



# THE GRAPEVINE



Fort Bend County Master Gardeners, Inc.

Volume XVIII, Issue 1

## From the Garden

By Nat Gruesen, President, FBMG S2004

Happy New Year! It's hard to believe that 2008 is here and 2007 is behind us. Wasn't it just the other day that we were taking a landscaping class and preparing for spring planting?? Geesh...where did all the time go?? I hope you all enjoyed your holidays and got some sort of gardening goodies in your stocking. While I had lots of presents under the tree, I am sad to say there were no hand tools (or power tools for that matter), or yard art for my garden. However, in my own humble opinion, I was an especially good boy this year and believe I will be ordering a Mantis tiller for my home garden to make up for this oversight. While I am at it, I think I will order a couple of those little gems for our demonstration gardens.

Oh! Oh!...I have to tell you of my new discovery straight from EPCOT and the Magic Kingdom. Apparently soil is OPTIONAL. Yep. You heard me right! What a concept...all you need is nutrient rich water, a ten gallon aquarium and a few basic supplies...and viola! Instant salad!! Well....not exactly...but close. You know you're a true Master Gardener when you've spent half a day at the Magic Kingdom and finally notice there's other attractions at the park BESIDES the landscaping!! I even took the "Behind the Seeds" tour of their greenhouses and their multi'bahzillion dollar hydroponics system. It was awesome. Once the tour guide found out I was a Master Gardener, it was as if the whole tour were just for me. I think the others in the group were a little envious. But it just reinforces to me the respect that others have for Master Gardeners and the Master Gardener program.

I love this time of year because we have a fresh start and a new calendar. A blank canvass if you will. Although if you're like me, your calendar is already filling up fast!! I would like to encourage each of you to join in on one of our upcoming workdays. I think this past year has been

particularly fun. I have learned so much just by coming to the workdays and talking to everyone. I have to admit, that there are times I wonder why I'm doing this all the way from the Clear Lake area, but as I am driving home I'm thinking to myself, what a great day and I sure am glad I went! There is no finer group of people that I would rather spend the day with.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mary Beth McCaughey for all of her hard work and dedication as FBMG President in 2006 and 2007. Mary Beth, we so much appreciate your contributions, especially during this past year. Mary Beth will now serve as Past President on the Board this year. Personally speaking, you are a hard act to follow, but I am so thankful you'll still be serving on the Board.

I look forward to seeing all of you in the gardens in 2008!

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### Feb 9—Fruit Tree Sale

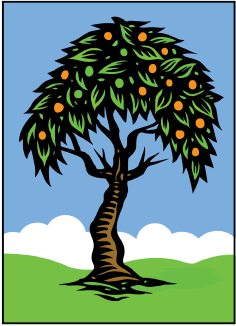
It's time to gear up  
for the Fruit Tree Sale.  
We need YOUR  
help to make our  
biggest fundraiser of the  
year a success!  
See page 7 for details



*Extension programs serve people of all ages regardless of socio-economic level, race, color, sex, religion, disability, or national origin. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture and the County Commissioner's Courts of Texas Cooperating*

**AgriLIFE EXTENSION**  
Texas A&M System

*Improving Lives. Improving Texas.*



**JANUARY  
MONTHLY  
PROGRAM:**

**“GROWING FRUIT IN THE HOUSTON  
AREA”**

**HERMAN AUER, GALVESTON COUNTY  
MASTER GARDENER**

**THURSDAY, JANUARY 15  
PROGRAM—7:15 PM (2 HOUR MEETING)**

**BRIEF MEMBER MEETING FOLLOWS THE  
PROGRAM**

**BUD O’SHIELES COMMUNITY CENTER  
1330 BAND ROAD , ROSENBERG**

**FREE PROGRAM, OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

**Upcoming Monthly Programs**

**Feb 21– “Roses—Preparing for Spring Blossoms”**  
by Gaye Hammond with the Houston Rose Society.  
7:15 p.m. at the Bud O’Shieles Community Center. A  
brief member meeting will follow the program.

**March 20 – “Fire Ants—Living with the Fiery Crea-  
tures”** by Paul Nester, Program Specialist-IPM, Texas  
AgriLife Extension Service. 7:15 p.m. at the Bud  
O’Shieles Community Center. A brief member meeting  
will follow the program.

*If you have suggestions for monthly program topics or  
speakers, contact Brenda Dresner, Community Rela-  
tions Director, FBMG F2005 at BMDresner@aol.com.*

**There can be no other occupation like gardening  
in which, if you were to creep up behind someone  
at their work, you would find them smiling.**  
~Mirabel Osler

**2008 Board of Directors**

At the January 8, 2008 Board meeting, the Board of Directors for 2008 was finalized when the Executive Committee (made up of the officers) appointed Directors of the Standing Committees.

