



A publication of...

TRAVIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS

THE COMPOST BIN

December 2006



Master Gardeners Holiday Party

"Our Holiday Party will be Wednesday, December 6th from 7 to 9pm.

This year our membership voted to have an appetizers and desserts party.

Over 130 RSVPs have been received. Parking may be an issue and carpooling is encouraged.

If you would like to attend the party and have not yet RSVP'd, please



Message From the President...

The year and the growing season may be winding down, but there seems to be much more to do than ever before. Skip and I are working with a good group of Master Gardeners and community project leaders to get Jackie Johnson's idea for a free East Austin Garden Event planned and going. The idea is to have a free educational event planned by East Austin residents and implemented with our help to get people excited about gardening and to provide information that is suited to the needs and interests of the community. We are hoping to have some kids' activities that would feature aspects of health and nutrition, and we would like to promote water conservation and water quality. But mostly we want to help community leaders create an event that will be successful in bringing information to the East Austin communities. Our target date is sometime in March, and we will be needing help from Master Gardeners to get things ready and to volunteer on the day of the event. We may need some Spanish speakers to help translate publications beforehand, and some to help out on the day of the event. I'll be asking for other kinds of help as we get more planning done. If successful, this could be a wonderful way to work toward our mission of public service.

As our new public seminar series comes to a close, Rosalie Russell has been working hard to plan for next year's seminars. She has a great schedule planned, and I hope some of you will be able to help us with talks and plant clinics for these events. This seminar series is a way to get our gardening information directly to folks who want and need it on a bigger scale than individual phone calls to the phone desk, and I am really proud of our efforts this year. I think next year's series will be an even bigger success. My goal is to have a good section of the public not just aware of our public seminars, but actively looking to us for advice and information through this series. This is a great way for folks who don't have time to attend the Master Gardener class to get the information on specific topics at times that fit into their schedules. It is an excellent way for us to reach out to a wide range of gardeners.

As you know, with Mabelle not being able to work for awhile, the Youth Gardening Projects have slowed down. But I still can use help with some current projects that are still active, and anything we can do to move these projects ahead without Mabelle would be a great help to Extension. A number of you have expressed interest in helping out, and I just need someone to coordinate our efforts over the next few months—really just getting volunteers and youth gardening projects in contact with each other. We especially need to keep track of any youth gardening projects we do and how many kids are involved each time. Let me know if you can help or if you have any records to report.

Coming soon to our group will be the database of Skip's answers to gardening questions at the phone desk and a new online hours reporting form. These should help you all both in your volunteer efforts, and in reporting your hours so that we can use the numbers to get more support from all of the agencies that benefit from our work.

The Holiday Party is nearly here, and I would still like to have more slides for an ongoing Power Point slide show for the party. Send me pictures of Master Gardener events and workdays, your own gardens, or garden you have visited this year. Please also get your hours reported for the year so our Awards Committee can be prepared for the party. Then you can come and enjoy a well-earned evening of good company, interesting conversation, and delicious culinary treats. So you there!

Susan Decker,
President

Plant Portrait: *Muhlenbergia capillaries* (Gulf Muhly Grass)

Gulf Muhly Grass (a.k.a. purple muhly, mist grass, hairawn muhly, pink hair grass, and pink muhlygrass)

Gulf muhly, is a humdrum, clumping, upright grass until late summer, when Cinderella-like, it transforms into a stunning, waist-high haze of pinky, purple-red blooms. The wispy flower heads seem to dance in the wind with their color intensified by the afternoon sun. The inflorescence rises like a pink mist about 18 inches above the foliage in late summer and persists for 6-8 weeks. Afterward, the ripe seeds are an attractive tan color. At maturity, Gulf muhly reaches 3 ft. in height and width.



Gulf muhly is native to a large area of eastern North America from Kansas to Massachusetts and south to Florida and Mexico (including parts of the West Indies such as Puerto Rico). It grows as an isolated plant or in dense stands where it is the predominant grass. In Texas this grass is native to the pine flat woods, coastal uplands and beach dunes. The blue-green, needle-thin leaves are un-branched and form a dense basal clump that does not produce runners.

Growing Conditions

This warm season grass tolerates a wide variety of soil types from moist to dry and alkaline to acidic. It will grow in full sun to light shade situations but flower color and form are better in sunnier sites. A tough, but refined native grass, Gulf muhly is drought tolerant when established. It is also tolerant of ocean salt spray



and poor soils. Being a warm season grass, it can be late in starting to grow in the spring. It may also be susceptible to root rot if its feet stay too wet during the winter. It is hardy to zone 5.

