



McLennan County Master Gardeners

Horticulture Newsletter

Fall, 2007

www.mclennanmastergardeners.org

Call 757-5180 for information on upcoming extension events.

From McLennan County Master Gardeners:

Calendar:

- Oct. 2 - Chemical Brush & Weed Control Field Day, Clifton, 9am-noon. Call Extension Office for information.
- Oct. 4 - H.O.T. Hay Show, H.O.T. Fairgrounds Show Pavilion Conference Room, 3-5pm. Hay samples can be brought to the Extension office until Sept. 7.
- Oct. 7 - Rainwater Harvesting Seminar, 2-4 pm, Carleen Bright Arboretum, free to public.
- Oct. 5-13, Heart O' Texas Fair and Rodeo. Discount tickets at 420 North 6th Street.

Newsletter Option:

Beginning with the next issue of this quarterly horticulture newsletter, it will be available by e-mail or regular postal service mail. To receive the copy via e-mail, call the McLennan Co. Extension Office at 757-5180 or fill out the form at the bottom of page 3 and return to the Extension Office at 420 N. 6th Street, Waco 76701. Your e-mail address will not be given to any other mailing.

Master Gardener Training:

A new training session to become a certified McLennan County Master Gardener is scheduled to begin in June 2008. Classes will be held from 1 to 5pm on Wednesday afternoons. Participants will be required to attend 60 hours of classroom training followed by giving 60 hours of community volunteer service during the following year. Interested persons may call the McLennan County Extension Office at 757-5180 to leave their name for additional information.



Report from the Earthkind™ Rose Trials:

The 45 rose bushes planted in 2005 by the McLennan Co. Master Gardeners are still under observation to help decide which varieties will be given the "EarthKind™" designation. Except for the abundant rainfall that the area received during the summer months, they have received no other water or care except an occasional pruning. The pruning was necessary because they were planted on three-foot centers and some have grown so well that they are crowded - which hampers the air circulation needed by roses. They have continued to bloom during the heat and recent humid weather and should be a blaze of color during the coming fall.

Drive by 202 Greenway Drive on the TSTC campus, get out and walk among the plants, and smell the roses! There are 15 different rose varieties. Look for *Quietness* with its delightful fragrance and *Knock Out* which has been a continual bloomer.

Rainwater Harvesting Seminar:

Wouldn't it be nice if you had been able to collect all that wonderful rainwater from earlier this year to water your home gardens and landscapes during drier times? It is not only possible but is an environmentally-friendly, cost-effective way to nurture our landscapes with clean, pure rainwater.



A Rainwater Harvesting Seminar will be offered Sunday, October 7, 2-4pm at the Carleen Bright Arboretum. This outstanding free program is brought to you by McLennan County Master Gardeners and the Carleen Bright Arboretum. Speakers include Justin Mechell from Texas A&M University, and McLennan County Master Gardeners who are Rainwater Harvesting specialists.

Take advantage of this wonderful opportunity to hear how you can save precious natural resources and money at the same time.

Busy Time In Fall

As the weather cools down and the plants burst into active growth, this is a busy time for gardeners.

These are ideal days for cleanup - begin gathering the falling leaves, destroy the remaining summer weeds before they make seeds for next year's crop in the garden, give the hedges a final clipping for this year.

After temperatures cool in October, put in the cold-hardy annual flower transplants. Some may bloom this fall, but they will grow over the winter and give good early spring bloom. Among these are Dianthus, pansies, petunias, snapdragons, stock, violas, alyssum, flowering cabbage and kale.

Divide bearded iris, daylilies, cannas and other spring blooming perennials. Replant half and share half with neighbors and friends.

Prepare beds for planting spring flowering bulbs by cultivating the soil well and incorporating generous amounts of organic material such as compost to improve the soil and drainage. Spring bloomers such as daffodils, narcissus, Dutch iris, grape hyacinths, anemones and ranunculus should be planted in late October and November so that their roots become well established before they send up their flower buds. Select bulbs early for best selections and store them in a cool, dry location until planting time.



Tulip bulbs must be pre-chilled (in vegetable bin of refrigerator) for 45 to 60 days, then planted in late November or December. In local climates, they must have the additional cold prior to planting in order to form tall, sturdy stems and good, colorful blooms.