**2008 Executive Committee**

President—Nat Gruesen, FMBG S2004  
Vice President—Barbara McCormick, FBMG S2001  
Secretary—Marilyn Almon, FBMG S2002  
Treasurer—Mike Greenwood, FBMG F2004  
Past-President—Mary Beth McCaughey, FBMG S2000

**2008 Directors**

Awards—Carolyn McDaniel, FMBG F2001  
Communications—Robert Goehring, FBMG S2006  
Community Relations—Brenda Dresner, FBMG F2005  
Fundraising—Barbara Brannon, FBMG F1999  
Greenhouse—James Buckley, FBMG F2005 and  
Glenn Dresner, FBMG F2005  
Landscape - open  
Member Relations—Sallie Bourgeois, FBMG F1999  
Youth Activities—Ginny Grant, FBMG S2003

**Non-Voting Board Advisors**

Mark Countryman—Texas AgriLife Extension Service  
Fort Bend County—Horticulture  
Margo McDowell—Master Volunteer Coordinator



Now that Nat Gruesen is busy being our President, we are in need of another volunteer (or volunteers) to serve as Director(s) for planning, implementation and maintenance of the Demonstration Gardens. We’re also looking for volunteers to chair the Japanese Garden and the Rose Garden. We already have several gardens that are lead by co-chairs so that the responsibilities can be shared. Please contact Nat Gruesen (William.N.Gruesen@uth.tmc.edu) if you’re interested in knowing more about these opportunities.

The Board has also approved the Operating Budget for 2008. Committee Chairs will be notified of their approved budgets. Please see the Operations Manual—Section 18 *Expense Reimbursement and Vendor Payment* for the rules on spending funds authorized in the budget. You’ll find the current Operations Manual on the Member’s page at FBMG.com.

Board meetings will generally be held on second Tuesday of each month in the evening. All members are welcome to attend. Check the calendar on FBMG.com for exact dates and times.

# Wanted Alive!

By Linda Rippert, FBMG F2004

*Editor's Note: Linda concentrated on her family over the holidays and suggested that instead of her usual column, we run information on a new reference sheet developed recently by the Coastal Prairie Master Naturalist chapter. (Linda shares her enthusiasm for Entomology with both the Master Gardeners and the Master Naturalists, and we're all the better for it!) In order to promote awareness that not all bugs are bad, an old-fashioned "Wanted" style reference sheet was designed. The following is a sample of the information included in the full "WANTED ALIVE: BENEFICIAL INSECTS" poster, to view the entire poster visit [www.coastalprairie.org](http://www.coastalprairie.org).*

## Wanted Alive! Beneficial Insects

If FOUND: don't scream, don't call for the pesticides,  
just relax and enjoy your REWARD: a healthy garden.

### Lady Beetle

AKA: Lady Bug

**Wanted For:** Eating Aphids, mealybugs, spider mites and more



### Dragonfly

**Wanted For:** Eating vast quantities of mosquitoes



### Garden Spider

**Wanted For:** Eating anything caught in its web



### Syrphid Flies

AKA: Flower Flies

**Wanted For:** Their children  
These juveniles feed on aphids, young termites, ants, and bees



### Predatory Bugs

AKA: Assassin Bug

These insects are aggressive predators. Predatory bugs include assassin bugs, damsel bugs, big eyed bugs, and the minute pirate bug.

**Wanted for:** Lethal injection of caterpillars, spider mites, aphids, thrips, and leafhoppers.



### Green Lacewings

**Wanted for:** Their children  
AKA: Aphid lions, eat insect eggs, small caterpillars, spider mites and more.



Photos credits: Don Johnson (Master Gardener, Master Naturalist), Entomology Department of Texas A & M University, and Ronald Smith, Auburn University





## Texas Natives: Possumhaw Holly

By Mary Beth McCaughey, Past-President, FBMG S2000

One of my favorite plants is spectacular this time of year. I first became familiar with Possumhaw Holly (*Ilex decidua*) when I began spending time in Rosenberg with the Master Gardener program. It was early February when I noticed what seemed to be clouds of red berries along the edges of the wooded areas visible from the Southwest Freeway and Hwy 90A as I traveled between Sugar Land and Rosenberg. Not being a native Texan, I wondered what sort of plant could produce such a beautiful effect.

After doing some research, I realized that I was admiring Possumhaw Holly. This large shrub/small tree attracts attention because of its unique presentation of red, orange and yellow fruit, which appear when the foliage drops in November or early December. The berries usually remain all winter unless they are spotted and eaten by cedar waxwings, blue jays, robins or other birds.

While beautiful in a natural setting along the edge of a wooded or swampy area, this holly makes a great accent in the urban landscape also. It will grow in a variety of soil conditions and will take sun or part shade—though in full sunlight growth is more dense and fruiting is heavier. It has an upright, spreading habit—averaging 20' x 15'. They tolerate poor drainage quite well, but will thrive in dry conditions also.

Like all hollies, a male plant is needed to pollinate the female plants, or they won't bear fruit. If you live near an area where Possumhaw is native, you're in luck. But out of its range you'll have to plant a male as well—although other berrying hollies have been known to act as pollinators also.

Possumhaw Holly is native from Maryland to Florida and west to Texas and Mexico. In addition to the beautiful seasonal display of color, including this plant in your landscape will attract a variety of birds—and you've got to love that in a plant!



