

# UrbanDirt

IN COOPERATION WITH THE TEXAS COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

## Web Surfin'

By Tom H. Robb, Jr

I hope that all of you don't keep your computer hard disks as cluttered up as I do mine. I'm too prone to download some software—just to try it out—and then forget to uninstall it when I'm through playing around with it. After a time it's almost impossible to know what is really where. And the same thing often happens with hardware – you can't always look outside and know what all you do have connected.

I came across a *free* program that is a miracle at letting you know what is in your computer – hardware and software and present it in a form that anyone can read. It tells me that my Main Circuit (Mother) Board is an Intel Corporation D815EEA AAA10380-205 whose Serial Number is BLEA02905845 with a Bus Clock of 133 megahertz. It uses an Intel Corp BIOS with a number much too long to enter here. It tells me that I have an HP CD-Writer +9100 [CD-ROM drive], a SONY CD-ROM CDU4821, and a Generic floppy disk drive (3.5").

I could go on and on – it supplied 5, 2-column pages of fine print, listing all of my drives, operating system, processor, controllers, memory modules, printers, *etc.* along with models and capacities; and then showed all software licenses with license numbers and all software names and versions and then lets you know where in the computer the program is installed.

What good will all of this detailed report do? Did you ever have to reinstall a piece of software and somehow or another you had misplaced your software license number? Perhaps you had taken your computer into the shop for repairs, and when you got home and plugged in the printers they wouldn't work. Or, you know that you installed some certain program but you don't remember where, and you can't find it under programs because it is buried under several other folder names.

Believe me by running this program, which is called the **Belarc Advisor** and printing a copy of the report it runs for you will save yourself a lot of aggravation and headaches. You can find this program at <http://www.belarc.com/Download.htm>. And as I said – it's free.

## Herb Garden News

By Heidi Vaughan

Is spring here yet? We hope the freezes are over. Weren't expecting that last one! It has been a slow month in the garden, with the cold weather and the rain. The herbs we could plant have been planted, and we're just waiting for a bit more sun and warmer temperatures to do more, and trying to be patient.

We will have a visit soon from **Nel Barner**, who will advise on what to plant next, and when. And **Toula Hagidimitriou** will surely be able to give us advice, too, soon. She's off to the Seventh Annual Herbal Forum at Round Top on March 23. The rest of us are very jealous, of course. Perhaps she will be able to find some plants for the Eastern Culinary Garden, at the plant sale, or at least some good advice to get started on that bed, which she has begun work on with **Lee Ann van den Bold**.

Lee Ann, **Kim Braud** and I are getting together later in March to make soap for the April plant sale. Why would we sell soap at a plant sale? They will be scented with herbs from our own garden! **Nancy Verwest** has begun work on some sachets, as well. It all sounds very exciting, doesn't it?

We also will welcome **Fran Quitzau** to the Herb Garden, after she completes her telephone duty in the next week or so. We are delighted she will be joining us. And **Becky Kern** is attending a meeting this week at the Extension Office for me, while I am in Tucson. Thank you, Becky!

As the weather continues to improve, we will be busier and busier in the garden. If you are interested in working with us, just stop by any Tuesday, or call me at (281) 579-8995.

# President's Thoughts

By Jean Fefer

When I wrote last month we were preparing for the Tomato/Pepper sale and everything looked good. We didn't know how good!! You had to be there to appreciate the eagerness of Houston gardeners to buy the fruits of our labors. **Mary Lynn** is to be congratulated and she is already preparing for next year by reviewing this year's choices, amounts and methods.

This month we have the Spring Plant Sale and **Deba Cox** is working hard to bring that all together. There has already been an announcement about that so I won't belabor that point except to say that we need your help again to guide the buyers through the property and help them find the plants they came for and check out efficiently. For this sale I also want to thank **Heidi Sheesley, Clyde Cannon, Diane Ballentine** and **Ray Wallace** for sharing their expertise with the community.

I know that we have Master Gardeners that work out in the community in a garden who are not directly connected with HCMGA. It is important for you to let us know about these efforts. Since only 10 hours per year are required for recertification you may feel that it is not necessary to keep reporting. However, there are people who like to keep track of numbers and use this as a measure of our effectiveness. We need to keep others informed about what we do so please use the form in Urban Dirt to record and report periodically. Thanks.

## The skinny on Swiss fertilizer

I promised to tell you about Swiss fertilizing practices. If you know about this already or if you are likely to have a bad reaction to yuk, skip to the next paragraph. I'll try to find something fun to write about there. First you need to know that cows are everywhere in Switzerland, the land of cheese and chocolate. (By the way, do not ask for Swiss cheese in Switzerland – it's *all* Swiss cheese.) The cows get to spend the winters in the barn. The floor of the barn is covered with straw and/or hay and designed so that the liquid waste drains into large storage tanks underground. The barns are cleaned on a regular basis and

the floor covering is composted. This goes on all winter. In the spring the liquid is pumped from the tanks and sprayed on the fields. A few days later the compost is spread on the field and this is all worked into the soil and left to age awhile before the crops are planted. It is *not* a good idea to be strolling through the countryside during this time. However, I am told that the odor dissipates very quickly. How's that for an answer to Miracle Gro? This is the original Organic Gardening.

