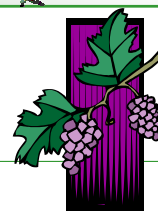




# THE GRAPEVINE



Fort Bend County Master Gardeners, Inc.

Volume XVII, Issue 5

## From the Garden

By Mary Beth McCaughey, President, FBMG S2000

It may not feel like it yet but summer is on the wane and fall gardening opportunities await us all. As the weather cools it will be enjoyable to be outside again. Fall gardening has such promise—you can enjoy late summer blooms and produce, while planting trees for the future, vegetables for harvest in the winter months and perennials that will reward you in the spring. And if you're lucky you'll get a chance to hear and see birds, butterflies and other wildlife that also enjoy your gardening efforts.

We have a new training class underway with a number of enthusiastic Master Gardener Associates. They're already getting involved in a number of areas. Join us for a workday or help out with AgTivity Barn preparations and you'll get chance to meet them. And please, everyone, remember to wear your nametags.

Speaking of workdays, I know it's been hard to get motivated to work in the Demonstration Gardens this summer but as the weather cools off we'd appreciate your help to keep the gardens looking good. More and more, we're getting visitors to the gardens—they're looking for gardening information and, in some cases, they just want to enjoy the beautiful surroundings. We started a new outreach effort earlier this year that we call "Saturday with the Master Gardeners" - where we simply advertise our regular Saturday workdays and invite the public to join us while we're working. We knew it would take a while for the idea to catch on but we've had a handful of folks join us in the past few months and expect that we'll see more visitors as it becomes more pleasant to be outside. The Demonstration Gardens are a learning tool for our members but we bring them to full fruition when we use them as a teaching tool for the community at large. So come on out during a workday or whenever you have some time. We'll keep the refrigerator stocked with ice cream!

I hope you'll enjoy this issue of the Grapevine. In the last few months we've succeeded in making our newsletter more of an educational resource as well as a means to communicate information about things going on within the FBMG organization. That's been a long-term goal and, thanks to the efforts of members who've been contributing some great articles, we've made good progress towards making the Grapevine another educational resource for both our members and the community. I know that writing isn't everyone's forte but you might be surprised to find how much information you could put together on a favorite topic—and I imagine our readers would enjoy learning from you. See page 5 for details about submitting articles to the Grapevine.

Onward.

- Mary Beth

### Welcome Fall 2007 Associates—We look forward to working with you!

Bertha Abraham	Carole Anhalt	Barbara Buckley
Elisabeth Dismuke	Cindy Fairbanks	David Gerstenberger
Jane Gray	Terri Hurley	Vern Juchau
JoAnne Lannin	Lynne Leong	Anne Lootens
Justin Morales	Mary Anne Ondrusek	Mary J. Parkhouse
Molly Powell	Dean Robison	Linda Robison
Marsha Sachs	Paul Schumann	Joe Steudle
Cheryl Swanson	Lillian Tigard	Stephen Utterback
Evelyn Waggoner	Brenda Webb	

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The Texas A&M University System



**SEPTEMBER  
MONTHLY  
PROGRAM:**

**“THE CLOCK IS TICKING,  
BIOLOGICAL CLOCKS OF PLANTS  
AND ANIMALS”**

**MICHAEL REA, PROFESSOR OF BIOLOGY AND  
BIOCHEMISTRY, UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON,  
FBMG ASSOCIATE, SPRING 2007**

**THURSDAY, JULY 19  
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**

**Oct 18- “Water Harvesting & the Cistern—  
Everything Old is New Again”** by Nat Gruesen,  
FBMG Landscape Director, S2004, Certified Water  
Harvesting Specialist 7:15-8:15 p.m. at the Bud  
O’Shieles Community Center. A brief member meeting  
will follow the program.

**Nov 14- “The Bonsai—Big Things Come in Small  
Packages”** by Hurley Johnson and several other  
members of the Bosai Society. 7:15-8:15 p.m. at the  
Bud O’Shieles Community Center. A brief member  
meeting will follow the program.

**No program in December.** Watch for information  
about the Annual Awards Banquet on December 5.

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

**News from the  
Nominating Committee**

By Ginny Grant, Youth Activities Director,  
Nominating Committee Chair, FBMG S2003

The search is on...in November, the Fort Bend  
County Master Gardeners will elect officers for 2008.  
A Nominating Committee has been formed and the  
assignment is to find volunteers willing to serve as  
elected officers—President, Vice President, Secretary  
and Treasurer. The Nominating committee consists of  
Ginny Grant-Chair S03, Jodie Douglass S03, and  
Doris Spiegel S05.