### Sources:

<http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/extension/newsletters/hortupdate/nov01/art1nov.html>

<http://www.usna.usda.gov/Gardens/faqs/HolliesWinter.html>

<http://williamson-tx.tamu.edu/AG/landscapedemos/plantmaterial/trees20.html>

## BALL MOSS (or is it really a moss?)

By Carolyn McDaniel, Awards Director, FBMG F2001

First off it is everywhere you look in trees here in the south. You know that ball of stuff with many little grayish-green "pincushion-like" growths or with little fingers sticking out everywhere on the big oak tree, pecan trees and sometimes power lines. A moss it is not. It is actually an epiphyte, (*Tillandsia recurvata*), a bromeliad and kin to the pineapple. Other similar epiphytes are ferns and orchids

Although somewhat annoying and unsightly for some people, it generally will not harm your trees. Because it is an epiphyte, aka air plant, it feeds off of air, dust, and rain by absorbing nutrients through the atmosphere. Its stems and leaves are the nutrient uptakers. Ball Moss is actually beneficial to our environment by fixing atmospheric nitrogen and adding it to the soil.

This interesting specimen does flower especially after a rain. However the insignificant flower on a stem which is somewhat longer than the rest of the plant is hardly noticeable. Ball moss blooms every spring, resulting in tiny purple flowers which form a seed pod that bursts and the fuzzy seeds spread. Because the seeds are fuzzy they easily stick to rough limbs of trees and begin to grow.

Ball Moss, for the most part, prefers low light found in the more shaded limbs of a tree, gentle air movement and lots of humidity. Because they prefer low light, it is unlikely they have any impact on the health of a tree unless the tree itself is growing in an area that is too shaded for proper growth.

Just think, you can have a profuse plant that flowers, does not need potting soil and needs no care. It could be the perfect plant for those of us who are, shall we say, plant challenged. But if you don't like them, just pick them off your tree and throw them on the ground to enhance the soil. There are sprays you can use but why when it is not necessary. So just set back and enjoy these interesting little plants.

Photo courtesy of the Image Archive of Central Texas Plants (<http://www.sbs.utexas.edu/>)



## 2007 FBMG Annual Volunteer Recognition / Awards Program

By Glenn Dresner, Greenhouse Co-Director, FBMG F2005

*The following is a copy of Glenn's presentation to the membership at the 2007 Annual Volunteer Recognition and Awards program held on December 5.*

When Margo contacted me and asked if I would consider saying a few words at our FBMG Annual Awards Program, I asked her what would be appropriate to speak to our group. She suggested that it might be good to talk about what the FBMG program has meant to me. I told her I would put together some thoughts on her suggestion and go for it. The subject of the benefits to the Master Gardener program was a little hard for me since I had already submitted two articles on how important this program had been to me since my retirement. In each of the two articles there was the central theme of how each of you has been so special to not only me but also to my wife, Brenda. We have established some really wonderful relationships with you and those friendships have helped to fill the void of the "business" friends we had while we were working. We have found friends like Becky Smith, Becky Leugemors, Cliff Bergman, James Buckley, and so many, many others too numerous to name at this time that wanted so much to share their gardening knowledge and experiences with us. Along with their sharing they have encouraged Brenda and I to share as well. I then thought about a book that I am reading called "Tuesdays with Morrie" by Mitch Albom. For those not familiar with the book, it is a story of a college professor Morrie Schwartz from Brandeis University and his discussions with Mitch Albom, one of his former students. Morrie is slowly dying from ALS or commonly know as Lou Gehrigs Disease. Mitch visits Morrie each Tuesday and listens carefully as the professor shares his thoughts on "life's lessons". From my perspective, Morrie shares a comment that, is the key reason or answer to what FB Master Gardening is all about. Professor Schwartz tells Mitch that **"The way you get meaning in your life is to devote yourself to loving others, devote yourself to the community around you, and devote yourself to creating something that gives you purpose and meaning"**. One of the key words in this message to live by is the word "yourself". To me it is not what the Master Gardeners should do for "me" but what "I" as a member can do for the organization. To illustrate this further, I would like to share my thoughts on each of the three items that Morrie said we each should strive for.

To get a better understanding of Morrie's message to Mitch, I went to The Merriam-Webster Dic-

tionary to check out the meaning of the word "devote" which was mentioned in all three action steps. According to the dictionary, "devote" can mean "to set apart for a special purpose" or "to dedicate".

In all three of the action steps, Morrie is saying we must search out ways that will allow us to dedicate ourselves to those around us. To be a Master Gardener it definitely takes dedication, because where else would people come together to work for other's benefit and pay for this privilege as well.

Now I would like to explore the professor's First Thought of "devoting yourself to loving others". Again, I went to the dictionary to see if there other meanings for the word "love" besides the traditional words we think of. The dictionary said "love" can mean "feeling a passion, devotion, or tenderness for". This is an important point not only for living our lives but also what a Master Gardener should be. Master Gardeners not only have a devotion and tenderness for plants, trees, and nature, but also for the people that make up this wonderful group. Master Gardeners show their devotion and tenderness through their actions and words towards other MG's but also to the many visitors that come and view the various gardens we have. We show tenderness to those in our organization when they have health issues in their lives or their families' lives. Giving a hug or sharing words of encouragement shows the tenderness and caring that means so much to the person who has the issues in their lives. Sometimes we just give hugs and encouragement because it is a warm greeting to our fellow Master Gardeners. This is giving a part of ourselves to others and not the other way around.

