

# The Compost Bin

July 2010

A Publication of the Travis County Master Gardeners - a volunteer program  
of Texas AgriLife Extension



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**Building A Healthy Soil  
with John Dromgoole  
of The Natural Gardener**

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## July Meeting Speaker — John Dromgoole

### Building a Healthy Soil

John Dromgoole, nationally recognized owner of the Natural Gardener Nursery in Austin, organic innovator, TV personality, and host of Gardening Naturally, the nation's longest running gardening show will speak at the July 7 meeting. Building a Healthy Soil is the topic.

Dromgoole has been involved in organic gardening and environmental issues for over thirty years. Although he studied radio and television in college, employment in a friend's nursery led to a new direction for his life — an organic direction. Choosing to be a pioneer in this movement has not always been an easy path. He was faced with clients demanding high-powered pesticides and chemical fertilizers. To them, an organic approach was something for oddballs. Then, as now, the heart of John's message has always been the importance of building the soil and choosing native or well-adapted plants.

During his years as a spokesperson for the organic movement, Dromgoole has written articles for *The Texas Gardener* and *Organic Gardening* magazines, hosted *Gardening Naturally* on KLBJ AM 590, appeared in the *Backyard Basics* segment of KLRU (PBS Austin) TV's *Central Texas Gardener* and had his nursery featured in magazines such as *Texas Highways*, *Herb Companion* and *Fine Gardening*.

His awards and accolades include recognition as a Texas Legendary Pioneer of Organics: the Dennis Hobbs Individual Achievement Award by Keep Austin Beautiful for his contributions to many different Austin and surrounding area non-profit groups, schools and the general public; 10 times voted the Best Nursery In Austin in the Austin Chronicles Best of Austin Poll and 3 time winner of Today's Garden Center's "Revolutionary 100 Garden Centers." In 2008, The Natural Gardener was honored with the national award of "Innovative Garden Center of the Year" by Garden Center Magazine.

Meeting information: Wednesday, July 7th, 2010 starting at 7 pm.  
Zilker Botanical Garden

## Hello Master Gardeners: A Message From Your President

### Tomatoes ... 'Maters ... Slicers!!

I can easily think of three wonderful reasons to love summer. They are swimming, watermelons and tomatoes fresh picked from the garden! You can smell their fresh grown fragrance when you pick them from the vine, hold them in your hand and marvel that you grew them yourself. No matter how much it probably cost you in time, labor, compost, etc. No matter how much you water, add secret amendments, check for worms, bugs and all other ailments, when you pick that first tomato it is like love at first sight!

This year I am growing both hybrid and heirloom tomatoes and my boys (husband and son) have been just wonderful to help me eat and decide which ones they love most. And I must say, my husband does not question how much money I spend on growing them, no problem with the budget on this! Whatever it takes, just keep those tomatoes coming into the kitchen as often as possible.

This year my varieties consist of the following: Big Beef, Kellogg's Breakfast, Juliet, Black Krim, Crimson Carmelo, Azoychka, Sun Sugar, Super Sweet and JD's Special C-TEX Early Black. Big Beef started off early with great production and is still going strong. Juliet, Super Sweet and Sun Sugar are also going well. Crimson Carmelo was the last one planted, but its growth has been outstanding and is now coming on strong. It is very large and the sun and heat seem not to be bothering it at all. The same goes with Big Beef.



But for sheer fabulous taste, we love Black Krim and Azoychka. Black Krim is dark red with a marvelous deep textured taste. I have read that local chefs love the complex flavor of Black Krim and I certainly agree! Azoychka is a very sweet yellow that I purchased from our very own greenhouse. Both of these two tomatoes make for a wonderful meal of sliced tomato, fresh mozzarella, basil (from my own garden, of course) and covered in olive oil. Oh my gosh good!! We have basically been eating some version of this every night and it really is the best meal around.

Above: It's late June and the tomatoes are still going strong!  
Below: Carolyn's grandson Peyton helping with the daily tomato picking.

After the last several years of early triple digit heat, deer eating every tomato I had planted and several other ailments, the fact that I am still picking fresh tomatoes makes it a bumper crop year for me. I am keeping close data on my tomatoes in the hopes of doing better next year. But, in all reality, mother nature's rains or the lack thereof, heat index, etc. usually dictate my growing season.



