

# UrbanDirt

IN COOPERATION WITH THE TEXAS COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

## Garden Gifts

### News from our Outreach Gardens

By Kenneth Dorman

**H**appy days are here again! **Walter** and the Pres, **George Williams**, are back working in the garden at CCSC and life is much brighter. The fishing even got good for a few trips and the deep freeze is again full of trout, redfish and flounder. The only dark cloud is that **Sharon** has not been heard from since before Christmas and the weeds were getting troublesome. But, Walter and I took after the weeds and now the garden looks much more presentable.

We have a profusion of beautiful lettuce growing, supposedly three different types; however, the **Laura** and the **Crawford Heirloom** look an awful lot alike. I saved seeds of both types last year and surely I did not get them mixed or worse only saved one kind. Never mind, whatever we have is really good and we are taking many bags to the Pantry for distribution.

Testing the fertility of the lettuce beds, **George, Theron McLaren** and I planted a hundred **1015 onion** sets in each of three beds for a total of three hundred onions. We planted them outside and between the rows of lettuce. We have done this for a couple of years now and have averaged getting about eighty pounds of onions per 32 square foot bed. Normally we plant in December, but couldn't get the sets until early January this year. By the time onions and lettuce are finished in early May it will be just time to use their beds to plant the **Zeebest okra**, of which I saved about 1,500 seeds last year. If any of you want any let me know and I will bring them on a Tuesday morning before summer.

Speaking of fertility, the garden averaged 3.88 pounds of produce per square foot of usable space in 2002. How much is that per acre, farmers? No pesticides of any kind, no chemical fertilizers.

Walter and I cut most of the cabbage in one bed the other day and uncovered the dead vines of some volunteer potato plants. When we dug them up we found about ten pounds of very nice red **Lasoda potatoes**. I suspect we may find some more in the other two cabbage beds.

Just before Christmas my computer died (or I killed it) and I lost everything in my Word files, but I had printed hard copies of most of the garden records and all these articles

Just before Christmas my computer died...  
or I killed it. I'm not sure I'm cut out  
for the electronic age.

so I have that much. I had bought floppy disks to backup stuff on, but the machine quit before I could learn how to use them. I know how to use them now that I don't have anything to save. When I got the computer back going again I put on all the programs I lost, like the anti-virus, Adobe up-

grade, etc, and the latest upgrades for Outlook Express and Windows and in the process managed to get it screwed up so I couldn't open email attachments. I finally got that straightened out, but I'm not sure I am cut out for the electronic age.

I am going to put in a quote by Hal Borland that I used last year at this time, *No winter lasts forever, no spring skips its turn. April is a promise that May is bound to keep, and we know it.* This is a true statement for most of the country, but not in my gardens or any of the gardens I know about. We don't acknowledge the seasons except to change the type of plants. Maybe we should give the gardens and ourselves a little rest every now and then.

As you've probably figured out by now, there is not much to write about a winter garden, especially one that has no women helping in it. That being so I give up on this edition.

*Smile at your neighbors and be good to yourselves.*

# President's Thoughts

By George Williams

Even though we have had some cold, rainy weather, the gardens at the Extension Center look great thanks to the efforts of many who have pitched in over the past two or three months. The flood damage is just about history with perhaps the exception of the shade area in the Millennium Garden, and that will be taken care of by Spring. We had one of our largest turnouts ever for Hamburger Tuesday in January. Lots of work was done and, as usual, the hamburgers were tasty. All was topped off by a wonderful slide presentation from **Tom Robb** on a recent trip to Costa Rica. This was definitely worth seeing, and our thanks go to Tom for taking all those great pictures.

This past December 4, **Ken Dorman, Theron McLaren** and I attended a meeting presented by Upper Kirby District at their offices located at 3015 Richmond here in Houston. Levy Park, owned by the City of Houston, is located behind this building on the southeast corner of Kirby and Eastside. Upper Kirby District is developing Levy Park into an "urban nature center" that will include garden plots that will be available to groups and individuals for planting flowers and vegetables. There will also be a wetlands pond, orchard, and an outdoor theater. We were invited to attend this organizational meeting which was attended by about fifteen people including representatives from Urban Harvest and Native Plant Society. Construction of beds is underway, and it was hoped that they would be ready to plant by March 1, but it is doubtful that they will be completed by then. In any event, volunteers will be needed to assist in planting and upkeep once the construction has been completed.

