



## THE COMPOST BIN

April 2007



### Speaker for April: Juanice Davis

Juanice Davis is the owner of "It's a Jungle", a great shop on Kramer lane. They sell orchids, roses, and other exotics. If you haven't been out there, it's worth the trip.

She will do a talk on Orchids, and bring a few with her to show us.

Another thing of note...It's a Jungle has a large selection of citrus trees. I love citrus, and since Mar-bridge Gardens closed, finding some varieties can be difficult.

Here is the link to her website: <http://itsajungleaustin.com/index.html>



*I am looking for a speaker on vegetable gardening. If anyone knows of one, please pass the contact info on to me.*

Regards,  
Jerry Naiser

### Message From the President...

What a great month March has been! And I don't mean just because of the great weather. We had the busiest time, but we all came together in a remarkable way.

Master Gardeners gave two public seminars in March, and reached over a hundred people with great advice, tips, and recommendations for Spring gardening. People coming to these seminars are staying through all of the sessions, not coming and going at a high turn-over rate, and that means that what we are providing with these public seminars is both of high quality and geared toward what people want. Many thanks to **Rosalie Russell** for organizing the events, and for my fellow speakers at Zilker, **Ron Miller** and his intrepid assistant **Don Freeman**, along with **Tommie Clayton** and **Kevin Washington**, and thanks also to **Skip** for his talk, which always guarantees that folks will stay to the end. **Wayne and Kathie King** ran the plant clinic, and did a great job as always. Thanks to **Jackie Johnson** and **Betty Dunn** for their talk in Pflugerville, which I'm sure made a big impression.

The Austin Green Living and Home Products Show at the Austin Convention Center took three days' worth of volunteers to talk to the public about organic gardening. The attendance was much lower than last year's event, and there were not as many actual gardening booths as last time, but it was interesting to note that the few people who did come to the show were all clustered around our booth! And although it seemed like there weren't enough people in the building to hear the talks, Skip, Gani and I all ended up with a decent audience for our talks. Thanks to all of you who volunteered your time—we reached some folks who don't normally come to our other festivals. Whether or not it will be worth doing again is debatable, but we did



make at least some headway with the Weed and Feed issue!

Congratulations to the Sunshine Gardens Plant Sale folks! I heard the attendance was outstanding—people lined up around the corner. Thanks to **Michelle Butler** and **John Papich** for running a successful plant clinic and passing out flyers for our Garden Fair.

A Passion for Plants, An East Austin Garden Fair was a brilliant success, thanks primarily to many dedicated Master Gardeners. It was a really fun and relaxed atmosphere, and the fairgoers stayed for a long time and had a chance to get all of their questions answered. Their written comments showed that they appreciated our having this event in the community, and were happy to find so much gardening information in one place, especially when they were having a hard time finding any advice before. I made many wonderful new friends preparing for the event, and even more on the day of the fair! We had a wonderful group of volunteers, whose cheerfulness and helpfulness combined with their enthusiasm to give the fairgoers more than they had expected. We had more than 250 people come out, which was a really good turn out for the first year. Thanks go to so many people, but I'd like to especially thank **Kevin Washington**, who gave great advice at the planning meetings, helped get us plants and compost, and got the word out before the event as well as rounding up folks on the day of the fair by handing out flyers on the streets and in front of stores and getting people excited about coming to the fair. **Emily Neiman** and **Karen Banks** with Sustainable Foods and **Suzanne Hurley** with the Green Corn Project are new Master Gardener interns, but they are also experienced gardening teachers, and Emily and Suzanne's demonstrations and booths were keys to the event's success. Thanks go to **Tommie Clayton**, **Susan Jung**, **Becky Waak** and **Steve Reynolds** for organizing and running three propagation tables at the fair, which were also a big hit with the crowd. Thank you, **Cheryl McGrath**, for many pre-event tasks, but especially for finding and bringing the two lovely ladies who were local gardeners we honored at the fair, **Velma Clemens** and **Celia Pearson**. Their words about many years of pleasures in the garden were an inspiration, and really made the event a special community gathering. Thanks to **Eleanor Pratt**, whose organizing expertise was a huge help. She was intrepid and tireless in getting us all sorts of donations and buying all the little things we needed to actually make it a fair. Thanks to another intern, **Leslie Ernst**, the fair looked professional with a beautiful banner and matching table signs, which she made the week of the event, with a very short lead time. She also brightened up the event with her enthusiasm, and actually got me to eat breakfast! We could not have done this event without **many Master Gardeners** who showed up to do whatever they were asked to do, and I am indebted to all of you for being so flexible and agreeable, and for helping set up and take everything back to Extension afterwards. I hope you had a chance to visit with **Vernon Bailey** with the Holistic Education and Health Network, who was giving free massages, and with the **ladies from KAZI** who helped us advertise the fair and came to enjoy the fair themselves and stayed all day. I can hardly wait until next year!

