



A publication of...

TRAVIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS

THE COMPOST BIN

October 2007



Speaker for October: Steve Kainer, Hill Country Water Gardens

Steve Kainer, owner of the seven-year-old water gardening resource, launched the company with his wife, Christie, after working in landscaping as a high school student and as an aquatic plant wholesaler during college at Texas A&M.

“The introduction of water into landscapes is a new trend,” Kainer said. “People lead such busy lives, and water features offer tranquility in a home setting.”

The company’s 16-person staff offers turn-key design and installation of Koi ponds, water gardens, water features, as well as service, maintenance, and pond cleaning. They offer an array of retail services, but emphasize their focus is teaching do-it-yourself landscapers and gardeners how to complete projects.



In keeping with sharing helpful tips, the company hosts weekly events and seminars to discuss different gardening topics, such as waterfall and pond building, disappearing fountains, and repotting aquatic plants.

Kainer leads a seminar that teaches how to build disappearing fountains, using containers such as urns, vases, or drilled boulders. Water pours out and disappears into the ground into a reservoir, and then drains back into the receptacle. This type of water feature creates a peaceful ambience with very low maintenance.

Regards,
Jerry Naiser

Message From the President

It’s that time of year when we get ready to choose the new Executive Committee (board) for next year. Thanks to **Carolyn Williams** and her Nominating Committee, we have an excellent slate of candidates for the job. Here is the slate as it stands:

President - Manda Rash

VP Programs - Jerry Naiser

VP Education - Rosalie Russell and William Hyland as co-VPs

VP Volunteer Coordinator for Certified Master Gardener - Karen Banks

VP Volunteer Coordinator for Master Gardeners in Training - Michelle Butler and Carolyn Williams as co-VPs

Secretary - Hope Dyson

Treasurer - Johnny DeMyers

Publications Director - Cheryl Harrison

Membership Director - Marty and Cindy Berdan

Greenhouse Manager - Anne Van Nest



AAGC Representative - Angie Dixon
State Council Representative - Susan Jung
(State Council Representative Jo Kautz continues the second year of her term)

Thanks to all who are serving this year, and all who have agreed to stand for next year's offices—these folks help keep our projects running smoothly and they all deserve big hugs. They certainly receive my deepest gratitude.

I hope some of you have been attending the free public seminars that **Rosalie Russell** has been organizing, with excellent talks by our own Master Gardeners. These are available as continuing education credits for certified Master Gardeners. I know that Rosalie has had great response to the upcoming Continuing Education Classes, and I hope you will all use your soon-to-be knowledge of Power Point, photography, and how to give public lectures to get out there in the public and talk to folks about gardening.

I am currently working on getting **A Passion for Plants: An East Austin Garden Fair** 2008 started up, so anyone who wants to help organize it is more than welcome—it would be great to have some of you take on things like creating kids' activities, or decorating the site for a festive look, or organizing plant giveaways and such. It will be on the last Saturday of Spring Break. Please let me know right away if you can help. Thanks to those who have already signed on to help! I'll keep you all posted.

On Saturday October 13 there will be a **Green City Festival** at City Hall from 10-4, put on by the Green Garden Program to make the city council and the public aware of the all of the issues that they and other environmentally responsible groups address year-round. They have offered us a booth space, and I am going to have Plant Clinic there. I'll need help with it, so please tell me you'll come. This should be a great way to make the city council, staff, and the general public that mills around down there aware of all that we do. So come help me talk ourselves up!

Don't forget to sign up for the **Greenhouse Technician Training** program our wonderful greenhouse folks are offering right now. You won't get a better hands-on, detailed instructive program on all of the how-to's of running a greenhouse. This is an amazing program that I hope will be put up for a state MG award. So sign up now and get in on it before everyone in the state finds out about it and wants to come! Contact our Greenhouse Manager, **Anne Van Nest** for more information.

Thanks for all the effort you put into our programs, everyone!

Susan Decker,
President

Plant Portrait: Mexican Bush Sage (*Salvia leucantha*)

This plant native to Mexico is ideal for central Texas gardens. Showy purple and white blooms cover the upright, mounding plant from late summer through fall. In addition to the appealing blooms, the plant is very drought tolerant (more so than many other *Salvia*).

