



McLennan County Master Gardeners

Horticulture Newsletter

Winter, 2006

www.mclennanmastergardeners.org

Call 757-5180 for information on upcoming extension events.

From McLennan County Master Gardeners:

ROSE SYMPOSIUM:

The McLennan County Master Gardeners will host an EarthKind™ Rose Symposium on April 21, 2007 at the TSTC campus.

PLANT SALE:

The annual plant sale featuring plants shared from the gardens of the McLennan County Master Gardeners is scheduled for May 19, 2007.

TEXAS SUPERSTAR BED:

The demonstration bed at Carleen Bright Arboretum continues to showcase the reliability and versatility of the Texas Superstar plants. Stop by and stroll through the area - just across the bridge to the right of the Whitehall Center.

Horticulture Programs at BIG Conference

The 45th Annual Blackland Income Growth (BIG) Conference will be held January 16-17 at the Waco Convention Center. The Horticulture Session kicks off at 9am on Tuesday, January 16th, with Billy Kniffen, Menard County Extension Agent for Agriculture and Natural Resources. Kniffen's topic will be "Rainwater Harvesting for the Homeowner". At 10:30am, Dr. Paul Baumann, Texas A&M Professor and Extension Weed Specialist, will speak on "Controlling Weeds in Lawns, Flower Beds and Vegetable Gardens".

The BIG Conference is open to the public. A registration fee of \$12 includes admission to both Horticulture Sessions as well as the noon barbeque luncheon. This year's luncheon speaker will be Bryan Hale, noted speaker throughout South Texas on flag and country, Texas pride, and Cajun humor.

The BIG conference is sponsored by the Texas Cooperative Extension and the Greater Waco Chamber of Commerce. Registration begins at 8am on Jan. 16.

Two New Texas Superstars Named for 2006

Duranta and a variety of salvia named Henry Duelberg have been awarded Texas Superstar designations by Texas Cooperative Extension. These have been tested for at least three years to make sure they will perform effectively throughout most if not all of the state. The duranta designated as a Texas Superstar is *Duranta erecta*, but is more commonly called Lilac-Flowered Golden Dewdrop, Brazilian Sky Flower, Pigeon Berry or simply Duranta.



Duranta is a tropical annual with blue flowers on weeping or drooping type branches throughout the summer and is followed by yellow berries in the fall. It is easy to grow and as pest resistant as possible. The plants perform very well in containers and make great patio plants for sun and shade. It also does well in our heavy clay soils. Duranta attracts birds, butterflies and hummingbirds. A variegated cultivar named Duranta Golden Eagle is grown just for its foliage and does not flower, but is useful in the shade to provide color.

The Henry Duelberg salvia, found growing in a rural Central Texas cemetery, has dark blue flowers. It is more vigorous than other salvias and performs best when sheared occasionally to renew the flowers and keep the plant tidy. Another variety named Augusta Duelberg, after Henry's wife, has white flowers. Both varieties are heat and drought tolerant, grow 2 to 3 feet tall, thrive on full sun and provide good color throughout their blooming season, which is May through the first frost.

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The gardening season officially begins on
January 1st and ends on December 31.
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Marie Huston

Winter Color in Containers

Container gardening in central Texas is very pleasant at this time of the year because there is such a wide range of color and varieties of plants and bulbs available. One large container could contain some daffodil bulbs planted with blue pansies and yellow violas surrounding them. Parsley could be added as a filler.

Another attractive combination planting includes flowering cabbage and kale surrounded by blue or purple pansies with dusty miller for height and additional interest. There are endless combinations of flowering and foliage plants to choose from in making a winter container: pansies, violas, flowering cabbage and kale, dianthus, alyssum, calendulas, cyclamen and herbs such as parsley, rosemary, sage, fennel or thyme.



Aspidistra (cast iron plant) can be added for a vertical element in the planting. In larger containers, *Powis Castle* Artemisia can be used but will need regular pruning to maintain desirable shape and size.

Bulbs are good to include in a winter container. In addition to daffodils, consider using the low growing Grape Hyacinth in its shades of blue, dutch iris, or the fragrant hyacinth bulb. (Tulips must be pre-chilled in the refrigerator for 6-8 weeks before planting in our area.)

The essentials of container gardening are:

1. Good drainage
2. Good soil mix
3. Right size container

Make sure that there are drainage holes in the container. Use a good professional potting soil mix. When planting, add a slow-release fertilizer in the soil mix. Use a large container, at least 12" diameter or larger so that the plants will have growing room for their roots.

With the many flowering plants available for fall and winter, attractive containers are easy to make and add color to your patio and outdoor areas during the winter months.

