a small application of fertilizer each week or two.”

## 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.

**Seeding dates and spacing (inches) between plants for cool-season vegetable crops are:**

- 11/1 - 11/15: Swiss chard 6”-8”; mustard 4”- 6”
- 11/1 - 11/20: turnip 4”- 6”
- 11/1 - 11/30: carrot 2”-3”; kohlrabi 8”-12”; lettuce 6”-12”; radish 2”

**Set Transplants**

- 11/1 - 11/5: Brussels sprouts 12”-18”
- 11/1 - 11/15: broccoli 6”-18”
- 11/1 - 12/31: cabbage 12”-24”

During the cooler fall, vegetable plants should grow faster with a small application of fertilizer each week or two. Potassium nitrate or ammonium nitrate fertilizers are more available in cold soils, than only ammonium sulfate when irrigating with underground water (not rain water).

Frost protection could be very beneficial for tender plants. For small plants, devices that are filled with water to retain solar warmth work well. A 12 inch circle of connected tubes, 18 inches tall can provide protection from 10° to 16° F. Commercial frost blankets are suitable for larger areas. Cardboard boxes and old blankets are good, but should be kept dry. Clear plastic is the worst

as the area under it may be colder.

**Asparagus**

Asparagus may be considered a luxury vegetable in Texas, since it is probably the most expensive to purchase in the grocery store. But, asparagus can be grown in this area, if it is properly planted between January 15 and March 15.

The Brazos County Master Gardeners planted asparagus crowns on February 26, 2011, and they have continued to develop during the dry-hot-windy weather since then. My 15-year-old asparagus currently has healthy fernlike foliage 4 to 5 feet tall.

Growing your own is increasing in popularity because:

- It requires minimal care
- Has very few disease/insect problems
- Tasty flavor and nutritional value
- May live for 15 to 25 years in this area.

Asparagus bed should be prepared properly and a month or two early.

Details are available at website: [www.theeagle.com/homegarden.102811](http://www.theeagle.com/homegarden.102811) <<http://www.theeagle.com/homegarden.102811>> , or <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/homegarden/vegetables/>



## Herbal Highlights Survivors and Thrivers

Donna Murray-Brazos County Master Gardener



Rosemary, 'County Girl' Mums, & 'Belindas Dream' Roses

“Rosemary was the hands down winner this year in my garden.”



'Cinnamon' Basil & Garlic Chives



'Silver' Thyme

After retreating inside all summer the welcome fall-like temperatures had me checking to see what survived and what shriveled.

**Basil** (May/June 2008 issue) seemed to love the extreme conditions. 'Globe' basil, re-seeded from previous season, 'Cinnamon' and 'Thai' basil all flourished. Left to flower, there was constant attention from bees.

**Chamomile** (July/Aug 2009 issue) was added to the compost bin but will be replaced because I like it.

**Chives** (Jan/Feb 2010 issue) Garlic chives did well while the onion chives disappeared. Hopefully they went dormant and will put up new growth with cooler weather.

**Horseradish** (March/April 2011 issue) was planted in a pot this spring. It has not been a lovely plant but I'm looking forward to harvesting and adding homegrown zip to foods.

**Mints** (July/Aug 2010 issue) that threatened to take over planting beds saved me the effort of excavating them and took a dirt nap. Doing well are 'Chocolate' and 'Habak' *Mentha Longifolia* (narrow silver leaves) mints growing in pots.

**Oregano** (March/April 2008 issue) had competition from the nearby basil but seems to be slowly making a comeback.

**Rose** (will be 2012 Herb of the Year) Earth-Kind roses proved their worth this season and 'Belindas' Dream' is in its fall flush of blooms with the cooler temperatures.

**Rosemary** (Jan/Feb 2008 issue) was the hands down winner this year in my garden. It did wonderful and looked good all season.

**Rue** (Sept/Oct 2010 issue) is still living in its pot and proving that it'll survive most anything.

**Salad Burnet** (Jan/Feb 2008 issue) was a surprise seedling this spring and a refreshing green mound in the herb bed all summer.

**Tansy** (May/June 2010 issue) has been a presence in the garden for years and took this season in stride. Cut flowers were added to a fall bouquet just this week.

**Thyme** (May/June 2011 issue) Of the nine varieties planted this spring, two died, and six are recovering, but the 'Silver' Thyme was a bright spot all summer

**What's Happening at the D.I.G. (Demonstration Idea Garden)**  
**Andrea Fox, Brazos County Master Gardener**  
 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 continue to renovate and add to their demonstration garden, the D.I.G. Funded by the Brazos County Master Gardener Association, donations and in-kind contributions, the D.I.G. is a place to see and learn about plants that are best suited for the Brazos Valley, as well as composting, recycling, rainwater harvesting, water conservation and more.

October was a busy month in the DIG, starting with a high attendance for a Saturday DIG. Twenty-five MG volunteers came out to tidy up the gardens, weed pathways, trim spent flowers to improve their fall blooming potential, water the trees, turn the compost piles and store the beautifully sifted end product for use elsewhere in the gardens.



