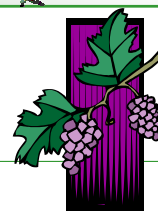




THE GRAPEVINE



Fort Bend County Master Gardeners, Inc.

Volume XVII, Issue 6

Have you turned in your hours for 2007 yet? Get your hours in NOW so that they can be compiled in time for the annual Awards Banquet on December 5! Visit www.fbmgs.com and download the Volunteer Hours spreadsheet or stop by Margo's office to get forms.

You have until November 30 to complete your hours for recertification in 2008.

From the Garden

By Mary Beth McCaughey, President, FBMG S2000

As the year draws to a close and we reflect on all that is good in our lives (while purposefully setting goals for 2008 of course!) I wanted to be sure I said thank you to our members for your many efforts this year. Just one example is the FBMG education and outreach efforts that continue to enrich the lives of Fort Bend County residents—and the tremendous success of this year's Ag'Tivity Barn is due in no small part to the efforts of our members who invested their time and talent to making this youth education program an important feature of the county fair. Good job folks!

I'd also like to extend a welcome to our newest Master Gardeners—as this year flew by, the class of Spring 2007 completed their training and certification hours while helping in the gardens, on the Hotline, at education and outreach events and a host of other activities. We appreciate your efforts.

Have you turned in your hours for 2007 yet? I appreciate that it's a bit of a chore but the information is not only required in order for recertification purposes for our group, but the data is accumulated across the state and nation as one way to quantify what the Master Gardener program contributes to communities. Please make an effort now to get your information in to Margo so that it can be tallied before the Annual Awards Banquet on December 5. And be sure to watch your email for information about this event, it will be a chance to celebrate our accomplishments while sharing good food and the company of fellow Master Gardeners.

At our November monthly meeting we'll be electing new officers for 2008. Looking ahead, I'd like to encourage all of you to consider new possibilities for how you might be involved with FBMG next year. There are lots of opportunities in the gardens, being part of the Hotline team, helping with programs at In-Service days for local school districts, researching and compiling information for our website and the Grapevine, serving as a Committee Chair or Director... it's a long list. You never know how much fun you might have until you give something new a try!

My term as President ends this month. It has been an honor to serve in this capacity and I look forward to working with our new Officers.

Onward.

Mary Beth

As the weather changes, please remember the wildlife in your area. A little extra food and clean water will be much appreciated



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**NOVEMBER-
MONTHLY
PROGRAM:**

**“THE BONSAI—BIG THINGS COME IN
SMALL PACKAGES”**

**JOHN HURLEY, HOUSTON BONSAI SOCIETY
ALONG WITH
HOUSTON BONSAI SOCIETY MEMBERS**

**THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 15
PROGRAM—7:15 PM**

**BRIEF MEMBER MEETING
FOLLOWS THE PROGRAM**

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

FREE PROGRAM, OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Upcoming Monthly Programs

No program in December. The Annual Awards Banquet will be held on December 5.

Jan 17– Program on Growing Fruit in the Houston Area. This program will tie in to our annual Fruit Tree sale on February 9. 7:00 p.m. at the Bud O’Shieles Community Center. This will be a 2-hour special program. A brief member meeting will follow the program.

If you have suggestions for monthly program topics or speakers, contact Brenda Dresner, Community Relations Director, FBMG F2005 at BMdresner@aol.com.

VOLUNTEERISM ---

“Behold the turtle, he only makes progress when he sticks his head out.”

**Nominating Committee
Announces Slate of Officers**

The Nominating Committee announces the following slate of officer candidates for FBMG Officers for 2008. The following candidates are nominated for a one year term.

Treasurer – Ms. Mike Greenwood

Mike is completing her first term as FBCMG Treasurer and has accepted the nomination for the position for another year. Mike is a member of the Master Gardener class of Fall 2004 and she has served on numerous committees since graduation.

Secretary – Marilyn Almon

Marilyn has completed her first term as FBCMG Secretary and has accepted the nomination as Treasurer for 2008. Marilyn completed her Master Gardener training in the Spring of 2002 while living out of state, and joined FBCMG when she moved back to the Houston area. She was Treasurer on the Board for 2 years prior to being elected Secretary.

Vice President - Barbara McCormick

Barbara graduated from the FBCMG program in Spring, 2001. She has been involved in many activities since graduation, including the Vegetable Garden, Fundraising, Garden Tour and currently volunteers on the Hotline. She was Secretary on the FBMG Board for 3 years and is currently the Secretary for the Extension Program Committee.

Barbara is also a Landscape Design Consultant and is a member of several associations including the Native Plant Society of Texas, the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center and the American Horticultural Society.