Fort Bend County Master Gardeners, Inc. is a non-  
profit, educational outreach organization. It is legally  
incorporated under the laws of the State of Texas and  
is governed by a Board of Directors consisting of  
elected officers, appointed committee chairs, and  
Texas Cooperative Extension staff advisors. Without  
a functioning Board, FBCMG would cease to be.

As an officer you would have an opportunity to help  
grow the Master Gardener program and help shape  
the organization’s future while working with fellow vol-  
unteers and Extension staff. If you’re willing to serve  
as an officer, please contact me at ginny-  
gaden@msn.com or 281-499-5664.

Your contribution in a leadership role can make a  
difference in helping expand our educational outreach  
goals. By promoting a love of gardening and an ap-  
preciation for the environment, the Master Gardener  
program will continue to positively impact the residents  
of Fort Bend County.

***Have you turned in hours for 2007  
yet? Visit [www.fbmgs.com](http://www.fbmgs.com) and  
download the Volunteer Hours  
spreadsheet or stop by Mac’s  
office to get forms.***

***You have until November 30 to  
complete your hours for recertification  
next year (12 hours of Advanced  
Training and 24 hours of Volunteer  
Service).***

***Get your hours in regularly. And mark  
your calendars for the annual Awards  
Banquet on December 5!***

# Moths in Meadows Place, TX

By Linda Rippert, FBMG F2004

Someone recently asked how to tell the difference between butterflies and moths. Here are some suggestions:

Butterflies are usually seen during daylight hours when the sun is shining; moths are mainly nocturnal and feed only after dark, with some exceptions. Butterflies usually rest with their wings folded over their backs; moths rest with the wings out flat. Butterfly antennae are generally clubbed at the tip; the antennae of most moths are slender and tapering-except for some male moths who have feathery antennae.

Below are some examples of moths and caterpillars I have found in my yard:



**Grapeleaf skeletonizer moth**



**Sphinx moth caterpillar**



**Tussock moth caterpillar**



**Yellow Bear caterpillar & cocoon**



**Yellow Bear moth**



**Tussock moth cocoon & female laying eggs**

If you have pictures of caterpillars, moths, butterflies, etc. I would love for you to send them to me at: [rippert@pdq.net](mailto:rippert@pdq.net) so I can share them with others in the FBMG Entomology Committee!



## Slugs – Friend or Foe?

By Robert Goehring, Webmaster, FBMG S2006

I got up one morning and went out to my front yard to relax with a cup of coffee and enjoy the sunrise. I noticed several slime trails on my walk and wondered what the critter was who made those marks. I searched around and found a slug about 3 inches long, moving slowly from one point to another.

My first inclination was to take that slug and get it off my yard! But, I really didn't know much about them. Are they beneficial or harmful? After being a Master Gardener for more than a year, I realized I needed more information before I made a decision.

As hard as it might be to believe, some slugs are beneficial to your garden! They can play a major part in clearing up dead and decaying material in the garden and can assist in managing the soil by incorporating organic matter. Additionally, they are important prey for other wildlife including toads and frogs.

For most gardeners, however, the slug is a slimy, rather disgusting creature that destroys seedlings and mature plants alike. Many a grower has gone to their prized vegetables in the morning only to find them in tatters after a night of feasting by the slimy creatures.

Slugs have rasping-chewing mouthparts and cause plant damage by creating large irregular shaped holes in leaves. Slugs have a strong sense of smell and will travel substantial distances to locate a food source. They prefer to feed on succulent foliage such as seedlings, herbaceous plants, and fruit lying on the ground. One of their favorite food plants is the hosta.

Adults vary in color from almost white to brown, grey and black. They are legless, elongate, terrestrial (land) mollusks (snails, shellfish, etc.) and prefer to feed at night. They will feed during the day in moist, shady locations. Their movement is highly dependent upon moisture availability. They move by sliding forward on a trail of secreted slime. The slime has a silvery appearance and is often used to detect an infestation.

Slugs live anywhere from 6 months to 2 years, depending on species. They can lay between 20 to 100 eggs several times per year. Garden slugs reach sexual maturity in late autumn. Our local slugs in Fort Bend only reproduce in early spring. Garden slugs reproduce faster on alkaline to neutral soils than on acid soils.

Slug eggs are very small (less than 3 mm or 1/8 inch in diameter), colorless and deposited beneath the soil surface, making them very difficult to detect. Newly hatched slugs are also small and transparent, making their presence easily overlooked. Because of this, slug eggs or young slugs can enter the garden on new plants or in soil materials. Even borrowed garden equipment can introduce slug eggs. Slugs, even though considered to be a slow mover, can move unaided from one garden to the next in an urban area.