This year is the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first county Extension agent, and the centennial is being marked by resolutions in the State House of Representatives and the Senate. I will be there for the ceremony and will report back.

All this, and we haven't had Zilker Garden Festival yet!

Susan Decker,  
President

## Plant Portrait: Chinese Fringe Flower (*Loropetalum chinense*)

It seems that masses of hot pink blooms are everywhere this spring. After a monochrome green and brown landscape all winter, the intense (even sizzling) fuchsia pink blooms of the Chinese fringe flower is a much welcomed infusion of color for the garden.

The original species (*Loropetalum chinense*) is native to Japan, southern China and northeast India. It was discovered in the 1880's and languished in relative obscurity until the Chinese took the dull green leaved parent with white blooms and added red (*rubrum*) to the plant. Voila! The result was a spectacular deep rich, maroon/burgundy foliage and hot pink blooms. The introduction of the maroon foliage and pink flowered cultivars from China in the 1990's was said by Plant Guru Michael Dirr to be the most significant happening in zone 7 to 9 gardening.



The showiness of the narrow, strap-shaped petals resulted in the botanical name (*Loropetalum*) being derived from the Greek words *loron* (a strap) and *petalon* (a leaf or petal). The recently introduced pink flowering cultivars bloom earlier than the white species and have a long season of bloom. Some even re-bloom sporadically during the summer and fall.

The deep maroon-burgundy foliage is often more intense in the spring when new growth emerges. As the summer progresses, some cultivars will "mature" to greenish red or have just a tinge of red, while others keep most of the maroon color. The foliage is usually evergreen through the winter (at least in zone 8).

Chinese fringe flower grows larger than many people envision. It will reach a medium size shrub or small tree height at maturity. A few cultivars are compact and only reach 6' ('Sizzling Pink') with a spread of the same distance. Others reach a greater height (like the species) and can reach 15-20 ft. and eventually develop rich brown bark. Do not plant this as a foundation plant! Give it the room it deserves (although it is very tolerant of pruning if it outgrows the space). This plant can be pruned into a formal hedge but it does not bloom as prolifically. It is great unclipped as an informal hedge.

Full sun to partly shaded sites are ideal. Slightly sunnier sites will result in a fuller plant with more blooms. Fringe flower thrives in peaty (mostly acidic) and well-drained (gravelly) soil. Some foliage chlorosis might appear if grown in a high pH (excessively alkaline) soil.

Fringe flower is hardy for zone 7 ('*Zhuzhou Fuchsia*' being the most cold tolerant) and zone 8 (such as 'Purple Majesty'). Mulch the shallow roots for protection if growing in Zone 7. Field testing in North Carolina showed many cultivars surviving temps down to about zero degrees with just a little tip dieback. This plant is easy to propagate from cuttings.

Ok, here's the down-side... this plant is not very drought tolerant and requires moderate amounts of watering. The plant looks (and blooms) better if the soil is kept somewhat moist. Mulch it well to protect the roots and conserve water.

Chinese fringe **flower** (*Loropetalum chinense*) is sometimes confused with the bigger and very different white blooming, Chinese fringe **tree** (*Chionanthus retusus*). Check for botanical names and avoid confusion.

Cultivars available: (heightened interest in this plant has resulted in an explosion of cultivars, some of which may be duplicates).

*Loropetalum chinense* var. *rubrum* cultivars:

'Blush' (syn. 'Razzleberri', 'Monraz') rose-red new growth turning medium green, rose pink blooms.

'Burgundy' (syn. 'Sizzling Pink') reddish purple new growth turning purple-green, pink blooms.

'Daybreak's Flame' pinkish new growth turning green, hot pink blooms.

'Fire Dance' ruby red new growth turning green with a reddish hint, dark pink blooms.

