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Meeting - East Austin Garden Fair 2017

Pop quiz:
How many people attended EAGF this year?
Name three booths or presentations at EAGF?
Name two events at EAGF that fall under Educational Program?

Join us as Mikala McFerren and crew tells us about the great things that took place at the award winning East Austin Garden Fair (2017 first place for Educational Program). See why this Master Gardener is herself an award winning volunteer (third place 2017 Outstanding Individual Master Gardener) as you hear about the ways she is contributing to our community through TCMGA and the EAGF.

Master Gardener Meeting information:
Wednesday, July 5, 2017, starting at 7 pm
Zilker Botanical Garden

Master Gardener meetings are open to certified Master Gardeners and trainees only.
In the Vegetable Garden
by Patty Leander

Put down that rake and step away from the garden. July is a good month to go dormant and give yourself and your soil a rest. Grab a garden magazine along with a big glass of iced tea and start thinking about the fall season. What do you plan to grow? Perusing seed catalogs and garden blogs will provide inspiration for tasty new vegetables to try.

Summer’s unforgiving heat takes a toll on plants this month and zaps the joy right out of growing our own food. The flavor of garden vegetables is compromised, and most don’t produce as well in the stifling heat. Even heat-tolerant champs like okra and Southern peas need regular watering to produce a decent harvest.

If your tomato plants are healthy and you can keep them that way, you might be able to carry them through the summer for a fall crop. Prune them slightly, removing any damaged or diseased leaves and stems, apply a fresh layer of mulch, fertilize monthly and make sure they receive 1-1½” of water each week. Providing temporary shade will also help them make it through the summer.

When the heat zaps the fun out of growing your own food outside, how about growing your own sprouts inside? They are easy to grow and ready to eat in only 4-5 days.

A variety of seeds for sprouting can be purchased through online sources (try www.johnnyseeds.com, www.sproutpeople.org or www.superseeds.com) and can sometimes be found in the bulk spice section at the grocery store.

There are 3 simple steps for growing sprouts:

1) Soak
2) Rinse
3) Drain

First, soak 2 tablespoons of alfalfa seed in a one quart Mason jar overnight. Cover the opening with cheesecloth, a piece of nylon pantyhose, or a special sprouting lid with holes for drainage. I purchased my sprouting lids from Pinetree Seeds – www.superseeds.com. The following morning, drain off the water and cover the seeds so that they are not exposed to light, by either placing the jar in a paper bag or by wrapping the jar in foil.

Lay the jar sideways on the counter so that the seeds are spread out. Gently rinse and drain the seeds with tepid water 3 times-a-day. After 3 or 4 days, expose your sprouts to bright light (but not direct sun) for a day so they can green up. Give them one final rinse, and they are ready to eat. They can be stored in the refrigerator for up to a week. Spread them out on the counter and allow them to air dry for a few hours before storing. Add to sandwiches, wraps, omelets, salads and appetizers.

Looks like it’s time to take an inventory of that seed collection.
Here is the vegetable gardener’s checklist for July:

- Remove spent plant material from the garden; discard any material that is diseased or infested with spider mites or other damaging insects.
- Allow the soil to rest by leaving it fallow for several weeks. Cover empty beds with 1-2 inches of compost, then add a layer of mulch, shade cloth, newspaper, leaves or straw to protect the soil. If possible run a soaker hose under the mulch layer and water the soil once a week. When it’s time to plant in August or September the soil will be moist and receptive to seed or transplants.
- If you are willing to water, plant a living mulch of cowpeas or buckwheat. As they grow, their leaves will shade the soil and help conserve moisture. After they start to bloom you can cut them down, leaving the roots in the soil to decompose. The tops can be composted or turned into the soil. I usually let my cowpeas bloom so I can harvest peas for the kitchen.

Soak alfalfa seeds in a large jar before sprouting.

