



THE COMPOST BIN

March 2007



Speaker for March: Michael J. Hansen

Michael Hansen has been an active student of the bonsai art for 35 years, and he has 24 years of experience as a bonsai teacher and lecturer. He is Internationally recognized as a leader in the community of bonsai enthusiasts and is a recognized bonsai artist. Michael has received many awards and recognitions for his work including:

- Outstanding American Bonsai Artist Award in 1987
- Minnesota Best of Show Awards in 1980, 1982, 1983 and 1984
- Award of Merit in 1983 at the Midwest Bonsai Show in Chicago, IL .
- Invited Exhibitor at the International Bonsai Congresses in 1987, 1988, 1992 and 1993.

As co-founder and co-owner of the Midwest Bonsai Pottery and MBP Bonsai Studio, Michael is one of two bonsai nurseryman in the US licensed in 2003 by the USDA to import bonsai under quarantine from Asia.

Michael is deeply involved in all things bonsai and his current focus is:

- Refining understanding of horticultural requirements and styling of Japanese Black Pine for Americans
- Maintaining a good working relationship between the USDA and bonsai importers.
- Refining bonsai teaching techniques using modern business tools.
- Studying Bonsai in Japan and in the US annually
- Teaching Bonsai to Clubs and individuals at every opportunity



Jerry Naiser

Message From the President...

March Madness is here! We have so many great opportunities to get out and meet people this month, that we could have a record-breaking year for our educational impact. This is really exciting, but also very daunting, so I need to ask all of you to sign up for at least one event in March, either helping at the planning stage, or set up and break down, or working the events. Consider it a chance to get to know some other Master Gardeners that you may not have spoken much to before, and find shared areas of interest; or get a few buddies together to have fun working an event together. This is our chance to shine, and have a blast at the same time!

First off in March is the Austin Green Living & Home Products Expo at the



Austin Convention Center on March 9-11 — it is the same event as last January's. Skip has a 10' X 20' booth that we will use to give out publications, answer gardening questions, and perhaps do demonstrations. Skip will have his microscope, too. I need a few folks to help me plan out the booth — I have some ideas for making the booth inviting and easy for show-goers to get access to the publications. We also need someone to handle scheduling and entry badges for volunteers over the three days of the event. Then we need folks to set up and take apart the booth, and of course, we need volunteers to offer their time and expertise in creating displays or providing demonstrations. Last year we gave out a LOT of publications and talked to a huge number of people. And because the focus of the show is organic living, this is a chance for you organic gardeners to help folks get away from their non-organic habits.

On Saturday March 10, in addition to the Austin Green Living & Home Products Expo and our public seminar that Rosalie Russell has lined up at Zilker, the Sunshine Gardens Plant Sale is happening, and Michelle Butler is having a plant clinic there. That means we'll have three plant clinic-type events on one day, so if you like plant clinics, that's the day to sign up — you even have a choice of venue. That also means we'll be spreading our supplies thin, but each event has a different focus, so we'll be fine. Let Wayne and Kathie King know if you can either work a plant clinic or help stock each event with publications.

A Passion for Plants, An East Austin Garden Fair is on Saturday, March 17, from 10-4, and it is going to be fantastic! We have a long list of hands-on demonstrations and informational booths, and we have ideas for festive attractions, kids' activities, and free plant giveaways. We want to get folks in East Austin excited about gardening, and help them with whatever kind of gardening advice they might need or want. We need lots and lots of help with this, though. From now to the event, we need people to distribute flyers and get the event promoted at churches, neighborhood associations and media, we need help getting donations and sponsorships, and we need help planning demonstrations and booths, putting together handouts, arranging parking, getting plants delivered to the site, coordinating the plant giveaways, making signs and balloon displays — if you can think of it, we need it done. And on the day of the event we'll need parking attendants, rovers, demonstrators, translators, people to put up and take down signs on street corners, and more. So please, please, make this an event you sign up for in some way. Just let me or Machel at Extension know what you can help with, and ideas are welcome!

