



# THE COMPOST BIN

September 2007



## Speaker for August: Amanda Moon

Amanda Moon, co-owner of Trinity Gardens here in Austin began her career in Horticulture 13 years ago, after graduating high school in 1993. She began working at "It's About Thyme" in 1994 and continues there today, helping with public presentations and annual plant shows.

She received a B.A. in Geography, with a double minor in Horticulture and English from the university formally known as Southwest Texas State University and she also is a thesis short of a Master's in Physical Geography. She received training as a Master Gardener in Hays County during her time at Southwest Texas.



She founded Trinity Gardens in the late nineties with her mother (business partner) and they attended plant shows all over Texas and Oklahoma selling plants they grew themselves. They started out specializing in herbs and antique roses and then also added many native and adapted perennial species to their "catalog" of plants.

In the last few years (due to rising travel costs), Trinity Gardens has focused on landscaping, design and consultation and lavender growing. Her goal when landscaping: "To meet the customer's needs primarily using plants that will survive the drought to flood conditions that central Texas is famous for." The other facet of the business is supplying lavender farms around Texas with lavender for their fields and retail outlets.

Join Amanda, at the Zilker Botanical Gardens Clubhouse, September 5, 2007 at 7:00 p.m. when she will present: "The Wonders of Herb Gardening" and incorporating herbs into the landscape.

Regards,  
Jerry Naiser

## Message From the President

Now that we are more than half-way through the year, I'd like to start compiling a file of what we have accomplished in 2007. This will be put in our association files and will be used by Skip to report our activities, but it also will create the basis of an application for the Association of the Year Award at the 2008 State Conference. What I need is any information you have about our projects, events, speaker's bureau talks, gardening activities, and educational seminars. It can be a description of the event or activity with an approximate number of MGs who participated and the approximate number of people impacted by the event, and where possible I'd like some photos to add to the file that show MGs volunteering or the public being educated, or the ongoing stages of a project and completed projects. If you don't have time to write something up, at least let me know that the event happened so I can gather information about it and



report your efforts. I know you have all been working really hard on all sorts of important projects, so let's put them all together and I'll bet we'll all be surprised how impressive the list will be. And if you have some fun photos that aren't for the archive but show us having fun while volunteering, or even photos of your own gardens, let me have them so I can make a slide show for the Christmas party. If one of you wants to pull this all together for me, let me know.

With all of the strange weather going on it has been hard to keep up with the massive flushes of tropical-like growth, which are now started to wilt in the heat. But I would like some folks to come out to the Demonstration Garden to help me get it in shape for a September Tour I'm giving. We still have plants to give away for those who want to come and get them, and the areas in the shade could use some attention, so you wouldn't have to be out in the sun. Let me know when you can come out so I can arrange some workdays. You can always go out on your own and do whatever looks like it needs work. I especially need someone with a cordless drill and cordless saw to help me finish putting up the climbing rose trellises—please, please, please.

Don't forget to let Carolyn Williams know if you want to nominate yourself or someone else for a board position. This is REALLY IMPORTANT and we need folks to come forward. Remember, you can always get volunteers to help you in your duties, so it doesn't have to be all-consuming of your time. Please give it some serious consideration.

Make sure you check out Skip's Central Texas Horticulture website for the new postings of articles he has prepared this summer, including one on gardening around deer, and one on his weed-wiper contraption. There will be more posted in the next few months, so keep checking it and look for new icons on the home page. An updated version of Skip's online searchable Question and Answer Archive with 300 newly added records and editing fixes to the previous version is ready to be posted, and that will be up and running probably by the time you read this. Let me know if you find any problems so I can get them fixed, but also just enjoy the font of information that is there for you, and see if you can find the funny ones Skip intentionally put in there. The archive is not meant to be out in the public yet until we get the kinks worked out of it, so I will email out the URL again to everyone for those who missed Skip's presentation at the July meeting.

Thanks, and happy gardening—I think I'll need a machete to get to the backyard....

Susan Decker,  
President

## Plant Portrait: *Tecoma stans*

Yellow Bells (also known as Esperanza, Yellow elder, Yellow trumpet flower, and Yellow trumpetbush) is a native Texas plant known botanically as *Tecoma stans*. The bright yellow trumpet-like blooms can be seen around the Trans-Pecos area. The plant is native from Arizona and Texas south to Argentina. The genus name *Tecoma* is from the Nahuatl or Aztec word *tecomaxochitl*, referring to the flower resembling a certain earthen-ware vessel.