President – Nat Gruesen

Nat is a member of the Spring, 2004 Master Gardener class and currently serves as Director of Landscaping. Nat is certified as a rainwater harvesting specialist.

Nat has a B.A. in Economics, a B.S. in Accounting and a M.B.A., all from the University of Texas at Austin. During the day Nat is an Information Systems Auditor for the University of Texas Health Science Center and he also holds several certifications in the auditing area.

Nat is married, has a 9 year old son and 4 dogs.

Respectfully submitted by the 2007 Nominating Committee Ginny Grant FBMG S2003, Jodie Douglass FBMG S2003 and Doris Spiegel FBMG S2005

MORE BEAUTIES... AND ANOTHER BEAST

By Linda Rippert, FBMG F2004

Swallowtail butterflies are beautiful creatures, and we have several varieties of them that visit our gardens in this area! I have personally raised a number of them over the past few years, including the Giant Swallowtail, the Pipevine Swallowtail, the Eastern Black Swallowtail, and the Polydamas Swallowtail.



Giant Swallowtail

The **Giant Swallowtail**, pictured at left, has laid eggs on Rue in my yard, and also will use citrus trees. The young caterpillars look like bird droppings-brown and white. The tails on the butterfly's hindwings have yellow centers.



Pipevine Swallowtail

The **Pipevine Swallowtail**, shown here on the right, has laid eggs on *Aristolochia fimbriata* and also on other Pipevines including the *Gigantea*, but the caterpillars cannot tolerate feeding on the *Gigantea* and will die if they are not transferred to *Fimbriata* or another vine. This butterfly is a male; the females do not have the blue iridescent shading.



Female Black Swallowtail

The **Eastern Black Swallowtail** has laid eggs on Rue, Parsley, and Dill in my yard. The caterpillars start out brown and orange and as they grow turn green with black stripes with yellow dots. The one shown here on the left is a female-mostly black with blue; the male is mostly black with rows of yellow spots.



Polydamas Swallowtail

The **Polydamas Swallowtail** has laid eggs on Pipevines including *Gigantea*, *Fimbriata*, *Calico* and *Tri-lobed* varieties. The caterpillars tend to cluster together on the stems of the vines. This butterfly has no tails like the other swallowtails and is mostly black with a row of triangular or heart-shaped yellow spots on top of the wings.

Swallowtail Butterfly photos by Linda Rippert

AND THIS EDITION'S BEAST—The Land Planarian

This month I received the "Dirt Doctor Weekly Newsletter" (dirtdoctor.com) which included this article: "Dangerous Beast in the Garden -- Breaking Story". The beast in question is an Asian exotic, a land planarian, or flatworm, that's harmless to people but preys on earthworms. It's appearing in our gardens in the Houston area. I've seen several in mine, usually in moist places, under pots and once on the siding of my garage.

This creature is very flat. It can stretch out as long as 20 inches and is between 1/8 to 1/4 inch wide. The head is shaped like a spade. The color is a light to medium brown with two dark brown parallel lines running along its back. According to the Dirt Doctor, Howard Garrett, the Flatworm is known to be a "parasite that eats earthworms and can wipe out entire populations". According to TAMU, which is more cautious in its conclusions, "Most terrestrial (non-aquatic) planarians in North America are exotic, having arrived here via the trade in potted foliage plants.

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Be Careful Out There!

By Robert Goehring, Webmaster, S2006

As gardeners and naturalists, we tend to spend a lot of time outdoors either working in our gardens and yards or wandering in the wilderness hoping to find a picture-perfect setting in nature. We all take some precautions in these activities even if we simply make sure we don't step on a rattlesnake! But we should also take some precautions for the smaller critters.

A quick history of Lyme Disease:

- Around the turn of the 20th century in Europe, groups of individuals were found with a certain type of rash subsequently called erythema chronicum migrans. The association with *Ixodes ticks* was finally recognized in the mid-1930's.
- In the mid-1970s, a geographic clustering of an unusual rheumatoid arthritis-like condition was reported in Lyme County, Connecticut. This syndrome proved to be a newly recognized disorder that took the name, Lyme disease.
- In the early-1980s, a novel spirochete, called *Borrelia burgdorferi*, was isolated and cultured from the mid-gut of *Ixodes* ticks, and subsequently from patients with Lyme disease.
- Lyme Disease is the fastest growing infectious illness in this country after AIDS.