Winter Tips:

- Drain gasoline from the power tools and run the engine until fuel in the carburetor is used up.
- Clean and sharpen your gardening tools before putting them away for the winter.
- Drain and store the garden hoses and watering equipment in a readily accessible location. The lawn and plants may need water during prolonged dry spells.

- Continue to set out the cool-season bedding plants, such as pansies, violas, stock, snapdragons, and dianthus.
- Plant trees and shrubs in the winter months. This gives them time to adjust to their new environment. Do not fertilize until they have begun to grow, then lightly their first year.
- On good weather days, prepare garden beds for spring planting by working in organic matter.
- On bad weather days, study seed and nursery catalogs as well as gardening books. Place seed orders early to be assured of getting the variety desired and have them available when ready to plant. Try a few new kinds each year.
- Late December thru February is the best time to prune woody plants. Make sure your pruning equipment is clean and sharp.
- Trim red oak and live oak trees on cold days and avoid pruning them from February 1 to June 1 to reduce the risk of spreading oak wilt.
- Valentine's Day is a reminder to prune hybrid tea and ever-blooming roses. Remove the weak canes, leaving 6 or 8 healthy canes and remove half of the top growth and height of the plant. Climbing roses should be pruned soon after they have bloomed.
- Cool weather veggies like broccoli, collards, asparagus crowns, lettuce, spinach, and onion transplants can go into the ground in January. Vegetables like loose, well-aerated soil. Work plenty of compost into the soil to improve its nutritional content and texture for good seed germination and healthy plants in the spring and summer.



- Carrots, radishes, beets, turnips and mustard can be planted in February along with other cool weather vegetables. Stagger the planting times so that all won't be ready for harvest at the same time.
- Watch for loopers on cabbage, kale and lettuce in the garden. Treat them with a product containing Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*).
- Tomato and pepper seeds can be started indoors, but must kept inside until danger of frost is past.
- Protect the lawn from excessive winter damage by providing irrigation during dry periods.
- Prolong the life of holiday-season gift plants by providing proper care. Don't over water. Check to see if the pot wrap has plugged up the bottom drainage. Keep out of drafts from heating vents and opening doorways.

Common Poison Ivy
Toxicodendron radicans
Member of the Sumac family – *Anacardiaceae*

The Sumac family includes Poison Ivy, a poisonous semi-erect shrub or woody vine with a variable growth habit and which is spread across the United States, Canada, Mexico and the West Indies.

The most noticeable parts of the plant are its three part leaves that vary in size from one to several inches across; the general shape can vary, as can the edge of the leaf, from smooth to deep tooth. A five-leaf form has been noted in the wild, but the individual leaflets are on each side of a straight stem with a single leaf at the end and not radiating from a central point like a palm leaf. Many plants resemble Poison Ivy at first glance, including Box Elder tree, Boston Ivy, Tree Bine (also called wood bine) and Virginia Creeper. Another similar feature of Poison Ivy and these other vines is a beautiful fall color palate. The leaf colors can range from yellow gold to burgundy and red or any combination of these colors. So choose fall leaves for decorating with care.



Poison Ivy may produce tiny greenish white flowers in clusters that result in a dull white waxy fruit that birds love and spread around.

There are several related plants whose names are sometimes used interchangeably with Poison Ivy but are really different plants, such as Poison Sumac and Poison Oak. Poison Sumac is more common in wet areas and Poison Oak is more common in sandy soils of pine forest areas.

The active poisonous part is an oil compound in the whole plant - roots, stems, leaves, flowers, berries, and bark. The oils can remain in dead plant tissue for several seasons depending upon exposure to weather. The intensity of the oil varies from season to season and plant to plant.

A rash might result from contact with one plant, but not the next. Some people are more sensitive than others; walking in smoke from burning Poison Ivy or in fragments thrown up by mowing or shredding may cause a reaction. If severely allergic, consult a doctor immediately after contact.

The oils from Poison Ivy can be absorbed in clothing, socks, and shoes from walking in it. Even pet's hair will pick up the oils from contact with the plant. Washing

clothing, yourself, or the pet immediately with a detergent or soap that breaks down the oil is best.

Control or eradication can be difficult, especially if it is in with other desirable plants. Pulling will help, depending upon how established the plants have become. Wear gloves, pull carefully to remove the plant, and wash the gloves afterward. Well-established plants may have to be dug out or poisoned. Dispose of debris carefully. Putting it in the compost bin is not recommended.