Here's hoping your garden is still producing and the bugs are going to your neighbors! Happy Gardening!

Carolyn

## In The Vegetable Garden

By Patty Leander

I love vegetables. I just love them. I can't think of anything bad to say about them. I'm no saint when it comes to eating — I love peach cobbler, ice cream, and soft, yeasty, white bread fresh from the oven — but if I overindulge, I feel stuffed and lethargic. And guilty. But there is never any guilt or regret associated with eating too many vegetables. From planting the seed to harvesting the fruit, I love their distinctive colors, shapes and tastes and the unique manner in which each vegetable matures and fulfills its destiny. The more I garden the deeper my connection grows to my home-grown vegetables — I check on them every day, contemplating their development and their ultimate use. Will they be sautéed, grilled, roasted, pickled, casseroled, frozen for later consumption, shared with a neighbor, or simply eaten while standing in the garden? They are my "Green Eggs and Ham" — I would eat them anytime, anywhere, with anyone.

And they are so good for us, too. Scientific studies have shown that people who consume generous amounts of fruits and vegetables as part of a healthful diet are likely to have reduced risk of chronic diseases, including cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and certain cancers. Recommendations for fruit and vegetable intake vary slightly based on age, sex and weight, but generally we should consume 2-3 servings of fruits and 3-5 servings of vegetables every day. A few years ago, the American Institute for Cancer Research came out with the "New American Plate" campaign, urging Americans to rethink the way they eat. Their advice for mealtime is to compose a plate that contains two-thirds fruits, vegetables, beans and whole grains, and one-third animal products. In other words think of meat as a side dish, which allows more room for . . . vegetables!

July is a good time to make more room for vegetables in the garden as well as on our plates. By now okra, eggplant, peppers, melons, Malabar spinach and Southern peas should be established in the garden and they require minimal care as long as they are mulched and receive 1-2" of water per week. As spring planted crops succumb to the heat and pests, pull them out and compost them if they are not diseased. Even though it is the middle of summer, gardeners must always be thinking ahead, and now is the time to plan your fall vegetable garden. Peppers, eggplant and tomatoes can go in as transplants in late July and will produce until frost. A second crop of quick-growing warm season plants like green beans, squash and cucumbers can be planted in mid-late August. Cool season vegetables like broccoli, carrots, collards and beets usually go in during September and October. Earnest decisions may have to be made based on the space you have available, but do plan to take advantage of the wonderful fall season by choosing vegetables that your family likes to eat.



If you want pumpkins for Halloween be sure to plant your seed by the middle of July as most varieties take 90-100 days to reach maturity. Plant pumpkins in hills or rows that are 4-6 feet apart. Smaller varieties, like 'Jack Be Little' or 'Baby Bear' can be grown on a trellis or fence,

## In The Vegetable Garden

## Continued...

but the larger varieties grow vigorous vines, so give them plenty of room to roam. If you are interested in heirloom pumpkins try 'Small Sugar', which is grown for pies and 'Connecticut Field', which produces 15-20 pound pumpkins. 'Rouge Vif d'Étampes' is a large, deep orange French heirloom that makes a beautiful fall decoration. It is sometimes called the 'Cinderella' pumpkin because its flattened and heavily ribbed shape resembles Cinderella's carriage.



Above: A variety of tomato uses for today's meal and future meals featuring tomato sauce, gazpacho and fresh tomato and mozzarella salad.

When life gives you tomatoes, make salsa! And tomato sandwiches, and tomato sauce, and BLTs, and gazpacho, and roasted tomatoes . . . Enjoy the tomato surplus because as the summer heat and lack of rain takes its toll the quality of the fruit will decline and most plants fall victim to pests and diseases that are increasingly difficult to keep in check. A great way to capture the summer flavor of fresh tomatoes is by roasting, canning or freezing. It's easy to freeze tomatoes, even without cooking. Smaller tomatoes, like romas, can be frozen whole. Wash, core and peel if desired, then lay them out on a wax paper lined tray. Place in the freezer until frozen, then transfer to glass canning jars or freezer bags. When you are ready to use them just thaw under running water and add to soups or sauces.