'Pipa's Red' dark purple foliage, bright pink blooms.

'Plum Delight' (syn. 'Hines Purpleleaf', 'Hines Burgundy' and 'Pizzazz'), rosy red new growth turning dark bronze, dark rose blooms.

'Plum Passion', blackish maroon new growth, hot pink blooms

'Purple Majesty', deep burgundy new growth turning brilliant purple, hot pink blooms.

'Raspberry Fringe' bronze-red new growth turning olive-green, pink blooms.

'Ruby', ruby red new growth, pink blooms, dwarf

'Suzanne' deep reddish maroon foliage and pink flowers.

'Zhuzhou Fuchsia', blackish maroon foliage and fuchsia colored blooms.

*Loropetalum chinense*, green foliage and white blooms cultivars:

'China Pink' wine colored foliage and clear pink blooms.

'Ming Dynasty' crimson new growth turning green, reddish pink blooms.

'Snow Dance' green foliage, white blooms

'Tang Dynasty' crimson new growth turning green, pink blooms.

Anne Van Nest





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## AAGC News:

What's new at Zilker Botanical Garden—an event coordinator has been hired, several public event leaders are currently being interviewed, the Zilker docents have formed their own club (Docents of Zilker Botanical Garden) and have been accepted as members of AAGC, rainwater collection tanks have been installed to support the Isamu Taniguchi Oriental Garden, a new fence has gone up around the Hartman Prehistoric Garden, and lilies have been ordered for the first planting of a 3-year installation process in a newly created bed near the Rose Garden.

Nominations for the election of the 2007-2008 AAGC Officers were presented to the AAGC Board of Directors. The election will be held at the April meeting of AAGC.

Your Austin Area Garden Council was in overdrive for the past few months preparing for the 2007 Zilker Garden Fest that celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Zilker Botanical Garden. By the time you receive this update, the Fest will be over and its organizers and volunteers will be enjoying a well-deserved rest.

There was an all out effort to pre-sell as many entry tickets as possible. I'm happy to report that TCMGA made the largest contribution of ticket sales again this year. Many of you also purchased raffle tickets... I hope you won! The prizes were terrific. Businesses and individuals supporting the raffle included Lowe's, Best Buy, HEB, Home Depot, Dillard's, Wal-Mart, Sears, Patrick Lane Photography, Verna and Susan Grice, Bicycle Shop, The Great Outdoors and many, many more.

If you did not have an opportunity to attend Zilker Garden Fest this year, you missed a really special event. The opening ceremony featured Mayor Will Wynn, Austin City Council representatives, and Parks and Recreation leaders. Several individuals who began volunteering at ZBG 50 years ago were recognized for their contributions as were past presidents of AAGC. Performances by the City of Austin Pipe and Drum Corps and 85 members of the Westlake High School band contributed to the festive atmosphere.

GSD&M donated time and staff to create this year's branding which appeared on all of our newspaper advertisements, the website, magazine articles, and t-shirts. They even helped design a special children's t-shirt.

For the very first time, live music filled the air from the stage in the Rose Garden and Bowie High School strolling musicians. Our thanks go to CSE for donating the stage and sound system. As our AAGC president Laura Joseph said, "It's not exactly what the Rolling Stones had but it's pretty darn close."

Another new event this year, "Joys of the Garden" featured talks on creating your own tropical jungle, roses, rainwater harvesting, landscape design, and fragrant gardens. Felder Rushing, who most of you are familiar with, was our keynote speaker. His presentations were on Texas Tough Plants and Gardening for Busy People.

As of this writing the final numbers aren't in but it's my guess that this was the best year yet for Zilker Garden Fest. The bar has definitely been raised!

A big THANKS! to all of you who volunteered either in our very own Master Gardener booths and/or for AAGC. Without the dedicated work of our volunteers, none of this would have been possible.

Manda Rash  
AAGC Representative

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### In the Vegetable Garden...

If you planted potatoes be sure to pull dirt or mulch up around the leaves as they grow. The tubers will develop along the stem and you want to protect them from sunlight or else they will turn green.

And speaking of mulch, try to keep all the soil in your garden covered with mulch or compost as we enter the summer months. It will help retain moisture and regulate the soil temperature.