Mexican bush sage is an upright, rounded plant with arching stems. The plant forms a bushy, deciduous perennial or evergreen, woody, subshrub depending on the degree of winter cold. Attractive gray-green, linear leaves and white, wooly new growth make this plant good-looking even when not in bloom.



A very good xeriscape plant, Mexican bush sage is drought tolerant and requires good drainage. Avoid over watering it. Add compost to the soil and use an organic mulch to provide nutrients for good blooming. Full sun is best (but some light shade tolerated). The plant will get leggy and stretch for the light if it is in too much shade. It may also become top heavy even when grown in full sun. Numerous blooms late in the year cause the plant to spread out and flop or open up (possibly breaking the stems). If plants are prone to unattractive flopping, prune them in early summer to promote a more compact or bushier plant. Or grow 'Santa Barbara', a dwarf cultivar.

Overall the species will reach between 4 – 5 ft tall and 4-5 ft wide. Cut it back annually in early spring or after the main bloom is finished. Mexican bush sage will send up cute silver-gray shoots at the base when it is time to prune off the old stems to ground level. Watch for this sign to start pruning.

The blooms on Mexican bush sage are actually few in number and don't last long. Each has a colorful calyx that is very long lasting and masquerades as the real bloom. The plants look like they are blooming from late summer into fall in central Texas because of the showiness of these purple calyx.

Mexican bush sage is hardy to 15-20 deg. F. (zone 8).

The plants are usually deer resistant and a favorite for attracting butterflies and hummingbirds. In addition, they are good for cut and dried flower arrangements.

Mexican bush sage is easy to propagate from root and stem cuttings.

Fall is for planting and lots of Mexican bush sage blooms!



Cultivars:

'Eder' variegated green and cream/yellow foliage, purple flowers

'Midnight' (syn. 'All Purple') long spikes of fuzzy purple flowers

'Purple Velvet' purple blooms.

'Santa Barbara' dwarf plant with deep purple flowers

Anne Marie Van Nest



In the Vegetable Garden

Ahhh. It's been a long time coming but it is finally here. That slight break in the weather, when the air feels lighter, crisper, and so much more refreshing. This is the time to be a gardener. As a vegetable gardener I have often planned vacations and out-of-town trips around October (my favorite gardening month) and June (my favorite harvest month).

If you haven't planted any cool season crops, now is the time. Broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, cabbage, pak choi and Chinese cabbage can all go in as transplants. Kohlrabi is an interesting vegetable to grow and can be grown from transplants but may do even better if grown from seed. The name means 'cabbage turnip' and that is just what it tastes like.

The bulb, which is actually an enlarged stem, can be eaten raw or cooked. Only one is produced per plant, so plant a few and be sure to harvest them when they are small, about 2-3" in diameter. Or plant several, and harvest them as "baby" kohlrabi for a gourmet treat.



Early Purple Vienna Kohlrabi



Tatsoi – a type of pak choi with mild mustardy leaves

Thin and win . . . a premium harvest, that is. This is the time to plant root vegetables such as beets, carrots, radishes and turnips. The secret to a successful crop is to thin your seedlings and give them room to develop a decent root. It's not that you want a *big* root, just a root that isn't crowded, misshapen, or having to compete for water and nutrients. Beets and turnips should be thinned to 4-6" apart, radishes and carrots can be a little bit closer. Turnips can be grown for their roots and/or their tops. If you are a fan of turnip greens, grow a variety like All Top or Seven Top. They both produce high- quality, tender leaves but do not produce an enlarged root. Personally, I like a little turnip root with my greens, so I like to grow roots and leaves.



Seven Top turnip greens – does not develop a root



Pacemaker and Golden Beet

Carrots can be little bit tricky to grow. They need rich, loose soil – planting in raised beds is ideal. Don't expect long, straight roots in our Central Texas soils, it is best to stick with the shorter Nantes and Danvers type varieties. Sow the seed sparingly in moist soil, cover lightly with compost (about ½") and keep the soil moist by misting once or twice a day. A lightweight row cover can also be used to cover the seedbed and you can mist right through the cover. Be patient as it may take 2-3 weeks for germination.