### ¡SALSA!

4 fresh tomatoes, chopped (peeled and seeded if desired, but I usually don't)

2-3 jalapenos, chopped

1 onion, chopped

1-2 cloves garlic, smashed

1/4 cup cilantro

1-2 tsp salt

1/2 tsp pepper

1/2 tsp cumin

2-4 Tbsp lime juice

1/2 tsp sugar

Chop the onion, jalapenos, garlic and one tomato in a blender or food processor. Then add the seasonings and the remaining tomatoes, and blend till it seems right. This is personal taste. You can leave it chunky but I usually blend out most of the chunks. Then I taste and usually end up adding more tomatoes, lime juice and sometimes another jalapeno. I let it sit a bit and then go back and taste and adjust seasonings if necessary. It gets a little redder and a little spicier as it sits. \*\* You do not have to use a blender/food processor. If you prefer, finely chop the first five ingredients by hand, then stir in the seasonings and adjust to your taste.



## In The Vegetable Garden

## Continued...

### GRILLED VEGETABLES

1/3 cup balsamic vinegar  
2 tbsp olive oil  
2 cloves garlic, minced  
1-2 tsp Italian seasoning  
1-2 tsp salt  
1/2 tsp pepper  
1 1/2 tsp molasses  
1 onion, quartered  
12 mushrooms, quartered  
1 red or yellow pepper, cut into rectangles  
1 green pepper, cut into rectangles  
1 small zucchini, cut vertically into 1/2" slices  
1 small yellow squash, cut vertically into 1/2" slices  
1 small eggplant, cut vertically into 1/2" slices

Combine marinade ingredients. Place vegetables in a bowl and toss with marinade. Let stand 30 minutes. Remove vegetables from marinade and place on grill basket. Grill, covered, for 15-20 minutes.

### RASPBERRY VINAIGRETTE DRESSING

1/3 cup raspberry vinegar  
2-3 tsp sugar  
2 tsp Dijon mustard  
1 garlic clove, minced  
1/2 tsp salt  
1/2 tsp pepper  
1/3 - 1/2 cup vegetable/olive oil

Combine all ingredients except oil in a blender. Add oil in a slow, steady stream until smooth. I like a tart dressing so I use the smaller amount of oil; add more for a milder, less tart flavor. Pour over cucumbers and/or tomatoes and marinate 30-60 minutes in the refrigerator before serving.

## In The Vegetable Garden

Continued...

### ROASTED TOMATOES

*Roasting tomatoes brings out an amazing, concentrated flavor – they can be used in sauces, pasta, sandwiches or simply as a savory snack. They don't last long around my house, but they can be stored in the refrigerator for 2-3 weeks or frozen for up to three months without compromising the flavor. 'Juliet' tomatoes are perfect for this recipe.*

Wash, dry and slice in half vertically. Arrange on a foil-lined pan, cut side up. Drizzle with olive oil and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Roast in a 325° F. oven for 1½ -2 hours. Watch carefully to be sure they don't burn and adjust temperature or time if necessary.

BLTs, and gazpacho, and roasted tomatoes . . . Enjoy the tomato surplus because as the summer heat and lack of rain takes its toll the quality of the fruit will decline and most plants will fall victim to pests and diseases that are increasingly difficult to keep in check. A great way to capture the summer flavor of fresh tomatoes is by roasting, canning or freezing. It's easy to freeze tomatoes, even without cooking. Smaller tomatoes, like romas, can be frozen whole. Wash, core and peel if desired, then lay them out on a wax-paper lined tray. Place in the freezer until frozen, then transfer to glass canning jars or freezer bags. When you are ready to use them just thaw under running water and add to soups or sauces.



Above: Straight from the oven, roasted Juliet tomatoes.  
Left: Fresh and roasted Juliet tomatoes.



## Widow Spiders

By Wizzie Brown

There are four species of widow spiders found in Texas, with the best known being the black widow. Coloration can vary dramatically, but they are typically jet black with two reddish-orange triangles on the underside of the abdomen, forming an hourglass shape (See Figure 1). The triangles sometimes do not touch each other creating a broken hourglass shape. Males and juveniles are smaller and often show more color, with bright markings on their sides or back.