Slugs prefer warm, moist conditions. They hide under all sorts of debris including mulch, plant debris, rocks, boards, weeds, and ground covers and even seek shelter in cracks in the soil during dry periods. Rock piles are especially good breeding areas but also support populations of natural slug predators like garter snakes. With the onset of cooler weather, slugs will become less active or even dormant, but with the return of moist warm weather, slugs resume their active state.

### Slug controls

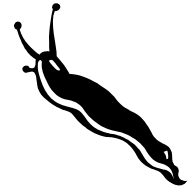
Few gardeners, want to willingly encourage slugs and will be looking for ways to get rid of them. Slug management involves a combination of strategies such as hand picking, habitat modification, barriers, traps, baits, and commercial molluscicides. Spring and fall are the best times to control slugs. Feeding generally occurs at night. In the morning slime trails can often be seen where slugs were the night before. Since they have a skin covered with mucus, the principal enemy of the slug is a hot, dry atmosphere. Making sure that there are as few 'hiding' places as possible is a start to reducing their activity.

Habitat modification is one of the most effective strategies in reducing slug populations. This involves eliminating hiding places such as mulches, weeds, old vegetation, and debris. The initial preparation of the soil is most important in a slug control regime and a soil that has a fine surface with no lumps will be less attractive to slugs. Make sure that your soil is well drained and not too alkaline. Regular cultivation and hoeing of the soil can also help as it disturbs the slugs and their eggs and exposes them to the drying conditions that are fatal to them.

There are natural predators of the slug and these include various beetles such as firefly larvae and ground beetles. In addition, toads, frogs, snakes, and lizards eat slugs. It is good to encourage some of these predators though, of course, some of them bring their own brand of trouble!

One of the oldest methods of slug protection is the use of some kind of 'barrier' around the plant. Diatomaceous earth, shredded bark, eggshells, lime, and wood ash have been used as barriers to prevent slugs from

feeding on plants. However, these materials generally work best during dry periods when slugs are less active. In addition, the effectiveness of these materials is reduced by rainfall, which means they have to be reapplied regularly after becoming wet. The use of some of these materials such as egg shells, lime, and wood ash is discouraged because over time, they may raise the pH of the soil. Also, **never** pour salt on slugs as this may burn plant foliage and roots.



Mulches, too, can encourage slugs as they provide places to hide. Avoid mulching young plants and always apply mulch to a warm soil.

Another option is spraying coffee on plants that are plagued with slugs. Caffeine in any form — including a few No-Doz tablets mixed with water — is a slug neurotoxin that will kill these unwanted pests.

Another old-fashioned method that works well is the trap and one of the best is the beer trap. In this method a small container is filled with beer and then the container is placed on the ground where you know the slugs to be. They will climb in and drown and can be removed every few days. Try to ensure that the lip of the container is approximately 1" above the ground so that the beetles that eat slugs will not also get in and die. Slugs are attracted to the yeasty smell of beer.

Finally, you can pick slugs by hand.

You may have a number of garden slugs in your garden. If you see the benefits that they bring, you may be willing to share your yard with them. Then again, they may be destroying your hard work by eating their way through your plants. Either way, slugs are a part of our gardens and knowing more about them makes them less disgusting!

*By the way, studies from Colorado State University have shown that Kingsbury Malt Beverage is the beer most preferred by slugs. I wonder if I can get a grant from the Fort Bend Extension Office to make a study about different Texas beers and their influence on slugs.*

## References

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"Gardening in the East Texas Piney Woods", Texas Cooperative Extension, Smith County, website (<http://aggiehorticulture.tamu.edu/county/smith/homegardens/Shade/hostas.html>).

Texas Integrated Pest Management Program, Texas A&M University, website (<http://hortipm.tamu.edu/pestprofiles/other/garslug/garslug.html>).

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## ***Information from the Master Gardeners—Read all about it!***

**If you've got an idea for an article you'd like to share in the Grapevine, we'd like to help you get it into print! It's easy**

- **Run your idea past one of our editors—Margo "Mac" McDowell or Mary Beth McCaughey.**
- **Educational articles normally run anywhere from 400 to 800 words but that will vary based on topic. We also try to include actual photos to illustrate, and we always like to use FBMG images where possible.**
- **Be sure to include your references—remember Master Gardeners only provide research-based information.**
- **Submit your article electronically and you're done. You do get Volunteer Service Hours for the time spent developing articles.**

## Seek Beauty in the Garden

By Peggy d'Hemecourt, Vice President, F2003

It was there, right before my eyes, but I missed it.