Ready to eat!
In the Vegetable Garden

- Take an inventory of seeds, and purchase varieties you want to try.
- Grow your own cool season transplants indoors. You don’t need fancy or expensive fixtures; fluorescent lights are sufficient to grow seedlings to transplant size. Use one warm bulb and one cool bulb to provide the color spectrum that plants need.
- Plant tomatoes at the end of this month. Varieties that mature in 70-75 days will ensure that you have a productive harvest before the cold weather arrives.
- If you do work in the garden this summer, wear sunscreen, take breaks and drink plenty of fluids. It is easy to fall victim to heat exhaustion this time of year.

As long you keep them watered, Southern peas, like these purple hulls, will produce all summer.

photos by Patty and Bruce Leander
How Does Horticultural Oil Work?

by Wizzie Brown

To properly choose and utilize pesticides, we need to know a little about how they kill their target pests. Such knowledge can allow us to use proper pesticides on the correct target organisms, in the proper locations, and at the proper time.

Horticultural oils kill insects through suffocation. When oil coats the insect’s body it blocks the spiracles. Spiracles are openings on the side of an insect’s body that they can open and close in order to allow oxygen into the body and carbon dioxide out. Since oils need to coat the insect thoroughly to work properly, oils must be applied when some stage of the insect is present. Horticultural oils can also kill eggs by penetrating the shell and interfering with respiration. When using horticultural oils it is important to get good coverage.

It is important to know differences in horticultural oils. If you choose to use the incorrect oil for the time or place you are treating, you could damage your plant. Dormant oils are heavier oils, and evaporate more slowly. They tend to stay on the plant longer and are meant to be used in winter (when the plant is dormant). Summer oils are lighter, stay a shorter period of time on the plant, and can be used throughout the growing season.

Not all conditions are ideal for horticultural oils. They should not be used when it is about to rain, or if the area will be irrigated, as this washes oil away. Plants that are wilting, stressed by drought, or under excessive heat or humidity conditions should not be treated with horticultural oils. Oils should be applied when temperatures are between 40-90°F, or within the temperature range stated on the label.

Horticultural oils work best when used against soft-bodied insects such as aphids, whiteflies, mealybugs, scale insects, etc. Caution must be taken when utilizing horticultural oils, because some oils may cause phytotoxicity (toxicity to plants). To avoid damaging the plant, make sure to read and follow all label instructions.

For more information or help with identification, contact Wizzie Brown, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist at 512.854.9600. Check out my blog at www.urban-ipm.blogspot.com
Flashback Favs
by Daphne Richards

As a contributor to Central Texas Gardener (CTG), I love to answer your questions and share knowledge on new and tried and true plants for our area. Here are some Flashback Favs

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aT4C4RDYCEo (CTG 2013)

We know it’s too hot and dry to plant right now, but if we must, or if we’re starting a fall vegetable garden, how do we best protect our new plantings?

Although some plants, like lantana, okra, bird of paradise, and other truly heat-loving tough guys will not bat an eye if you plant them in mid-summer in Texas, most plants will struggle. The sun here is just brutal. But sometimes it’s necessary to plant in summer, and the good news is that you can help your plants transition. It’ll take a little bit of effort, but will be well worth it. All you need to do is build a simple, even crude shade structure for them, to keep out some of our burning sunlight. A very easy way to do this is with PVC pipe and shade cloth, both of which are easy to find at home improvement stores and most nurseries. PVC pipe is relatively easy to cut with a small hand saw. You can build an A-frame and just drape a large piece of shade cloth over the top. To build a larger shade frame, you can use thin wooden stakes, which can be hammered into the ground relatively easily, and use a staple gun to staple the shade cloth onto them. Shade cloth comes in different weights, keeping various amounts of light out. About 30% sun blockage should do the trick. Make sure that there is plenty of air circulation under the shade structure around your plants. If you’re protecting a vegetable garden, you may choose to leave the shade on until daytime temperatures fall back down into the 80’s. Although vegetables can handle more light, and you can remove it earlier, once they’re established, the plants will be less stressed in a bit of shade. Although too much shade will inhibit their ability to fruit, so don’t overdo it. If you’re simply protecting a landscape plant, such as a perennial with delicate leaves, a few weeks under a bit of shade should do it. Any rudimentary shade structure will work, so don’t think you need to get too fancy. But make sure that the wind isn’t going to pick it up and blow it away.