## The Zen of gardening

I found the fun in my own garden when I went this weekend to see what could be resurrected after 'the big freeze'. Happily, with a light bulb in my little 4 x 4 ft. greenhouse I did not lose anything in there – about 3 dozen tomato plants and a few annuals that I saved from last year. Meyer the lemon came through in fine shape covered with blossoms. I must confess that I moved him in on the porch for a few days. Brugmansia look fine though a little shorter now. Lettuce didn't even notice the change in weather and the strawberries were cozy under their blanket of straw, covered with row cover.

The MG greenhouse didn't get much of a breather after the tomato/pepper sale.

Last year we spent some time trying to give tomato plants away, no problem this year. We are now busy starting seeds for: Mary Lynn's color border in the Millennium Garden, Jennifer's flower garden between the buildings, and the herb garden under the direction of Heidi and Nancy and quite a few other dedicated people. It's great to see this happening. **Nel Barner** did a wonderful job on the herb garden for so long and it's good to see others taking on the responsibility. Of course, we also have **Dave Parish's** vegetable garden to deal with so we have a few flats in the greenhouse for him as well. If you have been out there lately you have seen a lot of gardeners planting lots of seeds. It is so great to go each week to see what has popped up when we weren't watching.

## And the winner is...

We had a winner to last month's cliffhanger. **Carol George** correctly identified milnot as a mixture of skim milk and dehydrogenated soybean oil, which is used as a replacement for evaporated milk.

*Congratulations, Carol!*

## “Do not ask for Swiss cheese in Switzerland

(There was a cool picture of swiss cheese here.)

# Hamburger Tuesdays

By Mary Ann Wagner

On the first Tuesday of March, **Karen Breneman** shared her experience in creating a native garden. She showed how she started with a vacant lot with a concrete slab and the work it took to make it a Wildscape Demonstration Garden. Her program included slides of all of the wildlife that had taken up residence in this beautiful habitat. There were butterflies, birds, bees, turtles, fish, numerous frogs and toads, an armadillo, and possums. It was delightful. Her new book *Gardening with Nature in Texas* had just arrived from the publisher and we had a chance to be the first to purchase it.

On April 2, **Roz and Pat Merrit** will present a program on tropical hibiscus. They presented an evening program a few years ago. They brought the most beautiful specimens of hibiscus flowers. Our freezing temperatures this past month will probably prevent them from bringing blooms next month, but they have incredible slides and wonderful information to share about this wonderful heat tolerant plant.

On May 7, **Angela Chandler**, a fellow Master Gardener from Precinct 2, will present a program on how to install and maintain drip and low volume spray irrigation. This should be very interesting for those of us who do not have sprinkler systems in their gardens.

Remember the first Tuesday of the month. Join us for some gardening, a great hamburger, good companionship, and some new ideas.

## Speakers Needed

### Speakers' Bureau Needs Your Help

At this time of the year, the Speakers' Bureau is especially busy. The garden clubs, church groups, or civic organizations that call us for speakers are particularly interested in any topic about Spring gardening, or any topic that will serve as inspiration for those just dusting off the gardening tools for the season. While many speakers have their own programs and slides, the library includes many programs such as composting, shade gardening, native plants, or other suitable topics. The programs are given in the Houston area and one can pretty much work as often as desired, during the day or early evening or even weekends. Those that have joined have enjoyed the experience. All say that you do not need to be a pro... you just need to enjoy speaking, people, and gardening! Contact **Beth Grunden** at (713) 461-7159 or [egrunden@houston.rr.com](mailto:egrunden@houston.rr.com).

## Shepherd's Garden

by Yvonne Tallent

Shepherd's Garden, the community outreach garden of Christ the Good Shepherd Catholic Community located on Klein Church Road between Louetta Road and Spring Cypress Road in Spring, is off to good start with the help of one very dedicated volunteer.

He helped me layout, till, and supervise volunteers for the installation of the irrigation in the garden. By the time you read this, we will have planted 64 tomato plants, 48 hot and sweet pepper plants, two kinds of squash, cantaloupes, cucumbers, and watermelons with sweet potatoes and onions to follow in the fall. We supply unemployed families in our area, the food pantry of Holy Name on north Main St., and Casa Juan Diego, a ministry to immigrants.

Master Gardener, **Lynel Boudreaux** has volunteered to help me with the garden. But I know there are other MG's out there in the 1960-Spring area who might like to volunteer close to home. Please contact **Yvonne Tallent** at (281) 370-0938 or [ytallent@aol.com](mailto:ytallent@aol.com) to volunteer. Come meet some great people and have fun in the garden!



## First Wednesdays at Precinct 2

On April 3, the Master Gardeners at Precinct 2 welcome **Suzanne Chapman**, Green House Manager, Mercer Arboretum, to present a program on Containers. Along with bringing lovely plants, prepared containers, soils, amendments, and bulbs for forcing, Suzanne will also present a short PowerPoint presentation covering additional flowering plants, too numerous to carry in.