Thought Number Two is the dedicating of ourselves to the community. To me the "community" can mean different things. According to the dictionary, it means a body of people living in the same place or a joint ownership. By this definition, community could mean Rosenberg, Richmond, Sugar Land, or Ft. Bend County. But it could also mean the community of our Master Gardener organization. When each of us take time out of our busy schedules to come and work in the various gardens, or volunteer to help with the Ft. Bend County Fair, or work with the schools in the Junior Master Gardener Program or in countless other areas, we are dedicating ourselves to making these activities a success for everyone and not just ourselves. Again, the bottom line is about "we" and not "me".

Finally, Thought Number Three is almost the summation of what we should be about, not only as Master Gardeners, but also what we should be about each day in our lives. We should be constantly looking for



*(Continued on page 6)*

(Continued from page 5)

ways that we can make a difference in the lives of others. We should be searching for ways to add purpose and meaning in our life while we add purpose and meaning to the lives of others. When you are able to hear comments from others that they are glad they had the opportunity to work with you or to cross paths with you, then you know that you are moving toward this third challenge from Morrie. When you take the time to tell others how much you enjoy working with the other Master Gardeners because they are so willing to help each other and share knowledge and information, then you are moving toward achieving the third goal of giving us purpose and meaning in our lives. We must always remember that each of us is an "Ambassador for the Ft. Bend Master Gardener Program". You may be just the person who shares the right kind of message that encourages a person to decide to become part of such a devoted, caring community of people.

I realize that with these comments tonight that I am "preaching to the choir". From my experience with many of you, you are each following the suggestions of Professor Morrie Schwartz. You are here tonight because you have put in the time, work, and effort to ensure the success of our Ft. Bend Master Gardener Organization. To me our challenge is to take the message of Morrie and share it with others especially those Master Gardeners that may not be here tonight. We must also share the message with those in the community that may be potential Master Gardeners. We must work to share the message that it is not about "me" but it is all about "us".

Thank you for your time and attention as I share these thoughts about Professor Morrie Schwartz's words to guide our life.



## Greet The Gardener: Roberta Owen

By Sheredith Heitzenrater, FBMG S2002

Mention hydrangeas and Roberta Owen (fall 2002) almost swoons. She has several varieties in her Sugar Land flowerbeds. She also has numerous photos of huge

hydrangeas she took on a recent trip to Japan with her daughter. They were there for a student exchange program and the flower displays were beautiful.

Roberta was born in Uniontown, PA, but her family eventually found their way to Fort Lauderdale, FL, where she graduated from high school. She earned her BA in Geology from the Univ. of Southern Florida in 1981. She came to Houston that same year for a job in the oil industry.

The work place is often a good place to meet your future spouse. Roberta met Kevin there and they were married in 1987. Roberta's grandparents always had huge gardens and small orchards so she decided to have a large garden also. She says she had a bumper crop of tomatoes and cucumbers and she couldn't give them away. Unfortunately, the stink bugs found her garden the next year!

Katie was born in 1992 so Roberta "retired" from the oil industry. In 1994 Kevin was transferred to Kuwait and they lived there until 1998. From the heat to the cold, they then transferred to Connecticut! By 2001 they were back in the Houston area. Roberta tried her hand at gardening in each of these areas. Kuwait required a lot of watering of plants and the bougainvillea was beautiful. Of course there were the ever-present date palms, and hibiscus.

Besides the hydrangeas, Roberta says her other favorite flowers are day lilies. A walk around her yard shows she enjoys Mexican zinnias, coleus in a wide variety of colors and clerodendron. She claims her biggest gardening surprise is a pink cloud guara. She thought it would be a low bush and it gets over 4' high and has to be pruned to keep it at a reasonable height.

Roberta's favorite Master Gardener class was entomology. She also enjoyed the perennial and herb classes. In fact, Roberta served as the chairperson of the MG Herb Knot Garden from 2003-2007.

Everyone loves to give a little gardening advice and Roberta is no different. She stresses it is important to plant "natives" as they grow so much better. She hopes everyone will read up more on "natives" and will visit their local nurseries to find some good buys. Be sure to label them. Roberta uses the metal tags since they last longer. She also suggests rain harvesting and has a rain barrel that helps with the watering in the drought times.

In her spare time, Roberta does volunteer work at her daughter's school. She is also a member of the Band Booster Board. In spite of all that you may just be lucky enough to find her home. Stop by to see the hydrangeas and take a look at those awesome photos from Japan.