Little Finger, Scarlet Nantes and Mokum carrots

Lettuce and spinach should be seeded throughout the cool season, and October is the best time to get started. Lettuce needs light to germinate, so just scatter the seeds over the soil and mist daily. Soak spinach seeds overnight for better germination and plant about ¼" deep. Don't plant a whole row at once unless you really, and I mean really, love lettuce. Lettuce just isn't a good candidate for canning, freezing or drying, so it is best to plant a few seeds or a short row every week or two for a continuous harvest. And here's a tip from Montgomery County Extension Agent and vegetable expert Tom LeRoy: refrigerate your lettuce overnight before eating to cut that bitter flavor often associated with lettuce eaten fresh from the garden.

Watch out for cabbage looper this time of year as those little pale-green caterpillars can devour a leaf in no time. And they start out so tiny you can hardly see them. Bt or neem oil is a good control, but my first defense is always to hand pick them. That little brown and beige moth that flits around your newly planted cole crops is the mama.

Harlequin bug is also a pest in the fall garden, especially on leafy plants like kale, mustard and turnips. Monitor your plants for clusters of the distinctive, black and white barrel-shaped eggs and destroy them. Again, the best control for the bugs is to hand pick and drop them into soapy water.



Harlequin bug



Cabbage looper – they start out so tiny!

October is strawberry planting time in Central Texas. It is best to treat them like annuals here, planting in fall, harvesting in spring, and then discarding the plants in May or June when they finish producing. You will have healthier plants, fewer insect problems and will be able to rotate them to a different location each fall. It may not look like they are doing much over the winter months, but it is all happening underground, and they usually start blooming those first warmish days in February and don't stop until May.



Chandler strawberries

If you are growing winter squash or pumpkins, harvest when the skin is hard, especially if you are planning to store them through the winter. If you can puncture the rind with your thumbnail, it is not quite ready and will not store as long. Sweet potatoes can be damaged by cold, so dig them all before the first frost. Wipe the dirt off but do not wash until you are ready to use them.



Sunshine winter squash



Sweet potato harvest

It's been a good year for figs and many folks have them coming out of their ears, including Jane Bramlett, who shared some of her wonderful figs with me a few weeks ago. If you have a fresh fig connection, in your own backyard, via a friend or neighbor, or a favorite grower at the Farmer's Market, try this simple recipe that was published in the *Austin-American Statesman* this summer:

Halve fresh figs, add a dollop of goat cheese to the cavities, top with glazed or toasted almonds and bake at 350° until the cheese softens and the figs are heated through. Or try it with blue cheese and pecans. Yummy!

I will be testing different varieties of carrot, spinach and lettuce this fall. I'm mainly interested in flavor, growth rate and ease of production. If you have room and would like to participate in any of these trials, please let me know and I will get seed to you. If you don't have room now, we will also plan to do sugar snap peas and spinach again in early spring, so keep that in mind.

Here's to a bountiful harvest,
Patty Leander
leander@austin.rr.com
301-0923

The Greenhouse Bench

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

Two groups of new Master Gardener students from the Class of 2007 were introduced to the greenhouse during orientation tours and hands-on activities in September. Thanks are extended to the four instructors (Holly Plotner, Molly Clark, Marian Stasney and Anne Van Nest) for organizing and presenting information about the greenhouse mechanical systems (rain collection, irrigation, fertilization, heating and venting) as well as our production activities (transplanting seedlings, division, potting up, soil mixing and pot washing). Thanks also to Don Freeman for bringing iris rhizomes to the greenhouse for

students to pot up and take home. It was a fun morning of teamwork and bonding in addition to lots of learning.

The regular Greenhouse Work Day saw lots of activity at the potting bench. Many cuttings of perennials and shrubs from the mist system were transferred to 4" pots. Also some long overdue potting up took place as many plants were moved up to gallons. The front and side of the greenhouse also got a much needed straightening and re-organization.

Several types of woody plants were started from seed with excellent germination. These were soaked overnight and then left in the mist system until the first signs of germination were seen. Young seedlings of Texas mountain laurel, Mexican bird of paradise and Pride of Barbados are now happily growing in the greenhouse. With a little patience, they will be available for sale one day when they get bigger.

Ramsey Adkins, Skip's intern during the summer started some fig cuttings from Boggy Creek Farm. As an experiment, some were started using rooting hormone dip and others without. Also, many were started in our usual vermiculite and perlite rooting medium while others were put into Sunshine peat moss based soil. There was no difference between those in the rooting hormone dip and those without. The big difference noted was in the soil types. The Sunshine peat moss soil was by far the most successful. In this case, the perlite/vermiculite mix was not suitable for the thick (and top heavy) fig cuttings. When large enough, Skip will distribute the fig plants back to Boggy Creek farm and to Hays County for their fig trial.