Ticks are notorious for carrying diseases and we must be careful whenever we venture outside. Here in Texas, the predominate tick is *Amblyomma americanu*, order of *Ixodes*, better know as the "Lone Star Tick." This tick is not a very friendly sort of critter as it has been associated with diseases such as Ehrlichiosis, Lyme Disease, Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, and Southern Tick-Associated Rash Illness (STARI). According to the Texas Lyme Disease Association,



"This is an aggressive species that will feed on a variety of hosts including humans. In a Texas Department of Health study conducted in 1990 and 1991, *A. americanum* ticks were gathered from nine Texas areas. Of the over 28,000 ticks collected, 26,901 or 95% were *A. americanum*.

Visitors to any area with high vegetation are at considerable risk of being bitten by lone star ticks and are at risk of acquiring Lyme disease."

Even though Lone Star Ticks prefer to live in wooded areas with underbrush, along creeks and riv-

ers near animal resting places, they can and do travel. They can be vectored by animals such as deer, mice, pets, and just about all mammals. Fortunately, working in our lawns is not a high risk because the habitat is too dry and hot for the ticks. But if your lawn and garden are close to high grasses, wooded areas, bayous, creeks, or such, the ticks may travel during the evenings. Just a word of caution for you; even working at the Extension Gardens, you should use prevention measures and always check yourself after being outdoors.

Adult ticks have eight legs and the body is fused into a single region. Lone Star tick adults are brown to tan,



1/3 inch long before feeding and up to 1/2 inch long engorged. Females have a single silvery-white spot on the back while males have scattered spots or streaks around the margins of the body.

Because diagnosis and treatment of Lyme disease is still evolving, prevention is critical. Wear light-colored clothing so that crawling ticks can easily be seen. Tuck pant legs into boots or socks so that ticks do not have access to skin. Use insect repellents with DEET or Permethrin in high-risk areas. Use tick and flea preventatives on your pets. Inspect yourself, your children, and your pets frequently for ticks, and remove any attached ticks promptly using proper removal procedures.

Don't be overly concerned and decide to never, ever work in the gardens again or take a walk through the woods or take a camping trip. Just remember that, just like checking for rattlesnakes before you step, make sure you take some tick precautions.

Note: May is the designated Lyme Disease Awareness Month.

Bibliography:

J. Craig Venter Institute for Genomic Research, website: <http://www.tigr.org/tdb/CMR/gbb/htmls/Background.html>

John Meyerhoff, MD, Johns Hopkins University, eMedicine, website: <http://www.emedicine.com/med/topic1346.htm>

Stand Up for Lyme - Promoting Lyme Literacy in Texas - <http://www.standupforlyme.org/>

Texas A&M University, <http://insects.tamu.edu/fieldguide/cimg370.html>

Texas Lyme Disease Association, <http://www.txlda.org/>

TEXAS SALVIAS

Family: Lamiaceae (lay-mee-AY-see-ee)

Genus: Salvia (SAL-vee-uh)

By Tricia Bradbury, FBMG F2005

There are over 900 species of salvia (not counting hybrids). Most of the salvias grown in our area are native to California, Mexico and South & Central America, but you can find salvias in Africa, Asia, & Europe. In fact, salvias are found growing in the wild on every continent except Australia and some of its smaller surrounding islands.

There are several salvia species native to Texas. First I planned to arrange them in alphabetical order, but decided to group them from the ones that grow farthest away and get closer until we are in our own backyard.

TRANS PECOS

The Trans-Pecos is the region west of the Pecos River, bounded by the Rio Grande on the south and west, and on the north by the thirty-second parallel, which forms the boundary with the state of New Mexico. Most of the region's physical and cultural landscape has little in common with the rest of the state. Although it constitutes about 11 percent of the area of Texas, the Trans-Pecos has received less attention than the more populous east.

Salvia arizonica (Arizona sage)

Found in southern Arizona and the Trans-Pecos mountain area of Texas. A loose mound of luxuriant verdant foliage and trailing stems 18" high x 2' wide, this salvia thrives in the partial shade of small trees and shrubs. Arizona Sage has a multitude of small, bright purple flowers June–July & again in September. If you have property in the Hill Country, you might give this one a try. Deer like to eat it, though.

Salvia lycioides (Canyon sage)

Found in West Texas to New Mexico on dry limestone hills and canyons at high elevations. Compact mounds of evergreen foliage only 18" tall are topped with cobalt blue blooms spring to fall. Prefers full sun. If you have *Salvia greggii*, this salvia makes a great accent in front of it, but I've heard it will freely hybridize with *S. greggii*. You might try this one here if you have a rock garden.