Beans, cucumbers, squash, melons, peppers and eggplants can all be planted now, but I wait till mid or late April to plant those heat lovers like okra, southern peas, and sweet potatoes. And don't forget to plant some Swiss chard. Though we generally consider it to be a cool season crop, it seems to do pretty well through the spring and summer, especially if given a little afternoon shade. And if you don't have room in your vegetable garden, it would make a pretty nice, edible landscape plant.

Here's to a bountiful harvest,  
Patty Leander





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## The Greenhouse Bench

It has been a very busy time in the greenhouse during March with work days scheduled for every Saturday and Monday mornings to prepare for Zilker Garden Festival and A Passion for Plants, an East Austin Garden Fair.

Most of the activities involved potting up of cuttings or vegetable and herb seedlings into 4" pots and moving up other 4" pots to gallons. Several applications of half-strength fertilizer were given to the newly re-potted roses, color patio pots, coleus and others needing a gentle nudge to "get growing". Once the weather warmed up to a comfortable temperature, the entire greenhouse was fertilized with full strength 20:20:20.

The deluge of rain in early March was much needed for our landscape plants and to add significant quantities to the greenhouse rain collection system. Just before switching off the city water and turning on the rain water to irrigate inside the greenhouse, the four tanks indicated 1700 gallons each.

Thanks are extended to Joette Pelliccia for her trips to Texas Disposal Systems composting facility to pick up the Container Mix that we use in the greenhouse combined with the peat moss based Sunshine bales for our potting soil. Also Molly Clark deserves thanks for her numerous transportation duties getting plants from the greenhouse to the Austin Community College (Riverside Campus) for the East Austin garden event.

And to all those that responded to our plea for donated gallon pots, our appreciation is extended. The greenhouse was totally out of these recycled pots and there still were loads of tomatoes needing potting up!

Thanks also to all the certified Master Gardeners and Master Gardener Interns who worked in the TCMGA plant sales area (as well as helped with preparations the week prior and set up just before the event) at Zilker Garden Festival.

Anne Van Nest

## Skip's Corner: East Austin Garden Fair - "A Passion for Plants"

I have for some time wanted to see us offer more educational events in east Austin. Look at a map of Austin area nurseries and you'll see that virtually all are west of the interstate. Most gardening events also tend to target and attract residents from central and west areas. Many of you have also had the same desire to program more effectively for east side residents. Jackie Johnson brought the idea up last year at a meeting and it was well received.

Our initial effort was to work to pull together groups, individuals and organizations from the east side to form a committee to plan the event. The first meeting was held late last fall. Things moved slowly at first but thanks to lots of hard work and persistence by Susan Decker the plans moved forward and by the time March 17th arrived the combination of east side groups, Extension and many hard working Master Gardener volunteers resulted in a superb educational event. Special thanks also to Kevin Washington who helped pull together seeds and plants for giving away to participants and who along with his dad spent the day at some key high traffic areas in east Austin promoting the event and sending folks our way.



Hats off to everyone who helped launch our maiden voyage of the East Austin Garden Fair. It was a resounding success in many ways. Over 20 educational booths, exhibits and presentations were available for participants. Several bilingual Master Gardeners were on hand roaming about to assist in various booths with communication. Soil preparation, planting, propagating (by our ubiquitous Plant Prop specialists), vegetable gardening, fragrant plants, tree planting and training, oak wilt, insects, a plant clinic, vermiculture, seed saving, the famous Grow Box, EarthKind™ roses, flowering plants, irrigation, composting, nutrition, native and adapted plants, etc. etc. etc.



Add to this dozens of free educational handouts (many in Spanish and English), hundreds of free plants and seed packets given away, face painting and fun learning activities for kids and you've got one great gardening event. Oh yeah, and music from the world's largest "boom box" (Honda Element with 4 doors and back hatch open wide and radio cranked) courtesy of Velia Sanchez-Ruiz.

Thanks to all who helped with the planning, hauling, setup and breakdown, and the many educational publications and activities. Once again you all outperformed all expectations and showed just how amazing and effective you are at putting on successful, first rate programs. We counted 267 participants entering the Garden Fair area which I think was great for this first event. Comments were OVERWHELMINGLY positive, enthusiastic and appreciative. Participants not only came but they stayed...

and stayed...and asked LOTS of questions. The two ladies honored as special gardeners for the event were a hoot. They have been gardening in east Austin for a very long time and their love for plants and people really showed.