Come and join us for an exciting program and stay to enjoy lunch. Registration begins at 9:30 a.m.; the program at 10:00 a.m. The program is free and open to the public, but reservations are required. Lunch \$3.

Please call (281) 991-8437 to register. We are located at 1202 Genoa Red Bluff, Houston, TX 77034.

### Future Events

On May 1st, come out to the Genoa Friendship Garden and learn to make beautiful stone garden troughs with Master Gardener **Pam Harris**. This is a hands-on workshop where you'll create a trough to take home to your garden. \$25.00 fee includes all materials and lunch. Please call for reservations (281) 991-8437.

On June 6, avid butterfly gardener **Robin Pacholder** will teach us about gardening to attract butterflies.

The Harris County Master Gardener Association at Precinct 2 will offer **Summer Master Gardener Classes** at their southeast location. Classes will be held June 4th through July 3rd on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. at 1202 Genoa Red Bluff.

Registration begins March 2, 2002. Space is limited so enroll early! Call (281) 991-8437 to enroll.

# Carol's Comments

By Carol Cammack, CEA Horticulture

I get an unbelievable amount of email. Some of it's important, some funny, some is junk and some is inspirational. Most of the time if it's in the last three categories I skim it and trash it, but occasionally I get one that grabs me. I got one of those the other day. I won't reprint it all, but the essence of it was this: "*When thrown in boiling water, are you more like carrots, coffee or eggs?*" Boiling water of course being the trials of life. It turns out you're supposed to be like coffee beans. They change their surroundings rather than being changed (they make coffee.)

I like analogies, they make me think. I fear greatly that I'll end up hard-boiled like the egg. But really, my responses vary on any given day depending on how hot the water has been lately. I think this is true for everyone. That's what's great about the Master Gardeners though. Everyone in the organization has those days, but as a group everyone comes together to get the jobs done and make a positive impact on our community. Thank goodness we can work on the big things as a team. So much for my attempt at philosophy. Plato I am not. (He *was* a philosopher, right?)

I first wanted to congratulate Tami

Pipkin on a job well done. The newsletter looks beautiful. It is so clean and professional. We had a few glitches putting out the February edition. Mainly because I forgot to mention some things to Tami. One of those glitches really affected our Bulk Mail team. You may have noticed they had to tape the label page on the outside because I forgot to mention that the mailing information has to face a certain way relative to the fold. **Susan Weir** and the Bulk Mail team were troopers and got it taken care of. **John Plotski** delivered it to the Post Office and off it went. Thanks to Susan, her team, the folks in the phone room that all helped and John Plotski. (See...team work does make a difference.)

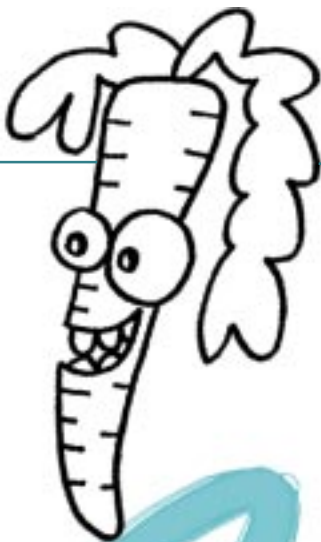
Speaking of team work, I'd like to congratulate the Master Gardeners from the **Genoa Friendship Satellite** that all worked so hard putting on the plant sale at the Water Smart Conference. The plant sale and conference were both extremely successful due in large part to those hard working Master Gardeners. I hesitate to mention names for fear I'll leave someone out, but I'm certain that if you flip over a page or two you'll find a full report. If you haven't been down to visit this group you should pick a first Wednesday and take a field trip to eat a burger, help out in the garden for a while and hear an interesting

presentation. They are a great group and would love to see you.

Another MG team I'd like to thank is the volunteers that signed up to work with the Cylinder Garden Program this semester. This program wouldn't be successful without you. Thank you:

**Jeanne Alsmeyer**  
**Diana Bensen**  
**Margaret Black**  
**Marcia Braschayko**  
**Kim Braud**  
**Frank Brocato**  
**Amy Bryant**  
**Michelle Chrusciel**  
**Anthony Chrusciel**  
**Vicky Esse**  
**Gretchen Gemeinhardt**  
**Glen Graves**  
**Toula Hagidimitriou**  
**Merry Anne Hetrick**  
**Boone Holladay**  
**O. Scott Hume**  
**Joyce Johnson**  
**Kathy King**  
**Caroline Lecomte**  
**Portia Leyendecker**  
**Sylvia Louvieu**  
**Bernard Mahoney**  
**Rachel Mancill**  
**Theron McLaren**  
**Christine Mitchell**  
**Jane Olson**  
**Janell Peyton**  
**Mari Red**  
**Carolyn Rolsten**  
**Melissa Simpson**  
**Nicki Smith**  
**Vicki Smith**  
**Bonnie Steinberg**  
**Kim Stone**  
**Mary Ward**  
**Welliva Weems**  
**Charlotte Williams**  
**George Williams**  
**Lavon Witherspoon**  
**Deborah Wood**  
**Ann Wood**  
**Deborah Wood**

Go Team!