The tree is long blooming and has clusters of sporadic flowers from early summer to late fall (or until frost) at the ends of the branches. After the flowers fade, attractive bean pod-like fruit, growing to 8" long, turn to a chocolate brown color. The elongated disk-shaped seeds are released when the pod splits. In some areas the tree self seeds readily. Remove the young seed pods if this is a concern.

Yellow Bells can be grown as a shrub or small tree (just prune it according to your preference) reaching 25 ft. It also grows into a wide spreading (vase shape) and can be pruned after flowering if desired to keep it compact. The ultimate width is 6 ft. This plant tolerates rejuvenation pruning quite well. Cut it to the ground in the spring to encourage new growth or remove winter damaged portions.

A great plant for native gardens or xeriscapes, Yellow Bells is also suitable for container gardening if irrigation is provided during the driest times. Its low water requirement has put it in the "native and adapted" recommended category by the City of Austin. It is very tolerant of well draining soil and dry sites. Grow it in full sun to partial shade locations.



Although Yellow Bells is hardy to zone 8, it may receive tip damage at 28 degrees and die down to the ground at temperatures slightly lower than this. Freeze tolerance varies among the cultivars. If it does freeze to the ground, most will sprout from the base and regrow quickly. Sometimes the winter damage causes it to develop a bare trunk look. If this occurs, plant a group of shorter plants such as agaves in front of it.

Yellow Bells is easy to propagate from cuttings or seed. Take semi-hardwood cuttings in the spring or early summer. Start seeds as soon as the pods open. Germination takes 14-21 days.

*Tecoma stans* is the official flower of the Bahamas and US Virgin Islands (adopted in 1934).

Cultivars:

'Burnt Out', burnt orange flowers.

'Gold Star', discovered by Greg Grant, introduced by Texas A&M, and noted for its flowering at a young age, heat tolerance, vigor, and pest resistance.

'Orange Bells', large flower clusters and very serrated leaf margins.

'Orange Jubilee', more cold hardy than the yellow cultivars.

'Sunrise', yellow blooms with copper veins.

Anne Marie Van Nest



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### In the Vegetable Garden

That first whiff of fall weather is on the way. You probably can't feel it yet but it's coming!! And that means it's time for cool weather vegetables like broccoli, cauliflower, collards, kale, Chinese cabbage and bok choy. Notice I said 'cool weather' vegetables. Since the 'cool' has not arrived just yet, we need to give these guys a little extra help getting started in our hot soils. Wait until mid-month (or even later if it's still really hot) before setting transplants in the ground. A couple of weeks before planting prepare the soil by mixing in fertilizer (about 1-1½ cups of 8-2-4 or 6-2-2) per 25' of row and keep the planting bed shaded with mulch, leaves, newspaper, shade cloth, umbrellas or row cover a few weeks before planting. Once your transplants are in the ground, keep them well-watered and feed them with a diluted fertilizer once a week. And unless you want to harvest all of your broccoli and cauliflower heads at once, it is a good idea to stagger your plantings over the course of 2-3 weeks.



***Stagger your broccoli plantings unless you plan to share or freeze***

Kale and collards are especially fast and easy to grow and there are several excellent varieties that can be grown here. I like to sauté young tender leaves of kale and use the older, thicker leaves in soups and stews, but nothing beats a big ole pot of collard greens served with black-eyed peas and cornbread. And if you or your kids are grossed out about finding bugs in your food, you may want to stick mostly with collards. We have found that the thick, crinkly leaves of most kale varieties are excellent hiding places for aphids and other critters.



***Blue Curled Vates Kale- such a pretty plant but a perfect home for aphids***

Mid September is the best time to plant a fall crop of peas – sugar snaps, snow peas or garden peas. Soaking the seeds overnight will give them a head start. Peas like cool weather but don't do so well when we get that first frost which usually comes in mid-November. I try to plant varieties that mature fast, like Sugar Ann (52 days), Sugar Bon (58 days) and Little Marvel (62 days). I tried a variety called Cascadia (58 days) in the spring that produced well on 24-30" vines and had a wonderful flavor. I will plant again this month and hope it performs as well in the fall. If you are a pea lover and would like to participate in some pea trials this fall, please let me know ([leander@austin.rr.com](mailto:leander@austin.rr.com) or 301-0923). We will be trying some new varieties and will test to see if we can get peas to germinate earlier in September by shading the soil and planting the peas at weekly intervals.

