

THE COMPOST BIN

A publication of the Travis County Master Gardeners



ALL ABOUT EARTH KIND ROSES

Are Roses a Mystery to you? Join us this April Fools day when Master Gardeners Holly Plotner and Carolyn Williams will be discussing Earth Kind Roses, a designation indicating high performance and outstanding disease and insect tolerance, as well as the basics of pruning and rose care.

Earth Kind is an important designation given to select roses by the Texas A&M University Agriculture program. Earth Kind Roses have been through rigorous statewide testing and evaluation by a team of horticultural experts and found to possess a high level of landscape performance and outstanding disease and insect tolerance/resistance. We will include illustrations of a number of Earth Kind Roses plus information on site selection, soil amendments, and bed preparations.

And just as important as selection is care for your roses. Pruning

APRIL 2009

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rose bushes is intimidating to many gardeners, but actually very good for the plants. Becoming an accomplished rose pruner takes time and practice. Learn about properly pruning plus the basics of rose care.

Please Join us on Wednesday, April 1st at 7 PM at the Zilker Botanical Gardens Clubhouse. Refreshments will be provided.

Best Regards,

Jerry Naiser
Vice president Programs



The President's Message

Spring, Spring, Spring...or should I say spring fever? It's that time of year when all of my attention is focused on outside activities and I become a bit neglectful of my inside duties (like writing this note in a timely manner!).

After a couple of trips...okay maybe 5 or 10...to my favorite nurseries and a visit to the Master Gardener greenhouse, I am ready to plant. Although it's a little rainy today, I will not complain. We need the rain and I need to pay attention to some paper work.

Speaking of plants...our spring Plant Swap is Wednesday, April 1 following our monthly meeting. I know you'll be tempted to "shop" before the end of the meeting but you'll have to wait. Bring your plants, seeds, gardening magazines, and anything else garden related and join in the frenzy...and I do mean frenzy! Interns, if you have not experienced this event yet, I hope you will come and join us. It's great fun and you can go home with a treasure or two. And, you do not have to bring anything to participate. There will be plenty to go around.

I want to reflect a little on last month's activities. Passion for Plants was incredibly successful again this year. In fact, it just gets better every year. The weather cooperated and although as of this writing the numbers aren't in yet, we must have had another record crowd. Thanks to Susan Decker, Lisa Anhauser, the planning committee and all of our members who gave a few hours of their time. I'm looking forward to next year's event!

Also, as I write this note Zilker Fest is just days away. Anne Van Nest, Molly Clark, Marian Stasney, the entire greenhouse committee, other Master Gardeners and our wonderful interns have out done themselves this year. The greenhouse is full of beautiful tomatoes, herbs, perennials, annuals, hanging baskets and other containers. I hope you all had a chance to shop before the sale because I just know that our plants went "flying out the door" so to speak once the gates were opened to the public.

And don't forget to check out the Demonstration Garden at the AgriLife Extension Office. The Demo Garden team continues to make progress on revitalizing the garden. I hope that you will be able to contribute a few volunteer hours to this effort. The team is arranging workdays and education sessions.

Planning for the 2009 training class is underway. Information about the class is available by calling the Master Gardener Help Desk. If you know of someone who is considering applying for the class, have them call the Help Desk. Classes begin August 4th and enrollment is limited to 40.

Before I close, I want to thank Vicki Blachman and Bonnie Martin for their great work scheduling and promoting our educational seminars. Attendance at all of our seminars has been amazing this year. Because of their efforts and the many volunteers who make these events happen we are reaching more and more home gardeners!

Now, I'm going for a walk in the rain!

Manda Rash, President



Plant Portrait - Mother of Thousands

Mother of Thousands, Alligator plant, Devil's Backbone, Mexican Hat Plant (*Bryophyllum daigremontianum*, *Kalanchoe daigremontiana*)

A member of the Crassulaceae (Stonecrop) family which hails originally from southwest Madagascar in the Mount Androhibolava region.

It is an annual succulent with "v" shaped, triangular leaves that grows up to 3 ft tall (more if it is flowering). Hardy to zone 9b and will not survive the frosty winter weather unless in a very protected location. Mature plants (1-2 years old) will flower in late winter producing a very showy panicle of orangey-pink flowers (similar to aloe blooms).



A unique and prolific reproducer

Once in bloom, stake the plant as the sheer weight of the flowers will topple the plant. In the greenhouse a potted plant sitting under the bench decided to bloom this year and grew up through the bench to bloom almost at eye level. The wire mesh bench was perfect to support the massive bloom.