When thrown  
in boiling water,  
are you more like  
carrots, coffee, or  
eggs?

# Plant Swap... It's baaack!

Following up on **Jean's** suggestion is last month's *President's Thoughts*, Master Gardener **Ginger Geist** has generously offered to manage a plant swap for us. A self-confessed plant junkie, Ginger says that "meeting other people, seeing other gardens, free plants, trying something new, something that works for someone else, you name it... all these are benefits to me." Matching plants to people will be a major logistical challenge, requiring one person to coordinate and keep working on the concept.

To kick things off, Ginger has a selection of plants she'll offer to share, and a list of plants she's looking for. Now all we need is a process. Until she is able to formulate a way of coordinating this, anyone offering or requesting a plant should email Ginger directly. It'll probably help Ginger out if you include the words "plant offer" or "plant request" in your subject line. (In the web version of the newsletter, clicking on the word offer or request above will start an email for you.)

Ginger already has several ideas on how to organize the swap. One idea for listings is to post offers and requests on the web. Another is to use the newsletter, as I'm doing this month. For those who are interested in the swap, how would you like to see it organized? Are you interested in setting up a time for exchanging, such as during the pre-meeting coffee hour at monthly meetings or before lunch on hamburger Tuesdays? Or would you rather contact each other directly? If interest is strong, we can make it a regular column in the newsletter as well.

To request a plant, offer to provide plants, or contribute your ideas to the plant swap, contact **Ginger Geist** at (713) 973-9295 or MG2MG@mac.com.

## Offers

### Plant/cuttings

Giant (Mex.) Turks Cap Red/Pink  
Mock Orange  
Inland Sea Oats  
Wedelia  
Algerian Ivy (large leaf English)  
Boston Fern  
Airplane – green or variegated  
Philodendron

### Seeds

Texas Star Hibiscus  
Inland Sea Oats

## Requests

### Plants wanted in general

Gingers  
Natives  
Perennials  
Ferns other than Boston  
Bulbs that naturalize

### Plants specifically wanted

Amaryllis – red  
Shade plants – Persian shield  
Variegated monkey grass or lariope  
Rain lilies  
Chinese Ground Orchid  
Star of Bethlehem

(There were 4 botanical illustrations here.)

## Upcoming Events at Bear Creek

### April 2 – Hamburger Tuesday

8:00 a.m. Work up an appetite  
Noonish Home cooked burgers, then Roz and Pat Merrit, *Tropical Hibiscus*

### April 13 – Spring Plant Sale & Free Symposium

8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Symposium  
9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. – Plant Sale  
See back cover for full details.

### April 16 – MG Monthly Meeting

6:30 p.m. Coffee & dessert  
7:00 p.m. Perennials

### May 7 – Hamburger Tuesday

8:00 a.m. Work up an appetite  
Noonish Home cooked burgers, then Angela Chandler, *Drip and Low Volume Spray Irrigation*

## And in other areas...

### April 3 – First Wednesday Program

Precinct 2. Suzanne Chapmen, *Containers*.

### April 6 – Daylilies Workshop

9 a.m.–noon, Mercer Arboretum

### April 10 – Bulbs of Houston

Noon–1 p.m., Mercer Arboretum

### April 16 & May 18 – Public Garden Tour

10 a.m.–noon, Mercer Arboretum

### April 20 – Summer Color in the Houston Garden

10 a.m.–noon, Mercer Arboretum.

### May 1 – Garden Trough Workshop

at the Genoa Friendship Garden. Master Gardener Pam Harris teaches this hands-on workshop. \$25 fee.

### May 5 – Judged Daylily Show

Noon–5 p.m., Mercer Arboretum

### May 8 – Butterflies of Mercer

Noon–1 p.m., Mercer Arboretum

### May 18 – Flower Arranging Class

9 a.m.–noon, Mercer Arboretum, \$15 fee.

# Garden Gifts News from our Outreach Gardens

By Kenneth Dorman

**H**al Borland said “*No winter lasts forever, no spring skips its turn. April is a promise that May is bound to keep, and we know it.*” And, by golly, he was right again! But, there were a few days at the end of February and the start of March that caused a little doubt as I shuffled around trying to keep seven flats of tall tomatoes, two flats of assorted peppers, a flat of cucumbers, a flat of green eggplants and a flat of **French Orange Hybrid melons** alive and well. They survived to be planted in the various gardens they were destined for and I (and my immediate family and associates) survived my grumpiness until they were safely in the ground.

We are building up a really good group of volunteers for the CCSC garden. For the first time ever the garden looks neat and clean. One day **Walter** shoveled up dirt that had washed from the fruit tree bed and I picked up a years accumulation of other people’s trash that didn’t make it to the dumpster plus weeds and plants that we had pulled from the beds and thrown on the pavement. Amazing! An instant good feeling from looking at a neat and clean garden that is almost as good as seeing the plants grow!