Portulaca and Apenia, both of which are commonly called “ice plants”

Using the common name for plants can often lead to confusion, and with the common name “ice plant,” this seems to be especially true, as most any succulent plant that spreads along the ground, thrives in the heat, grows in rocky soil, and has strikingly beautiful leaves is called ice plant! Most ice plants will do very well here in Central Texas, especially in the summer. But some species don’t tolerate our cold winters. So be sure to do your research before you plant. Apenia is also known as “hearts and flowers” and as “red apple plant.” Both it and Portulaca are very easily grown: Portulaca can be grown from seed and Apenia can be grown from cuttings. In fact, if you have a neighbor with Apenia, ask them if you can break a piece off. Take it home and let it air dry for about an hour so that the broken surface heals a bit, then put it directly into your landscape and water just a bit: the ground will be covered in no time.
THINGS TO DO IN JULY

FERTILIZE: Give annuals a complete fertilizer. Water well before and after application. Deadhead and fertilize roses. Fertilize young fruit trees (except pears) with a 3-1-2 ratio product at 1-2 cups per inch of trunk diameter.

WATER: Water all planted areas deeply but infrequently during dry periods. Outdoor container plants need daily watering. Consider landscaping with drought resistant native plants in the future.

SOIL: Mulch all bare soil. Turn compost pile and add new ingredients. Clean up spring vegetable gardens and replenish with compost.

LAWN CARE: Mow every 5-7 days and leave the clippings on the lawn. Watch for take-all patch. Set mower higher in shady areas to promote denser turf.

DISEASES / PESTS TO LOOK FOR: spider mites, leaf rollers, lacebugs and aphids on plants; chinch bugs, fleas, ticks, chiggers and grubs in lawns; scale insects on euonymus, hollies, peaches and plums; webworms in pecans and persimmons; powdery mildew on crape myrtles and roses; aphids on crape myrtle, roses and Mexican milkweed; scale on peaches and plums. Remove any diseased leaves from beds; do not add to compost.

PRUNE: Remove vigorous growth from center of peach and plum trees to prevent shading of fruiting shoots. Tip new blackberry canes at 4’ to force side branches. Prune dead and damaged wood from trees and shrubs as needed.
Austin Area Events

**Woodland Fairie Trail**
open through July 30, 2017

Zilker Botanical Garden
2220 Barton Springs Rd
Austin, TX

Explore the abodes of the faeries and gnomes along the Woodland Faerie Trail through the escarpment pathway and see who is home. Free with Garden entry and open during regular hours, no registration required.

Zilker park entrance fee is $2 per adult, $1 per child (ages 3-12) or seniors (age 62 & over), $3 for non-Austin Residents. Cash or check accepted.

**The 6 D’s of Container Gardening Success**
Saturday, July 8, 2017
10 am - 12 pm

Zilker Botanical Garden
2220 Barton Springs Rd
Austin, TX

Whether you want winter color or summer vegetables, you can grow it in containers. The session covers the major considerations and decisions that lead to gardening success – from design and soil to irrigation and sunlight. Participants will come away with a list of recommended plants and resources suitable for Central Texas. Travis County Master Gardener Kirk Walden is a hands-on experiential gardener.

Seminar is free and open to the public. No RSVP is required.

Zilker park entrance fee is $2 per adult, $1 per child (ages 3-12) or seniors (age 62 & over), $3 for non-Austin Residents. Cash or check accepted.
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**The Compost Bin Submissions**
We are always looking for Travis County Master Gardeners who are interested in writing for our monthly newsletter, and we would love to see your articles, photographs, book reviews and gardening ideas.

**General Guidelines**
- Please first email the editor to discuss potential article ideas.
- Email contributions as attachments (preferably in Word with a .doc or .rtf suffix).
- Please send images as separate attachments (preferably .jpg suffix). Don’t forget to include photographer acknowledgments and captions.

Send your submissions, announcements, questions and suggestions to: editor.compostbin@gmail.com

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“Deep summer is when laziness finds respectability.”
- Sam Keen