The plant is considered viviparous and will produce baby plantlets (eventually complete with roots) all around the lower leaves – a very interesting feature. Each plantlet though will start a new plant once it drops into a hospitable environment to grow – like another plant pot. One plant can produce hundreds (thousands?) of babies. In Australia this plant is called Mother of Millions and is considered a weed. Scientists believe that the plant has lost its ability to produce viable seeds and shifted to produce plantlets as a means of reproduction. And a very successful technique indeed!

In Austin these plants are best grown outdoors during the spring-fall season and then moved to an above freezing location during the winter. They are very drought and heat tolerant during the summer.

If you can't find this plant at the nursery - search out a friend who has one and ask for some of the babies - they will have plenty.

Don't fertilize this plant as it really prefers little attention. All it needs is a splash of water occasionally and some bright sun and it is happy. It even prefers to be slightly pot bound so there isn't a big need to repot it very often.



Keep some plantlets for future generations. After the mother of thousands completes its glorious and long bloom, the plant dies.

All parts of the plant are poisonous if ingested - watch small children and the easily dislodged baby plantlets.

Other species:

Kalanchoe laetivirens (Common Mother of Thousands) has wide leaves

K. tubiflora has very narrow leaves

K. daigremontiana (Alligator Plant) has medium leaves and very prominent “v” shape.

K. delagoensis has very narrow leaves

K. pinnata has wide and round leaves

Anne Van Nest



In The Vegetable Garden

Whoever said Texas doesn't experience a spring season must not have been paying very close attention. Here in Central Texas we enjoy a definite transition from a cold and bare winter landscape to one that slowly comes alive with daffodils, redbuds, Texas mountain laurels, bluebonnets, poppies and roses, to name just a few. Granted, our Texas summer follows in quick succession, but we are fortunate to enjoy a brief, but bug-less, mosquito-less and swelter-less, period that beckons us to the garden. So take advantage of this wonderful time (it is almost over!) and plant some seeds that will bring a delicious and nutritious harvest to your dinner table in the next 2-3 months.



Get those tomato transplants in the ground!

April is here, and I don't know if it will bring showers, but I do know that vegetable gardeners are planting, digging, raking, mulching and weeding at an accelerated pace. Got to get those seeds and transplants in the ground and off to a good start before the heat sets in. Seeds of cucumbers, green beans, squash (both summer and winter), melons, Southern peas, okra, and sweet corn can all be planted directly into the garden. Keep the soil moist and germination should take place within a week. Eggplant and peppers should go in as transplants.

If you haven't planted tomatoes yet, do it soon. It is too late to start tomatoes from seed. Most varieties take 65-78 days to produce from transplants, and if you wait too long, that means production won't start until late June. That's about the time that our nighttime temperatures are well into the mid 70's, causing tomato production to decrease or shut down altogether, so get those transplants in. Eggplant and peppers should also go in as transplants. If the soil is dry, it's a good idea to saturate the soil with water a day or two before planting seeds. To get my transplants off to a good start, I set them in a pan of water enriched with water soluble fertilizer or liquid seaweed (diluted to half strength) and let them soak it up before planting. Then water them with a dilute fertilizer every week or two.

The danger of frost is probably past, but it seems we often get some kind of cold snap around Easter, which falls on



April 12 this year, so pay attention to the forecast and have your sheets or row cover at the ready in case cold temperatures threaten. Your plants will thank you.

Here's to a bountiful harvest,

Patty Leander



The Greenhouse Bench

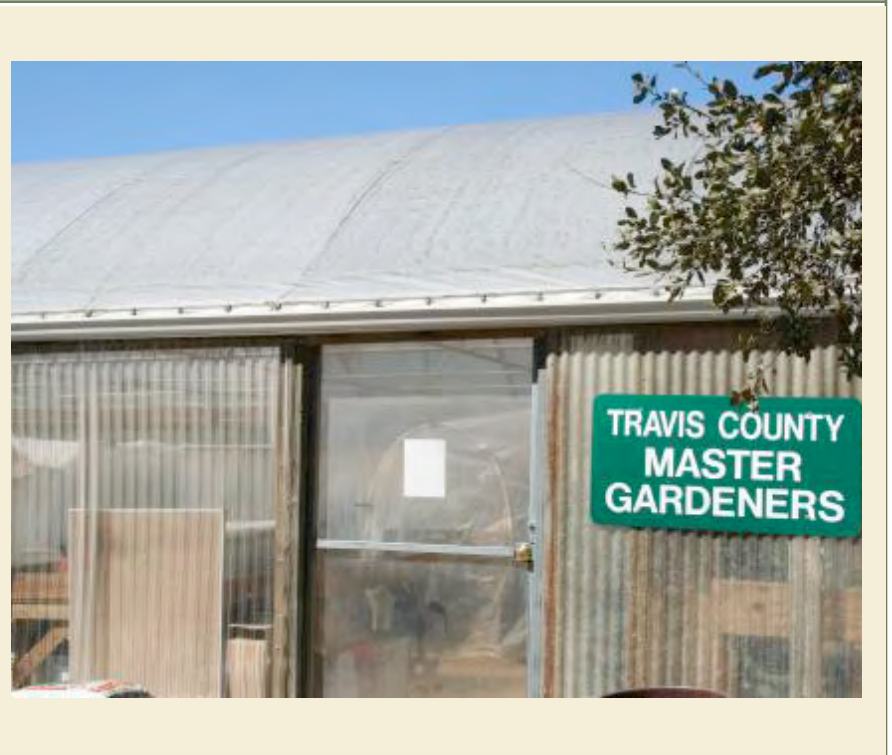
March is the busiest month in the greenhouse with lots of work activities focused on two very successful events involving greenhouse plants; the Passion for Plants - An East Austin Garden Fair and the Zilker Garden Festival.