Last winter I had placed its hanging basket right outside the bedroom door, hanging from the pergola over the patio. I knew from experience that, even when you know it's coming, you may not find a way to admire its beauty. So I wanted it in a spot that would be easily accessible throughout the night.

The yard was a soggy mess and island beds off the patio desperately needed attention, but not under these conditions. How could I spend a productive 90 minutes before sundown in the garden? The answer was obvious. Work the beds adjacent to the patio where I could stay out of the lawn and still reclaim control from the nut grass and other invaders.

Head down, on my knees I pulled weeds with ease. Before long, the cigar plant, henna, and copper canyon daisy were rescued from the invaders. I laid a good layer of mulch to seal the deal and pulled out the garden hose to clean up the mess on the patio, taking time to check on the bromeliads happily growing in pots under the pergola.

There under the pergola, it was right before my eyes, but I missed it. I know from experience that its four to five inch flower bud was curled up and full, a sure sign that this would be the night.

Tools stowed, I admired my work and retreated indoors for the shower.

My heart sank the next morning as I stepped onto the patio to feed the birds. There it was, the saucer-size blossom hanging limply from its leaf, its beauty spent. Last evening it had been right in front of me but I'd missed it.

The night-blooming cereus (*Epiphyllum oxypetalum*) – arguably one of the most exotic and beautiful blossoms in the plant kingdom – had put on its fragrant show under the cover of darkness right outside my bedroom door, but I'd missed it. I had been too pre-occupied with weeds the evening before to notice that it was announcing its arrival.

What do you see when you look at your garden? Do you see the beauty? Or do you see the work to be done? I'm training my eye to admire what's good about my gardens, and conditioning my brain to relax when confronted with the ever-present maintenance. From now on, when I survey my gardens, I'll be looking first for the beauty, because sometimes, like the bloom of the night-blooming cereus, it can be fast-fleeting.

### **Epiphyllum oxypetalum**

Common Names: Night-blooming cereus, Lady of the night, Queen of the night, Dutchman's pipe

Occurs naturally in tropical rainforests. Common near Veracruz, Mexico where the climate is very humid and temperatures range from 60 degrees to 120 degrees Fahrenheit. Nocturnal bloomer; pollinated by bats and large moths. A true cacti.



Photo from [www.mtholyoke.edu](http://www.mtholyoke.edu)

### Growing tips:

Plant in a large hanging basket or a large pot. If potted, support with stakes or a trellis to accommodate its natural climbing (and drooping) habit. Produces long, arching stems that are flat and notched along the margins. Grow in the shade. Protect from freezes during the winter. May be propagated by stem cuttings.

## **Memorial Contributions**

The Board of Directors recently approved a policy to recognize and honor the memory of its members and others who have had an impact upon the organization. The new policy will be included in a revised version of the Operations Manual which will be issued in September but we wanted the membership to be aware of this decision since it has been officially adopted:

### **Operations Manual: Memorial Contributions**

A contribution of \$100 may be made to honor the memory of a certified member of FBCMG. The master gardener must have been an active member in good standing at the time of death. Memorial contributions will not be made to honor spouses, parents, children, other relatives, significant others, or friends of Fort Bend County Master Gardeners.

At its discretion and by a majority vote, the Board of Directors may elect to make a memorial contribution of \$100 in the name of an individual who has had a significant association with or impact upon FBCMG.

In all cases, a majority vote of the Board of Directors will determine which organization(s) or fund(s) will receive the donation.

We recently made a donation in memory of Marge Powers (FBMG S2002) who passed away earlier this year. At the suggestion of her husband Gene (FBMG S2002), the Fort Bend County Master Gardeners sent a \$100 contribution to the M.D. Anderson Cancer Center.

If you have a suggestion concerning a memorial donation, please contact our Membership Director, Sallie Bourgeois.

## COMPACT FLUORESCENT LAMPS AND MERCURY

From The US Environmental Protection Agency Fact Sheet: Mercury in Compact Fluorescent Lamps (CFLs)

### What are the Health Risks of Mercury and How do CFLs Fit In?

Mercury is an essential ingredient for most energy efficient lamps. The amount of mercury in a CFL's glass tubing is small, about 4mg. However, every product containing mercury should be handled with care. Exposure to mercury, a toxic metal, can affect our brain, spinal cord, kidneys, and liver, causing symptoms such as trembling hands, memory loss, and difficulty moving.

As energy-efficient lighting becomes more popular, it is important that we dispose of the products safely and responsibly. Mercury is released into our environment when products with mercury are broken, disposed of improperly, or incinerated. If you break a CFL, clean it up safely. And always dispose of it properly to keep CFLs working for the environment.