Figure 1. Female widow spider.

Females lay eggs in an oval sac which can hold from 25 to over 900 eggs (See Figure 2). Depending on temperature and time of year, eggs usually hatch after about 20 days. Spiderlings will stay near the egg sac for several days where they can be seen consuming their brothers and sisters. The survivors throw a thread of silk to the wind and are carried off in a process called "ballooning". They eventually locate a sheltered spot where they build a loosely woven web and remain for the rest of their lives. As time progresses, the spiders build larger webs to capture larger prey. Males eventually leave their webs to find females for mating. Most females do not eat the male after mating.

Widow spiders do not like being in the open. They can often be found outside in protected areas such as rainspouts, shrubbery, firewood piles or unused BBQ pits. It is also possible to find them in garages, cellars, attics, furniture or electric or water meter boxes. Widows are shy creatures and often people are bitten when they accidentally disturb a web.

## Widow Spiders

Continued...



Fig 2. Widow spider web and egg sac.

The bite of a black widow sometimes is not noticed, but when it is, it often feels like a pin prick. The bite location will have two red marks surrounded by redness and swelling. The bite reaction is systemic and intense pain usually occurs within 1-3 hours and continues for up to 48 hours. Other symptoms include tremors, nausea, vomiting, leg cramps, abdominal pain, profuse perspiration and rise in blood pressure. It is also possible for breathing difficulties and unconsciousness to occur. If bitten by a black widow, immediately seek medical attention.

When working in the yard, it is best to wear leather gloves to avoid being bitten by venomous arthropods.



Carolyn William's prolific tomato plants and a summer feast of fresh tomatoes, mozzarella and bread.



## Gardening in the Heat of Summer

By Bob Beyer

### Summer Break for Plants and Gardeners

Here in Central Texas, summers are our most stressful season of the year — unlike our northern neighbors who declare winter to be their season of distress for gardeners. Temperatures from June through October can easily exceed 100 F. for long durations which, when added to the strong sunlight intensity can make gardening activities stressful not only to the gardener, but to the plants in the garden. Here are some survival tips:

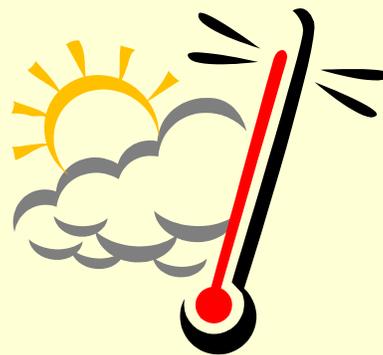
1. **Stop Fertilizing:** With the exception of potted plant which lose nutrients every time they are watered (which is frequently in summer), most garden plants go into protective dormancy to survive the heat and drought of summer conditions in Central Texas. Oh yes, there are some that thrive on the high heat, but they are in the minority. Fertilizing during these stressful conditions encourages new growth which is the opposite of what the plant is trying to do during dormant periods. Most plants produce new growth in spring when temperatures are more moderate. If you have an organically enriched soil, there is sufficient nutrient to sustain all garden plants through summer.

2. **Stop Pruning:** Like fertilizing, pruning encourages new growth when plants are struggling to grow. New growth wilts easily and draws energy away from root development. Fungus grow during hot and humid conditions and pruning opens wounds for them to enter. Prune spring flowering shrubs after blooming in late spring and summer flowering shrubs in fall.

3. **Stop Planting:** Oh, the garden looks so nice during spring thru fall, the temptation is always there to add new plants during summer. But, the reality is that the survival rate of new plantings drops significantly in high heat. The additional transpiration that occurs in heat adds stress to the plants and if roots are not watered more frequently, insufficient water is available for transpiration — bottom line, stresses on the plant that make it susceptible to disease and fungus. Plantings should be done in spring for evergreen and fall for deciduous plants when temperatures are moderate and there is sufficient rainfall to help a new plant get established. Any new planting requires almost a year to become fully established so you want to give them a good head start by planting during non-stressful periods.