With a focus on edible and wildlife attracting plants, over 800 4" pots of tomatoes, vegetables, and herbs were grown for Master Gardeners to give away to participants at the Passion for Plants event in Govalle Park in late March. Thanks to everyone who seeded, transplanted, potted up, labeled and transported these plants with such loving care.

New this year at Zilker Garden Festival was the unveiling (or rain christening) of a large canopy for the TCMGA booth. After several minutes of marveling at the sheer number of pieces the canopy had arrived in, Don Telge and Fred Van Nest jumped right in and started assembling the canopy ahead of the Zilker Garden Festival weekend. A 7 am start to the set up day found a bleary eyed group ready to march the canopy to the main parking lot. The new canopy and the display racks created the structure for the TCMGA plant sale booth. A xeriscape theme complete with Agaves, Opuntia and Christmas decorations were used to attract visitors to the booth. Also new this year was the addition of a compact hanging basket display stand which had more flexibility in where it could be positioned. Thank you Don Telge for the construction of this handy display stand.

Once again this year, special recognition is given to Holly Plotner for holding numerous Monday morning work days in the greenhouse during the last three months as well as researching and printing all the plant information labels for the Passion for Plants event plants and Zilker Garden Festival sales plants. And to further recognize Holly, she also put many of these thousands of labels on the plant pots too.

Thanks are relayed to all the Master Gardeners and Interns who labeled, staked, organized, inventoried,



groomed and fertilized the greenhouse plants during the months, weeks and days leading up to the Garden Festival and additional thanks to everyone who transported, staged and sold the plants during the Zilker Garden Festival weekend.

And to everyone who bought TCMGA plants - appreciation is extended to you for supporting your organization!

See you in the Greenhouse!...Anne Van Nest, Marian Stasney and Molly Clark



Over The Back Fence

NEW WHITE HOUSE VEGETABLE GARDEN

Here is a diagram of the new vegetable garden at the White House which many of you might enjoy reviewing. Taken off the New York Times site. William Hyland

The New York Times

March 20, 2009

Local Food, From the South Lawn

Blueberries, raspberries
and blackberries

Michelle Obama envisions the organic garden on the White House lawn as a means of educating children and communities about healthful eating, and as a source of fresh herbs and vegetables for the family and guests.



Source: *The White House*

THE NEW YORK TIMES/PHOTOGRAPH BY SANBORN, VIA GOOGLE EARTH

PUBLIC SEMINARS

Gardening Above Ground, April 15, 2009, 7-9pm, Zilker Botanical Garden

Love to garden but don't have the space or soil for the plants you love? This free seminar will increase your knowledge of working with plants in containers. It is an ideal learning experience for anyone wanting to know more about growing flowers or vegetables on a patio, an apartment balcony or in other locations. We will discuss what plants grow well in containers, types of containers, soil, fertilizer and watering. In addition, we will introduce you to using Grow Boxes, an easy to construct gardening container made from a plastic storage box that allows for growing of vegetables or flowers without weeding and only needing infrequent watering. A limited amount of Grow Box kits will be offered for sale.

Going Native in the Garden, April 30, 2009, 7-9pm, Zilker Botanical Garden

Having trouble picking the right plants for your Central Texas garden? Attend our Going Native seminar and hear more about the beautiful native and adapted plants that can grow well in Central Texas and still be earthwise plant choices. Let us help you discover plants that are drought tolerant and resistant to pests and diseases, yet offer the color and texture you desire in your garden. These plants will allow you to build a breathtaking garden while using plants that require less fertilizing, less watering, and less chemical control. Going native is an experience everyone should have in their garden!