I keep a daily log of what goes on in both gardens as well as outside activities that affect the gardens and I include here some of the events I think are interesting. I also have a history of each variety of each plant that I keep from each planting season. If anyone is interested in how the various plants did each season I will be/may be happy to share it with you. It is only since the spring of 2001, but we have gained some good information. However, remember we started both gardens with manufactured soil that had no fertility. At Bonita Street we planted on newspapers spread on native soil and we now have earthworms in the beds, whereas at CCSC we are on asphalt and have no earthworms in spite of all the compost we have added.

As a matter of fact on checking the records I found that the potatoes I planted on February 7 and said were a couple of weeks later than the year before were actually planted a couple of weeks earlier than the year before and got their little growing tips nipped by the cold weather.

So much for reading and learning from your records.

**Cornelius Nursery** gave us a lot of potatoes and onions of several varieties and I planted as many of each at both gardens as I had room for. The rest I gave to **David** to use in the Extension garden as he sees fit. Some of the potatoes will be interesting as they are varieties I haven’t tried, **Yukon Gold, Blue** (blue inside and out), **Caribe** (blue outside, white inside), **Warra, Red Potomac** and several others I don’t remember. I have grown the Caribe and it is a really great baking potato, beautiful white flesh with a wonderful flavor. We will report on the final results.

During all the preparation for the planting of the outreach gardens I am trying to maintain some semblance of order in my gardens at home and prepare them for planting and trying to keep what remains of my hardy perennials alive. After a winter like we just had “hardy” is a moot description. My handy dictionary describes it thusly: “*a plant is said to be hardy if it remains alive in a nursery long enough to be sold.*” Thank goodness we have access to plants from our greenhouse and our periodic sales that are truly hardy.

On March 7th **George, Walter and Theron McLaren** and I planted three beds of tomatoes, **Montfavet, Early Goliath** and **Carmello**; a bed of four **Big Bertha** and two poblano peppers; a bed of three each of jalapeño and serrano chilies; a bed of eggplants, three beds of bush beans, **Gina, Tendercrop** and **Derby**; and a bed of sweet corn. All the beds are planted intensively, or very close together, because of all the fertility we think we have. We’ll see what happens. These plantings are in addition to the potatoes and onions and lettuce and strawberries we have growing. We put cages around the tomatoes, peppers and eggplants, watered everything and cleaned up. The others left and I went to the Bonita Street rehab facility to plant their gardens.

**Rodney** had all the beds ready to plant and had two young men doing community service to help. I showed them how to plant the tomatoes and then spaced the plants out on the bed and let them do it. They did a good job and were joined by a young woman

resident that helped quite nicely. From the tomatoes they went to the pepper patch and planted peppers and eggplants and then planted a big bed of corn. The young woman mentioned she was from Iowa and had had some adventures in some tall corn, whatever that means. While they were planting another young male resident came behind watering everything in. We were finished in less than an hour. None of these young folk had ever planted anything yet they were gentle and interested and did a really good job. I thanked them and they thanked me, but I felt the most thanked, I’m sure. We still have cucumbers and French melons to plant at both gardens plus some watermelons in a cleaned out flower bed at BSHOH and hope to do that the 11th.

As I reported last month we put up a sign hoping to stop the vandalism, but **Carol** said no one but me would read it and I think she was right. We haven’t had more damage, but I planted some left over potatoes in the FTB and put a big sign on a stake right in the middle of them. George and Walter managed to walk right through the bed without hurting (or seeing) the sign while they were cultivating and setting out cucumber plants.

Well, I guess I am going to have to quit about here because I have been threatened with editing for taking up too much space. However, I am going to squeeze in that the potatoes are back up at both gardens, the onions and lettuce look great, we have strawberries we are sharing with the mockingbirds and all the fruit trees have started to leaf out again. Also, I was invited to give a talk on community gardening and the HCMGA at a meeting of the Upper Kirby “chamber of commerce” at HEB’s Central Market Community Room. This was a pleasant chore as I followed an interesting woman from River Oaks Garden Club and preceded two landscape designers from A.J.’s Landscape that had a really beautiful program. I also got breakfast. Then went downstairs and spent too much money shopping in the Market.

Mary Engelbreit made a beautiful statement that can be interpreted to suit any situation you choose, “*Bloom where you’re planted*”. Do just that and be at peace.

# Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens

## April Events

### Monthly Gardening Workshop: Daylilies

Saturday, April 6, from 9 a.m. to noon, join Mercer staff and volunteers in an educational program on caring for your daylilies in the spring. Master Gardener training is not required and novices are welcome.

### Lunch Bunch: Bulbs for Different Seasons

Wednesday, April 10, from noon to 1 p.m., enjoy this lunchtime program by **Greg Harmison**, Mercer horticulturist. Greg presents information on the variety of bulbs that can produce yearlong seasonal blooms in Houston gardens.

### Public Garden Tour

Saturday, April 13, from 10 a.m. to noon, join Mercer staff for a guided tour of the gardens featuring the blooms of spring.