***Mmmmmm - this pea won't even make it into the house***



If you still have any warm season crops growing like green beans, cucumbers, peppers, tomatoes or squash, be sure to keep them watered, mulched and fertilized with a diluted solution every week or two. Your okra should be producing like mad now. The pods grow extremely fast in the heat and sunshine, so try to pick at least every other day. And it's a good idea to wear gloves and long sleeves when you are cutting okra to avoid the itch that comes when your skin rubs up against the leaves.

Go to [www.tcmastergardener.org](http://www.tcmastergardener.org) to see the vegetable planting calendar for Travis County and a list of recommended varieties for our area. And if you have had success with a variety that we do not have listed, please let me know. We are always looking for new varieties that do especially well in Central Texas.

Here's to a bountiful harvest,  
Patty Leander



***Okra is related to hibiscus – isn't it a beauty?***

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### The Greenhouse Bench

August continued to be a busy time in the greenhouse. Thanks to everyone who came by to lend a hand during our Greenhouse Workday and to those that regularly water each week.

A request from Elizabeth McVeety, Zilker Botanical Garden Grounds Manager, to grow 1,000 marigold plants coincided very nicely with a huge donation of Burpee seeds brought to the August Master Gardener meeting. Thanks to Glenn Olson for generously offering these seeds to the Master Gardeners. A huge selection of tomato, pepper, eggplant, and herb seeds were given to the greenhouse for our use. In addition, at the Master Gardener meeting, all the available marigold seeds were diverted to the greenhouse. These were sown a few days later during the greenhouse workday. Thirteen flats of seeds were sown of various varieties of single, dwarf French and tall African types. Some of the seeds started to germinate within 48 hours, while others took several days longer. Watch for an upcoming email to announce details for a transplanting workday.

Special thanks are extended to Don Freeman and Ron Miller, the Sunday greenhouse work team for their efforts to prune back the live oak that overhangs the greenhouse. The excessive rains these last two months have encouraged the live oak to have a growth spurt and end up rubbing on the greenhouse at the north end. Ron and Don, wielding a pole chain saw from a ladder pruned back the offending branches so they would not damage the greenhouse poly roof.

Marian, Molly and Anne



## Skip's Corner: Turf Drought Research

### **Turf Drought Research in Central/South Texas**

In 2006 Texas A&M researchers initiated a turfgrass drought study sponsored by the San Antonio Water System and the Turfgrass Producers of Texas. Turfgrass specialists along with the Irrigation Technology Center conducted this trial of the response of 25 species and varieties of turfgrass to a 60 day drought period in mid to late summer. The trial included eight types of bermudagrass, seven of St. Augustine grass, nine of zoysiagrass, and one buffalograss.

The Irrigation Technology Center constructed a 5,000 square foot roof structure that moved automatically on a 350 foot rail system. This roof would move over the turf plots at the start of a rain event and move back off 30 minutes after the rain ended.



***5,000 Square Foot Retractable Roof on Rails  
(Texas Cooperative Extension photo by Dr. David Chalmers)***

Grasses were planted on two soil depths: a 4 inch deep soil and a soil that was over 18 inches deep. The grasses were established using irrigation and then at the start of the study, no further rain was allowed to fall on them for 60 days from July 23 until September 20.



***Establishing the 25 Species and Varieties of Turf in the Drought Study Site  
(Texas Cooperative Extension photo by Roger Havlak)***

No grass species or variety planted on only 4 inches of soil survived the drought. One the deep soil all 25 grasses survived the drought but some has very significant loss of cover.