MG's Elmer Krehbiel and Nancy Nelson tend the Superstar Garden



MGs (left to right) Kenneth Lennen, Donna Seelig, Maggie Boriski, Rita Baker, Marie Sander, James Kneip and Jan Truede-Jatzlau tend the Earth-Kind Rose Garden.

Once our work in the DIG was done, members participated in a members-only plant swap organized by Master Gardener Carol Drees. A few choice plants were selected to remain in the DIG gardens. MGs were then treated to a BBQ lunch. Overheard from the crowd was "This is the kind of fun that Master Gardeners want to have!" Plants, food and friendship... it's what we're all about!



MG's Molly Harris and Susan Smith sift finished compost for use in the DIG.



MGs rest after a productive workday and patiently await the members-only plant swap.



## Pretty But Poisonous

Sandra Lovering-Brazos County Master Gardener Intern



Oleander  
*Nerium oleander*

“When evaluating choices of plants or dealing with existing plants in the landscape, consider the toxic potential of some plant species”

Are we putting our pets at risk in their own backyards? We create beautiful landscapes to add value to our property as well as for our family’s enjoyment. For many of us, pets are included as part of our families. When evaluating choices of plants or when dealing with existing plants in the landscape, consider the toxic potential of some plant species. While our children can be warned not to handle or ingest certain plants or plant parts, dogs and cats are usually less responsive to our warnings.

**Oleander (*Nerium oleander*)** is widely utilized as an ornamental along roadways, in residential areas and home landscapes (particularly for screening). Used because of its’ dark green, leathery foliage and showy flowers, Oleander is one of the most toxic plants in wide use (2,3). Particularly toxic are the leaves. While green leaves are bitter and not very palatable, the toxic principle remains even in clippings and dried leaves. In this dehydrated state, the leaves become more edible.

Oleandrin, the toxic principle

in the Oleander plant, is a powerful cardiac toxin. The ingestion of only a few leaves can cause cardiac failure. Clinical signs can be observed within 4 hours of ingestion and may include weakness, hypersalivation, and abdominal pain and increased (tachycardia) or decreased (bradycardia) heart rate.

Another plant containing a powerful cardiac toxin is the **Kalanchoe** (3, 4). These flowering succulents are popular in the garden, in containers, and as houseplants. All parts are poisonous but the flower has the highest concentration of the cardiac glycoside referred to as bufadienolides. Depression, hypersalivation, and gastrointestinal signs can begin within a few hours of ingestion and progress to cardiac arrhythmias, rapid heart-beat and respiratory distress. Cardiac arrest is the cause of fatal ingestions.

**Lilies** belonging to the genus *Hemerocallis* (including day-lilies) and to the genus *Lilium* (including Easter Lilies) also pose poisoning risks to pets, particularly cats (3). These

## Pretty But Poisonous

continued from page 5



plants contain a toxin, which can result in kidney failure. Lilies are found in gardens or used as houseplants. All parts are considered toxic but the leaves seem to be the most frequently ingested. Clinical signs can develop within 12 hours following ingestion but might not be seen for several days. Vomiting, depression and decreased or increased urination are seen. Seizures, disorientation, tremors and ataxia can also occur in some animals.

Plant toxicity is not limited to these examples. Numerous references list plants toxic to humans and pets (1). Prompt treatment of plant toxicity is critical and often the clinical signs are not specific enough to determine which plant might be involved. So it is important to look for clues should your pet become sick, particularly if the pet has been seen grazing or chewing on plants. Be prepared to provide the scientific names of any suspect plant species or collect samples of plants that appear to have been chewed. This information on plant identity can be critical to ensure proper veterinary treatment (3).

### References:

1. Aggie Horticulture Web page. <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu> February 7, 2011.
2. Hart, C. R., Garland, T., Barr, A. C., Carpenter, B. B., Reagor, J. C. Toxic plants of Texas. B-6105, 12/00. Texas Agriculture Extension Service. pp132-133
3. Milewski, L. M. and Kahn, S. A., An overview of potentially life-threatening poisonous plants in dogs and cats. J of Veterinary Emergency and Critical Care 16(1) 2006. pp 25-33.
4. Smith, Geof, Kalanchoe species poisoning in pets. Veterinary Medicine. November 2004. pp 933-936 moisture.

“Prompt treatment of plant toxicity is critical and often the clinical signs are not specific enough to determine which plant might be involved.”



## Raised Beds for Seniors

Maggi Boriski Brazos County Master Gardener Intern



I am not talking about a bed one sleeps in but raised planting beds for vegetables, herbs and flowers. Some of us seniors have weak knees and sore lower backs. It would be pleasant if we could garden pain free. Constructing raised planting beds was our solution to dual challenges, personal physical limitations and heavy clay soil that can be found in the Brazos Valley.