### Memorial Donation

By Marilyn Almon, Secretary, FBMG S2002

At its November meeting, the Board of Directors voted to make a memorial contribution in the amount of \$100 in memory of Marcia Roenigk. Respecting the wish of Marcia's husband, Bob, the contribution was made to Creekside Christian Fellowship for their prayer garden. Owners of The Vintage Rosery in Needville, Marcia and Bob have been very active supporters of FBCMG.

Section 30 of the FBCMG Operations Manual stipulates the guidelines for memorial contributions.

## A First Time Visitor

By Robert Goehring, Webmaster, S06

A few weeks ago, my daughter, Rebecca, flew into Houston from Norfolk, Virginia, to spend a few days with us. Since her husband, Paul, had recently deployed to the Persian Gulf with his U.S. Navy ship, Rebecca found the perfect time to visit us and to get over the loneliness of her first-time deployment.

Being her first visit to Houston, I suggested we could visit Galveston, the USS Texas Memorial, Brazos Bend State Park, the Arboretum, or the museum downtown. But Rebecca simply stated, "The only place I want to visit is the gardens where you work for the Master Gardeners."

She continued to say that I was always talking about the gardens and the folks who are Master Gardeners. And she wanted to see what I droned on about during our frequent telephone conversations. Amazed that I actually talked about the gardens that much, I agreed to take her on a short tour of the demonstration gardens.

We arrived at the gardens around 10 one Friday morning. I started the tour with the vineyard and told her what I knew of that garden. We moved into the Herbal Knot Garden and finally to the Berry Patch. She asked me, "What is that plant? Would it grow in Virginia? How much fruit does that berry produce?" She showed great interest and we hadn't even really got started.

We moved to the Japanese Garden and I thought I'd not get her to leave. She was so relaxed and thoughtful during our time there that she said, "I don't know if I can ever leave this garden." Again, she asked me all about the names of the plants and why did they plant this species here? Maybe you would do better than I, but I was really at a loss for most of the plants!

Finally, we moved on to the Texas Native Garden. She was thrilled with the rocks (she studied Geology in college) and loved the yucca. She wanted to touch all of the plants, smell their leaves, and she would have tasted everything in sight if I'd let her!

On to the Cottage Garden. Once in, she said, "I think this is my favorite garden." She then paused and said, "Well, so far, they are all my favorites!" She loved the mixture of plants, colors, and textures presented here.

We moved to the Water Garden and she wanted to dip her feet in! Fortunately, I talked her out of it and we make our way to the Greenhouse. Although it was closed, she got a good look at the inside and asked many questions about the operation of the sprinklers, the potting, the temperature control, and other things.

Next, we moved back to the YardWise display and the compost bins caught her attention. She actually took some notes and is planning on doing her own compost back home.

We walked around a bit and viewed the fruit trees before getting to the Butterfly Garden. Again, she was amazed at the diversity of the plants and how well they looked together.

After a short walk through the Vegetable Garden, we walked through the Circle Gardens. Yet again, she said this was her favorite one!

Finally, we walked by the Annex and to the Front Yard and the Roses. As we walked back to the truck, I asked her if she could name all of the gardens we had visited. I was very impressed when she not only named each of the areas but recalled several key points of each one.

Our visit lasted only one hour but my daughter was thoroughly impressed with the gardens and with the fact that they are maintained by volunteers. She still remembers the gardens and what they represent. I gave her the Virginia Master Gardener website and she plans on attending their training.

If more people would visit our gardens, I think we'd be getting more Master Gardeners! We have a wonderful place, beautiful plants, and vigorous volunteers that could sell ice to Eskimos!



## FRUIT TREE SALE PREPARATIONS

It's time again to gear up for our Annual Fruit Tree Sale—scheduled for Saturday, February 9 this year. This event is our major fundraiser and we'll have customers from all over the Houston area. We'll need everyone's help to make this sale another success—it takes more than 80 volunteers to fully cover everything going on during the sale. **Please mark your calendars NOW and plan to help!**

### Tuesday, Feb 5—Pre-talk and volunteer meeting.

- 5:30 Potluck (bring your favorite dish)
- 6:00 Heidi Sheesley will give the program that will be presented to the public on Feb 9 and will answer questions about the plant stock for the sale
- 7:30 Sale details and volunteer overview. Barbara Brannon will outline how the sale will flow and where we'll need volunteers to help.

### Friday, Feb 8—Unload plant stock, set up for sale.

Volunteers needed to help unload all of the plant stock and complete the sale setup. We're planning to pre-wrap all of the bare root stock on Friday again this year—it makes handling of those items much smoother during the sale! Work will start at 8:00 and should be complete before noon.

### Saturday, Feb 9—FRUIT TREE SALE

The talk for customers begins at 8:00 and the sale opens at 9:00. We'll need volunteers in place by 7:30 or 8:00 depending on where you're assigned. The sale runs until 1:00 or until we're sold out—and then we'll need help cleaning up the barn.

This is a great way to get hours, enjoy the company of other Master Gardeners and meet other enthusiastic gardeners. Sale day is crazy, exhilarating, hard work—and tremendously rewarding. **Contact Barbara Brannon at [LILBITMOM@aol.com](mailto:LILBITMOM@aol.com) and let her know if you can help!!**



## Mac's Message

*by Margo "Mac" McDowell,  
Fort Bend County  
Master Volunteer Coordinator*

Hi Everyone!