*Turf Plots at End of 60 Day Drought and Start of 60 Day Irrigated Recovery Period*

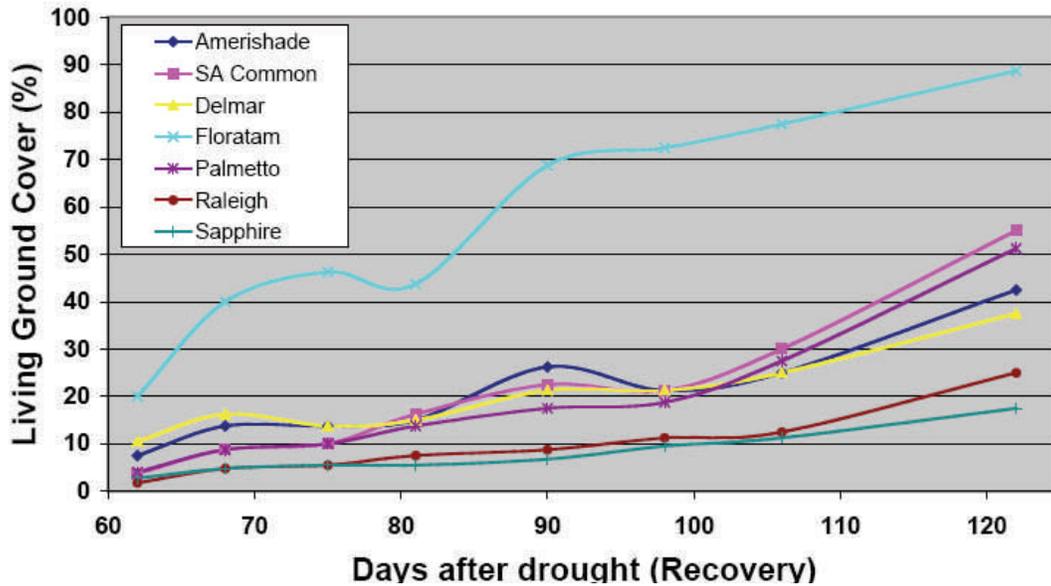
After the 60-day simulated drought, the grasses were irrigated over a 60-day recovery period to see how they responded. All grasses were evaluated through the July 23 through Sept. 20, 2006 drought period and subsequent 60-day recovery period. Plans are to evaluate them again this year after they have had additional time to recover.

The results were quite interesting. The grasses which survived the drought period and recoved enough to be deemed acceptable by SAWS staff (approximately 60% cover) include all but one bermudagrass (Premier), the wider leaved types of zoysia (Cavalier, El Toro, Jamur, Palisades, and Empire), and one St. Augustine. These were the bermudagrass varieties Celebration, Common Bermuda, GN1, Grimes EXP, Tex Turf, TifSport and Tifway 419; the zoysiagrass varieties El Toro, Empire, Jamur and Palisades; the St. Augustinegrass variety Floratam, and the one buffalograss variety. Narrow leaved types of zoysia (Emerald, Cavalier,Y-2, Zeon and Zorro)and most of the St. Augustine varieties (Amerishade, Common, Delmar, Palmetto, Raleigh, and Sapphire) did not recover to a level that the SAWS staff considered to be acceptable by the end of the 60 day period.

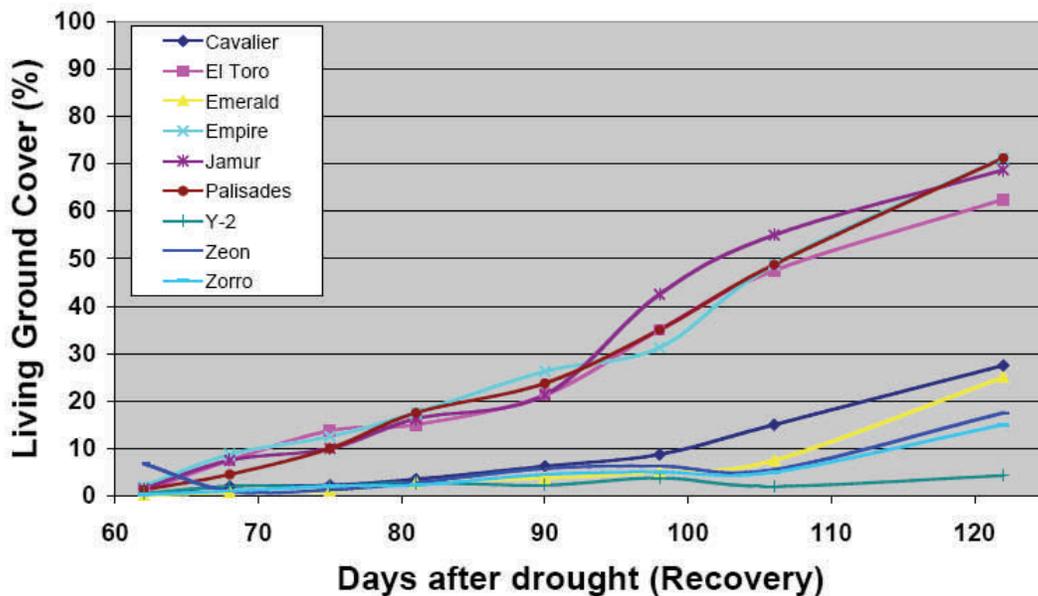
The charts below show the initial data from the year one progress report of this trial. I should note that the trial is not completed and additional recover data is expected. Dr. Chalmers who teaches the Turf section of our Master Gardener class is a researcher on this trial and can provide more details and information to explain the results and the ongoing trial plans. Final results of this trial are expected in the near future.