There are two large beds each approximately 15 x 22 feet located in front of the garden plots that will be available for horticulture groups such as ours. The **Upper Kirby District** asked if our association would consider planting one of these beds to be available for viewing by the public. At our regular Board meeting on January 7, our Board voted to develop one of these beds and also approved the Levy Park project for work credit by any of our members who wish to participate. We advised Upper Kirby District of our decision to do this when we attended another meeting there on January 9. Incidentally, the Native Plant Society intends to develop the other bed which runs parallel to the one we will plant. There are a number of details to be worked out, but we will keep you updated throughout this process. Some of you are unable to work at the Extension Center on Tuesdays, so this might be a better opportunity for those who can't work on Tuesdays or who live closer to this project.

Also, we have been contacted by the chairman of **St. Theresa Community Garden Club** located at St. Theresa Church near Memorial Park who asked us to come by for a visit. Ken and I plan to visit their campus to determine what assistance we can provide. We will furnish more information later, but our Board has also approved this location for work credit by our members. More on both of these projects later.



**Harris County Master Gardener Association**  
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# The Flower Garden

By Jennifer Lowenthal

I hope that everyone's New Year is turning out to be a good one. In the next couple of days we are supposed to be getting 3 days of freezing temperatures. I am planning to cover plants at my house, however, in the flower garden at the Extension Center we did not cover any plants. The reality of it is that we don't have many plants that need to be covered.

The garden is somewhat bare. In the last month, we cut back all of our ginger. We also pulled up most of the fall plants that have completed their life cycles. We have sprinkled seeds of poppies all throughout the flower beds. And the faithful **larkspur** have peaked their little heads out of the ground. We are always excited when the larkspur come back year after year. Some of the plants that we have in the garden beds are **baby's breath**, **Petunia** (we have several of the wave series), a few **poppies** around the **silver globe**, and a favorite among many of the visitors is the **Dianthus 'Melody Pink'**. This dianthus just keeps on flowering and flowering. We have only had to replant this dianthus one time in a three year time span. During the summer it may get a tiny bit cranky, but other than that it is a winner.

We have one plant that is a new All-American Selection Winner that is a show stopper, it is **Gaillardia 'Sundance Bicolor'**. This plant is magnificent. It has a low growth habit. It does not spread, but instead grows into a nice round lush plant. The flowers are really a delightful yellow-orange

*All America Selection Winner 2003 — Carnation 'Can Can Scarlet' was selected for its fragrance and versatility as a bedding plant, as well as a cut flower. 'Can Can Scarlet' is heat tolerant and flowers freely throughout the growing season. The plant reaches about 12 inches in height and its gray-green foliage provides good background for the bright scarlet blooms.*



All-America Selections <http://www.all-americanselections.org>

combo with hints of red in the petals. If you are looking for this plant it is in front of the Extension center building. It is worth a look. We do have a few plants in the greenhouse that will be ready to go into the garden beds within a couple of weeks. Among them are **Osteospermum 'Passion Mix'**, **Petunia F1 'Merlin Blue Morn'**, and **Carnation 'Can Can Scarlet'**. The petunia and the carnation have both been recently introduced into the market. This is the first time we have been able to grow these plants. We will let you know how these plants did after the season is over.

We are at the beginning stages of designing the type of trellis that we will be constructing by the water fountain. We should be ready to start this project within the next month. It would be nice to have it completed by our **Annual Spring Symposium**. We will keep you up to date with this project. However, you could always stop by and see how much progress we make week by week. I hope everyone stays warm until spring hits us. Winter is a great time to think about all the awesome plantings available. I just hope it isn't winter too long. I am already ready to see what we can do.