Those of you in booths have expressed just how much fun it was to have such eager and interested folks coming by the booths, sometimes several times! I spoke to various participants throughout the day and the vast majority had never been to an Extension program before or called the office for gardening advice. It was a very good opportunity to tell a lot of new people about the free services and information we offer.

I think this year's East Austin Garden Fair has great potential to become an annual event. I hope in the future we can draw more partnering organizations and sponsors to keep this a uniquely east side event. We intend to start meeting to organize next year's event in late summer or early fall so get in touch with me or Susan Decker if you are interested in helping out or if you have contacts that would be useful in taking the event to the next level.

Skip Richter



## Skip's Plant Pick: "Outdoor Aromatherapy"

Gardening is such a multi-sensory blessing -- delectable flavors, beautiful sights, and wonderful scents! No wonder we enjoy it so much. When it comes to the ornamentals in my landscape I must confess a strong preference for those that offer the added bonus of perfumed delights.

I do grow flowers for their beauty, but it is those that offer fragrance that really get the majority of my time and attention. I have a few roses that are just drop dead gorgeous, but most are chosen for the many great fragrances they offer. In case you are unfamiliar with roses, their aromas range from baby powder to spice to various perfumes. It is always a pleasant surprise to approach a blossom nose first to see what unique blend of light, subtle scents it offers.



*Hedychium (White Butterfly Ginger)*

(*Hedychium*) and several types of Citrus. But the hands down winner of the "lack of subtlety award" is Texas Mountain Laurel, a native of the Texas Hill Country. The spring blooms will literally bowl you over with a syrupy-strong "grape bubble gum" aroma.

There are dozens of delightfully fragrant blooming plants including annuals, perennials, vines, shrubs and trees, most of which are more mannered in their approach to our noses. Sweet osmanthus, night blooming jasmine, four-o'clock, Datura, butterfly bush, gardenia, Confederate jasmine, and sweet viburnum are but a few familiar examples. Many roses also provide wonderfully fragrant blooms.

Enough said about the fragrance of blooms. What about foliage? Many plants contain volatile substances in and on their leaves that offer a pleasing added dimension to our olfactory experiences in the landscape.

This is one of my favorite benefits of growing herbs in the garden. I guess you could call it

Then there are those plants with absolutely overwhelming blooms that knock you over with their heavy fragrance. They hit the olfactory system with the subtlety of an 18-wheeler... kinda like a Jr. High English teacher I once had who apparently thought perfume should be applied with a turkey baster!

Among these wonderfully overpowering flowers are Gardenia, White Butterfly Ginger



*'Holy' Basil*

aromatherapy, but I can't pass by a rosemary, basil, or lemon verbena without pulling a half-closed hand over the shoots for a fresh scent to carry with me through my gardening activities. Whenever I am reworking a patch of oregano, Mexican mint marigold, lemon verbena or lemon balm I have to pause to sample the scents they each offer.

There are many new basil varieties that are available to gardeners. This year why not try some new types of basil to spice up your garden. In addition to the basic Genovese type of basil gardeners can now grow Lemon, Clove, Cinnamon, Licorice, Thai, and Holy basil. Last season I grew a number of different types primarily for the fragrance they leave in your hand as you brush over them when working in the garden.

The citrusy/pine aroma of Copper Canyon Daisy (*Tagetes lemmonii*), the strong spicy scent of Rosemary, the licorice scent of Mexican Mint Marigold and the fresh bay scent of crushed Red Bay (*Persea borbonia*), native in east Texas, are among my favorite plants with fragrant foliage. Then I can't stop before mentioning the many types of mint and thyme, which when planted around the stones of a pathway yield their fragrance with passing foot traffic.

This spring include a few fragrant plants along your garden pathways, or perhaps in a container next to the porch swing. They make a walk through the garden even more enjoyable.

Skip Richter



*Copper Canyon Daisy*



*Citrus Blooms*

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## News, Notes & Events

**Garden to Garden Plant Exchange** - Following the April meeting share your bounty with your gardening buddies. Please have your contributions potted, bagged, labeled, and with instructions for care. Don't forget those extra magazines and catalogs along with your seeds, cuttings, and bulbs to pass along. We only ask you to remember to retrieve your leftovers as the Garden Center has no means to handle them. We need volunteers to help clean up after the exchange as the Center has a prompt closing time. I'm looking forward to it! Roxane Smith and Liz Caskey

### **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 36<sup>th</sup> 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](mailto:billater@flash.net), or visit our Web-site: <http://www.hotos.org/>.