Finally, March 31 and April 1 are Zilker Garden Festival days, and we need your help as always with the plant sale booth, the plant clinic booth, and helping AAGC with their other volunteer needs. We'll have sign-up sheets at the March monthly meeting, so please clear some time on your schedule for that weekend. We all love this event, and so I know you are probably already planning to help out, and I thank you for that.

I am so proud of what you are accomplishing, and I tip my hat to you all,

Susan Decker,
President

Plant Portrait: Iresine x 'Blazin' Rose':

What's old is new again...many people think of Iresine as the plant that lived on grandma's window sill with all her African violets. Well, the old-fashioned chicken gizzards, bloodleaf or beefsteak plants with their heart shaped, scooped blood-red or yellow and green leaves are back and improved! This time Iresine has escaped from its precarious perch on the window and is now found as splashes of color in containers and even planted in semi-shaded places in the garden. The new and improved Iresine has a much larger and showier leaf.



The new 'Blazin' Rose' cultivar, introduced by BallFloraPlant in 2006 has stunning foliage colors of high intensity bright rose, pink and dark red. The tropical looking leaves are luminescent when dappled sun hits them.

Iresine is in the Amaranthaceae family along with Joseph's coat, Gomphrena and Celosia (although the foliage looks more like Perilla or Coleus). It is the flower that really resembles these other family members (but the flowers are rarely produced and are insignificant if they are). Iresine is native to the tropical areas of Brazil and Ecuador and hardy to zone 10 (frost tender).

Bushy and vigorous, Iresine 'Blazin' Rose' grows to 18" and can reach 30" in spread. Use it as a container plant or planted in the garden as a groundcover. It is excellent combined with the chartreuse of 'Marguerite' sweet potato vine, or coleus. Try it with blues, pinks or mauve colors as well for a harmonious arrangement.

Part day, morning sun with afternoon shade or partial shady areas in the garden or patio are the best locations. Full sun may cause the foliage to bleach. Too much shade may make the stems get long and brittle, so extra lanky ones should be pruned to keep the plant bushier. Easy to grow in average, well-drained, moisture soil. Generally pest-free, just watch for any signs of white, cottony mealybugs.

Propagate Iresine by taking softwood stem tip cuttings in late winter or spring (which root faster than leaf bud cuttings).

Did you know that there's a website dedicated just to Iresine? Visit Iresine World www.iresineworld.toptropicals.com.

The Iresine family:

Iresine herbstii (Beet plant, Beefsteak plant (so named for the waxy oval puckered leaves) or Blood leaf) has dark red, oval, notched leaf. A traditional window-sill plant.

Iresine aureo-reticulata (Chicken Gizzard Plant) striped green and white, oval, notched, puckered foliage. Red petioles and stems. Not as vigorous as other cultivars. Named Chicken Gizzard because it resembled the shape of the obcordate (inversely heart shape) leaves with dark veins.

Iresine accuminata (Painted bloodleaf) deep purple foliage, leaves sharply pointed.

Iresine lindenii (Linden's bloodleaf) narrow, oblong, dark wine colored foliage.

Iresine lindenii 'Formosa' (Formosa bloodleaf) an old favorite with yellow and red spade shaped, sharply tipped foliage. Very vigorous.

Cultivars:

'Purple Lady' dark purple foliage, cascading habit. 6-8" tall and 4' wide. The first *Iresine* available from seed.

Anne Van Nest

In the Vegetable Garden...

Spring has sprung and summer is just around the corner, so our goal in the vegetable garden is to get things planted as soon as we can so that we can harvest before the insects invade, the diseases infect and the summer inferno arrives (which we all know can be as early as May!). The last average freeze is early to mid March, but there is plenty of mild weather before that magical date, so I usually take a chance and set out some of my tomato transplants in late February/early March. Wrapping the cages with floating row cover is often enough to protect them through a chilly night. In fact, row cover is an excellent product to use anytime you set out transplants as it provides some protection from the wind, cold and insects. I keep it in place until plants start to bloom and then remove it so pollination can take place.