Salvia pinguifolia (Rock Sage, Greaseleaf Salvia)

Rock sage grows on the rocky limestone habitats of hillsides from 2000 feet to 7000 feet in extreme West Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and Mexico in sun or partial sun. It is a small shrub growing 3-5 feet tall and 2-3 feet wide. In late summer and fall small lavender flowers cover its branch tips. Its rounded, scalloped, aromatic leaves are described by some as feeling

greasy, hence one of its common names. It attracts bees and butterflies. It is seldom available commercially. I wouldn't recommend this one for our area.



Salvia pinguifolia
Photo from www.aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu

CHISOS MOUNTAINS

The Chisos Mountains are the heart of Big Bend National Park in southern Brewster County. They extend twenty miles from Punta de la Sierra in the southwest to Panther Junction in the northeast. The highest peaks in the range are 7300-7800 feet. Shallow, stony soils on the mountains support a flora that includes Douglas fir, aspen, Arizona cypress, maple, ponderosa pine, and madrone.

Salvia regla (Mountain Sage, Royal Sage)

In its native habitat mountain sage prefers the rocky soils of Central and South Texas, and the Chisos Mountains of West Texas. It also grows in Mexico. It is a small shrub growing 2-6 feet tall and up to 3 feet wide, having many basal stems and shield-shaped medium green leaves with tiny orange glands on the lower surface. But it is its very conspicuous floral exhibit in early summer and again in fall which make it especially garden worthy. Its 1-inch plus flowers have been variously described as "bright red", "flame red" and "vermillion red", and are extremely attractive to migrating hummingbirds. In a garden, afternoon shade with good morning sun suits it best or bright filtered light all day. Individual plants live 4 or 5 years on rich organic soils, but are easily propagated from stem cuttings. For bushier growth, it may be cut back in late winter. It is adapted to desert conditions, but cannot take very cold temperatures. The cultivar 'Mt. Emory' was developed by Benny Simpson, and is desirable for its greater cold tolerance; it is root hardy to 0 degrees F. You should try this salvia.

EDWARDS PLATEAU

The **Edwards Plateau**, in South Central Texas east of the Pecos River and west of the Colorado, is the southernmost unit of the Great Plains. It is an erosional region with thin soil over beveled limestone.

Salvia ballotiflora (Mejorana, Medjorana, Blue Sage, Shrubby Blue Salvia, Engorda-cabra, Crespa)

Mejorana is a multi-stemmed small shrub which stands 2 to 6 feet tall and 1.5 to 3 feet wide. It usually grows in full sun on shallow, rocky, sandy, gravelly or limestone hillsides or brushy areas of the Edwards

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Texas Salvias

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Plateau and South Texas Plains. It produces small bluish flowers following a rainfall from spring throughout the summer and into fall. Blue sage is not grazed by either livestock or wildlife, but is used as cover by small mammals. In an irrigated garden it will need frequent touch-up pruning to maintain a pleasing shape. Its dried leaves have been used to flavor meats and other foods.

Salvia roemeriana (Cedar Sage)

This compact Texas native has brilliant red tubular flowers in the spring - much earlier than many other types of Salvia. Hardy to Zone 7 and reseeds itself. Found in Edwards Plateau area of Texas. This variety produces bright red flowers in shady areas. The plant is small, growing usually to about a foot tall, and blooms through most of the spring and summer. It is a good plant for growing under trees, and takes its name from the "cedars" of central Texas where it is native. You should try this salvia.

HILL COUNTRY

"Hill Country" is a vernacular term applied to a region including all or part of twenty-five counties near the geographical center of Texas. The Hill Country represents in large part a dissected plateau surface. It is bordered on the east and south by the Balcones Escarpment, on the west by the relatively undissected Edwards Plateau, and on the north by rolling plains and prairies. The elevation nowhere exceeds 1,300 feet and is typically less than 1,000 feet. Lying in the transition zone between humid and semiarid climates, the Hill Country experiences both wet and dry years.



Salvia texana (Scheele) Torr. (Blue sage, Texas sage)
Small shrub only 10"-18" tall with spikes of azure blue flowers appear above the evergreen rosettes in spring and early summer. Native to the Texas Hill country, it loves alkali rocky soil and full sun, but needs good drainage.

Salvia texana

Photo from www.Uvalde.tamu.edu

PRACTICALLY IN OUR OWN BACKYARD:

Salvia azurea var. grandiflora Benth. (Blue sage, Pitcher sage)

This is one of the varieties that will appreciate a little shade. Growing naturally in both woods and prairies, the Pitcher Sage makes a tall background plant with lovely blue flowers with white centers. It is easy to grow from seed and is a perennial that grows throughout the state

(not in far west Texas, but even in several counties in the Panhandle) in almost any kind of soil that is well-drained. Its best display is in the fall. The slender, arching stems of blue sage grow 3-5 ft. long and are topped by fountains of clear-blue, tubular flowers. The stems, which grow in clumps up to 3 ft. wide, are well covered with downy, linear leaves.