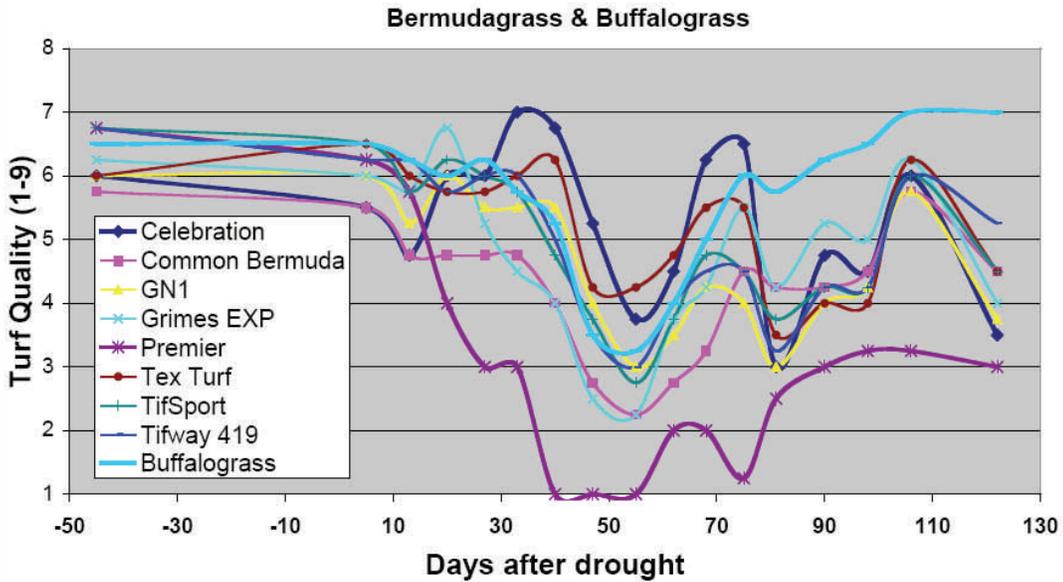
For more info see the following website:  
<http://itc.tamu.edu/documents/March%202007%20TPT%20Article.pdf>

### St. Augustinegrass



### Zoysiagrass





Cultivar		11/22/06 % Recovery	Stat. Grouping	11/22/06 Uniformity
Celebration	BM	100.0	a	9.00 a
Grimes EXP	BM	100.0	a	9.00 a
Common Bermuda	BM	98.8	ab	9.00 a
GN1	BM	98.8	ab	9.00 a
Tifway 419	BM	98.8	ab	9.00 a
Tex Turf	BM	97.5	ab	9.00 a
TifSport	BM	97.5	ab	9.00 a
Buffalograss	BU	95.0	abc	9.00 a
Floritam	SA	88.8	abcd	8.50 a
Empire	Z	71.3	abcde	8.50 a
Palisades	Z	71.3	abcde	8.50 a
Jamur	Z	68.8	abcdef	8.25 a
El Toro	Z	62.5	abcdefg	8.50 a
Premier	BM	57.5	bcdefgh	7.25 ab
SA Common	SA	55.0	cdefghi	6.00 abc
Palmetto	SA	51.3	defghi	4.75 bc
Amerishade	SA	42.5	efghij	4.50 bc
Delmar	SA	37.5	efghij	4.75 bc
Cavalier	Z	27.5	fghij	6.75 ab
Raleigh	SA	25.0	ghij	4.50 bc
Emerald	Z	25.0	ghij	7.25 ab
Sapphire	SA	17.5	hij	3.00 c
Zeon	Z	17.5	hij	6.75 ab
Zorro	Z	15.0	ij	6.00 abc
Y-2	Z	4.3	j	3.00 c