Good gravy, another year has come and gone, when just yesterday, we were saying how fast 2006 went by. I'm not sure 2007 happened – we just jumped from 2006 to 2008. I remember when I first came here as your Coordinator, and the year rolled over into 2000. I was telling Wayne (president at the time) that I couldn't believe I was making 2001 plans, and wondered about the changes 2005 might bring. How far away 2005 seemed at the time! And now it is 2008. Make every day count is a big statement.

I often count my blessings because that I am one of the luckiest people – I love gardening and the outdoors, never dreaming that I would be so lucky to have so many friends as you that love the same thing I do. I can't imagine not liking to get dirty, or not getting excited about a new plant or not discovering the secrets of an insect. Just as those who scream upon seeing insects and say "yaaauuuk" at our dirty hands and knees and don't understand how we can like such "things", I too, don't understand why they don't!

We have had a great year in the Master Gardener program. We made great strides in our Plants In the Classroom program, and our Green Thumb program. Don't forget too, that in just a matter of a couple of weeks, we planned, created and executed "Kids in the Garden" too! That's a first for us! I was so proud of all of you stepping up and made that day happen! I think we all had a really good time!

Plants in the Classroom has been steadily revolving in order to meet the needs of our teachers. This year alone, we reached 107 teachers in 4 different In-services for Fort Bend ISD. We are hoping to branch out to other school districts. Green Thumb changed their schedule and their venue and over 175 people have received solid gardening information through the efforts of Master Gardeners throughout the year. Ag'Tivity Barn stretched itself this year encompassing the Bees, Master Naturalists, and Water Garden exhibits to create the new "Nature Trail", not to mention the efforts to highlight recycling in our county. During the 8 days of the fair, Hester painstakingly counted the folks visiting our exhibits, and we had over 4,500 people visit. That's not the entire count for the fair, just people coming through our exhibit! Our monthly programs are always a hit, and we had several programs that challenged our minds and taught us a thing or two! I must mention the Entomology Group who has met steadily ever month meticulously researching, photographing, and writing their new set of insect

cards. They are almost ready for print, and should be available to everyone in early 2008.

I want to also note the fact that we had an amazing volunteer like Cliff Bergman who reached 1000 hours in 2007. All I can say is - Wow! The Greenhouse Guys – James Buckley, Glenn Dresner and Cliff Bergman have totally rejuvenated the Greenhouse and made it a real asset again! Now one of our most popular places to work, the Greenhouse is active and becoming a success. It was hard for me to look at Cliff walking the pipes that frame the roof in the Greenhouse as the roof was being replaced. Replacing the Greenhouse roof was no small accomplishment, and only 4 men did it – Cliff, Glenn, James and Doug Staff. There is still more to come here – but you have to be here to appreciate and absorb all the fun and education taking place in the Greenhouse. Consider that an Invite!

Even though we all love to create beautiful gardens, let's remember that we are also here to help our fellow friends and neighbors. Plenty of folks around this county still overuse pesticides and fertilizers, don't know how to plan a garden, nor do they know plants, and don't even mention insects! That's only part of what they don't know. There are hundreds that are untouched and most don't know anything about how to plant a seed. The key here is that they are untouched, not unreachable! So my hopes for all of us are that we remain mindful of our purpose in this program, and that is to help educate those around us. In order to reach that goal, we all need to chip in.

As a tender nudge from me (!), please send in your hours on a monthly basis to me! If you need help with the form, please be sure to get in touch with me.

January brings change, and we will no longer be known as Texas Cooperative Extension. A new logo has been created and we will all become familiar with our new name – Texas AgriLife Extension Service; "Improving Lives. Improving Texas."

I wish to say thank you, I very much appreciate all that you've done for the Master Gardener program this year and for every year you have been here, and you know I do appreciate all your hard work. Let's make this year the year of 2008 the year we congregate! Let's see each other more.

One of our Master Gardeners, Mary Fleming, FBMG F2006, has been awarded "Yard of the Month" by the City Rosenberg. Congratulations!

# News from Around FBMG

## Words from the Berry Patch

By Dell Keene, FBMG S2004

In November we prepared our strawberry bed after numerous rains. And, we received 400 strawberry plants—200 Ozark Beauty and 200 Sweet Charlie varieties. Naturally, it rained so we waited for the bed to dry out. Finally, we were able to plant the little plants. As luck had it, the irrigation system was not working. So our hard working gardeners took turns watering by hand. Since then the irrigation system has been fixed. We now have healthy little strawberry plants that are growing very well.

A big thank you to Justin Morales and his father for donating two round bales of top grade hay. Also, a big thanks to David Gerstenberger for donating 16 square bales of hay as well. Some of this hay has already replaced the old hay between the rows of blackberries. This hay was also used in the strawberry bed. This will protect the young plants.

There are many activities planned in the new year, including adding two new rows of raspberries. Also, planting several Honey berry plants as a trial.