### CFLs Responsible for Less Mercury than Incandescent Light Bulbs

Ironically, CFLs present an opportunity to *prevent* mercury from entering our air, where it most affects our health. The highest source of mercury in our air comes from burning fossil fuels such as coal, the most common fuel used in the U.S. to produce electricity. A CFL uses 75% less energy than an incandescent light bulb and lasts at least 6 times longer. A power plant will emit 10mg of mercury to produce the electricity to run an incandescent bulb compared to only 2.4mg of mercury to run a CFL for the same time.

### Always Dispose of Your CFL Properly

While CFLs for your home are not legally considered hazardous waste according to federal solid waste rules, it is still best for the environment to dispose of your CFL properly upon burnout. Only large commercial users of tubular fluorescent lamps are required to recycle. If recycling is not an option in your area (see below on how to find out), place the CFL in a sealed plastic bag and dispose the same way you would batteries, oil-based



paint and motor oil at your local Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) Collection Site. If your local HHW Collection Site cannot accept CFLs, seal the CFL in a plastic bag and place with your regular trash. *To find the collection site nearest you, visit Earth911.org. In the Find A Recycling Center section, type "CFL" in the "What" space and enter your zip code in the "Where" space.*

**Safe cleanup precautions:** If a CFL breaks in your home, open nearby windows to disperse any vapor that may escape, carefully sweep up the fragments (do *not* use your hands) and wipe the area with a disposable paper towel to remove all glass fragments. Do *not* use a vacuum. Place all fragments in a sealed plastic bag and follow disposal instructions above.

Is it worth it to switch to CFLs? Make your own decision. Here are a few more tidbits:

*According to the federal government, if every American home replaced just one light bulb with an Energy Star approved compact fluorescent bulb (CFL), the United States would save enough energy to light more than 2.5 million homes for a year and prevent greenhouse gases equivalent to the emissions of nearly 800,000 cars. Energy Star is a joint project with the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Energy that promotes energy efficient, and thus climate-friendly, products.*

- Energy Star qualified CFLs use at least two-thirds less energy than standard incandescent bulbs and last up to 10 times longer (average lifespan of a CFL is five years).
- CFLs save \$30 or more in energy costs over each bulb's lifetime.
- CFLs generate 70 percent less heat, making them safer to operate.

*(Editor's note—this article was contributed by Tricia Bradbury, FBMG F2005)*

### Get to Know the Fort Bend County Recycling Center

Fort Bend County has a Recycle/Environmental Center at 1200 Blume Road, on the western edge of the Rosenberg city limits.

#### **Hours of operation:**

**Recycling:** Monday—Saturday: 8:00 am—4:00 pm (except holidays)

#### **Closed Wednesdays**

**Household Hazardous Waste:** Mondays: 9 am—6 pm, and the first Saturday of the month: 9 am—2 pm.

Automated Recycling/Household Hazardous Waste information telephone line is 281-633-7527.

Visit [www.co.fort-bend.tx.us](http://www.co.fort-bend.tx.us) and type "recycling center" into the Search Site box to get to more detailed information about the types of waste that can be brought to the Recycling Center and environmentally friendly alternatives to some of the chemicals used to produce household hazardous wastes.

## **Extension Insights and Updates**

By Mark Countryman, CEA Horticulture

I would like to re-introduce myself and how Master Gardeners, Extension agent and Texas Cooperative Extension are intended to work together. In the future I hope to use this spot to keep members updated with Extension activities such as the upcoming name change to Texas Agri-Life Extension Services.

Briefly, for those who do not know my background, I started with Extension in December 2006. I have 2 degrees in horticulture, B.S. from Texas A&M and a M.S. from Texas Tech. After my bachelor's, I spent 3 years working in the Houston/Conroe area as a landscape consultant. I recently "retired" from 17 years as the self-employed owner of Lakeview Landscape; a retail garden center, landscape installation and landscape maintenance just southeast of Dallas.

The Master Gardener organization is set up to help the Extension agent educate the Fort Bend county community. There are numerous activities that the agent alone cannot complete as the community requests. So with the agent acting in an advisory and technical capacity, the Master Gardeners work to accurately educate the community with research backed information via Texas A & M University. By no means do the Master Gardeners work for the Extension agent but also the Master Gardeners should not act without the approval of the Extension agent. The agent is ultimately responsible for all actions of the Master Gardeners and the other organizations from his job description. We must understand that we are all answerable to county and state. While they cannot tell the Master Gardeners what to do, they do control the name "Master Gardener", land, facilities and staff.