INSIDE AUSTIN GARDENS TOUR 2009

Mark your calendar with the date for our 2009 Fall Inside Austin Gardens Tour. That date is Saturday October 24th from 9am to 4pm

We have a fabulous theme this year. All our gardens are Certified Wildlife Habitats!

This means these gardens have Food, Water, Cover, and Places to Raise Young.

To learn more to have your own Backyard Wildlife Habitat go to [www.keepeaustinwild](http://www.keepeaustinwild.org) or nwf.org

These gardens are in Central Austin and all have interesting front yard gardens that attract hummingbirds and butterflies for the whole neighborhood to see and enjoy.

Of course we'll have lots of fun and interesting educational highlights throughout the day of the tour. We know people come to our tour for the garden demonstrations as well as the beautiful gardens.

So circle October 24th on your schedule because this is a great volunteer project for us all. We will have plants for sale too. And after the tour we will have a party with great food to celebrate our hard work.

Join us to help show the Austin community how easy it is to support our Native Wildlife.

Thanks and feel free to call me 771-4319 or email me loretta@nfainc.com.

Loretta Fischer

Closing The Garden Gate

S PRING FEVER! I've got it bad! It's to the point I cannot make myself go inside and my house is definitely showing signs of neglect including dirty dishes in the sink and laundry piling up. I can't even find time to read. However, my yard is beginning to look good after hauling tons of mulch and cutting back all the dead or straggly looking plants. Also, I've planted quite a few new ones and there will be more to come. I stocked up at the MG greenhouse pre-Zilker Festival sale. Plus, I'm looking forward to the plant sale at the Wildflower Center the weekend of April 10 and there are a few succulents I spied at a local nursery one evening when I attended a lecture that I absolutely must have. Oh, and I found a nursery on I-35 that sells tons of palms. Palms are one of my newest loves after attending the garden tour of the Ogden's yard last year. I've been slowly adding them to my yard ever since. So the dishes and laundry can wait – it will be hot soon enough and I am going to spend as much time as possible outside. Hope you are able to do the same. Happy Spring!!!

Rebecca Matthews

Spring Trivia Quiz

1. In which U.S. state you would find Hot Springs National Park?
a) Oregon, b) Montana, c) Arkansas, d) Alaska
2. What 20th-century composer wrote the ballet "Appalachian Spring"?
a) Cole Porter, b) Aaron Copland, c) Stephen Sondheim, d) Rubin Goldmark
3. Which novel opens with the line: "The Mole had been working very hard all morning, spring cleaning his little home"?
a) The Hobbit, b) Return to Oz, c) Now We Are Six, d) The Wind in the Willows
4. Which movie musical includes the song "Younger Than Springtime"?
a) Mary Poppins, b) State Fair, c) Anchors Aweigh, d) South Pacific
5. Whose book *Silent Spring* informed the public of the harmfulness of pesticides, leading to the ban on DDT?
a) Ida Tarbell, b) Nellie Bly, c) Rachel Carson, d) Joy Adamson
6. *Cold Spring Harbor* and *Streetlife Serenade* were the first two albums recorded what by popular pop singer?
a) Phil Collins, b) Elvis Presley, c) Billy Joel, d) Elton John
7. What poet asked "If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?"
a) Percy Bysshe Shelley, b) Edmund Spenser, c) Edgar Lee Masters, d) Omar Khayyam
8. Who romanced a middle-aged Vivien Leigh in the movie *The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone*?
a) Warren Beatty, b) John Gavin, c) Gregory Peck, d) William Shatner
9. Which U.S. President died at his vacation retreat in Warm Springs, Georgia?
a) Richard Nixon, b) Franklin Delano Roosevelt, c) Calvin Coolidge, d) Warren G. Harding
10. Whose first novel was the 1926 "romantic" comedy novel *The Torrents of Spring*?
a) William Faulkner, b) Ernest Hemingway, c) F. Scott Fitzgerald, d) Virginia Woolf

ANSWERS

1. c) Arkansas
2. b) Aaron Copland

3. d) The Wind in the Willows
4. d) South Pacific
5. c) Rachel Carson
6. c) Billy Joel
7. a) Percy Bysshe Shelley
8. a) Warren Beatty
9. b) Franklin Delano Roosevelt
10. b) Ernest Hemingway

In Closing

It's spring fever. That is what the name of it is. And when you've got it, you want - oh, you don't quite know what it is you do want, but it just fairly makes your heart ache, you want it so!

Mark Twain



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