Uses

Gulf muhly is great for use in borders and perennial beds where a smaller ornamental grass is desired. Its fine texture contrasts well with other bolder, coarser plants. It is a great groundcover for poor soil areas. Backlit by the late afternoon or setting sun, this plant is spectacular in full bloom. Use it as a specimen in the garden or as a mass to fill a larger area.

Propagation

This grass is easily divided when growth starts in the spring or can be grown from seed (but germination rates can be low). Use fresh, cleaned seed and subject it to a 12 week cold and moist stratification. Dried seed germinates better with a warm moist stratification.

Trivia

In South Carolina, fine baskets can still be purchased woven by traditional artisans using sweetgrass (*Muhlenbergia filipes*), a close relative of Gulf muhly.

Cultivars

'Lenca' (Regal Mist), deep pink blooms
'White Cloud', white blooms

Anne Marie Van Nest

In the Vegetable Garden...

Fall in Central Texas is a wonderful time for growing members of the brassica family, which includes broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, collards, kale, mustard, and turnips. This plant family offers something edible for everyone: roots (turnips), stems (kohlrabi), leaves (cabbage, kale, mustard), flowers (broccoli, cauliflower) and seeds (mustard seeds). These easy to grow and nutritious vegetables are the foundation of my fall garden, but they are also the chomping ground for that mean, green, chewing machine, the cabbage looper.

Bt is the recommended control for this pest, especially if you catch them in their earliest stages of growth. However, they are so prolific this time of year I try to check my plants several times a week and hand pick the larger caterpillars. The smaller ones often get schmeared in the process (yuk!). It's a dirty job but not so bad with a pair of sturdy garden gloves. They can be easy to miss as the tiny ones can look just like the vein of a leaf and the larger ones are sometimes able to blend into the color of the leaf.

Liquid Bt seems to roll off some of the thick, waxy leaves of broccoli, cabbage, kale and collards, so I have found it beneficial to apply Bt as a dust. My brother gave me a low-tech tool called the Dustin Mizer several years ago that I have used quite often for this purpose. When cranked it emits a fine dusting of powder over the plant.



It is especially important to get Bt on the underside of the leaves as that is where the caterpillars are feeding.

Floating row cover can also be used to protect these crops and should be used as soon as the plants go in the ground so the moth never has access to the plants to lay her eggs.

One last tip: after cutting your first head of broccoli, leave the plants in the ground and they will produce tender little side shoots that make for some pretty good eats.

Wishing you a bountiful harvest,
Patty Leander



News & Notes

IMGC Registration is Officially Open! Come Celebrate Gardening in the Natural State May 2-5, 2007!



Arkansas is proud to present the agenda, registration forms, pre and post conference information, speaker bios and garden tour information. Please go to: <http://mg2007.uaex.edu/>
Click on: *Registration Information* and you will see all the information you need to register.

In an effort to reduce expenses and put as much of our efforts into presenting a first class event, we are doing registration via email and the web instead of printing programs. You may choose to register on line using a credit card, or print out your registration form and mail it in with a check.

Note: Early registration runs until December 31, 2006 and the final registration deadline is April 1, 2007.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me. We look forward to seeing you all in next May! We are going to have a Janet B. Carson Extension Horticulture Specialist
icarson@uaex.edu



Little Rock
great time!!

TCMGA Shirts and Hats

Want to look really spiffy as you work in your garden or jaunt about town. Buy yourself a new TCMGA Shirt or Hat. We have white Polo (collared) shirts or Denim long-sleeve, short-sleeve, or sleeveless shirts, all embroidered with the TCMGA logo. We also have caps and bucket hats with our logo. You'll need at least one of these to protect you from the sun while you garden.

Shirt samples will be available at the November and December TCMGA meetings. These shirts are the same as we have ordered in the past. Please note there is a "no return, no refund" policy.

Mail your completed order form with your check to: Mary Lou Bell, 2315 Farnswood Circle, Austin, TX 78704, or place an order in person at the November or December TCMGA meeting. Contact Mary Lou at 441-4048 or maryloubell@sbcglobal.net if you have any questions. Deadline for ordering is December 11, 2006.