Shantung Maple – a Dressy Little Tree

For a tree to dress up a smaller landscape, consider the Shantung Maple *acer truncatum*. With a mature height of 25 feet and a width of about 20 feet, it is perfect for a compact area and offers enough color and bark interest to dress up either back or front landscapes.

An added plus is that horticulturalists with Texas A&M University have deemed the tree a Texas Superstar. It is well-adapted to our area, but does not do well in far west Texas because of the lower humidity there.



The Shantung Maple is native to northern China and resembles another Asian favorite, the Japanese Maple. One difference is the Shantung Maple's delicate five-lobed leaves that make for a dense canopy. This grower is Texas tough. It likes full sun, tolerates the Texas heat well and likes both acid and alkaline soils.

Other advantages of the Shantung Maple:

- Although it likes full sun, it does fine in partial shade.
- It is drought- and cold-tolerant.
- It presents no disease or insect problems, which means minimal maintenance.
- Its water needs are average.
- The mature bark is a rough, tough corky texture.
- Its tough limbs can withstand our damaging Texas ice storms.

The tree produces blooms in mid-spring, and in late fall, the leaves turn from yellow to orange red. It is deciduous, meaning it drops its leaves, but cleanup is easy. A young Shantung Maple can be seen in the Texas Superstar flower bed sponsored by the McLennan County Master Gardeners at the Carleen Bright Arboretum.

Deer-Resistant Plants

Area homeowners are often faced with the problem of deer grazing in their landscapes. As deer adapt more to newly established urban surroundings, the incidence of deer grazing on gardens and landscaping projects is no longer a problem for rural areas only.

Landscape protection options include fencing - or other physical barriers - or chemical repellents. Deer-proof fencing can be expensive or unsightly and chemical repellents may be undesirable for some landscapers and homeowners.

Deer-resistant plants may offer an ideal solution for those living in areas with a large and hungry deer population. The combination of heat and summer droughts almost invariably make late summer and fall a particularly trying time for deer-plagued areas. Homeowners that feed deer often make the problem worse for themselves and their neighbors. Feeding of deer tends to attract more deer than can be fed and this coupled with a reduced fear of man usually adds to landscape damage.

Deer rely on their strong sense of smell to determine if a plant is safe and palatable. By creating a "scent barrier" using a mix of deer-resistant plants that emit a variety of strong odors, it is hoped that the scents may prove overwhelming and encourage deer to graze elsewhere. Other deer-resistant plants are bitter tasting, or have hairy or prickly leaves that are coarse and tough, and may even have caustic and sticky sap. Deer typically find these plants unappetizing, and will leave the area in search of something more savory. Few plants are fully deer-proof. When hungry enough, deer may eat even the most resistant plants.



No trees have been observed to be resistant enough to leave unprotected. The best approach is to construct a cage around each tree until the leaves and smaller branches grow beyond the deer's reach.

Deer-resistant Shrubs: partial listing

Agarita (*Berberis trifoliolata*)
 Boxwood (*Buxus microphylla*)
 Ceniza/Texas Sage (*Leucophyllum* spp.)
 Desert Willow (*Chilopsis linearis*)
 Dwarf Chinese Holly (*Ilex cornuta*) and Dwarf Yaupon (*Ilex vomitoria*)
 Eleagnus (*Eleagnus* spp.)
 Evergreen sumac (*Rhus virens*), Flameleaf sumac (*Rhus lanceolata*)

Goldcup (*Hypericum* spp.)
 Juniper (*Juniperus* spp.)
 Lantana (natives resistant, hybrids not)
 Mexican Buckeye (*Ungradia speciosa*)
 Nandina (*Nandina* spp.)
 Oleander (*Nerium oleander*)
 Pyracantha (*Pyracantha coccinea*)
 Sotol (*Dasyllirion* spp.)
 Texas Mountain Laurel (*Sophora secundiflora*)
 Yucca (spp.) All yucca with sharp, stiff point

Deer-resistant Flowers/Herbs: partial listing

Ageratum	Ornamental Grasses
Angel Trumpet	Oxeye Daisy
Artemisia	Periwinkle
Bluebonnet	Purple Cone Flower
Blue Plumbago	Rock Rose
Copper Canyon Daisy	Rosemary
Dusty Miller	Salvia
Garlic Chives	Santolina
Germander	Spearmint
Hummingbird Bush	Thyme
Iris	Verbena
Larkspur	Wood Fern
Marigold	Yarrow
Mexican Oregano	Zexmenia
Monkey Grass	Zinnia

For additional listings and information on deer-resistant plants:

<http://lonestar.texas.net/~jleblanc/deerplants.html>

<http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/plantanswers/publications/deer.html>

<http://aggie-.....publications/repellents.html>