By mid-March it is usually safe to plant green beans, cucumbers, squash, eggplant, peppers and corn.

Wait till the soil warms up a bit more (late March to early April) to plant melons, okra, sweet potatoes and southern peas. There are so many varieties to choose from, but I have listed below a few varieties that have consistently done well in my own garden. Some are old stand-bys and others are newer varieties. Feel free to contact me if you have questions or if you'd like to share some of your favorite vegetable varieties:

Tomatoes: Juliet, Celebrity, Early Girl, Big Beef

Squash: Butterstick, Sunburst, Eight Ball, Zephyr

Cucumber: Suyo, Sweet Success, Tasty Jade

Green Beans: Roma, Contender, Derby

Hot Peppers: Tabasco, Garden Salsa, Mucho Nacho

Sweet Pepper: Gypsy, Jupiter, Cubanelle

Patty Leander



Contender Green



Gypsy Pepper



Juliet Tomato



Suyo Cucumber



Sunburst Squash



Zephyr Squash

The Greenhouse Bench

It has been a busy time in the greenhouse during February with work days scheduled for every Saturday morning as preparations continue for Zilker Garden Festival and A Passion for Plants-an East Austin Garden Fair.



Members of the propagation specialist team were busy seeding and taking cuttings (until they ran out of space on the two propagation benches and Susan Jung offered to care for some seed trays in her own greenhouse). Basil bowls were seeded with 5 different types arranged in wedge sections. The biggest activities included starting about 600 Juliet tomato

plants and taking 450 Rosemary cuttings for two prominent March events. Lush, vigorous Lockwood Forest and French Rosemary branches were graciously donated by Susan Decker from her garden for this propagation project.

A creative group of Master Gardeners constructed our “color” hanging baskets, bowls and containers for Zilker Garden Festival. Annuals (and a few perennials) were arranged into sun, part sun or shade-themed decorative pots and hanging baskets.

Several Master Gardeners tackled the task of re-potting 28 donated roses that have resided outside the greenhouse. These were removed from very large containers and transplanted into three and five gallon size pots for sale at Zilker Garden Festival. Some root pruning occurred and all were pruned back to encourage new outward, spring growth.

To make more growing space in the greenhouse during this time of critical need, the prototype flood bench was removed from the south end of the greenhouse for our new color containers. This flood bench structure will be reinstalled later in the summer for some hydroponic growing experiments. In addition, at the far south end of the greenhouse a temporary bench was constructed using cinder and cement blocks. This additional growing space was instantly filled by the color containers.

The weather was cold and damp, but several Master Gardeners tidied up the outdoor stock plants. They cut back any deadwood and trimmed the excessive growth on these plants growing in large nursery pots by the greenhouse door. Metal labels were also created to permanently record the names.



Broken branches were removed from the trees in the citrus area behind the greenhouse. These were damaged during the January ice storm with the worst happening to the pink grapefruits.

The usual potting up of cuttings to 4" pots occurred and also a subsequent moving up of other 4" pots to gallons.

Members of the Greenhouse Committee had a very productive meeting discussing the plans for the TCMGA space at the Zilker Garden Festival. Thanks to all who attended and contributed.

Huge thanks are also extended to Don Freeman and Ron Miller for their two trips to Peterson Bros, wholesale growers in San Antonio to pick up our annuals and perennials for color pots and hanging baskets. They also brought back plants that the Master Gardeners donated to Zilker Botanical Gardens.

Many slots are still available for certified Master Gardeners and Master Gardener Interns for the TCMGA plant sales area (as well as preparations the week prior and set up just before the event) at Zilker Garden Festival. Contact Marian Stasney at marian@stasney.org or 512-853-9598 if you are interested.