My goal is to work with this organization that has proven itself effective, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it". We are an education source, not a labor source and I intend to continue that philosophy. There are some goals and headings I want to work toward such as more community involvement and public awareness of your excellent demonstration gardens. We need to work with the community and other branches of Extension as much as possible. Please help me with these goals and feel free to come to me at any time. I really try to have an "open door policy" and am trying to improve my interaction with the Master Gardeners.

Respectfully  
Mark



## **Greet the Gardener: Robert Owen**

By Sheredith Heitzenrater, FBMG S2002

Mention hydrangeas and Roberta Owen (fall 2002) almost swoons. She has several varieties in her Crescent Lakes, 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!

Their daughter 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 was 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 MG 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.



## Mac's Message

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

Hello fellow gardeners!

We've all gotten what we wished for – the rain has stopped! (Well it was when I started this article - we just had a downpour here at the office). I tell my sister that the humidity helps us all keep up our good appearances! That is, we have the best weather in the world because Texas produces the best looking people in the world just because of its humidity! I'm not sure anything I say will convince her to visit during the summer. I have to tell her something, so I thought that was a good one!

We have twenty-six new people in class, and I sure am glad to see them all enjoying themselves. They have already been heavily involved with Twilight Gardening, and I'm anxious to see if they beat all the attendance records for the Regular Saturday workday with the entire class showing up! Wouldn't that be something?!!! Welcome all of you to our great organization! I know you all will eventually become comfortable with our gardens, chairpersons, and procedures!

The Fort Bend County Fair is around the corner. September 28<sup>th</sup> is actually Fair Day – a fun day for the entire county as all county offices and schools are closed! The Parade is a fun event as well. We have had 2 meetings so far trying to determine what FBMG will be doing. A few years ago, we decided to have the butterfly exhibit, paint as a background a home and viola! We had an Ag'Tivity Exhibit. Things have expanded and last year decided we had to be more kid-oriented so we added another background – a beautiful schoolhouse. Along with the schoolhouse, we added a series of "guess who" or "guess what" photos to the booth, which consisted of plants, insects and bird photos. This year, we've added another focus on Recycling and Composting so we can spread the word about these important topics, while maintaining the Butterfly exhibit, and all the beautiful plants surrounding the exhibit.

Another Ag'Tivity Barn change planned this year is the conversion of our "house" background of our exhibit from a front yard to a back yard—or maybe we'll change the house to a barn! We thought it would be more appropriate to have a back yard because we are adding the composting exhibit this year! We also want to focus on why it is so important to recycle plastic. We've heard that school age children bring several bottles of water to school to drink throughout the day – and apparently there isn't a lot of plastic recycling at a majority of our schools. So all their plastic bottles are thrown in the regular trash. Ouch! We also will highlight that we do have a wonderful Recycling Center here in our county, and we want people to take full advantage of this facility. They take all plastics, all glass and lots of other materials and objects. We hope you all get a chance to either work at the fair this year, or at least visit the fair. Its fun for the entire family!

One change I would like to mention to you all is our classes. In 2008, we will not have a night time class.

There are several factors that went into this decision. After listening to what our speakers were saying to us for the past couple of years, we recently polled them for their honest opinions. After talking with Doug Welch as well, we came to the conclusion that it was in their best interest for us to postpone having a night class for a while. In all sincerity, our speakers are worn out from an entire day's work, then driving here and driving back home so late in the evening. Some speakers don't arrive home until midnight, another stays at a hotel because he's too tired to drive! Being from the night class myself, I know how difficult it is to stay focused during the evening, and its even difficult trying to complete the volunteer hours. We didn't come to this conclusion just because we thought it was a good idea. We thought long and hard about this decision.

I won't say that we will never have a night time class again. What I'm saying is that everyone is taking a break, including the Master Gardeners who help facilitate classes. When we reach a certain amount of people who are interested in being committed to our program and we have the Master Gardener resource to accommodate their schedules – then we will have another night time class. Therefore, our spring 2008 class will be a morning class. If you know of anyone who is interested in being a Master Gardener and can only take it in the evening, have them call me! I'm keeping a list of interested folks.

Don't forget that I like to have your hours at the end of every month (S07 & F07 – this doesn't include you!), and also any attendance sheets you may have taken home with you. I have to compile a report each month for Texas Cooperative Extension so having your hours by the end of each month enables me to get my report completed and turned in on time. If I receive attendance sheets after the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month, those hours don't get reported for that month. We can't go back into the reporting system once a month is finished. Even though they do get reported on the year end report – it's a totally different reporting system, so it is important to get all hours in by the 30<sup>th</sup> of each month. You worked them – they matter!