*All America Selection Winner 2003 — Petunia 'Merlin Blue Morn' was selected for its bicolored blooms that are pure white in the center, gradually merging into velvety blue toward the edge. The plants reach up to 20 inches tall, with an equal or greater spread, and are well-adapted to hanging baskets and container gardens.*

All-America Selections <http://www.all-americanselections.org>

# Michael's Corner

By Michael Morrison, CEA Horticulture

I was so impressed by the number of volunteers that have worked so hard to clean up after the flood we had at Bear Creek. The gardens have been cleaned up and are looking bright. A mighty thanks to the many Master Gardeners that take so much pride in the gardens. Many thanks also to the folks that helped out with the **Fruit Tree Sale**. The Greenhouse is busy with the smells of young pepper and tomato plants being grown. I have heard stories on how it is wall to wall plants before the **Tomato Pepper Sale**. That date is **February 22** at Bear Creek and if you are late for the sale it will be slim pickings. The **Precinct 2 Spring Sale** is the same day. The location of that sale is Clear Lake United Methodist Church at 16335 El Camino Real in Houston. They will be selling roses, fruit trees, tomatoes and peppers, palm trees, and other goodies. For more information on that sale call Precinct Two at (281) 991-8437. Our Master Gardener Spring Class has started at Bear Creek and Precinct two has their class starting June 3<sup>rd</sup>.

You know it is that time of the year when you sit down will all the catalogs and dream. I thought you might enjoy a poem written by John C. Streed. How true, how true...

## Mail Order Lament

My caution goes numb when the catalogs come.  
No way will it end for the good.  
Cold winter without, but the spring pages shout.  
"You better buy more than you should."

Some flowers, some seed: I just check what I need.  
The total? Five hundred and ten!  
A terrible blow. So back I must go.  
The list must be pruned and then....

It's still way too high. I almost can cry.  
The visions of glory are fading.  
Cross out and erase. A perennial case.  
Of not enough cash. How degrading.

The list now is brief after pain and much grief.  
The numbers, though, still wreck my budget.  
Much more must be cut. I economize, but  
The truth... well, I'm going to fudge it.

For I cannot say not to the flowers that glow  
On the page and then after, the garden.  
So what if I blunder? The balance goes under.  
I'll look to the bank for a pardon.

All shame be to them if their view is so grim  
That money they count more than beauty.  
As for me, I must grow every flower I know.  
For that, I believe, is my duty.

by John C. Streed

# Volunteer Opportunities

By Scott Hume

This time around I have a list of areas that are in need of your support and participation.

## The Orchard

**Doug McLeod** who has already made significant changes in the way our orchard looks and is feeling lonely out there. He is very desperately looking for people to come to work in this so very productive area. Additionally, there are a large number of new fruit trees ordered (they will be showing up soon) and they will need planting, etc.

## Speaker's Bureau

**Beth Grunden** reminds me that she is always looking for new people to replace those who have moved on and are no longer available as speakers. So if you have an interest in standing up in front of a group of "inquiring minds" please call Beth and join up.

## Cylinder Garden Program

**Carol Cammack** is again preparing for the next semester class of cylinder gardens. As always there is a pressing need for people to volunteer as advisors for those schools situated "inside the loop." Even if you are not available to support one of those "distant" schools we still need people to sign-up as advisors for all our other schools.

## Bucket Brigade

That group of strange people who collect and cut up the 5 gallon buckets into the cylinders that are provided to the schools is in desperate need of buckets. Our usual source, Blue Bell Creameries in Brenham, is short on buckets at this time of the year and we need all we can get from other sources. So if you have any buckets, or know of some available near you, please bring them in to me at the extension. Help!! 5, 10, 20... any number will help!!

## Telephone Committee

**Pat Rode** still needs people to join up to be available to call our membership when an emergency notification arises. So call her (281) 568-7970 or email her at [prode@pdq.net](mailto:prode@pdq.net) to find out what you can do.

## Enjoy being stung by fire ants? Fight back!

Help cut down on their population by volunteering to work a booth at your choice of three shows. If you *really* dislike those painful stinging critters, help out at two, or all three, shows!

### 17th Annual Texas Lawn & Garden Show

**February 7-9, 2003**, Reliant Center. Booth hours are: Friday 2:00 to 9:00 p.m., Saturday 10:30 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. and Sunday 11:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.