Marian, Molly and Anne



Over the Fence: Election of Officers

The Nominating Committee would like to submit the following slate of candidates. They are as follows:

President: Manda Rash
VP Programs: Jerry Naiser
VP Education: Rosalie Russell & Bill Hyland
VP Volunteer Coordinator for Certified Master Gardener: Karen Banks
VP Volunteer Coordinator for Master Gardeners in Training: Michelle Butler & Carolyn Williams
Secretary: Hope Dyson
Treasurer: Johnny DeMyers
Publications Director: Cheryl Harrison
Membership Director: Cindy and Marty Berdan
Greenhouse Manager: Anne Van Nest
AAGC Representative: Angie Dixon
State Council Representative: Susan Jung

During the October meeting, the Nominating Committee will announce these candidates and ask for any further nominations. The election of officers will occur during the November meeting with the installation at our annual December Christmas meeting.

Nominating Committee:
Carolyn Williams, Chair
Pat Creswell
Gloria Reindl

Inside Austin Gardens: April 18, 2008

Our garden show in 2008 will feature 2 returning gardens: the Bannockburn Baptist Church which is one of the sites of the 2008 International Iris show and will be hosting a spectacular collection of iris from around the world; and the garden of Patty Leander who is fast becoming one of the leading vegetable gardeners in the area and has new techniques and knowledge to share.

The next 5 gardens that were selected were chosen because they present sites and features that exemplify and demonstrate the elements necessary for "Gardening with 20/20 Vision," the theme of a speech given by Skip in 2006. By presenting these gardens, we hope to be setting up educational venues to demonstrate to the public the exact features and elements necessary to garden productively using environmentally friendly methods in the garden setting. We have beautiful gardens, all in a subdivision setting, none of which have a blade of grass in the back yard. There are solar panels, water collection systems, drip irrigation systems, composting, built up flower beds, beneficial insects, and best of all: eatable bounty! All of our gardens have either vegetable production, fruit production, or citrus production. Each of our gardener's stories begins with the mechanics of how their gardens began, how it has evolved through trial and error, but how the whole thing seems worthwhile when they sit down to have a quiet moment in the garden and watch the various wildlife come through for their portion of the bounty! More on our gardeners later.



Three of our gardens are certified Wildlife habitats; 2 are Austin Green Garden yards. The City of Austin will be on site at one location to actually give out information on how to take advantage of the City's solar energy programs and water collection system program. Another site will have a representative from Grow Green going through the garden elements to become a Green Grow approved yard. We hope to have someone from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department discussing how to create a wildlife habitat.

The Wildflower Center is in the process of defining sustainable gardening, and one of the first elements in the definition is: gardening for future generations. Your 2008 Garden Committee has bought into that theme and is excited to get the Master Gardeners involved in this project next year. Hopefully we will be able to express to the public our goals and present the sound elements of gardening in such a way as to make an impact in our community, as well as help people reduce their energy bills! To that end, your participation and support is encouraged and appreciated. We will be calling on many of you to donate your talents as we firm up our educational plans.

To our gardeners who have so graciously offered their yards and are in the process of preparing for next year's show, we thank you profusely. Your efforts are appreciated and you are doing a great job.

Joyce Cooper

Volunteer with the Docents

Christa McAuliffe said "I touch the future, I teach." The Docents of Zilker Botanical Garden have a wonderful opportunity to touch the future with every school tour. Last spring we got some insight into what the kids are learning from us when the first and second graders of Central Texas Montessori School in Temple sent us these thank you notes.

"I learned that trees can help people and that some flowers don't need lots of water."

"I learned that you saw dinosaur prints and I learned that you saw a dinosaur."

"Some roses don't smell some do smell."

"I learned about a root beer plant."

"I learned that a plant smells like lime."

"I learned how to read Japanese."

"I saw a snake and turtles."

"There are many kinds of plants. There is such a thing as lamb ear plant."

"I learned in the old days they blacksmithed."

"I learned a cowboy walked over the same bridge about 100 years ago."

"I learned that bamboo can grow to 100 feet tall and the names of trees and I also learned that a 70 year old man built the garden. Thank you!"