**Grasses in the chart above are color coded by species. Data indicates end of recovery period percent living ground cover and uniformity of plot recovery. Data in columns followed by the same letter are not significantly different at the 0.05 level.**

## Over the Fence: Brugmansia devastation!

A voracious caterpillar is on the loose in Southwest Austin decimating *Brugmansia*. Overnight (I am not kidding!) a hornworm (either the tobacco or tomato) has totally devoured all the leaves from my prized *Brugmansia* (purchased from the TCMGA greenhouse!) leaving just sticks behind. The severed areas look just like someone took a pruner and made a clean cut taking all the leaves off. Huge piles of olive green frass littered the soil below where the beautiful leaves used to be. Now, why couldn't this gluttonous eating machine munch on the tomatoes next door that are at the end of their season and destined soon for the compost pile?

Hornworms have been known to eat *Brugmansia* and *Datura*, but are most often found on tomatoes, eggplants, peppers and potatoes. They can even eat the fruit. No wonder when they can reach 4 inches long. The tomato hornworm is supposed to have 7 diagonal white stripes and a red horn while the tobacco hornworm has "V" shaped markings and a black horn.

The caterpillars take about a month to reach full size and then pupate in the soil. The adult of the tobacco hornworm is a Sphinx moth, while the tomato hornworm emerges as the Five-spotted Hawk Moth. Both are large, brown and grey moths.

One of the most interesting sights is a hornworm that has been parasitized by a small braconid wasp. The wasp larvae hatch from eggs laid on the hornworm. The wasp feed inside the hornworm and look like white cocoons attached to the body. Leave these hornworms as the wasp will kill the hornworm when they emerge.

Anne Van Nest



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## The Grapevine

### **Rainwater Harvesting**

Saturday, Sept. 22, 10:00 – 11:30 AM

West Rural Community Center, 8656 Hwy. 71 W., Building A (west of the “Y” in Oakhill), Austin

Rainwater Harvesting is the topic of this free seminar. The water that lands on your property is yours if you learn how to capture it. Don't let the water run away. Retain it for your own use!

Gain the knowledge necessary to build a rainwater harvesting system. All the basics are covered by Bud Kane and Jackie Johnson, Master Gardeners, who have helped designed and built a number of collection systems.

This free seminar is presented by the Travis Country Master Gardeners Association, a volunteer arm of the Texas A&M Extension Service. Seminar is free. No reservations taken. For more information call 512-854-9600 and ask for the Master Gardeners desk. <http://www.tcmastergardener.org/html/events.html>

### **Heads up on the opportunities for continuing education being offered this fall!**

These free classes will be limited to members of our organization. To help insure a good learning experience, most classes will be limited in size. Sign up for one or all the classes by emailing your request to Rosalie Russell at [gisathccs@aol.com](mailto:gisathccs@aol.com).



**Saturday, Sept. 15, 10-12 AM**

**Sunset Valley City Hall, 3205 Jones Rd**

**Introduction to PowerPoint** by Janet Church

This class is for people who have never created a PowerPoint presentation or have very limited knowledge. Janet will go through each step. You may bring your laptop and follow along but it is not necessary. Handouts giving a step by step guideline will be provided. PowerPoint in Microsoft XP 2003 Office Suite is the software that will be used.

prerequisite: must be comfortable using a computer

Class size limit: 20

**Tuesday, Sept. 25, 7:00 - 9:00 PM**

**Sunset Valley City Hall, 3205 Jones Rd**

**Learn to be a Speaker** by Terrill Fischer

Learn the basics of how to be a good public speaker in a fun filled atmosphere. In this session you will learn how to:-Eliminate your distracting habits forever-Turbo-charge your strengths and personal style-Conquer your fear of public speaking-Captivate audiences, and win the respect of your peers