Anne Van Nest



Zilker Garden Festival

2007 is a vintage year for **Zilker Garden Festival**. On Saturday, March 31st and Sunday, April 1st, the annual garden festival will celebrate its 50th year on the grounds of Zilker Botanical Garden. As always, the festival promises to be a fun-filled, one-stop, garden shopping experience. Last year, close to 10,000 people attended the festival, a popular spring outing that draws folks from Austin and surrounding Central Texas communities.

From 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily, the two-day festival will host over 100 vendors from across Central Texas, selling a variety of plants, ceramic pottery, garden furniture, and garden-themed arts and crafts. *Kid's Corner*—a popular destination for the little ones—will offer hands-on nature activities and face painting. And, this year's *Raffle* (drawing at 4 p.m. on Sunday, April 1...tickets \$1 each or six for \$5) will offer fabulous items donated by local businesses (see raffle items at www.zilker garden.org).

Local musicians will be featured on a soundstage in the Rose Garden which will be in its peak blooming season. Our special guest performer will be **Sara Hickman**, performing a special children's concert, "*Super-SingAlong with Sara*", at 1:00 p.m, Sunday, April 1st.

In 2007, *Joys of the Garden* talks and demonstrations will be scheduled both days, with national and local gardening experts sharing their horticultural knowledge with local gardeners. We are especially excited about the revival of the gardening talks...a feature of past festivals that was always a big draw for us. Our keynote speaker for the gardening workshops will be **Felder Rushing**. He has earned national recognition for his playful and quirky approach to gardening, and is probably best known for his award-winning book *Passalong Plants* which was honored in 1994 by the Garden Writers Association as the "best written" garden book in the country. In the fall of 2007, Felder will publish *Tough Plants for Texas, which promises to be a real winner with Central Texas gardeners!* Check out his official website, www.felderrushing.net for more interesting "Felder facts."

The Zilker Garden Festival is the primary fundraiser for the **Austin Area Garden Council**, a volunteer board of directors from over 35 garden clubs. AAGC funds garden improvements and education programs, which reach thousands of schoolchildren every year. And, the City of Austin's **Parks and Recreation Department** working in partnership with AAGC, provides an on-site manager and a staff of gardeners who maintain the 33-acres of gardens year-round.

Please spread the news... this will be a GREAT event!



ZILKER GARDEN FESTIVAL SCHEDULE:

Schedules for the *Joys of the Garden* talks and the musicians' performances will be available at www.zilker garden.org on a special link to the Zilker Garden Festival.

The garden talks include:

Saturday March 31, 2007

- 12:00 pm **CREATE YOUR OWN TROPICAL JUNGLE**
Speaker: Merredith Jiles – The Great Outdoors
- 1:00 pm **ROSES FOR AUSTIN**
Speaker: Dicke Patterson – It's a Jungle
- 2:00 pm **TEXAS-TOUGH PLANTS FOR BUSY GARDENERS**
Speaker: Felder Rushing
- 3:00 pm **"IF WE PLANT IT, WILL IT GROW?"**
Questions & Answers with Travis County Extension Agent
Speaker: Skip Richter –
- 4:00 pm **FREE WATER FROM ABOVE: RAINWATER HARVESTING**
Speaker: Renee Trepagnier

Sunday April 1, 2007

- 12:00 pm **SLOW GARDENING – GETTIN' MORE OUT OF LIFE**
Speaker: Felder Rushing
- 1:00 pm **THE FRAGRANT GARDEN**
Speaker: Mitzi Van Sant-The Fragrant Garden
- 2:00 pm **GREEN SIDE UP – GARDENING IN CENTRAL TEXAS**
Speakers: Cheryl Hazeltine and Barry Lovelace
- 3:00 pm **A NEW LOOK AT OLD ROSES**
Speaker: Glenn Schroeter - Antique Rose Emporium
- 4:00 pm **DESIGN BEFORE YOU PLANT**
7 STEPS TO A DREAM LANDSCAPE
Speaker Robert Leeper - R. Leeper Designs



GARDEN FEST VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES:

GOLF CARTS will be **ROLLING!** Come join the fun as we help Zilker Garden celebrate its 50th Anniversary!