Now it's YOUR turn to see snakes and turtles with kids who think you're as old as a dinosaur! Come join us for our next Docent Training, Saturday, October 20. We will meet in front of the Garden Center at 9:30 a.m., weather permitting, and go on a tour of the Butterfly Garden. For more information, call Marion Alsup at 480-0311 or Hope Dyson at 394-1558.

Marion Alsup



Special Feature: What's that Plant Called, Anyway?

Online resources for plants are pretty numerous these days, but lately while researching specific species I've noticed that some resources don't seem to have researched their plant names very carefully, even using clearly misspelled names, and often there are disagreements between websites about the species name for a plant, let alone the common names, which are about as consistent as lists of deer resistant plants.

Thanks to a few really good internet sites, there are ways to track down officially accepted species names.

The first place to go is the Floridata site, What's In a (Plant) Name? (http://www.floridata.com/tracks/misc/plant_names.cfm). This website explains very clearly what the different elements of a scientific or botanical name mean, from families all the way down to forms, including definitions and abbreviations for the terms variety, hybrid, and cultivar, and the use of "X" in a plant's name.

Once you know what the parts of a plant's name mean, head on to the International Code of Botanical Nomenclature (ICBN). (<http://www.bgbm.org/iapt/nomenclature/code/SaintLouis/0065Ch7OaGoNSec1a60.htm>) These are the rules that govern how species names are created. The rules are based on Latin rules of inflection, namely how to make the endings of nouns and adjectives match in their number and gender. Species names have to match the gender and number of the genus they belong to, even if the species name is created from a botanist's surname. One thing to keep in mind, especially if you know a little Latin, is that many plant names in Latin, particularly trees, have masculine-looking forms for words that are actually feminine. So *Malus*, for example, the word for Apple, ends with "-us" like many masculine words, but it is a feminine word, so its adjectives, including species names, must have feminine endings, such as *Malus angustifolia* ("-a" is a feminine ending) or *Malus X domestica*. In *Malus ioensis* the species name *ioensis* is the same whether masculine or feminine, one of the many reasons why most folks give up on Latin in favor of the much simpler modern Romance languages such as Spanish, but bear with me, because it's worth it. The weblink above takes you straight to Chapter VII on orthography. Scan down to Recommendation 60B for how to create genus names from personal names, and Rec. 60C for creating species names from personal names. Go to the bottom of the page and click on Subject Index to scan an alphabetical list of subjects. Under Hybrids, for example, it will take you to Appendix I on the naming of hybrids.

Once you know the nomenclature rules, you can easily eliminate the alternates you come across that clearly do not match the rules. For example, I have found *hasslerana* and *hassleriana* as species names based on the botanist name Hassler. According to the ICBN (Section 60C.1) an adjective based on a name ending with a consonant, in this case an "r", has to have a connecting "i" before the feminine adjectival "ana" ending, which means that *hassleriana* is correct, as in *Cleome hassleriana*. The same is true for "walleriana" after Waller, as in *Impatiens walleriana*, and "wilkesiana" after Wilkes as in *Acalypha wilkesiana*. The rules are laid out very clearly for creating other adjectival or substantive (noun) endings as well. For example, substantive epithets (names from nouns) have to be in the Latin possessive



form, which has a wide variety of possible endings depending on the declension (governing the type of endings it has), and the gender (masculine, feminine or neuter) and number (single or plural) of the word, like *jamesonii*, *hookerorum*, *wilsoniae*. (I can do a crash course in Latin endings in another article if you like.)

The ICBN code has minimal explanations for naming varieties, cultivars and forms where they do not conform to the rules for wild plants (but see Chapter III, Section 6, Article 28 on the names of plants in cultivation). For more detail you need to go to the International Code of Nomenclature for Cultivated Plants (ICNCP) (<http://www.actahort.org/books/647/>), provided by the International Society for Horticultural Science, but to view chapters online you need to login to their site or otherwise you can buy the book. A shortened online version is available at How to Name a New Cultivar (<http://www.ishs.org/sci/icraname.htm>). The International Cultivar Registration Authorities (<http://www.ishs.org/sci/icra.htm>) site has a searchable database for finding genus names that have registered cultivars.