Prerequisite: Want to learn

Class size limit: unlimited

**Saturday, Oct. 6, 12:30-4:00 PM**  
**Sunset Valley City Hall, 3205 Jones Rd**  
**Plant Photography** by Sam Myers

The class will concentrate on developing your ability to take photos with impact. There will be an overview of cameras, film and digital. Discussion will include how lighting, focal length and aperture interact in composing photographs. Guidelines of composition will be covered along with "posing" plants. Prerequisite: study the owner's manual on your camera  
Equipment Required: any sort of camera (not mandatory)  
Class size limit: 40

**Date and time to be determined. Probably October/November time frame.**  
**Class may be schedules with 30 days or less notice. Probably will be a Saturday morning.**

**Advanced PowerPoint** by Bruce Leander

Are you ready to move to a more sophisticated PowerPoint presentation. Learn how to give your presentation more pizzazz.  
Prerequisite: working knowledge of PowerPoint  
Class size: 20

Rosalie Russell  
VP Education  
804-2257  
gisathccs@aol.com



**Propagation**

**Saturday, October 13, 2007, 9:30 AM - 12:30 PM**  
**Sunset Valley City Hall**  
**3205 Jones Road**

**Propagation**

"Gardeners, Learn to Multiply and Divide your Favorite Plants." The Travis County Master Gardeners Propagation Team presents a free propagation workshop. Propagation specialists demonstrate techniques of propagating roses, natives, herbs, succulents, bulbs, and seeds. Participants take home cuttings (as quantities last). Registration is not required.

For questions or to be notified of future presentations, 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 at Sunset Valley City Hall is very limited. Additional free parking is available directly across the street at the Toney Burger Center.

**The Purple Gate Herb Farm**  
**Saturday, Oct. 20**  
**7376 County Road 309**  
**Caldwell, TX 77836**



8:30 AM leave from car pool location. Return to Austin 4-5 PM  
Cost: \$15 per person which includes lunch. Plus \$5.00 to car pool driver.  
The Purple Gate Herb Farm is owned and operated by Bud and Mary Mills near the town of Caldwell, in south-central Texas. They grow herbs mingled with wildflowers in theme gardens bordered by native woods. They strive to provide quality plants to their customers. They provide extensive information about each plant to help customers enjoy growing and using each plant.



Field trip includes a guided tour of the theme gardens (ancient, culinary, medicinal, myth and magic and tea), a raku pottery demonstration, and an herb based lunch. There will be time to tour the grounds and shop at the gift shop.

Your \$15.00 check is your reservation. Check must be received by Oct. 12. Make check to: Rosalie Russell, 2401 Spring Creek Dr., Austin, TX 78704. Minimum of 10 people required for this trip. An email to participants about five days before the trip will include the last minute details, location of car pool and directions to the herb farm.

Let's have a great, fun day in the country!

Rosalie Russell  
VP Education  
804-2257  
gisathccs@aol.com

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### Closing the Garden Gate...

I love antiques. My house is full of them. So it's only natural that I would put them in my garden as well. There are grapevines growing on an antique iron baby crib, an old Buck stove is used as a plant stand, antique Victorian gate pieces serve as shutters and old English watering cans and a coal bucket make interesting planters. I planted sedum in a tattered little Radio Flyer along with hens and chicks in a child's toy wheelbarrow from the 50's. An antique iron bed is used as a trellis for Coral Honeysuckle and a few old cement statuarys with chips and missing paint (people used to paint them) are scattered about. My little treasures from the past add whimsy to my garden in addition to a welcoming homey feel.

The only thing I find more fun than antiquing is gardening! Both hobbies have the same effect, however, because I am always looking for more – one more plant or one more old bucket to put it in. So for all you antiquers out there – happy hunting!

### Garden Trivia

Back in the late 19th century some towns in England had laws that reduced a persons taxes if he planted flowers and shrubbery in his yard to beautify it. If the person next to him did not do the same, his taxes were raised. With these laws, the towns became attractive for visitors and towns folk alike.

### In Closing

If you're yearning for the good old days, just turn off the air conditioning.  
~Griff Niblack

Rebecca Matthews

Editor

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