### Mercer Arboretum March Mart Plant Sale

**March 21-22, 2003**. Booth hours are Friday 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and Saturday 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

### 9th Annual Spring Houston House Beautiful Show

**March 28-30, 2003**, Reliant Center. Booth hours are: Friday 2:00 to 9:00 p.m., Saturday 10:30 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. and Sunday 11:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Volunteers will work in shifts, receive free admission to the shows and be given credit toward their Master Gardener volunteer hours. What would you do?

Hand out literature and answer questions.

No previous experience needed.

Information on fire ants and the Fire Ant Project will be provided prior to the show.

Come join the fun!!! We kick fire ant \_\_\_!

For questions or further information, please call **Terrie Lenert** at (281) 855-5650 (work) or (713) 862-6975 (home).



# Upcoming Events

## Coming up at Precinct 2

### Precinct 2 First Wednesday Program

**February 5th** we welcome **Dick McEuen** from the **Houston Cactus and Succulent Society**. Dick and his wife have traveled extensively to learn and observe the many varieties of cacti and succulents. Come and share their enthusiasm for these beautiful plants.

Please join us at our **new meeting location**: The East Harris County Senior Center located at 7340 Spencer Hwy, Pasadena TX 77505. Registration begins at 9:30 am, the class at 10:00. The program is free and open to the public, but reservations are requested. Please call (281) 991-8437 and leave a message for more information or to reserve a spot.

### Spring Plant Sale

Tomatoes, Peppers, Roses and Fruit Trees. The Harris County Master Gardeners at Precinct 2 will hold their spring plant sale, **Saturday, February 22, 2003** from 9:00 am - 3:00 pm, at Clear Lake United Methodist Church 16335 El Camino Real, Houston, TX 77062. Come early for the best varieties!

### Upcoming

**Barry Schlueter** will share his expertise on Hibiscus Culture for Houston. Come and learn from this expert Hibiscus propagator. **March 5**, 10:00 a.m., at the East Harris County Senior Center located at 7340 Spencer Hwy. Call (281) 991-8437.

It's not too early to start planning for the **Master Gardener Summer Classes** at Precinct 2. Classes run June 3rd through July 3rd, Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8:30 am - 2:30 pm. Please call (281) 991-8437 and leave a message to receive an application or more information.

**MG2MG** *Sharing plants, ideas, and more...*  
By Ginger Geist

Spring is coming up all over. Those little volunteers popping up through your mulch need good homes. Why not announce them through mg2mg. Or, start a request with this year's 'I wish a had a ...' list. There's always something a gardener wants.

For those gardeners who have yet to sign up, here's your new year's invitation to share your extra plants, query other gardeners and meet some very nice gardens and their gardeners. Send your name, the email address you want to use and phone number (for problems only) to [mg2mg@mac.com](mailto:mg2mg@mac.com).

## Precinct 2

### February 5 – First Wednesday

**9:30 am** Registration

**10:00 am** Dick McEuen, *Cactus & Succulents*

### March 5 – First Wednesday

**9:30 am** Registration

**10:00 am** Barry Schlueter, *Hibiscus*

Precinct 2 programs are now held at the East Harris County Senior Center, located at 7340 Spencer Highway, Pasadena TX 77505.

For reservations (281) 991-8437.

## Bear Creek

### February 4 – Hamburger Tuesday

**8:00 am** Work up an appetite

**Noonish** Home cooked burgers, then a *Problem Solving Panel*.

Submit your problems in writing to **Becky Deasy** or email **Katherine Peterson** at [kpeterson@jump.net](mailto:kpeterson@jump.net).