Once you have mastered or at least know where to check for the spelling of species names, the best place to go to find out if a species name is officially accepted in the botanical community or not is the Integrated Taxonomic Information System (ITIS) (<http://www.itis.gov/index.html>). This is an international database of plants and animals that is updated monthly and lists all of the species names for plants that have been submitted for consideration to several agencies and whether or not they have been accepted, and if not, what the accepted name really is. It has a search engine that allows you to search by common or scientific name, but I recommend searching the scientific name, because most of the time the common names listed in the database are not the ones used in our neck of the woods. You can search a genus and scan the species listings that also give common names to find one that matches what you are looking for. One proviso, though: if you type in a misspelled species name, such as hasslerana instead of hassleriana, you will probably be served up a big fat “no can find,” so it is worth getting out your old Latin books to use with the ICBN or at least trying a few different spelling possibilities on the ITIS before giving up. One more thing about the ITIS—although it lists subspecies, it doesn’t list varieties or cultivars, and doesn’t have a lot of the foreign tropicals that we can grow here unless they grow in the wild as well as in nurseries and gardens. But really, this is the site I use more than any other.

When you come across a plant that seems to have more than one accepted name in the ITIS, and you want to find out which came first, you can go to The International Plant Names Index (IPNI) (<http://www.ipni.org/index.html>). This searchable database lists the original source for a botanical plant name and any subsequent major name changes in scientific journals. You can click on View Record History to see details, but in the ones I’ve checked so far this just seems to consist of recent changes to make the database entries consistent.

If you are really stymied, you can try the National Agricultural Library Catalog (NAL) (<http://agricola.nal.usda.gov/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?DB=local&PAGE=bbSearch>). This is a site that can search many different online databases for references to organisms, including plants. A lot of the databases are in the hard sciences such as genetics, but there are taxonomic entries, and you can be pretty sure that if a species name shows up here, it must be official, because someone somewhere is testing its most basic genetic make-up. Type in the name you are checking and scan the entries for relevant



databases that have a number besides “None” beside them. When you click on the database it will take you to more links and you can choose ones relevant to taxonomy.

Okay, so you have a plant name pretty much worked out. How do you know it's the one growing in your yard? If it's growing wild, go to the USDA Plants Database (<http://plants.usda.gov/>). This site is also searchable, and you can see the known distribution of native plants by state. Then click on Texas if it's in green (which indicates that the plant grows wild here) and see the distribution by county. The site gives taxonomic information as well, and is tied into the ITIS. Pretty cool.

Another source that fills some gaps in the databases above is W3Tropicos, the Missouri Botanical Garden's VAScular Tropicos Nomenclatural Database (<http://mobot.mobot.org/W3T/Search/vast.html>). You can search a scientific name and it will provide links to images, species lists, publications, synonyms, and sub-generic taxa, and within those categories, it will provide links to some Central American Lists where relevant. This is a good database to use to find some of our tropicals that don't show up elsewhere.

Finally, you can try the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew website ePIC, the Electronic Plant Information Center. The species names are from the International Plant Names Index (IPNI) discussed above, but it also lists entries from the Kew Gardens collections itself, along with those from their Survey of Economic Plants for Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (SEPASAL) and plants from parts of Southern Africa in their Flora Zambesiaca. These help locate where some of our best adapted plants are native.

So, even though it can be frustrating to look up a simple plant name and find so many wrong ones, now you know where to look for the right ones. And in my researching I've found a few horticultural resources that usually have it right for a lot of plants that grow here, although they occasionally fall into the trap of using a commonly used name that hasn't been officially accepted. So when you Google a name and you are scanning for the right ones to click on try some of these first:

I like Floridata (<http://www.floridata.com/index.cfm>) for plant descriptions and photos, along with taxonomy. You can look at lists of trees, shrubs, annuals, perennials, vines, and palms, although sometimes what we consider annuals might be perennials on their lists or perennials might show up as shrubs. Their plant descriptions are superb, and they give information on subspecies and cultivars as well.

I also like the Missouri Botanical Garden's Kemper Center for Home Gardening Plantfinder database (<http://www.mobot.org/gardeninghelp/plantfinder/Search.asp>), which although a little slow to load sometimes does have good cultivation information and photos. And you can select from a drop-down genus list if you're not sure of the spelling. You can also search by any of the plant's specific growing requirements or special features such as “attracts butterflies,” “fragrant,” “cut flower,” “shade tree,” and many more.