4. **Stop Overwatering:** Yes, this sounds odd. One would think you could never provide enough water to outdoor plants during high heat summer periods. You can easily overwater plants in summer creating waterlogged soil that will squeeze out available oxygen in the soil and cause immediate harm to your plants. It depends on your soils composition. You need to water but for average, organic, well-drained soils, frequency is more important than quantity and in xeriscape environments, a deep watering focused in the immediate area of the plant roots done less frequently works best. If some plants are persistently wilting, try pinching off some of the foliage to reduce transpiration stress. This is a good argument for use of xeriphytic native plants as garden choices.

5. **Cut Back on Mowing:** If you are struggling to maintain a lawn in hot, dry conditions, cut back on mowing — allowing your grass to remain taller than might be aesthetically pleasing. Raise the cutting height to 3" or more. This protects roots from drying and conserves water.



## Gardening in the Heat of Summer

Continued ...

Furthermore, thick lawns choke out weeds (which compete for limited water).

**6. Cut Back on Gardening Chores:** This suggestion is to help save the gardener as well as the plants. Have your garden construction work done before the heat hits, mulch heavily to prevent weed infestation, and follow the previous advice so that as plants go dormant during extremely hot summers, the gardener can go dormant as well. Oh yes, there are always a few things to do — weeds somehow find a way to defy all attempts to discourage them, etc., but good planning can minimize your need to stress yourself during summer. Always do necessary chores early in the morning.

In Central Texas, we really have two dormant periods in the garden, winter and summer, the latter being the most extreme. Even in shady areas, plants feel the stress of heat and take protective measures to survive. The gardener needs to do the same. Protect your health as well as your plants. Drink plenty of water, take frequent breaks when working outdoors, then hibernate indoors after 10 a.m. to Noon depending on weather conditions.

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### Heatstroke:

The risk of heatstroke can be reduced by observing precautions to avoid overheating and dehydration. Light, loose-fitting clothing will allow perspiration to evaporate. Wide-brimmed hats in bright color keep the sun from warming the head and neck; vents on a hat will allow perspiration to cool the head. Strenuous exercise should be avoided during daylight hours in hot weather; so should remaining in enclosed spaces (such as automobiles).

In environments that are not only hot but also humid, it is important to recognise that humidity reduces the degree to which the body can lose heat by evaporation. In such environments, it helps to wear light clothing such as cotton, that is pervious to sweat but impervious to radiant heat from the sun.

In hot weather people need to drink plenty of liquids to replace fluids lost from sweating. Thirst is not a reliable sign that a person needs fluids. A better indicator is the color of urine. A dark yellow color may indicate dehydration. It is debated whether water or sports drinks are more effective to regain fluids; however, drinking only water without ingesting any salts will lead to a condition known as hyponatremia, which can cause sudden death from heart attack. Humans lose salts through sweat and urine which also need to be replaced along with fluids.

The U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration publishes a heat stress checklist designed to help prevent heat stress. This list includes:

Know signs/symptoms of heat-related illnesses

Block out direct sun or other heat sources

Use cooling fans/air-conditioning; rest regularly

Drink lots of water; about 1 cup every 15 minutes

Wear lightweight, light colored, loose-fitting clothes

Avoid alcohol, caffeinated drinks, or heavy meals

Source: Wikipedia: Heat Stroke <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heatstroke>

## Organic Fertilizer Sources for the Garden

By Chris McLaughlin

There are many ways to supplement your garden with the fertilizer that it needs — naturally. Here are some of the organic fertilizers that you may want to have on hand:

### Organic Nitrogen Sources

- **Animal manure** You're interested in manures that come from cows, rabbits, horses, sheep, horses, alpacas, llamas, and chickens. Not animals that primarily eat meat such as dogs or cats — that's a no-no. Manure from meat-eaters can contain harmful pathogens that you really don't want to come into contact with. Usually manures are composted before they're used in gardens, but some such as rabbit manure doesn't need to be. Others such as cow manure, will burn your plants if not composted first. By the way, if you can get your hands on some bat guano (bat poo), this stuff is nitrogen gold.
- **Worm castings** They don't have to be pure castings, of course. Vermicompost is ideal. Plus, it's a super-duper soil conditioner.
- **Alfalfa meal** - Not only does alfalfa offer a big bang of nitrogen, it's also a terrific organism activator for soil. So I toss some into my compost, too. Use alfalfa meal on the plants that are gluttons for food like corn. As usual, I like to use what I have on hand to not only save time, but also to save money. Because I have rabbits and buy their feed in large quantities, I periodically dump a bit at the base of my roses. My roses reward me handsomely for my generosity.
- **Blood meal** It's exactly what it sounds like. It's dried blood from animals ... but it's loaded with nitrogen.
- **Fish meal or fish emulsion** This is seriously going to stink for a bit, but the smell doesn't last and your plants DIG it. I prefer fish meal to the emulsion only because the emulsion is said to wash away faster. But to each their own.
- **Coffee grounds** Stop by your local Starbucks and snag a bag. Many coffee houses have the used grounds already bagged up and free for the taking. Sprinkle it around your azaleas, rhodies (rhododendrons), blueberries, and the like for the acidity ... but it also brings terrific nitrogen, too.
- **Grass clippings** Call me cheap (and many do), but green grass freshly mowed from the lawn is an excellent source of free nitrogen.

### Organic Phosphorus Sources

- **Rock phosphate** The good news about rock phosphate is that it lasts a long time because it breaks down very slowly. The bad news is that it breaks down very slowly and the phosphorus doesn't become fully available to plants for like a year. But then, you've got time, right? I mean where's the fire? Add it and forget about it.
- **Bone meal** Again with the dead animals. Bone meal is animal bones that have been grounded into powder. It's highly phosphorus as well as calcium, but this is also a slow-releasing source. It's great for promoting flower blossoms as well as encouraging good root growth.
- **Colloidal phosphate** This is a soft-rock phosphate and is also called "colloidal calcium phosphate".

## Organic Fertilizer Sources

Continued...

### Organic Potassium Sources

- **Greensand** This stuff is mined from mineral deposits that came from the ocean floor. It's not only high in potassium but it's good for general soil amending, as well.
- **Kelp meal** Another garden gift from the ocean, kelp meal is derived from dried seaweed. This is an exceptionally nice fertilizer as it contains a lot of trace mineral and hormones that really give plant roots what they need to create strong plants. A popular organic fertilizing combination is kelp meal and fish emulsion.
- **Granite meal** Granite meal is finely ground granite rock that promotes healthy plants by not only slowly releasing potassium, but also by helping create soil structure and improving soil drainage.

As an all-around general soil amendment, there's nothing better than compost for your soil. Composted organic matter adds all kinds of nutrients and makes them easily available to plant roots.

*Article written by Chris McLaughlin, Master Gardener from San Ramon California, first appearing in The Vegetable Gardener (www.vegetablegardener.com) newsletter. Reprinted with permission.*

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### A Passion for Passion Flowers by Anne Van Nest

Anyone who has gazed at the intricate details of a passion flower in full bloom will understand how possible it is to be immediately captivated by this plant's spell. For all forms of passion flowers, it is hard to believe that a flower so beautiful is genuine and not a vision of human imagination. Once viewed, there is no denying the fact that passion flowers evoke a strong emotional response when they are in bloom. Building on the alluring sight of the flower is the fragrance of some passion flowers, so strong that it leaves a sweet tropical scent memory. Gardeners fortunate to taste the distinctive, nectar of the edible fruit will have an even clearer understanding of the reason that passion flowers are one of the crown jewels of the plant world. The best news is that many are easy to grow.

Passion flowers invoke more than an emotional response, they also have reputed medical properties. Their most prevalent use is as an extraction of glycoside, which is made from the dried leaves and its used as a sedative or tranquilizer. In Brazil, trained herbalists prescribe an herbal remedy using the rind of the fruit as a sedative for the relief of headaches. In Mexico it was and still is taken for insomnia, epilepsy and hysteria. Some people use the juice as a digestive stimulant. Herbal uses date back to the North American natives (Algonquin and Cherokee) who used parts of the native passion flower to create an curative tranquilizer.

Recently it was discovered that passion flowers have uses that are culinary in addition to their long-known medicinal properties. The oil from the seeds is now used domestically and industrially as an edible oil similar to sunflower oil. Some types of passion flowers have even been used as a beverage that is a substitute for tea. Caution should be taken at all times when preparing herbal remedies. Consult an experienced herbalist instead of attempting any self-medication. The results could be very tragic as the raw root of passion flowers has narcotic effects and is poisonous.