## Greenhouse Happenings

By James Buckley, Greenhouse Co-Director, FBMG F2005

The Greenhouse Gang (Glenn Dresner, Cliff Bergman and yours truly) have been busy making plans working to maintain and improve the greenhouse. In the fall the Directors (James and Glenn) attended the Greenhouse Specialist training in Fort Worth. After 2 ½ days of classes we began to learn what we are doing right and wrong, networked with other Master Gardener groups and got new ideas for additional improvements.

The greenhouse is open Monday - Friday, but the Greenhouse Gang is usually there on Wednesdays and all Master Gardeners are invited to come on Wednesday mornings to find out what's happening, give us your ideas, and of course work in the greenhouse.

A new addition soon will be 2 tables with stools which are being built by Glenn and Cliff. These will add more space for Master Gardeners to pot and propagate plants. They will be movable so they can also be taken outside during good weather. The plan is to provide umbrellas as well, for protection from the sun when used outside.

Next time you are in the greenhouse check out the new storage shelves and containers that are beginning to appear, these will help organize the supplies and tools. In order to keep everything in a designated location the containers and shelves will be labeled, so remember to return items to their new home.

Thanks to Ginny Grant for her donation of a large whiteboard which provides a space for a "To Do List" for anyone working in the greenhouse. If plants need to be repotted, watered, etc. leave a note or special instructions so the next Master Gardeners will know what needs to be done. Check out the board each time you go into the greenhouse for new messages, just look to the right as soon as you enter.

One of the things we learned at the Greenhouse Specialist training was to keep good records of what is being grown in the greenhouse. In order to keep good records of the projects within the greenhouse, everyone is asked to record the activity that is accomplished. For example, if you start seeds and place them in the mist tent record this in the notebook with the date, what was planted and your name. If you bump up any seedlings to larger pots note which plant was bumped, the date, size of pot, and where they were place (which table) within the greenhouse. When plants are watered (other than the automatic watering system) record this as well, then we will learn how to adjust the watering system. Be sure to label the plant containers as well so they aren't misplaced. This will hopefully provide a good timeline of plant growth and care so that we all can learn and improve our plant knowledge.

Plans are underway to work with the next class of associates to provide an overview of the greenhouse operation and to get them started planting and maintaining plants, cuttings, grafts or other projects. We are working with Margo to set up this process and ensure that it works with the class schedule. If anyone has ideas to contribute to this project see us on Wednesday mornings or send an email ([bbbj@ix.netcom.com](mailto:bbbj@ix.netcom.com)).

The greenhouse is available to all Master Gardeners for use with propagation, weather protection, and /or plant storage until your garden area is ready for the new plantings. Just ask one of the Greenhouse Gang and you will be assigned an area. We will also work with you to manage plant care.

Stop by the greenhouse and see the changes that are in progress.

(Continued from page 9)

### FBMG.com – Off to a Good Start

By Robert Goehring, Communications Director,  
FBMG S2006

The Fort Bend County Master Gardeners' website, <http://www.fbm.com>, is a great place to find information about gardening in our county. Although still in its infancy with the new format, it contains a lot of information about our organization.

Our newly formatted website went live in the third week of June 2007. Since that time we have had several thousands visitors looking at our pages. Here's the breakdown of visitors\* for each month since the new website went live:

June– 3,992	September– 4,968
July– 5,531	October– 5,427
August– 5,014	November– 4,878

\*A visitor is counted as an unique visit when requesting at least one page. If more than 30 minutes have elapsed since the first page impression, further requests will be counted as a new unique visit.

Didn't think there would be that many folks interested in Fort Bend Master Gardeners, did you? In case you are interested, we have had visitors from over 50 different nations from Brazil and Belgium to the Netherlands and Norway to the Ukraine and Zimbabwe.

Our gardens are all listed and we are slowly increasing the content. One garden, the [Texas Natives Garden](#), now lists most of the plants with photographs. We would like all of the gardens to have their plants displayed prominently on the website. Also, we would like the garden chairs to add information about their particular garden!

If you have any input about the content of our site or would like to see something added, please contact our webmaster, Robert Goehring, at [ctmcm.retired@gmail.com](mailto:ctmcm.retired@gmail.com). Be sure to include the specifics and, who knows, maybe your input will lead to an entirely new page! Photographs of the gardens are always in high demand!

Also, please remember to advertise our website to your neighbors. Having them visit our website just might lead them into joining our team.

Watch for your 2008 Membership renewal letter. It will be distributed soon via email to everyone who certified.



*Improving Lives. Improving Texas.*

### **Extension Update** **New Name Change Effective** **January 1, 2008**

By Mark Countryman, Texas AgriLife Extension Service  
Fort Bend County - Horticulture

You may have been hearing rumors for months now about a name change. Well, effective January 1, 2008, the new name will be **Texas AgriLife Extension Service**. This is an effort to better describe Extension's work in more areas than just agriculture. Extension does so much in "Life" issues such as; family and consumer sciences, youth development, crisis management, youth literacy, health education, nutrition and much more. Dr. Elsa Murano initiated the change in her position as Vice Chancellor and Dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences since 2005. She has now been named the sole finalist as the President of Texas A & M University, filling the position formerly held by Robert Gates.