Trees and shrubs can be selectively pruned to cut out dead or diseased wood now. Wait until January or February to do major removal of healthy tissue as pruning too early will stimulate tender new growth that could be damaged by frost. Likewise, do not fertilize trees and shrubs now as it will stimulate new growth which might freeze later.

This is the ideal time of the year to plant new trees and shrubs. There are several varieties of trees which have been designated Superstar status, meaning they have been extensively tested for hardiness and durability in Texas soils and climates. Find listings of these on the web at www.Texassuperstar.com.

There is still time to plant snap bush beans, beets, broccoli transplants, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrots, Swiss chard, collards, kohlrabi, leaf lettuce, mustard, parsley, southern peas, radish, turnips.

Roses should be lightly pruned in early September. Cut about one-fourth to one-third of the bush. Remove all the blooms, dead or diseased wood, and any crossing canes that might rub and injure other canes. Black spot and powdery mildew fungus should be prevented by using a fungicide. An insecticide may be needed to control thrips (which cause blooms to be mis-shaped or stay closed). Fertilize with a water soluble fertilizer every two weeks - one tablespoon of water soluble fertilizer per gallon of water, once the roses have been pruned. Mid-October should begin the peak rose bloom season. Cease fertilizing once blooming has begun so growth can slow and harden for the winter cold.

Turf Tips

Fall fertilization is an important part of a good nutrient management program for the lawn. Avoid applications of excessive nitrogen during this period, especially with a quick-release nitrogen fertilizer source which could lead to disease problems. A 3-1-2 or 4-1-2 analysis is preferred. Soil tests will help determine the nutrients needed for a lawn. Early fall or at least 30 days prior to the first frost date in the area is recommended as the best time to apply fertilizer. The grass will store food for the winter in its roots and the application of a fall fertilizer will promote early spring recovery of lawns.

Winter annual weeds can be controlled by use of a pre-emergent herbicide to control them. Winter annual weeds germinate in the late summer/early fall season. They will live during the winter and mature in the spring, then die. They come back each year from seed and bur-clover, chickweed, henbit, annual ryegrass and mustard weeds are among these unwanted lawn invaders. The pre-emergent herbicide needs to be applied prior to germination of the weeds and early September is usually the ideal time. Make sure to read the labels for proper application on all pesticides and herbicides!!

Take-All Patch or Root Rot has been a problem in many lawns. Sphagnum peat moss has shown to be useful in combating this fungal disease. The best time to apply the sphagnum peat moss is during the fall and spring at a rate of one bale (3.2 cubic feet) per 1,000 sq.ft. Application of a fungicide may also show improvement in a diseased turf. This can also be applied in early fall.

Bluebonnets: Plant now for stands of blue next spring

The sight of frothy, showy bluebonnets next spring is guaranteed to prod gardeners into wanting their own seas of blue. But planning as well as planting for bluebonnets needs to take place right now if you want to see spring blooms. The bluebonnet root needs the cool temperatures of winter to develop its root system.

The bluebonnet boasts a colorful history. Although it became the state flower in 1901, gardeners battled over what variety of bluebonnet should get the honor. In 1971, the Texas Legislature tried to solve the problem by officially decreeing that all varieties of bluebonnet held the distinction of state flower. So today, five different species of bluebonnets share the title, and if any more are discovered, they will also be so titled.



By far the favorite of gardeners, artists and tourists is the *Lupinus texensis*, the deep blue attention-getter that colors Texas fields and hillsides in March and April. This variety is easy to grow and blooms almost anywhere in Texas. We identify it by its pointed leaves and the tip of white on its flowering stalk.

Because of the efforts of the late naturalist Carroll Abbott, Texas now has a maroon bluebonnet, developed appropriately by Texas A&M scientists. Abbott was known as "Mr. Texas Bluebonnet," and when he suggested that a Texas flag be planted with red, white and blue bluebonnets for the Lone Star State's 150th birthday in 1986, the experts got to work. Although the white versions of *Lupinus texensis* were rare but at least present, pinks were almost nonexistent. Thanks to a find in San Antonio and careful cultivation, Abbott's idea became a reality many years after it took root. Now seed for the maroon bluebonnet is widely available.