**"Math for Gardeners, Learn to Multiply and Divide your Favorite Plants"**

Saturday, April 21, 9:30 AM - 12:30 PM Sunset Valley City Hall, 3205 Jones Road

The Travis County Master Gardeners Propagation Team presents a free propagation workshop. This presentation is a hands-on program. Participants leave with lots of new cuttings and plants and know-how to take care of them.

Registration is required. Call the Travis County Extension Service at 854-9600, Monday through Friday, and ask for the Master Gardeners desk. Information on the web at: <http://www.tcmastergardener.org/html/events.html>. Parking available at the rear of Sunset Valley City Hall is very limited. Additional free parking is available directly across the street at the Toney Burger Center. Master Gardeners earn Continuing Education Credits by attending. Open to the public.

**Texas Cooperative Extension, McLennan County and McLennan County Master Gardeners** will be co-sponsoring an EarthKind™ Rose Symposium in Waco on Saturday, April 21, 2007, from 9:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m., at Texas State Technical College Campus, 3801 Campus Drive, just off I-35, north of Waco. Pre-registration is required.

EarthKind™ roses, the ultimate landscape shrub, will be featured at the symposium. Regardless of gardening experience, you will learn what is important in growing showy, healthy roses and leave with your own "test" rose to take home.

EarthKind™ roses are those determined by Texas A&M horticulturists to be the most beautiful, most kind-to-the-earth landscape roses. In any soil type or geographic area, these roses grow without chemicals or deadheading and with very little water and pruning.

Speakers include: Dr. Steve George, Professor and Landscape Horticulture Specialist, Texas Cooperative Extension, Dallas; Mark Chamblee, owner Chamblee Rose Nursery in Tyler, one of the top rose growers in the country; Gaye Hammond, nationally recognized rosarian and President Houston Rose Society; Steve Huddleston, Senior Horticulturist, Fort Worth Botanic Garden; and Rachelle Kemp, Landscape Design Instructor, Texas State Technical College, Waco.

Price for the symposium is \$56.00 per person. Pre-registration is required by April 10, 2007. Registration includes snacks and beverages, all course materials, and a 2-gallon rose.

To pre-register or for more information, please call McLennan County Extension office at 254-757-5180 or visit [www.mclennanmastergardeners.org](http://www.mclennanmastergardeners.org) to download the registration form.



**May 12 & 13 – Salado Yard and Garden Tour.** The 4<sup>th</sup> 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](http://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>

### **Inside Austin Gardens, 2008**

The search is on! We are looking for volunteers to open their gardens to the public in 2008. Hopefully our tour will be the last weekend of April, or the first weekend of May. To be finalized later. It is my hope that this year we can present a theme garden or two, and at least one garden that will serve as a demonstration of rain water harvesting and dispensation. It seems that as more emphasis is placed on water use efficiency, a presentation of the effectiveness of the system is in order! As Steve pointed out last year, a primary purpose of our Tour is to demonstrate to the home gardener what they can actually accomplish in their own gardens. I would also like a garden that has been designated as a wildlife habitat.

We will be particularly looking for three gardens in the Pflugerville, Round Rock area to be on our Tour. I know we have some avid gardeners there and your consideration and or nomination of a garden would be appreciated. Our selection committee will hopefully be in position and ready to begin taking a look at gardens by mid April.

I am also looking for at least one avid vegetable gardener and of course, as always we just need some beautiful gardens. If you garden with succulents or roses, I would love to hear from you.

Secondly, we will need your help with committee positions. I would like to have the committees lined up by the end of May so that we can all be thinking about our rolls over the summer and be ready to get the whole thing organized in the fall. If you are interested in helping with advertising, promotion, brochures, or organization, please let me know. We also need a good photographer and program designer!

Please contact Joyce Cooper: 330-0954; or E-Mail: [janncooper@aol.com](mailto:janncooper@aol.com).

### **Spring House Cleaning And Yard Cleanup For Firewise**

Maintenance of home and landscaping are year-round projects. The tradition of annual spring housecleaning can be extended to include spring yard cleanup as well. It's the best time for more aggressive weeding, pruning, debris cleanup and garden preparation.