Salvia coccinea P.J. Buchoz ex Etlinger (Tropical Sage, Scarlet Sage)

This showy southern native is characterized by the loose, widely spaced nature of the flowering spike. It is found in the hot sands of the South from South Carolina west to Texas and south into Mexico and the Tropics. Also known as Scarlet sage, this bright red (or pink or orange or white) variety is another salvia that is adapted to most soils and can grow in part shade or full sun. It is perennial in the southern part of the state and an annual in colder regions. It works best in areas where the soil is poor. Over-fertilization turns this lovely flower into a rank weed. Keeping it pinched back will make it more manageable and attractive.

Salvia engelmannii Gray (Engelmann's salvia, Engelmann's sage)

Engelmann's sage is a 1-1 1/2 ft compact mound of velvety, narrow leaves and showy flower spikes. Pale lavender, tubular flowers occur on 4-6 in. spikes. This variety has purple-blue flowers that stay fairly low to the ground. Growing to about 1 1/2 feet tall, this native hails from only 17 counties in Texas from central Texas north to Denton. But that is a pretty big area...the equivalent of three normal US states. It is not particular about soils and will take part shade or full sun. *Salvia engelmannii* is another of those wonderful salvias that is strangely missing from the mainstream nursery trade. *S. engelmannii* forms an attractive deciduous clump of light green leaves to 1' tall x 1' wide. The clump is topped in June with short spikes of light blue-lavender flowers. This should be a superb rock garden plant and although it may be easy to grow, good drainage is very important.

Salvia farinacea Benth. (Mealy-cup sage, Mealy sage, Mealy blue sage)

This 2-3 ft. upright or sprawling perennial is native to Eastern & Central Texas and usually forms a mound as wide as the plant is tall. Dark-blue to white, tubular flowers are densely congested in whorls along the upper stems, creating a 3-9 in. spike. Gray-green, lance-shaped leaves are numerous, especially in the lower portion of the plant. You don't usually see the species plant in nurseries, but there are a multitude of cultivars from which to choose.

Salvia greggii (Autumn Sage, Autumn Salvia, Cherry Sage)

Salvia greggii is a popular, usually evergreen small shrub growing natively in rocky soils in Central, West and South Texas, and Mexico. It grows to about 3 feet by 3 feet, prefers sun or partial sun, has small, dulgreen,

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Texas Salvias

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glandular, aromatic leaves, and blooms in spring, summer, and fall. The normally red-flowered species also has white and pink forms and many named cultivars with slightly larger or smaller, rounder or more elongate leaves, varying growth habits from very upright to sprawling, and a wide range of colors. Pale yellow, orange, salmon, fuchsia, purple, red-violet, burgundy, some with white variegation of leaves or flowers are commonly available. This variety is perennial throughout the state except in the High Plains of west Texas.

Salvia lyrata L. (Lyre-leaf sage, Cancer-weed)

Lyre-leaf sage is native to eastern and southern Texas. It is a strictly upright, hairy perennial, 1-2 ft. tall. Its pale-blue to violet, tubular flowers are arranged in whorls around the stem forming an interrupted, terminal spike. Whorls of 3-10 lavender to blue flowers surrounding a square stem in an interrupted, spike-like cluster. Large basal leaves are purple-tinged in the winter. The exposed lower lip of salvias provides an excellent landing platform for bees. When a bee lands, the two stamens are tipped, and the insect is doused with pollen.

Salvia penstemonoides Kunth & Bouché (Big red sage, Penstemon sage)

Once thought to be extinct, this native has large blooms on tall flower spikes. Its evergreen foliage stays low. It grows in sun or part sun and blooms from June through September. It is hardy to Zone 7. Sometimes growing to a height of five feet, its burgundy-red tubular



flowers are a favorite with the hummingbirds. It is found in Central Texas—very central—only in the Austin and San Antonio areas—growing along stream banks amongst the limestone outcroppings. Herbicides, erosion, and the lowering of the water table in the Texas Hill Country are its main threats. The San Antonio Botanical Garden maintains a collection in their greenhouses and on the grounds. It was rediscovered a little more than 10 years ago. At least one nursery outside Texas sells it. Their stock

came from plants they bought at a sale at Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center.