Historically, the first passion flowers, called Maracuja in their native South American habitat, were introduced to Europe by the Spanish in the 18th century. The story begins in 1609, when a Mexican scholar showed Giacomo Bosio, a fellow scholar, drawings of a wonderful flower so marvellous that he did not believe them. After receiving more drawings and assurances from

## A Passion for Passion Flowers

Continued...

Mexican Jesuits, Jacomo Bosio was finally satisfied that this marvellous flower did exist. He now felt that it was his duty to present the 'Flos Passionis' (flowers of passion) to the world. The unusual flower structure was believed by Spanish Missionaries and early discoverers to be emblematic of the crucifixion of Christ. They saw the 5 stamens to represent the wounds, 3 styles for the 3 nails and white and purple-blue for purity and heaven. Finally the leaf symbolized the spear.

Of botanical interest is the fact that it was not until the early nineteenth century that many species were seriously collected and cultivated in European Botanical Gardens and then found their way to wealthy Victorian gardener's glasshouses.

In 1820, the first passion flower was hybridized to give it properties that made it more appropriate for the garden. Now there are hundreds of hybrids in a wide range of colours (purples, blues, white, cream and red). Today 95% of passion flowers are from the tropical rainforest regions of South America, the remaining 5% are from Asia, Australia and North America, with still more new species discoveries being made.

Botanically, passion flower is known as *Passiflora* which is from the latin word "passio" for passion and "flos" for flower. To date there are about 500 different species of passion flowers which have been discovered in the wild. They are mainly vines with tendrils to help them climb (cling). North America has several native *Passiflora* vines. One is *Passiflora incarnata*, which is called apricot vine or maypops in some areas. It is native from Texas to Illinois and can be grown in a protected location outside in Boston or New York. The blooms are an intricate bluish-white with purple accents. It has a small, edible fruit that produce a loud pop when accidentally trodden upon. Although it is less flavourful than some of the other South American types, the 2-3 inch fruit has plenty of seeds to start and share new plants with gardening friends.

Of economic significance, some passion flower's are grown for their fruit, the largest is the tropical, Giant Granadilla (*Passiflora quadrangularis*) which has melon size fruit up to inches in diameter. This is the source of passion fruit flavouring processed in Central America. Some vines produce twenty-five of these mammoth fruit in a season. The passion fruit flavouring is often added to drinks and ices.

In their native habitat, passion flowers are almost exclusive hosts to over 70 species of tropical butterflies in the Heliconid family. These colorful butterflies rely heavily on this plant both for the leaves as a larvae food source and for the nectar and pollen as an adult butterfly food source. The Niagara Parks Butterfly Conservatory uses passion flowers as one of their larval host food for their in-house butterfly breeding program.



It is this close relationship between butterflies and passion flowers that helps some species avoid insect attack. Look closely at many passion flower leaves and there will be inflated glands that mimic caterpillar eggs. Passing butterflies avoid laying eggs on leaves that already are claimed by another butterfly. This mimicry tactic saves the passion flower from being eaten.



Next time a leafy green vine is dangling overhead, stop to look for blooms and savor the scent. If you are lucky it's a passion flower.

## Coming Events

### **Designing Your Landscape**

#### **Basic Landscape Design Principles**

**Saturday, July 10th, 10:00 am - noon**

Zilker Botanical Garden

2220 Barton Springs Road, Austin, TX 78746 (512) 477-8672

Does your garden need a remodel? Or do you need a landscape design but don't know where to start? In this second landscape design seminar, we will explore the step-by-step process of creating a landscape plan. We will discuss the creation of drawings from site analysis through concept to a final planting plan. Learn how to measure your yard and draw a base plan to scale. This seminar will introduce the tools you need to create the garden you have always wanted.

This seminar is free and open to the public. It is presented by the Travis County Master Gardeners Association, a volunteer arm of the Texas AgriLife Extension Service in Travis County. [www.tcmastergardeners.org](http://www.tcmastergardeners.org) or call the Travis County Master Gardeners' help desk at (512) 854-9600.