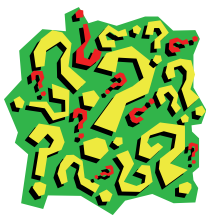
The new name will include a logo change, but that will not be publicly unveiled until January. Also all publications will need to include the new name and logo, so those of you who do publications and advertising, be sure to get with me about new marketing materials. Do not use "T.A.L.E.S.."! Administration is adamant about that.

We are told to embrace the new name. We are still the same people, in the same location, doing the same thing.

As always, my goal is to work with Fort Bend County Master Gardeners in order to provide our community with horticulture education to meet their needs. We are giving back to the community which has provided us with learning opportunities via county and state aid.

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If you have developed presentation materials for Green Thumb, our Speakers Bureau, Plants in the Classroom or other FBMG outreach activities, please take a few minutes and check your materials for instances where the Extension name and logo need to be updated.



## Don't Believe Everything You Hear

By Robert Goehring,  
Communications Director,  
FBMG S2006

I've been attending several different advanced training sessions lately in order to get all of my required hours for the Master Gardener program. As such, I have greatly increased my knowledge in many areas of horticulture in general. And I have found out that all training sessions are not equal.

One session at the ArborGate that I attended was exceptional. The speaker was brilliant and definitely knew her herbs. At another session, the speaker spoke of his love of flowers and why he started his company. These speakers made their points convincingly and I was very happy to have attended those sessions.

However, I attended one presentation during which an alarm bell went off in my mind. I noticed the 'scientist' who was presenting the information had displayed a chart that I knew to be completely wrong in its conclusion. That chart immediately cast his entire presentation into doubt. How could I take everything he said at face value now? Well, the answer is that I lost his trust at that point.

When I got back home, I really wanted to verify his information. I had taken some notes during the presentation so I started my own investigation into his data and conclusions. Based on the evidence I found, at least 3 times the speaker made statements and displayed 'scientific charts based on fact' that I could not verify outside of his presentation. And in one instance, he stated a 'fact' concerning artificial fertilizers that was completely false.

To be honest, I was stunned. I understand that this speaker really wanted us to believe his conclusions and buy the products he normally sold. In truth, most of us already supported his company and their vision of gardening. But since he blatantly displayed fallacious data, exaggerated and overstated some outcomes, and (to me) presented a 'holier than thou' attitude towards some others, I have decided to change how I listen at advanced trainings.

It is sad, really, that I can no longer simply listen to the speakers and trust their data and conclusions. I will be taking copious notes and spending a lot more time at the library and on the internet in order to verify their statements. I am returning to my Navy training in this with our saying of 'In God we trust; all others are verified.'

## Dates to Remember

Be sure to check the calendar on [FBMG.com](http://FBMG.com) for the most current information on the scheduling of activities

*Activities marked \*ATC are eligible for Advanced Training Credit.*

**Jan 10**—FBMG Green Thumb program, "Fruits and Nuts" 7:00 PM, Club Sienna, Missouri City.

**Jan 17**—FBMG monthly program "Growing Fruit in the Houston Area", 7:15 PM (2 hour program), Bud O'Shieles Community Center. A brief Member meeting after program. **\*ATC**

**Jan 21**—County offices closed in observance of Martin Luther King day.

**Jan 26-27**—Help out at the FBMG Booth at the Katy Home and Garden Show—sign up with Margo McDowell at [mmcdowell@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:mmcdowell@ag.tamu.edu).

**Feb 2**—Monthly workday in the Demonstration Gardens. Start time 8:00. Advanced Training session planned for 11:30 (topic to be announced). **\*ATC**

**Feb 5**—Pre-Talk and Volunteer meeting for the Fruit Tree Sale. Potluck—bring your favorite dish. monthly program "Growing Fruit in the Houston Area", 7:00 PM, Bud O'Shieles Community Center. A brief Member meeting after program. **\*ATC**

**Feb 8**—Unload plant material and setup up for Fruit Tree Sale. 8:00 start. You get Volunteer Hours for this!

**Feb 9**—**FRUIT TREE SALE!!!** Need as many volunteers as possible. You get Volunteer Hours for this!

**Feb 13**—Start of Spring session of Master Gardener training.

**Feb 14**—FBMG Green Thumb program, "Vegetable Gardening" 7:00 PM, Club Sienna, Missouri City.

**Feb 21**—FBMG monthly program "Roses—Preparing for Spring Blossoms", 7:15 PM, Bud O'Shieles Community Center. A brief Member meeting after program. **\*ATC**

Fyi: Perennial sale is March 8th!

# Reminders



Don't forget that hours information should be turned in every month to Margo "Mac" McDowell.

**You can have your own By-Line!**

The deadline to submit articles for the March-April edition of the Grapevine is February 22. Send articles and photographs in electronic format to the Editor at [mccaugheyb2@comcast.net](mailto:mccaugheyb2@comcast.net)



*Improving Lives. Improving Texas.*



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