### Gardening Program: Summer Color in the Houston Garden

Saturday, April 20, from 10 a.m. to noon, join **Linda Gay**, Director of Mercer and a nationally recognized expert on the best plant choices for our region, as she talks about a wide variety of plants that give great color to the garden during our hot summers.

## May Events

### Monthly Gardening Workshop: Tropicals

Saturday, May 4, from 9 a.m. to noon, join Mercer staff and volunteers in an educational program on grooming and preparing tropical plants for planting outside after a winter inside a greenhouse.

### Daylily Show

Sunday, May 5, from noon to 5 p.m., enjoy prize-winning daylilies at a judged flower show sponsored by the **Cypress Creek**

### Daylily Society.

### Lunch Bunch: The Butterflies of Mercer

Wednesday, May 8, from noon to 1 p.m., bring a lunch and enjoy a program on the butterflies of Mercer by butterfly expert and outstanding nature photographer

### Carlos Hernandez.

### Public Garden Tour

Saturday, May 11, from 10 a.m. to noon

### Gardening: A Flower Arranging Class

Saturday, May 18, from 9 a.m. to noon, join **Pat Hermes**, director of the Houston School of Floral Design, as she teaches the mechanics and techniques of arranging cut flowers and foliage in clear vases. In this hands-on class, participants will make and take home an arrangement. A \$15 material and supplies fee is payable to the Mercer Society at the time of registration. This program also covers the care and handling of cut garden flowers. Class size is limited and preregistration is required.

Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens is a Harris County Precinct 4 facility located at 22306 Aldine Westfield Road, one mile north of FM 1960. Harris County Precinct 4 programs serve people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic level, race, sex, religion, national origin, or disability. Anyone requiring special assistance to participate in any program, or for more information, please contact Mercer at (281) 443-8731 or [mercercarboretum@cp4.hctx.net](mailto:mercercarboretum@cp4.hctx.net).

## LATIN CORNER

### SALVE OF ACHILLES

"I want you to cut out this arrow from my thigh, wash off the blood with warm water and spread soothing ointment on the wound. They say you have some excellent prescriptions that you learnt from Achilles."  
Homer, *Iliad*

"This plant Achillea is thought to be the very same, wherewith Achilles cured the wounds of his soldiers."  
John Gerard, *Herbal*, 1597

### achilleifo'lius, achilleaefo'lius

*Acillea*-leaved; having finely cut, ferny foliage like that of the yarrow





# Volunteer Opportunities

## Saturday, April 27 – Harrod Elementary School

We need a volunteer to distribute materials to these enthusiastic school kids at their spring science fair. Carol will provide all materials, and claims it's lots of fun. If interested, contact **Carol Cammack** at (281) 855-5600 or [c-cammack@tamu.edu](mailto:c-cammack@tamu.edu).

## Workday at the Extension Office

Tuesdays from about 8 a.m. until noon. Check your e-mail, call (281) 855-5600, or check the Jobs Board in Master Gardener Room to see what work is needed. Remember that the 1st Tuesday of every month is **Hamburger Day**; \$3 donation requested; Lunch is followed by a **Continuing Education** speaker, lasting approximately one hour.

## Workdays at Precinct 2 in Genoa Friendship Garden

Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays; Call **Dick Benoit** at (281) 554-9017. The 1st Wednesday of every month is **Hamburger/Continuing Education Day**.

## Speakers' Bureau

If you are interested in speaking to groups or helping to update the Speakers' Bureau's inventory, contact **Beth Grunden** at (713) 461-7159 or [egrunden@houston.rr.com](mailto:egrunden@houston.rr.com). You do not need to be a gardening expert to participate; you just need to love to talk to groups. There are many slide and other presentations available for use, or you may use your own programs.

## Omega House Hospice

A few days a month is all the time needed to maintain this small garden. Contact **Patricia Adamik** at (281) 679-5198. Omega House Hospice is located near St. Thomas University.

## Vegetable Garden at Christian Community Center

Experienced gardener are needed to help direct community volunteers. If interested, please contact **Kenneth Dorman** at (713) 783-0317.

## Christ the Good Shepherd Vegetable Garden

Experienced gardeners or novices are needed to help with supervision of volunteers or help in the garden located in the Spring-1960 area. If interested, please contact **Yvonne Tallent** at (281) 370-0938 or [ytallent@aol.com](mailto:ytallent@aol.com).