### February 18 – General Meeting

**6:30 pm** Coffee & Desserts

**7:00 pm** John Ferguson of Nature's Way Resources on *Compost*.

### March 4 – Hamburger Tuesday

**8:00 am** Work up an appetite

**Noonish** Home cooked burgers, then Michael Bettler on *Edible Flowers and Herbs*.

### March 18 – General Meeting

**6:30 pm** Coffee & Desserts

**7:00 pm** Anita Nelson on *Ponds and Fountains*.

# Two's News

By Angela Chandler, Precinct 2 Coordinator

Congratulations to Summer 2003 graduates **Denny Denman, James Denman, Marge Bryan, Marsha Christjohn, Shirley Jackson, Aloisa Jones, Georgina Lau, Barbara Morrison, Bebe Parker, Patricia Pate, Paul Perisho, Carol Richardson, and Ruth Touchstone.** In addition to becoming certified Master Gardeners, **Denny Denman, Barbara Morrison, Carol Richardson, Marsha Christjohn,** and **Ruth Touchstone** were recognized for achieving 100 hours or more. Thank you for all your help!

Precinct 2 is busy getting ready for two upcoming sales events – our **Spring Sale** and the **2003 WaterSmart Workshop.** This will be Precinct 2's third year to host the plant sale for the Workshop. Houston has two gardening conditions – drought and deluge! Learning to manage these extremes is WaterSmart Landscaping.

This year's slate of speakers cover a wide range of topics highlighting low maintenance, environmentally friendly, landscaping techniques. Keynote Speakers are **Malcolm Beck** and **Heidi Sheesley.** Our own **Carol Cammack** will be teaching Landscape Design. This was a highly rated workshop last year, so Carol will be teaching at two sessions.

Roses, herbs, turf, organic gardening and pest control, low-volume irrigation, rainwater harvesting, water gardening, composting, and gardening with native plants will all be covered. The Workshop will be held **March 1** at the University of Houston – Clear Lake. For more information, contact **Chris LaChance** at (281) 333-5067 or **c-lachance@tamuedu.**

Our greenhouse is full of baby 'maters and roses. We will have Tomatoes, Peppers, Roses, and Fruit Trees ready for gardeners and homeowners who will be suffering from spring fever right about then – I already feel it coming on! The sale is **February 22, 2003** at the Clear Lake United Methodist Church, 16335 El Camino Real, Houston, TX 77062.

Our sale is the same day as Bear Creek's, so maybe if you sell out as early as last year, you can send them our way?

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## Master Gardener Field Trip March 12, 2003 ■ Blackwood Land Institute

### One hour in travel and a world away from Houston.

Attention Master Gardeners – Mark your shiny new 2003 calendars for this very special field trip on **March 12.** We will depart from the extension service and travel by bus to Blackwood Land Institute, a 23-acre retreat and education center located just past Hempstead off of State Highway 6. Parking at the entrance, we walk the short distance to the lodge and gardens that are the heart of the institute. Birds chirping and grasses rustling in the gentle breezes begin to slow us down from our usual hectic pace and we breathe easier. We'll enjoy some leisure time on the veranda overlooking the organic vegetable & flower gardens and spiral fountain as we get in tune with the rhythm of nature.

**Cath Conlon,** founder and director of the Institute will share with us the philosophy & concepts of Permaculture Sustainable Living, the development of Blackwood and the practical aspects of living gently and treading lightly upon

the land, with usable ideas that we can take home to incorporate in our own gardens and homes. Following that there will be a tour of the grounds, which includes the organic vegetable gardens, greenhouses, the strawbale construction lodge, rainwater cistern, worm farm, and even heirloom chickens which are utilized to help fertilize the gardens and more. A delicious, gourmet, organic lunch is included (and, speaking from personal experience, if that is the only reason you go, it is well worth the trip!) There will be time for questions and answers, independent explorations and relaxation before we head back to Houston, relaxed, refreshed and with some new perspectives of living in better harmony with mother earth.

Contact **Patty Adamik,** Program Committee, for more information.

# Web Surfin'

## Tech news for Master Gardeners

By Tom H. Robb, Jr.

The other day I received my e-file notice from the IRS pointing out some of the new advantages of filing my income tax return electronically. And I notice that in nearly all of the grocery stores, drug stores and other shopping areas I see the Basic Income Tax Programs being sold for \$19.99 or less (some only want \$19.95).