The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center Native Plants Database (NPIN) (<http://www.wildflower.org/plants/>) has a vast number of species listed for wildflowers that you assumed there was only one of, and so this will blow your mind. It contains information on plants that are native to states other than Texas as



well, so it is very useful. It gives information on the conditions under which it grows wild, and excellent photos. As you start to type in a name it will show a drop-down list of entries that match the spelling and you can use that to find the species you want.

North Carolina State's Perennial Flowers database (http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/consumer/factsheets/perennials/perennial_index.html) is pretty good, although it doesn't always have photos. But you can browse by common or scientific name, and the cultivation information is fairly close to the way plants grow here. It usually gives cultivar names that you can then look up elsewhere.

Of the non-academic websites, Desert Tropicals in Arizona (<http://www.desert-tropicals.com/>) is good for looking up both desert and tropical plants, with good photos, although their nomenclature is pretty unreliable. And of course Dave's Garden PlantFiles (<http://davesgarden.com/guides/pf/>) is a very useful Texas-based database from over 23,000 gardeners worldwide who share their photos and growing experiences for thousands of plants. They are fairly reliable in their nomenclature, giving synonyms and multiple common names. Near the bottom of each plant's page you can see where the plant has been reported to grow. I use that to check to see if it is being grown in Texas by one of the many participating gardeners. One proviso, however, is that the plant files appear to be written and edited by the gardeners, which means that sometimes a fairly wide range of cultivation conditions are given to cover all of the locations where the plant is being grown, and it means that sometimes scientific names are used that are not actually accepted by the ITIS.

So the next time you want to know what exactly a plant is called, you'll know where to look. Happy researching!

Susan Decker

AAGC News

The Dinos are coming! Zilker Botanical Garden will be the host of a dinosaur exhibit in September 2008. This traveling educational exhibit will feature something for all ages. The San Antonio Botanical Garden has been host to this program several times over the last few years with great success. Members of our planning committee met with folks from San Antonio in August and came home with tons of information and wonderful ideas to help make our event successful and profitable.

Master Gardener Donna Friedenreich has agreed to lead the planning committee. I'm sure we'll be hearing more about the exhibit as the planning process proceeds.

A new projector has been installed in the auditorium at the Garden Center. That means that we will have access to it for our monthly meetings and our fall class as well as other programs/events we hold there. Training will be offered for each club.

A lot of work went on in the garden following our summer monsoon season. Felled trees have been removed and damaged trees trimmed. The Koi ponds have new aerators and have been cleaned of storm debris.

Fees are now being collected from photographers and for weddings held at Zilker Botanical Garden. This new policy will provide a significant amount of additional income for the garden.

All things considered, it's been a good summer. If you haven't strolled through the garden recently, I encourage you to visit.

Manda Rash
AAGC Representative

The Grapevine

The Dallas Arboretum will host a traveling botanical exhibit called the Amazing Chocolate Tree (October 6-January 6). The exhibit explores the process of chocolate-making from the cacao plant to candy factory. Visitors can enjoy chocolate tastings, candy-making demonstrations, chocolate-themed teas, and a chef's chocolate-tree competition, during which 20 chefs create their vision of a perfect tree made of chocolate. The trees will be on display in November. Call 214.515.6500: www.dallasarboretum.org

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.

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

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

"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

Closing the Garden Gate...

Fall is officially here! It is by far my favorite season. Our days are still hot but at least the evenings are giving way to cooler temps. It's time to get back out there and decide what needs to be done to fix those less than stellar areas of the garden.

I seem to have more questions than answers. What do I need to plant this fall to fill in the empty spaces (especially the ones torn up by the marauding armadillo)? How can I solve my shade dilemma? What can I plant to provide extra food for the wildlife? Is it too late to put corn gluten out to suppress the weeds? How can I add some height in the beds?

What is next for your yard? Whatever your plans you can help say goodbye to summer by adding blazing color with a few pumpkins, fall annuals and hay bales for the neighborhood kids to enjoy. Happy Halloween!

Garden Trivia

According to Greek mythology, one could break the magical spells of sorcerers by drinking a tonic made with horehound leaves. Today, a tea made with horehound and honey can be used to ease the pain of a sore throat.

In Closing

Delicious autumn! My very soul is wedded to it,
and if I were a bird I would fly about the earth
seeking the successive autumns.



- George Eliot

Rebecca Matthews
Editor

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