There will be loads of wonderful garden vendors, music, food, and yes, golf carts! How about helping us by driving a golf cart and then go shopping for wonderful spring plants and ideas. You would be getting in free, having a darling new t-shirt, earn hours and meet and greet fellow garden lovers who will be riding the golf carts. Does life get any better than that!! Well, we don't think so....email me and help Michael and I as we golf cart at Zilker Fest.

We will need drivers Friday, March 30th as we prepare for the festival, then all day Saturday, the 31st and Sunday, April 1st. Spring will be in the air and fun will be had by all!! And, even if you cannot drive, please mark your calendars and plan on attending!!!

Carolyn Williams
willscaro@austin.rr.com or 263-2766



MORE GARDEN FEST VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES:

The TCMGA Greenhouse needs your help. This is our major plant sales event and volunteers are needed for the plant sale booth at the Zilker Garden Festival, as well as to help with construction and teardown of the booth. Volunteers will receive **free entrance** to Zilkerfest for the day, have lots of fun, get plant education, meet great people and have all the cold water you can drink. ***In addition to the volunteers listed below, we are also seeking a creative person to help design an attractive booth for maximum attention-getting and appeal.***

To volunteer, you can contact Marian Stasney at marian@stasney.org or 512-853-9598. Please reply with your name, phone number (preferably a cell number), email address, and whether you are an intern or a certified MG. For interns, this will count toward your certification and for MGs it decreases your hourly requirements for the year. Interns are asked to participate in at least one workday prior to the event in order to become familiar with the plants we are selling.

Friday, March 30: 9:00 a.m. 4-6 pickup trucks (and drivers) needed to move plants from the greenhouse and volunteers to help setup the booth.

Saturday, March 31: 4-6 volunteers are needed for the final setup from 8:00 am – 9:30 am. For Zilkerfest, we have 2-hour shifts starting at 9:30 am and ending at 5:30 pm. From 5:30 - 6:30 pm, we also need 2 volunteers to help secure the area for the evening. Note: Since there is no room for chairs in the booth, please don't volunteer for more hours than you think you can stand up. Needed at each shift: 1 cashier, 3 MG's, and 3 Interns.

Sunday, April 1: 4-6 volunteers needed for restocking and watering from 8:00 am – 9:30 am. For Zilkerfest, we have 2-hour shifts starting at 9:30 am and ending at 5:30 pm. From 5:30 - 6:30 pm, we also need 2 volunteers to help secure the area for the evening. Needed at each shift: 1 cashier, 3 MGs, and 3 Interns.

Monday, April 2: 10:00 a.m. until completed, we will need volunteers to help take down the booth and move any unsold plants back to the greenhouse. Hopefully, only 2 pickups will be needed on Monday.

To volunteer, you can contact Marian Stasney at marian@stasney.org or 512-853-9598. Please reply with your name, phone number (preferably a cell number), email address, and whether you are an intern or a MG.

News, Notes & Events



Austin Green Living & Home Products Expo
March 9-11, 2007
Austin Convention Center
www.showtechnology.com

What: Three day event that showcases 150 providers of green building technologies, organic gardening, alternative & flex fuel vehicles, and natural & organic home and personal care products

Thirteen information packed seminars including "How to Have a Greener Home", "Basics of Organic Gardening", "Intro to Permaculture" and "Real Green Building – You Don't Have to Go Weird to Go Green".

Who: 15,000+ expected attendees
Hours: Friday 2pm – 8pm
Saturday 10am – 8pm
Sunday 11am – 5pm
Speakers: The special speakers include Mary McLeod of Austin Energy Green Building Program, Peter Pfeiffer of Barley & Pfeiffer Architects, and Dr. Dason Whitsett of UT School of Architecture: Center for Sustainable Development
Tickets: Tickets are available at the door
Adults 17+ \$7.50
Kids under 17 free
65+ (Friday only) \$5.00

\$1 off admission when anyone brings a used ink toner cartridge or cell phone to recycle through the Capitol Area Food Bank's "Ink Out Hunger" program.