For those of you who own a computer—and most of you do—preparing your tax return can almost be fun. And the IRS is enthused about electronic filing. They state that last year 47 million people filed electronically, so I'm sure that to many, I hope most of you, I'm just preaching to the choir.

But for those of you who haven't taken advantage of your computer to perform the second of those things that everyone is faced with—death and taxes—there is no better time to start than this year.

Unless you have a tremendously complicated tax situation—and we all might think that ours are thus—current tax packages like TurboTax or TaxCut can handle almost any tax situation that you might have. I've been using TurboTax for over 20 years but I know people that swear by TaxCut. They've both grown from rather crude programs without printing routines, to fair programs with crude printing routines, to excellent programs with marvelous printing routines, to today's extraordinary programs permitting electric filing without any printing at all, completely paperless. Other programs are available, but the two mentioned above receive the highest ratings.

The first year you use one of these programs, entry takes a little longer than years thereafter. This is because you have to enter basic data that is used to fill in the various tax forms. But that's no problem because the program asks you for this information, one item at a time. You enter the data that applies to you and answer "no" to questions that don't apply.

It then asks you if you have certain forms such as W-2s, 1099s, etc. They ask about all the various things that you might have done to incur the tax and ask about all the things that might give you a deduction. There's simply nothing left out. And as it goes along it lets you know what your tax picture looks like until you've completed your shoebox of forms and receipts, etc. Then it makes an audit of your report and asks about things that you might have been overlooked. And then you have the choice of filing on paper or electronically.

Of course, you are encouraged to keep a printed copy for your records. And that printed copy can, at your re-

quest, contain individual work sheets for each and every item—quite a stack of paper. And then, you save it. This is really not as large a task as I might have made it appear, and remember, this is only for the first year.

Each following year, the program automatically finds your report for the previous year and copies all of the basic data. It remembers all about you and your family. It remembers all of the organizations who sent you W-2s or 1099s and all of the forms used to prepare the previous year's return. If these same organizations again send you W-2s or 1099s all you have to do is fill in the amounts; if not you just delete them. If you have forms from different organizations you add them.

Filing electronically is absolutely painless. You receive an electronic acknowledgement within 48 hours that the IRS has accepted your return for processing. You get your refund in half the time, even faster and safer with Direct Deposit in as few as 10 days. If you need to pay, you can use a credit card.

Since Texas does not have a state income tax, there is no need for using anything more expensive than the Basic Tax program. Getting your tax return for only \$19.99 isn't such a bad deal! Since the program contains all of the forms that you can possibly need, you don't have to make a trip to the post office or IRS office. If you file electronically you don't have to pay postage and the return doesn't get lost in the mail.

By the way, the IRS has a great web site at <http://www.irs.gov>. Even if I haven't convinced you to take the plunge it's worthwhile to look at this website for tips and assistance.

*Happy surfin'*

# Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens

## Master Gardener Morning: Rose Workshop

**Saturday, February 1**, 8 a.m. to noon. Join Mercer staff as they lead a free hands-on training on the correct pruning and care of roses. The Texas Rose Rustlers will be on there to give hands on a rose propagation demonstration. Master Gardener interns earn four hours of work credit, but Master Gardener training is not required and novices are welcome.

## Master Gardener Registration

Registration for the 2003 Master Gardener Program at Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens is **Monday, February 3**, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (Harris County residents only from 8 a.m. to noon) at Mercer, 22306 Aldine Westfield Rd., Humble. You must apply in person. Class size is limited to 35. Fee is \$150. Designed to train gardening enthusiasts of all ages and backgrounds, experienced instructors cover landscaping, vegetables, lawn care, pest control, water gardening and more. The class is offered for 12 consecutive weeks, 8:45 a.m. to 3 p.m., beginning Thursday, March 6, and continuing every Thursday through May 29. For more information and a brochure, please call (281) 443-8731.

## Lunch Bunch: Sage Advice about Salvias

**Wednesday, February 12**, noon to 1 p.m. Join volunteer Vicki Snyder as she talks about Salvias. This diverse genus in the mint family includes many popular garden plants and some of the best hummingbird attracters around. Bring a sack lunch to enjoy during the program.