We now require 12 hours of Advanced Training and 24 Volunteer hours for recertification. Of the 24 Volunteer hours, 8 hours must be worked in the gardens (this includes the greenhouse) or on the hotline. Working in the garden doesn't necessarily mean physically working – why not contact a chairperson and see if they need their garden record book updated. Join Terry Douglass in the hotline (where it's cool!), get extra training on the hotline – help answer some of the questions. Come in for some research or write an article for the Grapevine. This is all pretty do-able! If you need help – please don't call another Master Gardener – call me. Even if you have a something you need to get off your chest, please let me know.

Don't forget – the members' list is on the website. If you need someone's email or phone number, its there for you, but you must log in. And check the calendar regularly, we're doing our best to post all activities.

I hope to see a lot of you at the Fair!

# News from Around FBMG

## Greenhouse Happenings

By Glenn Dresner, Greenhouse Co-Director, FBMG F2005

Activities in the Greenhouse are continuing to grow as more and more Master Gardeners and Associates come to learn and share. Those helping and sharing are not only assisting with the planting of seeds and transplanting of seedlings to larger pots but also are taking on the not so glamorous tasks of weeding under the tables and sweeping the “stuff” that just seems to appear. When there is more than one person helping with these necessary tasks, it makes them go so much faster and more importantly fun.

The mist tent (the first table on the left) is complete and in operation. This tent area is divided into one half for starting of seeds and the other half for “misting” the new seedlings and cuttings. Cliff Bergman was the key person in the design and construction of this mist tent. A timer that will spray a fine mist for short intervals several times a day was purchased and installed for the cuttings. We started out with a two-second spray interval every 20 minutes but increased the interval to 30 minutes to see if this would encourage the production of the new cuttings. It seems that one of the key challenges in the operation of the Greenhouse is the determination of the proper interval for watering. Cliff Bergman, Doug Staff, James Buckley and others have spent a lot of time discussing and modifying the various watering systems on the tables in order to obtain the optimum schedule and pattern. Like Thomas Edison in his experimentation to develop the electric light bulb, we have found many ways on how **NOT** to water for the best success of the plants.

As FBC Master Gardeners we are really blessed by individuals like Becky Smith, Cliff Bergman, and others who have outstanding skills in the propagation of plants. James was working on a Wednesday with one of the Associates that needed some volunteer hours. James and the Associate went out to talk to Becky about some of the possible cutting from the Cottage Garden. Not only did Becky assist them with finding the cuttings, but she also came into the Greenhouse and demonstrated the proper methods for starting the cuttings. James said that the cuttings Becky helped them with on Wednesday were putting on new growth when he checked them out on the following Saturday. Another example is Cliff's experimenting with not only trying to do some “air rooting” propagation of a cardboard palm but also taking the leaves removed for the rooting and is trying to propagate them as well. No one knows if we will be successful, but it only takes trying and patience and who knows what will be the final results. Seems like the word “propagation” is a lot like the word “fishing”. If every time a person went out with some bait and hooks and limited out on the fish they wanted, it would be called “catching” and not “fishing”. If every time we propagated a seed or cutting and we achieved 100% success, then it might be called “planting” and not “propagating”. Each time one tries their hand at propagation they increase their skills and knowledge, which leads to a greater success in the future.

Those that have come to use the Greenhouse for growing and learning are ***strongly urged to label the plant/pots they are putting on the tables***. The other day we found some pots labeled “Japanese Cherry”. The plants needed to be transplanted to larger pots. The only identification we found on the “venetian blind” label was the name “Japanese Cherry”. We did not know when the plants were put into the Greenhouse, or who put them there. If we would have had a name (first and last), we could have let the Gardener know the condition of the plants they put into the Greenhouse. We want Master Gardeners to use the Greenhouse for learning, but everyone needs to communicate better to Cliff, James, or Glenn on the plants put in the Greenhouse. Communication needs to be through good written labels and verbally to Cliff, James or Glenn on what the Gardener would like to do in the Greenhouse facility.

We look forward to seeing more people coming and working in the Greenhouse. Who knows how much more you will learn and what new opportunities you will see.

## Publicity Assist

If you live in a neighborhood that publishes a newsletter or has a website that will post community education notices, and you don't see information about FBMG programs and activities there already, we'd like to see if we can add them to our publicity contact list. Please get in touch with our Publicity Chair, Mary Ellen Twiss with the particulars of how FBMG should send information— timing, format, contact e-mail etc. You can reach Mary Ellen at [twiss@hal-pc.org](mailto:twiss@hal-pc.org) or 281-242-8613.