Contact: Susan Seale (512/413-5407)
sseale5@austin.rr.com

Sunshine Community Gardens will hold their annual Spring Plant Sale on Saturday, March 10, 2007 from 9:00 AM till 2:00PM. Come early to get the best selection of exotic heirlooms and old favorites, including tomato, pepper, eggplant and other seasonal vegetable plants.

Sunshine Community Gardens is one of the largest community gardens in the country. The annual plant sale is always a colorful event and a wonderful start to the spring planting season. Besides vegetable, decorative and herb plants, this year's sale features Sunshine Garden giant 64 oz. mugs (great for staying hydrated during those long hours in the garden), T-shirts with the Sunshine Garden logo, bag your own compost and other garden-oriented goodies from a variety of vendors. You also have the chance to view the totally organic gardens up close, sign up for a plot of your own and participate in the silent auction! Knowledgeable gardeners will be on hand to answer any questions you may have about your spring gardening and live entertainment is lined up to keep your toes tapping while you pick out your spring plants.



Mark your calendars now. Sunshine Gardens is located on Sunshine Drive, just north of 45th St., west of Lamar, by the Health Department and School for the Blind.

Additional info at www.main.org/sunshine/.

Great Gardening Ideas!

Saturday, March 10
10:00 AM – 12:30 PM
Zilker Botanical Garden
2220 Barton Springs Road, Austin

The Seasonal Seminar Series continues with “Great Gardening Ideas!” Skip Richter, Travis County Extension Service Horticulturist and Travis County Master Gardeners team together for a fun, fact filled free seminar.

Topics include: 10 Great Low Budget Gardening Ideas, Show Stopping Perennial and Annual Flowers, Gardening in a Grow Box, Cut and Sow...Plant Propagation. Information and examples for making your own tomato cages will be available.

The Plant Clinic will be open during the entire seminar. Bring samples (wrapped in newspaper or in a plastic bag) of your diseased or bug-eaten plants to the Plant Clinic. Get expert guidance on possible solutions to restoring the plant's health.

For more information call 512-854-9600 and ask for the Master Gardeners desk.
<http://www.tcmastergardener.org/html/events.html>

Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center: Sign Up Now for Go Native U -- Go Native U is designed to teach gardeners of all skill levels to become certified native plant gardeners. Interactive classes teach the benefits of gardening native as well as the how-to. Classes may be taken individually or as a series on Saturdays at the Wildflower Center. Sign up for the entire course at Go Native U courses and receive a \$30 discount. <http://www.wildflower.org/?nd=registration>

“Showy, Low Maintenance Perennial and Annual Flowers” continues the 2007 Seasonal Seminar Series. The seminar is lead by Jackie Johnson and Betty Dunn, Travis County Master Gardeners.

Saturday, March 24
10:00 AM – 11:30 AM
North Rural (Travis Ct.) Community Center
15822 Foothill Farms Loop, Build D
Pflugerville

You can grow flowers that will look beautiful and take the extreme weather Central Texas endures. Learn varieties that love the sun, or succeed in shade, or prefer dry soil. Gain knowledge about tough natives and adapted plants that need less care. Hear about showy annuals that contribute color to your garden and fill in voids. Discover that foliage may contribute as much interest in the garden as flowers! Come to this fun and educational event.