Salvia penstemonoides

Photo from www.cabrillo.edu

NOT FROM TEXAS, BUT THEY GOT HERE AS FAST AS THEY COULD:

Pineapple sage (*S. elegans*) Often used as a culinary herb, pineapple sage leaves have the wonderful fragrance of fresh pineapple. It is delicious as a tea or

added to other herbs in drinks, fruit salads, or other dishes. The bright red flowers are most profuse in the fall. The plant grows to about 2-3 feet tall and likes full sun.

Mexican Bush sage (*S. leucantha*) One of the most popular salvias, this one has purple flowers accented with white. There is also a cultivar with all purple flowers. It grows to four feet tall with grayish green foliage. The long velvety flower spikes bloom in summer and fall. Needs full sun. Should be in every garden that gets some sun.

Majestic sage (*S. guaranitica*) Also known as Big Blue sage or Big Purple sage, this is a big bushy plant growing to 5 feet tall and flowering profusely throughout the summer. It likes some shade in the afternoon. This is a favorite food plant of hummingbirds.

Indigo spires (*S. longispicata x farinacea* 'Indigo Spires') Actually, you could consider this one half Texan since *S. farinacea* is a Texas native. This hybrid has deep blue bloom spikes up to 18" long. It is a profuse bloomer and is perennial to Zone 8. A compact variety was introduced in 2006 as 'Mystic Spires' and grows to only about half the size of 'Indigo Spires'.

Smooth Leaf Sage (*S. miniata*) is a tender perennial generally grown as an annual in all but deep South Texas. Bright red flowers are produced on sturdy, fast-growing plants from spring until frost. It is a good shade plant that will grow to 3-4 feet tall and produce an upright tropical-looking plant.

Bog sage (*S. uliginosa*) Unlike most salvias, this variety loves wet feet. Native to South America, this sage produces sky blue flowers on tall mint-looking plants. It is perennial in Zone 8 and above.

Even though these salvias are not native to Texas, they do very well here. Try them all!!

For more information about salvias, I recommend a lot of reading. These are some of my favorites:

- A Book of Salvias, Sages for Every Garden* by Betsy Clebsch
- The New Book of Salvias, Sages for Every Garden* by Betsy Clebsch
- The Gardeners Guide to Growing Salvias* by John Sutton

References:

- Texas Native Plants Database: <http://extension-horticulture.tamu.edu>
- *A Book of Salvias, Sages for Every Garden* by Betsy Clebsch
- *The New Book of Salvias, Sages for Every Garden* by Betsy Clebsch
- <http://plants.usda.gov>
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- <http://www.cabrillo.edu/academics/horticulture/salvias/html/index.html>

More Beauties ... And Another Beast

(Continued from page 3)

Although land planarians do not attack plants, they are predators of earthworms, a fact that has raised concerns among some biologists. Unfortunately, little is known about their distribution, ecology, or true impact on earthworms in Texas."

This worm does not like dry climates or strong sunlight. Dr. Garrett suggests using orange oil in the bottom of a container to kill the Flatworm. I killed the last one I found in my garden by putting it on the sidewalk in broad daylight for a while. It dried up and withered away.

I urge you to familiarize yourself with this earthworm predator and help researchers find out if they are dangerous in our gardens. You can read more at dirtdoctor.com and subscribe to the email newsletter. I also urge you to visit TAMU's excellent site: (<http://citybugs.tamu.edu/FastSheets/Ent-1039.html>).



The Sugar Land Garden Club celebrates 75 years!

Please join us for the Sugar Land Garden Club's 75th Anniversary Luncheon on January 15, 2008. There will be a display of club memorabilia and Dr. Bill Welch, Professor and Landscape Horticulturalist with Texas A&M University, who is a past board member and a Life Member of Texas Garden Clubs, Inc. will be our speaker. His presentation will honor the role of gardening organizations in communities – beautification, friendships, lessons and legacies.

Tickets for the Anniversary Luncheon, to be held at Safari Texas in Richmond, are now available. The price is \$25 for club members and \$30 for guests. There will be a vegetarian option available. Seating is limited so get your tickets early! For more information about tickets, contact Mary Beth McCaughey at mccaugheymb2@comcast.net or 281-565-4658.

FOUR LEAF CLOVER - OR IS IT CLOVER FERN?

By Carolyn McDaniel, Awards Director, FBMG, F2001

A few months ago in the middle of all of the rain in Fort Bend County, I came across what I thought was the luckiest day of my life. Four leaf clovers everywhere. Wow, life was really going my way.

Being a Master Gardener, I had to find out more about this curious little plant. It was everywhere; wet areas, shady areas and sunny areas. They were very lush with large and small leaves and sprawling everywhere.