## Harris County Master Gardener Association

#2 Abercrombie Drive (281) 855-5600  
Houston, TX 77084 FAX (281) 855-5638

## Board of Directors

**President** ..... Jean Fefer  
(713) 467-0231

**1<sup>st</sup> Vice President** ..... Anne O'Neil  
(713) 744-0945

**2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President** ..... Diane Ballentine  
(281) 373-1205

**Past President** ..... Kenneth Dorman  
(713) 785-9122

**Secretary** ..... Ann Robinson  
(713) 528-7454

**Treasurer** ..... Mary Lynn Randall  
(713) 263-9634

**Directors:** Clyde Cannon, Linda Carlson,  
Marge Chambers, Jinks Hammer, Bob  
Heinicke, George Williams

## Ancillary Positions

**Advisor & County Extension Agent – Horticulture** ..... Carol Cammack  
(281) 855-5600

**Harris County Extension Horticulture Secretary** ..... Becky Deasy  
(281) 855-5600

**Gulf Coast Fruit Study Group**  
..... Yvonne Gibbs  
(713) 462-7052

**Membership** ..... Tom Robb  
(713) 465-5987

**Greeting Committee** ..... Margaret Mason

**Hospitality Committee** ..... Bea Patterson

**Publicity Committee** ..... Clarence Sapp  
(713) 460-4414

**Book Committee** ..... Anne O'Neil  
(713) 744-0945

**Urban Dirt Layout** ..... Tami Pipkin  
[UrbanDirt@houston.rr.com](mailto:UrbanDirt@houston.rr.com)

# Career Opportunities

## Technical Assistant II (Master Gardener Volunteer Coordinator)

**Area Served:** Harris County

**Headquarters:** Houston, Texas

**Salary:** Commensurate with training and experience

**Date Position Becomes Available:** Immediately

Applications will be accepted immediately and until the position has been filled. A candidate for this position will not be selected before March 22, 2002. Texas law requires that males 18 through 25 show proof of compliance with federal Selective Service law in order to be eligible for employment. This is a security sensitive position. Employment of individuals not currently employed by Texas Cooperative Extension in a similar position is contingent upon results of a criminal history information check.

**Qualifications:** Ability to communicate effectively. High school diploma or G.E.D. equivalent required. Some college or post secondary training a plus.

**Competencies:** Competency in working in a business environment handling multiple priorities. Two or more years working with volunteers preferred. Demonstrated leadership in volunteer organizations. Computer experience required. Master Gardener Certification or other horticulture experience preferred.

**Administrative Relationships:** Works under the direct supervision of the County Extension Agents—Horticulture and the County Extension Director. Responsible for working cooperatively with other county Extension faculty and volunteers.

### Major Job Responsibilities:

- Assists designated county Extension agents with coordinating job assignments and activities for volunteers in the Harris County Extension Master Gardener program.
- Assists with identifying sources and writing grant proposals.
- Provides leadership to the Harris County Master Gardener program in the recovery of volunteer accomplishments through data collection using surveys, interviews, and improved communications.
- Assists with maintaining teaching gardens.
- Ability to work with people, communicate effectively, cooperate as a team member and respond positively to policy, administration and supervision.
- Wage position not eligible for benefits. Limited work time to no more than 19 hours each week.

### Application Procedure:

All interested individuals who meet the basic qualifications for this position are encouraged to apply. First Time Applicants: To request an application contact Texas Cooperative Extension – Harris County at (281) 855-5600. Submit application to:

Carol S. Cammack, PhD County Extension Agent – Horticulture  
Texas Cooperative Extension  
2 Abercrombie Dr.  
Houston, TX 77084  
FAX: (281) 855-5638  
c-cammack@tamu.edu

*The Immigration Control and Reform Act of 1986 requires all new employees to present proof of identity and eligibility to work in the United States. Extension programs serve people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, disability or national origin. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating. An Equal Opportunity Employer.*

## Volunteer Coordinator

Friends of Hermann Park (FHP) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to restoring and enhancing Hermann Park. We are seeking a Volunteer Coordinator to be part of a highly motivated and dynamic team involved in this unique and important civic project. The ideal candidate is an enthusiastic team player with a Bachelor of Science in horticulture, ecology, or a closely related field and 5 to 7 years volunteer management experience. The candidate must have proven ability to maintain and improve habitats (such as urban forests and lakes and meadows), and strong organizational skills to manage volunteer participation in maintenance and habitat restoration projects.

The Coordinator will work closely with the Program Coordinator to ensure consistency of FHP programs. Primary responsibilities of the coordinator will be to maintain and expand adult programs. Specific duties include management of the Natural Guard (a Saturday volunteer program); expansion of a drop-in volunteer program; development of an adult lecture series; and creation of a cohesive volunteer orientation, training and recognition program. Other duties will include creation and maintenance of a volunteer database, scheduling of volunteer events and supervision of corporate volunteer days within Hermann Park.

### Please send cover letter and resume to:

Roksan Okan-Vick, AIA  
Executive Director  
Friends of Hermann Park  
6201-A Golf Course Drive  
Houston, TX 77030  
FAX: (713) 524-5887

*Friends of Hermann Park, a nonprofit citizens' organization, is dedicated to the protection and enhancement of one of Houston's most historically significant public green spaces. Its goals are to preserve the integrity of Hermann Park, enrich its heritage as a unique landmark, and transform it into one of the nation's premier urban parks. <http://www.hermannpark.org>*

# Et Cetera Poetry, Recipes, Random Thoughts

## The Hooker Formula

by Diane Ballentine

The 'Hooker Formula' was developed many years ago by **George W. Hooker**, a retired chemist living in New Brighton, Pennsylvania. The original formula called for measurements in coffee cans and orange juice cans. All the ingredients plus some water were mixed together to make the stock. Then the stock was further diluted and slowly poured around the roots of the plant. Mr. Hooker, who was active in both the American Hemerocallis Society and the American Rose Society passed away in 1978.\*

Trying to be a little more precise and having a 15-gallon plastic barrel for mixing, I adapted the recipe as follows.