The free seminar is sponsored by the Travis County Extension Service with the volunteers from the master gardeners. For more information call 512-854-9600 and ask for the Master Gardeners desk. <http://www.tcmastergardener.org/html/events.html>

The Spring Plant and Seed Exchange will be held on April 4th after the meeting... It's time to get ready for the warmer weather and getting out in our gardens! Pass along your bounty to other members, share your successes. Try something new for your garden, experiment with something different. This year we want to also include gardening catalogs and magazines as well. Don't throw them out, bring them to share. One year we even had Starbucks Coffee, I still have some in my freezer! More next month. Liz Caskey and Roxane Smith

The Right Plant in the Right Spot

Wednesday, April 18
7:00 PM – 9:00 PM
Zilker Botanical Garden
2220 Barton Springs Road, Austin

“The Right Plant in the Right Spot” continues The Seasonal Seminar Series with the Travis County Extension Service Entomologist, Wizzie Brown, and Travis County Master Gardeners Carolyn Williams, Sue Nazar, Susan Decker, Kathryn King and Wayne King. The free seminar concentrates on helping you be successful select plants that work in your situation.

Do you have garden spots with full sun? Learn about plants that adore Central Texas intense sunshine and heat.

The deer keep eating almost every thing you plant? Discover plants that deer have little interest in including in their diet!

Struggling with your lawn? Consider gathering more information about grasses to understand if your grass variety is correct for your situation. Learn which grasses grow best in sun or shade and with limited water.

IPM (Integrated Pest Management)...how to win the bug battle! We all have insects that chew or suck the life out of plants. Understand methods to combat the problems starting with the least expensive and most ecologically friendly.

The Plant Clinic will be open during the entire seminar. Bring samples (wrapped in newspaper or in a plastic bag) of your diseased or insect eaten plants to the Plant Clinic. Get expert guidance on possible solutions to restoring the plant's health.

For more information call 512-854-9600 and ask for the Master Gardeners desk.
<http://www.tcmastergardener.org/html/events.html>

**Heart O' Texas Orchid Society's
36th Annual Orchid Show & Sale,
Orchid Showers
April 21 & 22, 2007**

Zilker Botanical Garden Center
2220 Barton Springs Road, Austin, TX 78746
(512) 477-8672

Show & Plant Sale: 10:00am - 5:00pm Saturday & 10:00am - 4:00pm Sunday.



This year we are very proud to present the 36th Annual Orchid Show here in Austin. There will be hourly raffles of plants and/or plant related items, which will be donated by the 8 vendors we will have at the show. Plus there will be hundreds of blooming orchids and helpful information from vendors as well as society members. Admission to the event will be \$2.00 per person, children 12



and under admitted free. The public is encouraged to attend, so come join us and help celebrate Earth Day, 2007. For a complete schedule of events, or for more information, please contact: Bill Ater, 3803 Greystone Dr., Austin, TX 78731. Telephone (512) 345-3225; E-mail billater@flash.net, or visit our Website: <http://www.hotos.org/>.

May 12 & 13 – Salado Yard and Garden Tour. The 4th annual tour of yards and gardens in the historic village of Salado will highlight characteristic and varied private and public gardens for the Central Texas landscape. From large to small, rambling to organized, annuals to perennials, water wise plantings to courtyard container gardens, there is something for everyone to enjoy. The tour will be Saturday, May 12 from 10 am – 4 pm and Sunday, May 13 from 1 - 4 pm.

Gardens will be self-guided with volunteers helping to answer questions when needed. Tickets will be \$15 to view all gardens and are good for the two days. Tickets can be purchased in advance at the Salado Civic Center, 601 Main, in mid April or on the day of the tour at the Salado Art Center on the grounds of the Civic Center. Maps will be available leading to each location with a description of each garden. Tours will be conducted rain or shine. Strollers and pets are not permitted and wheelchair accessibility is limited.

The tour is sponsored by the Salado Garden Club and the Public Arts League of Salado. All proceeds from the fundraising tour are used for the Village of Salado beautification and art projects. For further information visit the Village of Salado website at www.salado.com or call 254.947.8300.