Being somewhat but not too adept on the internet, I simply entered "clover" into my search. At least that is what it looked like. Several sites and pictures popped up.

The information was most interesting. One was about a little plant that was, much to my surprise, listed as a clover fern. Imagine that. It didn't look like any fern I had ever seen. The interesting little plant known as the clover fern is aka **Marsilea macropoda, the Big-Foot Water Clover or the Texas Shamrock.**

All of the leaves are in quarters, forming what looks like a four leaf clover. It is great for our climate. It can withstand drought for up to 90 days and cold down to below 20 degrees while staying green the entire time.

It works great as a ground cover, can be used between pavers and makes an evergreen turf. When conditions are dry it just needs a spraying with water when the going gets tough. It can be used as turf growing similar to Bermuda grass. It grows 8 inches in height spreading by rhizomes and can become invasive under the right conditions. When necessary you can shear it back like grass.

If you are really interested you can purchase it from biological supply houses, grow them from spores or just ask me for a few rhizomes. Those of you who are really adventurous could take the spores, expose them to water and look at them an hour later to see that they are growing. You see, the best way to grow them is simply add water. This brings me back to why I have these lovely little plants in proliferation this year. God just added lots of water.



So for those of you who have seen these delicate little ferns, count your blessings and all of your little four leaf clovers. Best of luck.

Source:

Image Archive of Central Texas Plants - http://www.sbs.utexas.edu/bio406d/images/pics/mar/marsilea_macropoda.htm



Mac's Message

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

Hi Everyone! We've had a busy fall — all of you who have been in this program for a while all know that once the Fair starts—everything is on a tight schedule! And... once the fair starts, it seems as though most of September and October just disappear. Right now as I type this, I can't believe that Thanksgiving is just around the corner—again!

We've graduated another class of Master Gardeners recently too! Please extend your heartiest congratulations to: Rhonda Dailey, Grace Liggett, Dawn Lin, Jolene Maurer, Kristi Nolan, Prasad Pati, Susan Peacock, Michael Rea, Ron Rogers, Patty Stemmer, Peg Turrentine, Laurie Whittle, Beth Williams and Terry Williams! Their theme was a Harvest Hoedown, and it was simple and fun. As you all know, I try to remind you that its great to decorate, but we must take down! We have a wonderful group of spouses who always help! Congratulations Graduates!

The current class is almost done with their classes. By November 14, they will be finished as that is their last class. They are an enthusiastic and inquisitive group of eager learners!

I know you are all scurrying to finish your hours as the deadline of November 30th nears. Our Banquet is on December 5. That will definitely be here before you know it! I just want all of you to know that you've done a great job this year, and you should all be proud of the accomplishments you've done, all the in-progress projects that are being planned, and for just taking the time to be with us! I'm proud of everything you do!



The Grapevine

A new statute for the gardens. A gift from the graduating class—S07.



Robert Goehring (S06) and Rhonda Dailey (S07) explain butterflies at the Fort Bend County Fair!



Barbara Buckley, Mary Parkhouse, Terri Hurley, Cheryl Swanson, Evelyn Waggoner & Justin Morales celebrate their Grafted Hibiscus! (F07 Class!)



Only our Becky (Leugemors—F98) would attempt to lift all these sacks of Quikcrete!

News from Around FBMG

Butterfly Garden Update

By Denise Riccobono, Butterfly Garden Co-Chair, FBMG F2004

Thank you to everyone who has stopped by the Butterfly Garden this past month to pull a few weeds, trim a wayward branch, or even just to share their enjoyment of the garden. It really is looking pretty this time of year and the butterflies sure seemed to know where they were supposed to be on the last work day! Someone even spotted the larva of a Cloudless Sulphur butterfly that day, so we know we're successfully providing support for the lifecycle of our winged friends (in this case, thanks to the cassia). What a wonderful feeling it is to be a part of this process and to share it with members of the public who visit our gardens!

At the October work day, we started the process of adding to the diversity of our nectar plants. Perennials that were planted included 'Fireworks' Goldenrod, White Mist Flower, Pringle's Aster, 'Omega Sky Rocket' Stokesia, 'Double Decker' Coneflower, 'First Love' Dianthus, 'Lady in Black' Aster, 'Gateway' Joe Pye Weed, and Salvia clevelandii. We also added some annual dianthus for color as well as for the instant gratification of our hungry butterflies. The black swallowtails gained a host plant when Nat gave us some Italian parsley. The larvae of this butterfly are beautiful and definitely worth the loss of some parsley leaves even in our home gardens.