## A Palette of Color for Fall Gardening

By Denise Riccobono, FBMG F2004

The Sugar Land Garden Club will host the 9th Annual Garden Art and Plant Sale on Saturday, September 22nd. The sale will feature perennials and hard to find plants from TreeSearch Farms. These will be plants that have proven they can stand up to the heat, drought and rains that are all part of living on the Gulf Coast. Many of the plants attract butterflies and/or hummingbirds, many are native to this area and others are proven WaterSmart plants – those that require less water plus little or no fertilizers or pesticides to thrive here. The sale is Saturday, September 22 from 8:30 AM to 1 PM at 930 Sugar Lakes Drive (Sugar Lakes Subdivision) in Sugar Land.

Heidi Sheesley, owner of TreeSearch Farms and a good friend to gardening organizations, will be the featured speaker at the September 18th Garden Club meeting. She will provide an overview of the plants—old favorites and new selections—that will be featured at the Garden Art and Plant Sale the following Saturday. The meeting will be held on Tuesday, September 18th, 10 AM at the Sugar Land Community Center, 226 Matlage Way in Sugar Land. The meeting is free and open to the public, anyone with an interest in gardening is welcome to attend. *This meeting qualifies for FBMG Advanced Training credit. There will be a sign-in sheet at the meeting.*

Proceeds from Sugar Land Garden Club fundraisers are used within the community, including scholarships at Stephen F. Austin and Texas A&M Universities, support for Habitat for Humanity, the Fort Bend Women's Center and East Fort Bend Human Needs Ministries, library donations, and environmental education programs.

Here is a small sample of the plants that will be available at the sale:

- Butterfly favorites such as Gateway Joe Pye Weed, Sunflower Heliopsis and Brazilian Red Cloak
- Natives: Native Spider Lily, Native Yellow Canna
- Fall bloomers including Country Girl Aster, Pringel Aster and a new hybrid "Lady in Black" Aster
- New selections – Orange lochroma, Swallowtail Christia, Fruit Cocktail Shrimp Plant
- Favorites that have been tough to find—African Bauhinia and Mexican Butterfly Vine
- Plant now for spring—Husker Red Penstemon and Bletillas (new white variety this year).

For more information about Heidi's talk on Sept. 18 or the plants to be offered at the sale on Sept. 22, visit [www.sugarlandgardenclub.org](http://www.sugarlandgardenclub.org) or call Tricia Bradbury (FBMG F2005) at 281-242-2338. The description of all plants at the sale on Sept. 22 will be posted on the website on the evening of Sept. 18.

## 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.**

**Sep 1**—Monthly workday in the demonstration gardens. Advanced training seminar topic to be announced.

**Sep 8**—Wildscapes Workshop. University of Houston Central Campus. Native Plant Society event. [http://www.npsot.org/Houston/special\\_events\\_and\\_workshops.htm](http://www.npsot.org/Houston/special_events_and_workshops.htm) for registration info. **\*ATC**

**Sep 13**—FBMG Green Thumb program. "Plant Growth and Disease Control" 7:00 PM, Club Sienna, Missouri City. (2600 Scanlan Trace in Sienna Plantation Subdivision).

**Sep 18**—"A Palette of Color for Fall Gardening" by Heidi Sheesley, 10:00 AM, Sugar Land Community Center, 226 Matlage Way, Sugar Land. Sugar Land Garden Club Program. **\*ATC**

**Sep 20**—FBMG monthly program. "The Clock is Ticking, Biological Clocks of Plants and Animals" 7:15 PM, Bud O'Shieles Community Center. A brief Member meeting after program. **\*ATC**

**Sep 28**—County Fair Day. All County offices closed.

**Oct 1-5**—School Days at the County Fair. FBMG mans displays in the Ag'Tivity Barn. Check with Mac for volunteer shift dates and times.

**Oct 6**—Monthly workday in the demonstration gardens. Advanced training seminar—"EarthKind™ Environmental Landscape Management Program"

**Oct 11**—FBMG Green Thumb program. "Soil & Composting" 7:00 PM, Club Sienna, Missouri City. (2600 Scanlan Trace in Sienna Plantation Subdivision).

**Oct 18**—FBMG monthly program. "Water Harvesting & the Cistern—Everything Old is New Again" 7:15 PM, Bud O'Shieles Community Center. A brief Member meeting after program. **\*ATC**

**Nov 3**—Monthly workday in the demonstration gardens. Advanced training seminar topic to be announced.

# 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 November-December edition of the Grapevine is October 26. Send articles and photographs in electronic format to the Editor at [mccaugheymb2@comcast.net](mailto:mccaugheymb2@comcast.net)



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