How Dry I am...Dealing with Drought Conditions

Saturday, June 23
10:00 AM-1:00 PM
Zilker Botanical Garden
2220 Barton Springs Road, Austin

Drought conditions periodically occur in Central Texas. If we're not in a drought now you can be sure another one is on the way! Learn how to cope with dry stretches at this Seasonal Seminar Series that focuses on water conservation. The City of Austin, Texas Forest Service and Master Gardeners, a volunteer arm of the Texas A & M Cooperative Extension Service, share their knowledge at this free seminar.

“Landscaping with Native Plants that Loves Central Texas” is the first topic. Get exposed to natives that look great in the landscape. These plants have adapted to require less water and to survive the extreme temperature fluctuations typical of our region.

“Saving \$\$\$...practical landscape water conservation techniques” features water saving ideas from the City of Austin. The talk also includes basic information on drip irrigation systems.

Learn to capture rainwater. A demonstration will illustrate how to transform a plastic garbage can into a rain barrel. Plants prefer rain water and this allows rain water retention for future use.

Prolonged droughts increase the conditions that are conducive to wildfires. Discover simple precautionary measures that will help protect your property from the devastation of a wildfire.



Creative Alternatives to Grass” explores other water saving ideas. Is it possible to not have grass and love it? Expand your possibilities with these proposals.

A Plant Clinic will be open during the entire seminar in an adjoining room. Bring samples in a plastic bag of your diseased or bug eaten plants to the Plant Clinic. Get expert guidance on possible solutions to restoring the plant’s health.

For more information call 512-854-9600 and ask for the Master Gardeners desk.
<http://www.tcmastergardener.org/html/events.html>

Gardening Websites

Since this drought is over for the time being, there isn't as much urgency to talk about fire prevention, however, a helpful website I received from my sister in Wisconsin is worth seeing.

<http://dnr.wi.gov/org/land/forestry/fire/prevention/wui/index.htm> or dnr.wi.gov.

The article labels the "No Grow Zone" as the first 3 to 5 feet around structures and wooden fences. These should be kept free of all vegetation, living or dead. It's important to consider when planning your planting beds or while pruning, to keep plants away from structures or wooden fences.

Jane Bramlett
Firewise Specialist
TCMGA

Learn about growing garlic from a Texas Garlic Grower: [http://
www.gourmetgarlicgardens.com/](http://www.gourmetgarlicgardens.com/)

Closing the Garden Gate...

I was on a much appreciated vacation in Progreso, Mexico located on the Yucatan Peninsula in February and was amazed at the vegetation. Many of the same plants that are native or well-adapted to our area are thriving there. I saw tons of cedar sage in full bloom with their little red flowers popping up off the forest floor. The Esperanza/Yellow Bells were trees about the size of a Redbud. Flame acanthus, agave, twistleaf yucca and softleaf yucca were abundant. One of the most fascinating trees I encountered was the Silk Cotton Tree. The fibers are wrapped around the fruit until the fruit ripens and then the fibers fall to the ground and are as soft as a kitten. It was fascinating to see all these plants in full bloom growing wild among the Mayan ruins receiving no care. It has renewed my ambition to go mostly native with a more natural look to my own yard.

Here at home, Spring is coming and gardening activities are gearing up (Daylight Saving Time begins on March 11). It's a great time to take advantage of the opportunities available for you to support our wonderful volunteer organization by working the phone desk, writing an article for the *Compost Bin*, speaking to an organization or club, helping at a seminar, working at the greenhouse to get ready for Zilker Garden Festival or dozens of other worthwhile projects.

In closing...
Rebecca Mattews

Peace Within A Garden
By Lady Langham Rosamund



(Photo by Ramona Urbaneck)



Queen Butterfly on Blue Mistflower
(Photo by Ramona Urbaneck)

There is peace within a garden
A peace so deep and calm
That when the heart is troubled
It's like a soothing balm
There is life within a garden
A life that still goes on
Filling the empty places
When older plants have gone
There is glory in a garden
At every time of year
Spring Summer Autumn Winter
To fill the heart with cheer
So ever tend your garden
It's beauty to increase
For in it you'll find solace
For in it you'll find peace

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