At the November work day, we built on this progress by adding a few more host and nectar plants along with performing the usual "tidying up" chores. Ellen Frank has been filling me in on some of the great ideas she's come up with for the garden, so it is my goal to get these implemented over the next few months so we will have an even more wonderful and welcoming garden for our visitors next spring.

My special thanks go out to Ellen for sharing her creativity and passion for butterfly gardening with me and to Alicia Jansen for staying late at the October work day to help me finish all that planting. Our fellow Master Gardeners are another reward we get being a part of this organization!

EarthKind™ Rose Trial Garden

We've been notified by Texas A&M that they want us to test the following rose varieties – Barn Dance, Earth Song, Polonaise, Quietness and Carefree Beauty (note that that Carefree Beauty is already certified as an EarthKind™ rose and it is part of each Rose Trial garden). By coincidence, all of the roses we'll be trialing were developed by Dr. Griffith Buck Roses. Construction of the garden will begin in December in the open area across the sidewalk from the Butterfly and Cottage Gardens. If you're interested in helping with the garden contact Mary Beth McCaughey at mccaugheymb2@comcast.net or Nat Gruesen at William.N.Gruesen@uth.tmc.edu.



Carefree Beauty



Barn Dance

Earthsong



Polonaise



Quietness



November-December Garden Checklist For South & East Texas

By Dr. William C. Welch
Professor and Extension Horticulturist

- Place orders for seeds now so you will have them available when you are ready to plant. By ordering early, you will be more certain of getting the varieties you want.
- Don't get in a hurry to prune woody plants. Late December through February is usually the best time to prune them.
- Drain gasoline from power tools and run the engine until fuel in the carburetor is used up.
- November through February is a good time to plant trees and shrubs. In the Panhandle, planting is often delayed until February or early March.
- Prepare beds and individual holes for rose planting in January and February. Use composted manure, pine bark, and similar materials mixed with existing soil.
- Use good pruning practices when selecting Christmas greenery from landscape plants. Don't destroy the natural form and beauty of the plant.
- Protect your lawn from excessive winter damage by providing irrigation during dry periods.
- Plant spring-flowering bulbs if you haven't already done so.
- Prolong the life of holiday-season gift plants by providing proper care. Check to see if the pot wrap has plugged up the bottom drainage. Don't over water. Keep out of drafts from heating vents and opening doorways. Fertilizer is seldom needed the first few months.
- Take advantage of good weather to prepare garden beds for spring planting. Work in any needed organic matter, and have beds ready to plant.
- Don't forget tulip and hyacinth bulbs in the refrigerator. They can be planted any time in December if they have received 60 or more days of chilling.
- Want to start cuttings of your favorite Christmas cactus? As soon as it has finished blooming, select a cutting with 4 or 5 joints, break or cut it off, and insert the basal end into a pot of moderately moist soil. Place it on a windowsill or other brightly lit area. The cuttings should be rooted within 3 to 4 weeks.
- Don't spare the pruning shears when transplanting bare-rooted woody plants. Cut the tops back at least one-third to one-half, to compensate for the roots lost when digging the plant.
- Berrying plants, such as holly and yaupon, may be pruned now while they can be enjoyed as cut material inside the house.

Dates to Remember

Be sure to check the calendar on FBMG.com for the most current information on the scheduling of activities

Activities marked *ATC are eligible for Advanced Training Credit.

Nov 15—FBMG monthly program “The Bonsai—Big Things Come in Small Packages”, 7:15 PM, Bud O’Shieles Community Center. Officer elections for 2008 and a brief Member meeting after program.

***ATC**

Nov 30 —Deadline to submit 2006 Volunteer and Advanced Training hours.

Dec 5—Annual Awards Banquet. [Watch Margo’s APBeee’s for RSVP details.](#)

Dec 1—Monthly workday in the demonstration gardens. Advanced training seminar—“Orchids”

County offices will be closed on Dec 24 and 25 and then again on January 1.

January 1—Happy New Year!

Jan 5—Monthly workday in the demonstration gardens. Advanced training seminar—stay tuned.

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”, 7:00 PM, Bud O’Shieles Community Center. A brief Member meeting after program. ***ATC**

Mark your calendar now for these fundraising events:

FEBRUARY 9—Fruit Tree Sale

MARCH 8—Spring Perennial Sale

From Mark:

Sorry I have not been around much the last couple of months because of my leg, but am now back and eager to work with the Master Gardeners.

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 January-February edition of the Grapevine is December 27. Send articles and photographs in electronic format to the Editor at mccaugheymb2@comcast.net



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The Grapevine



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County Extension Agent—Horticulture