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### **Better Photography in the Garden**

**Saturday, July 24th, 10:00 am - noon**

Zilker Botanical Garden

2220 Barton Springs Road, Austin, TX 78746 (512) 477-8672

This class will help you capture the beauty of nature with your camera. Learn tips on capturing plants and insects in the garden to get the most impact. Discussion will include how lighting, focal length and aperture interact in composing photographs and how to use your camera's programs (landscape, portrait, etc.) effectively. After the presentation, we'll go out into the Botanical Garden to practice our new skills. Participants must bring their own camera, and have an understanding of how to work it. All types of cameras welcome.

Prerequisite: Study the owner's manual of your camera. Bring your camera for some practical exercises.

This seminar is free and open to the public. It is presented by the Travis County Master Gardeners Association, a volunteer arm of the Texas AgriLife Extension Service in Travis County. [www.tcmastergardeners.org](http://www.tcmastergardeners.org) or call the Travis County Master Gardeners' help desk at (512) 854-9600.

Coming Events

Continued

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**Fall Vegetable Gardening**  
**Saturday, August 7th, 10:00 am - noon**

Southwest Hills Community Church

7416 W Highway 71, Austin, TX 78735

Cooler weather is just around the corner and now is the time to prepare your vegetable garden for the fall and winter season. Join Master Gardener Vegetable Specialist Patty Leander to learn the basics of vegetable gardening with an emphasis on varieties that flourish in the fall and winter months. Broccoli, lettuce, Swiss chard, radishes and spinach are among the fantastic crops that grow well in our cooler season. Vegetable gardens don't end in fall, so come learn how to keep yours going year round.

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**How to Manage Garden Insects**  
**Saturday, August 21st, 10:00 am - noon**

LCRA Redbud Center, Room 108N

3601 Lake Austin Blvd., Austin, TX 78703

Insects can be one of the biggest challenges for gardeners. But you can deal with pests effectively without spraying general insecticides all over your plants. Integrated Pest Management (IPM) can teach you how to protect your garden without harming the environment or your plants. Learn to distinguish beneficial insects in your backyard from harmful insects. Basic IPM strategies will be described that can help manage insect pests throughout the landscape, in vegetable gardens, even in the home.

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## Coming Events

Continued ...



### **4th Central Texas Master Gardeners Conference**

**Urban Farming — The Ultimate Backyard Experience**

**Saturday, October 9th, 8:00 am - 4:15 pm**

Schertz Civic Center

1400 Schertz Parkway, Building 5, Schertz, Texas

Urban farming, edible landscapes, whatever you call it, is “growing” in popularity; converts flock to talks and demonstrations given by Agri-Life Extension and Master Gardeners!

Now it’s your turn, join us for an educational fun filled day learning about the concept of Urban Farming from the microbes in the soil to the fruit, flowers and vegetables perfect for your home grown edible landscapes. Our esteemed speakers are: Dr. Larry Stein, Dr. Diane Boellstorff, Dr. David Reed and Dr. Joe Novak.

In addition to our educational talks, vendors will offer books, plants, fruit trees, and goodies for your gardening pleasure. Visit our educational displays on honey bees, backyard poultry, beneficial nematodes, compost tea and more!

Our objective is to offer Master Gardeners who usually don’t attend the State MG Conference an opportunity to participate in a quality one day event located in Central Texas. Master Gardeners attending this conference will be granted 6 continuing education hours.

Early registration will ensure your place – the conference is limited to 250 attendees!

Registration information [www.tcmastergardeners.org/what/conference/CTGCregform.pdf](http://www.tcmastergardeners.org/what/conference/CTGCregform.pdf)  
and agenda details [www.tcmastergardeners.org/what/conference/agenda.html](http://www.tcmastergardeners.org/what/conference/agenda.html)

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This issue of the Compost Bin has been published thanks to the contributions of the following Travis County Master Gardeners, and Wizzie Brown — Texas AgriLife Extension Service.

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Visit the websites: [www.tcmastergardeners.org](http://www.tcmastergardeners.org) and  
<http://travis-tx.tamu.edu>



*The End...*

*Time to Get Gardening!*