### The recipe

- 15 Tbsp water soluble fertilizer, *i.e.* Miracle Grow (15-30-15) or Peters (20-20-20)
- 1 cup Epsom salts
- 1 cup liquid iron
- 1 cup fish emulsion
- 1/2 cup Cygon\*\* (systemic insecticide)
- 15 gallons of water

Put the ingredients into the 15 gallon barrel, then add the water using a garden hose making sure the ingredients are well mixed and dissolved. As the mixture should not be stored, adjust the recipe to make only the amount you need.

Apply 2-4 cups to each clump, more or less, depending on the size of the clump.

**\*Notice:** this formula was based on Mr. Hooker's individual soil needs. You should have your soil analyzed and if needed, adjust the ingredients to match your own soil's particular needs. Furthermore, as I have changed to a more organic method of feeding my daylilies, I no longer use this formula (although it remains a popular method of fertilization.)

**\*\*Caution:** Cygon is a fairly **toxic** chemical and I personally recommend you leave it out. I include it here only because it was included in the original formula. If used, follow label directions carefully.

The Hooker Formula is also on the web at <http://www.ofts.com/bill/hooker.html>

## Catalog Junkie

by The Dame, Mary Heafner

What, we hope was the last freeze has finally passed,  
Now I'm hopeful that I can put those tomatoes in, at last.

I've spent my winter reading seed books and dreaming of new beds,  
Only to realize that there is no work force here to be lead.

It ends up the same way each year, I over order and under work.  
And end up with this wonderful collection of seed packets at a perk.

I have magazines and catalogues by the score,  
But never hesitate to order some more.

Other people stay up late at night and watch TV,

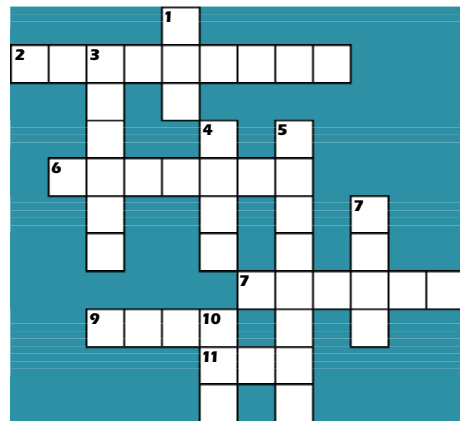
*Not me,*

I roll over and grab one of my catalogues or magazines.

I spend my time with folks like David Austin, Jackson and Burpee,  
I am the ultimate catalogue junkie...

## Digging for Clues

by Tami Pipkin



### Across

- 2. Desirable scaled wing insect
- 6. Hemerocallis
- 8. Salve of Achilles
- 9. Sure sign of healthy soil
- 11. Forest implement

### Down

- 1. Morning moisture
- 3. 'Texas Wild' genus
- 4. Common fungal disease
- 5. Popular winter bloomer, taking it's name from the Greek word for wheel
- 7. Edible plantable
- 10. Time to treat for pesky garden import



**Want to contribute?  
Have something to say?**

Drop me a line at  
[UrbanDirt@houston.rr.com](mailto:UrbanDirt@houston.rr.com)

There *are* submission guidelines.  
Nothing critical, mostly regarding length.  
And they're really only suggestions, so if  
you've got lots to say, send it on over.

Rest assured, no one's going to hack  
up your article if it's long. It's just easier  
on the page layout flunky (me) and looks  
better if articles can fit on a single page.  
See you next month!

APRIL 2002

# UrbanDirt

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Harris County Master Gardener Association  
 2 Abercrombie Drive  
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# Spring Plant Sale & Free Symposium

**Saturday, April 13**  
**8 a.m.–2 p.m.**



**Available at the Sale:**

**Hummingbird garden perennials**

**Butterfly garden perennials**

**Unusual & hard-to-find plants**

**Woody ornamentals**

**Roses**

**Irises**

**Daylilies**

**Handcrafted products and more.**

- **Water-Smart Landscape Plants for the Gulf Coast Area** **8:00 a.m.**  
 Heidi Sheesley, Treeseach Farms, Inc. Location: Auditorium
- **Plant Sale** **9:00 a.m.**  
 Plants discussed in Symposium lectures, and more Location: Outside
- **Composting for All Your Landscaping Needs** **9:30 a.m.**  
 Ray Wallace, HCMGA, GCCTMN Location: Outside, behind the building  
*Repeats at 10:30 a.m. & 11:30 a.m.*
- **Antique Roses** **10:00 a.m.**  
 Clyde Cannon, HMCMA, HSR Location: Auditorium
- **Composting for All Your Landscaping Needs** **10:30 a.m.**
- **Composting for All Your Landscaping Needs** **11:30 a.m.**
- **Daylily – The Perfect Perennial** **12:00 p.m.**  
 Diane Ballentine, HCMGA, AHS, GCDS Location: Auditorium