If you decide to have a garden bed at ground level, the frame should be bottomless for good drainage. The soil is the floor of your bed. First we needed a starving Aggie to dig out the existing soil and be available to replace it with compost amended soil. He could also lay down the drip irrigation system.

Bed designs are endless and layout decisions are at your pleasure. Consider a bed height of around two feet with a cap or lip on the top. Two feet above ground level is an acceptable height to sit and work in the bed and to rest.

There are many frame materials to select from-UV-stabilized polypropylene, rock, brick, concrete, or naturally rot-resistant cedar or redwood. Railroad ties are popular but may contain creosote and may have toxins according to MSU Extension article at <http://extension.missouri.edu/p/G6985>.

Install flexible pipe frames, either triangular or rounded over your garden beds. They will be in place to put a protective cover over your plantings when needed.

Two rectangular raised beds, three feet by six feet, gave us sufficient space for a harvest of vegetables, herbs and flowers. There are only two of us and we still had plenty to share with neighbors. This size allowed easy installation of a drip irrigation system down the middle with feeding

tubes off to the right and left with small emitters attached at each planting.

Better yet, why not get the starving Aggie to construct a raised bed on legs. A four foot by four foot wide bed, eighteen inches deep would be easy to fill with compost or potting soil. Attach heavy casters/wheels to the bottom of the legs. Roll it into the sun during the day and back into the garage at night for protection of the plants, extending the growing season. Roll it closer to the kitchen for harvesting. Add a shelf underneath for gardening tools and potting soil, etc.

If you can add a bench adjacent to or close between beds, you can sit and enjoy your labors and you have a quick place to go to if you are feeling a little light headed. Keeping a cell phone handy is another suggestion for safety. Being a mature age doesn't mean you have to give up gardening, just be creative in how you do it.



Editor's note: Visit the D.I.G. (Demonstration Idea Garden) located adjacent to the AgriLife Extension office on highway 21 to see raised beds of various materials or go to our website for photos of the raised beds in the Vegetable Garden at the D.I.G. <http://www.brazosmg.com/demonstration-idea-garden/vegetable-garden> and detailed material list with information on how to build them <http://www.brazosmg.com/info/dig-vegetable-garden-raised-bed-brochure.pdf>.

G.I.G.



## Dec/Jan Events



Follow us on Facebook for event  
notices and items of interest  
[www.facebook.com.brazosmg](http://www.facebook.com.brazosmg)



### Accepting applications for 2012 Master Gardener Training Course



Brazos County Extension Office  
2619 Highway 21 West Bryan, TX 77803  
979-823-0219

Applications will be taken and interviews conducted  
through December 15, with class beginning January 5, 2012!

For additional information:  
Visit our website: [brazosmg.com](http://brazosmg.com)  
Send an email: [brazosmg@brazosmg.com](mailto:brazosmg@brazosmg.com)  
Or call the Brazos County Extension office: 979-823-0129



### Gardening 101



Brazos Center Room 102  
3233 Briarcrest Drive Bryan, TX

Gardening 101 sessions are held the 3rd Tuesday of the month  
**6:30-8:30pm January 17, 2012**

**"Soil and Amendments; Earth-Kind methods to improving your soil."**

Kayron Dube, Master Gardener

*Achieving gardening success begins with your soil. Discover which Earth-Kind practices can help improve your soil.*

**"Month to Month Landscape Maintenance"**

Suzanne Milstead, Master Gardener

*Using Earth-Kind methods to maintain your landscape year round.*

G.I.G.



**Follow us on Facebook for event notices and items of interest**  
[www.facebook.com.brazosmg](http://www.facebook.com.brazosmg)

**“Lessons from a Rose Rustler”**  
 Brazos Center-Room 102  
 3232 Briarcrest Drive Bryan, TX  
**7:00pm-8:00pm January 24, 2012**

G. Michael Shoup-Antique Rose Emporium  
 The adventures of finding and propagating old roses and restoring them to their rightful place in the garden.

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)

**Successful Gardening in Challenging Climates**  
 Brazos Center Room 201  
 3233 Briarcrest Drive Bryan, TX  
**8:00am-5:00pm February 18, 2012**

**Earth-Kind Methods for Landscape Recovery and Survival**  
 It’s time for gardeners to rethink, refurbish and replant landscapes. The effect of record breaking drought and heat is visible across Texas. Join us for an information filled day to obtain useful insight and information about Earth-Kind methods that will make you a successful gardener in times of climate extremes.

Topics include plant selection, soil preparation. irrigation efficiency and how plants respond to extremes in weather. This seminar also offers gardening related vendors, refreshments and lunch. Master Gardeners will be on hand to answer your gardening questions.

Additional seminar and registration information will be announced.



### 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](mailto: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](mailto: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.

If you are interested in sharing our newsletter with a friend or **subscribing online** to the e-newsletter, go to [www.brazosmg.com](http://www.brazosmg.com). Please contact us with comments and suggestions, at [brazosmg@brazosmg.com](mailto:brazosmg@brazosmg.com).