It seems the live oaks have shed zillions of leaves. Roofs and gutters can hold this flammable debris without being noticed from the ground level. The roof is the most vulnerable part of a home near a wildfire. Fire-resistant roofs, such as metal, tile, and composition roofs are good but the combustible debris that builds up on roofs in the fall and early spring makes these roofs vulnerable.

The Wildfire Preparedness Checklist includes having:

- Roof and gutters clean of debris
- Adequate clearance of weeds, tall grasses and brush
- Leaves raked
- Trees pruned 10 ft. up from base of trunk

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- Debris cleared from beneath trees and near structures
  - Tree limbs pruned at least 10 ft. from roof or within 15 ft laterally from chimney
  - Firewood and other burnable items stored at least 30 ft. from the house
  - Small amounts of mulch used near wooden structures

The drought isn't over. Rains in December, January, and March gave us a sign of relief, but the lake levels and ground levels are still low. Burn bans and Red Flag Fire Danger warnings came again as the rains stopped in February and the winds became intense.

As we prune, mow, rake, clear the debris, compost the collection and water well for the aesthetics, better air circulation, help reduce plant disease and for our healthy exercise we also are helping our homes be more fire safe.

**The City of Austin** held a press conference to announce plans to take on the challenge of becoming certified by the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) as a Community Wildlife Habitat. Council Member Lee Leffingwell, and co-sponsors Council Member Mike Martinez and Mayor Will Wynn, are sponsoring a council resolution to register Austin as the first Community Wildlife Habitat in Texas and to develop an implementation plan to become officially certified by NWF.

Creating wildlife habitat gardens not only helps local wildlife survive in urban areas but also promotes water conservation, builds healthier communities, mitigates the impacts of climate change and gives Austinites the opportunity to take action right in their own backyards and neighborhoods. If you are interested in finding out how to create or certify your garden go to [www.nwf.org](http://www.nwf.org).

*What is a Community Wildlife Habitat?* A certified Community Wildlife Habitat is a community that has provided habitat for wildlife throughout the community--in individual backyards, on school grounds, and in public areas such as parks, community gardens, places of worship, and businesses. It is a place where the residents make it a priority to create habitat for wildlife by providing the four basic elements that all wildlife needs to survive: food, water, cover and places to raise young. The community has also educated its residents about sustainable gardening practices such as reducing or eliminating chemical fertilizers and pesticides, conserving water, planting native plants, removing invasive plants, harvesting rainwater, and composting. It has held workshops about gardening for wildlife and organized community events such as stream or trail cleanups to make the community healthier for wildlife and people alike. In the end, a Community Wildlife Habitat creates a place where people, flora, and fauna can all flourish. <http://www.nwf.org/community/>

## Closing the Garden Gate...

Last year several master gardeners bought owl boxes from the Owl Shack®, you might remember Cliff Shackelford spoke at one of the monthly meetings. I promptly took mine home with anticipation and hung it on a Live Oak in my backyard. I kept a watchful eye on it for MONTHS in hopes of catching a glimpse of a screech owl who had deemed my backyard worthy of its home. I was hearing from other master gardeners that residents had moved into their new owl boxes. What could be wrong with mine? Did I not hang it correctly? Was it too low? Was my backyard just not good enough to entice a screech owl? I was distraught! Until one day I was looking at the owl box longingly and there he was! The cutest little screech owl you've ever seen. I named him "Wahoo" in response to my exhilaration in discovering his occupancy.

His presence has not gone unnoticed by the other residents of my backyard. The birds and squirrels are NOT happy he moved into the neighborhood. The cardinals, *especially*, yell at him every night. The finches have actually gone to his box and pounced up and down on it screaming for him to leave. The Blue Jays dive bomb him constantly. The squirrels will peek in and give him what for. Wahoo just maintains his post undaunted by these taunts. It is the best entertainment in town.



I read that Wahoo will probably leave in late May but hopefully another resident will come later this year and bring more joy to my backyard. If you don't have an owl box I suggest making one or purchasing one so you too can enjoy this wonderful glimpse of backyard wildlife.

*(The attached pictures are of Whodini who lives in Ramona Urbanek's backyard.)*

Rebecca Matthews

In closing...

Every garden is unique with a multitude of choices in soils, plants and themes. Finding your garden theme is as easy as seeing what brings a smile to your face.

- Teresa Watkins, [Gardening With Soul](#)



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