Travis County Master Gardener Association - Shirt and Hat Order Form

NAME: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email: _____

Paid - Check No. _____; Cash: _____; Date: _____

Delivered Date: _____

Received By: _____

Long Sleeve Denim Shirt

Small	23.00 ea.	Quantity _____	Amt. _____
Medium	23.00 ea.	Quantity _____	
Amt. _____			
Large	23.00 ea.	Quantity _____	Amt. _____
X Large	23.00 ea.	Quantity _____	Amt. _____
XX Large	24.50 ea.	Quantity _____	Amt. _____

Short Sleeve Denim Shirt

Small	22.00 ea.	Quantity _____	Amt. _____
Medium	22.00 ea.	Quantity _____	
Amt. _____			
Large	22.00 ea.	Quantity _____	Amt. _____
X Large	22.00 ea.	Quantity _____	Amt. _____
XX Large	23.50 ea.	Quantity _____	Amt. _____

Sleeveless Denim Shirt

Small	24.00 ea.	Quantity _____	Amt. _____
Medium	24.00 ea.	Quantity _____	
Amt. _____			
Large	24.00 ea.	Quantity _____	Amt. _____
X Large	24.00 ea.	Quantity _____	Amt. _____
XX Large	25.50 ea.	Quantity _____	Amt. _____

Polo Shirts – White Only

Small	20.00 ea.	Quantity _____	Amt. _____
Medium	20.00 ea.	Quantity _____	
Amt. _____			
Large	20.00 ea.	Quantity _____	Amt. _____
X Large	20.00 ea.	Quantity _____	Amt. _____
XX Large to XXXXL	21.50 ea.	Quantity _____	
Amt. _____			

Hats

Bucket	7.00 ea.	Quantity _____	Amt. _____
Caps	8.50 ea.	Quantity _____	Amt. _____

TOTAL AMT. OF ORDER _____

Notes:

There is a “no return, no refund” policy on shirt orders. Shirt samples will be available at the Nov. & Dec. TCMGA meetings. If you have ordered shirts before, these are the same.

Mail completed order form (check payable to TCMGA) to **Mary Lou Bell, 2315 Farnwood Circle, Austin, TX 78704** or place an order in person at the Nov. or Dec. 2006 TCMGA Meetings. Contact Mary Lou at 441-4048 or mary-loubell@sbcglobal.net if you have questions.



Closing the Garden Gate...

The holidays are quickly approaching. It seems like the year has run by entirely too fast. I know I have garden projects that did not get finished and some that did not even get started. I guess that is what New Year resolutions are supposed to jump start!

Even though it is 82 degrees at the end of November, its time to get everything winterized. Time to get the sensitive plants protected because we know sooner or later we will have some winter.

I would like to thank everyone who volunteered and helped with our “Inside Austin Gardens” tour. It was a great success. Special thanks to Manda Rash who was a tremendous asset to the success of the event. Joyce Cooper did an outstanding job with the publicity. Kudos to all the Master Gardeners who volunteered before and on the day of the event. The TCMGs should be extremely proud—we had over 130 dedicated Master Gardeners who worked tirelessly on the event to help make it a success. We had over 400 visitors enjoying our tour and our educational programs. Our group made over \$2000 profit to fund our future projects. The biggest thanks of all go to the Master Gardeners who opened up their yards and homes for the tour. They were Bob Beyers, Clay Speers, Sue Nazar, Loretta Fischer, Ila Falvey, our friend Laura Joseph, Jack Campbell and Bannockburn Baptist Church, and Patti Leander. These gardeners did a tremendous job readying their fantastic gardens for the tour. They were the most gracious of hosts. When you see them, be sure and thank them again for all their hard work and dedication to our program!

Be sure and come to the Christmas Party on Wednesday, December 6 at 7:00pm. It promises to be a very enjoyable event. Come visit, enjoy the party, celebrate our accomplishments for the year, and start thinking about what we can accomplish next year. I hope to see you there!

In closing,

“Nature gives to every time and season some beauties of its own.” — Charles Dickens

Steve Reynolds

TCMGA 2006 Executive Committee:

President: Susan Decker
Immediate Past President: Becky Waak
VP Programs: Dave Tovar
VP Education: Rosalie Russell
VP Volunteer Coordinator for Certified Master Gardeners: Judy Lawson
VP Volunteer Coordinator for Master Gardeners in Training: Manda Rash
Secretary: Cheryl Harrison
Treasurer: Lindy McGinnis
Publications Director: Jennifer Brown
Membership Director: Rebecca Matthews
Greenhouse Manager: Don Telge
AAGC Representative: Steve Reynolds
State Council Representatives: Jacqueline Johnson, Susan Jung
Past Presidents (Non-voting): Tommie Clayton
Susan Cashin
Peggy Stewart
Bill Boytim
Don Freeman
Will Walker
Ex Officio Member of the Board (Non-voting) Horticulture Extension Service
Agent:
Skip Richter
1600-B Smith Road
Austin, Texas 78721
854-9600, 854-9611
r-richter@tamu.edu

The Compost Bin Team:

Steve Reynolds
Cheryl Harrison
Elaine Dill
Rebecca Mathews
Anne Marie Van Nest
Liz Caskey
Manda Rash
Paula Middleton