For the most prolific of blooms, plant scarified seed -- that is, seed that's been treated to remove growth-inhibiting properties. Scarified seeds will germinate within 10 days after planting in a moist soil, and the seedlings will be more vigorous. Seed that has not been properly prepared has limited chance of success. So it makes sense to spend some money on the seeds.

To plant:

- 1 Prepare an area with good drainage. Bluebonnets like slopes, so a hill makes a perfect spot for sowing the seeds. But don't worry if you don't have a hill. You can also plant in raised beds or an area with good drainage.
- 2 Make sure you sow the seeds in area that gets at least eight hours of direct sunlight daily.
- 3 September and October are the best times to sow seed in North Central Texas. In other parts of the state, the seed can be sown as late as Dec. 1.
- 4 Loosen the soil and remove clumps and debris before broadcasting the seed. An ounce of seed will cover 75 square feet.
- 5 Roll or press the seed into the soil about an eighth of an inch. Be sure the seed is covered, and keep the soil moist until the plants begin to grow.
- 6 Do not over-water, and protect the tender seedlings from pillbugs.
- 7 Fertilizer isn't necessary, but it will enhance the blooms.
- 8 If you are planting maroon bluebonnets and want them to stay maroon, beware of cross-pollination. Remove any blue or purple hues from your stand.

Gardeners can also use transplants if they prefer that to growing from seed. The major enemies of bluebonnet transplants are pillbugs, so spread bait around the seedlings every week for a month after planting. Plant seedlings in rows 24 inches apart, 12 inches from each other in the row. Don't bury the crowns. Plant other annuals as desired for long-lasting color and splash. Remember, the bluebonnets will disappear when summer begins.

Mail to: **McLennan Co. Extension Office**
420 N. 6th St.
Waco, Tx. 76701

I would like to receive the quarterly horticulture newsletter via e-mail rather than by postal mail.

My e-mail address is: _____@_____

Signed: _____

Address: _____

Chinese Pistache likes everything about Texas

If you're hunting for a superb shade and ornamental tree to plant this fall, consider the Chinese Pistache (pronounced pis-tash). Although it reminds some of the gangly teenager who seems too awkward for his body, get this grower past its adolescent years and it matures into a perfect size and shape and decorates the fall landscape with crimson hues.

The Chinese Pistache, or *Pistacia chinensis*, is a native of China. Growers know it as the ugly duckling tree because of its gangly, lanky appearance during the first five years or so of its life. But give it time and perhaps some pruning, and you'll remember that the ugly duckling of the fairy tale turned into a graceful swan.

In Texas, the tree's hardiness has earned it a Superstar designation from Texas Cooperative Extension. This means growers have tested the tree in the field for several years and found it well-adapted to the Lone Star



State, with minimal soil preparation and water application and zero pesticides. It also likes winter, at least as far as Central Kansas. The only place in Texas that the Chinese Pistache does not perform as well is the Rio Grand Valley.

Key information:

- 1 Full height is between 25 and 40 feet.
- 2 Spread is about 30 to 40 feet with a round or oval canopy.
- 3 Growth rate is medium.
- 4 It is pest and disease-free.
- 5 It does well in full sun, and it grows in soils that are acidic, alkaline, loamy, moist, sandy, silty loam or clay.
- 6 It is drought-tolerant and withstands Texas heat.
- 7 Foliage in summer is rich green before turning crimson in fall.
- 8 It's long-lived, even with little care.
- 9 Its wood is hard and decay-resistant.
- 10 It willingly grows in urban or rural settings.
- 11 Plant from September through November for best results.

If you are lucky enough to have a mature tree in your landscape, January or February are the best months to prune. Try to keep two-thirds of the tree in foliage and one-third in bare trunk.

Chinese Pistaches have a long and storied history and can be found in the Bible. In California, pistachio growers use the tree as understock. Birds like the berries produced every two years by the female trees, although humans can't eat them.

Its consistent performance and level of resistance to insect and disease problems has also earned the Chinese Pistache an Earth-Kind label from Texas Cooperative Extension. It was the first shade tree to earn the title.

Ways to contact us...

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Sincerely,

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