## Garden Tour

**Saturday, February 8** at 10 a.m. Join Mercer staff for a guided tour of Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens.

## Garden Program: Roses

**Saturday, February 15**, 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. Join Mercer horticulturist Greg Grant to learn about **Easy Roses in a Tough Climate**. Find out which roses are best for the Houston area and why you should have them in your garden.

## Volunteer Orientation

**Thursday, February 27** or **Saturday, March 1**, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Learn what it takes to become a Mercer volunteer. Volunteers are one of Mercer Arboretums most valuable assets. Come be part of the wonderful group of volunteers who keep the park looking good and the visitors happy. Enjoy an orientation from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. and a training session from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Volunteer at Mercer, smiles and bragging rights included.

*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 physical ability. Anyone requiring special assistance to participate in any program, or for more information, please contact Mercer at (281) 443-8731 or [mercerarboretum@cp4.hctx.net](mailto:mercerarboretum@cp4.hctx.net). On the web at <http://www.cp4.hctx.net/merc>.*



## New Junior Master Gardeners Need Advice and Encouragement

There is a need for Master gardener volunteers at **Thompson Elementary, St. Peters The Apostle Catholic School, and St. Agnes Christian Academy**. These sites are all in the inner city and have between 20-25 students currently enrolled in 4H and have decided on JMG as a project. The schools have identified property on which the gardens can be constructed and can began as soon as master gardener becomes available.

Basically, all that is needed is some advice about varieties to plant and a little encouragement. Initially, there would be a couple of visits to the school involved and then the volunteer would simply need to be available to answer questions and stop by from time to time to check on the progress of the gardens. If you can help or would like additional information please contact **Carol Cammack** at (281) 855-5613 or **LaVaughn Mosley** at (713) 440-4900.

# Volunteer Hours

See below for instructions.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_\_\_\_

Period covered – from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

Date	Facility or Garden Name	# Contacts	Hours
<b>Total hours this worksheet</b>			

**Submitting your volunteer hours** Please drop off completed forms in the inbox on **Scott Hume's** desk. Scott can be reached at (281) 855-5600 or [oshume@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:oshume@ag.tamu.edu).

**Want to fill out this form on your computer?** The volunteer hours form included here is for printing out and filling in by hand. But we've posted a spiffy version on the MG website, which you can fill out on the computer in Acrobat Reader before printing to save you all that tedious handwriting. The downloadable version even prints the current date and totals your hours for you. Get it at <http://harris-cnty.tamu.edu/hcmga/urban.htm>.

# FEBRUARY 2003

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
Jan 26	27	28	29	30 Spring MG Class starts — Bear Creek page 2	31	1 Rose Workshop — Mercer page 9
2	3 MG Class Registration — Mercer page 11	4 Hamburger Tues. at Bear Creek — Problem Solving page 6 <b>Note: please submit questions prior</b>	5 First Wednesday at Precinct 2 — Cactus & Succulents page 6 <b>Note: new meeting location!</b>	6	7 Texas Home & Garden Show — volunteers needed! page 5	8 Texas Home & Garden Show — volunteers needed! page 5 Garden Tour — Mercer page 9
9 Texas Home & Garden Show — volunteers needed! page 5	10	11	12 Lunch Bunch, Sage Advice About Salvias — Mercer page 9	13	14 Newsletter deadline 5pm 	15 Easy Roses in a Tough Climate — Mercer page 9
16	17	18 General meeting at Bear Creek — Compost page 6	19	20	21	22 Tomato Pepper Sale — Bear Creek page 4 Spring Plant Sale — Precinct 2 page 6
23	24	25	26	27 Volunteer Orientation — Mercer page 9	28	Mar 1 Volunteer Orientation — Mercer page 9 WaterSmart Landscaping Conference — UHCL page 12

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eDIRT FEBRUARY 2003

## WaterSmart Landscaping Workshop: Surviving Texas Gulf Coast Droughts, Floods And Bugs

Imagine a beautiful landscape that requires less water, fertilizers, and pesticides and is low maintenance and better for the environment. Make it a reality this spring by attending the Fourth Annual WaterSmart Landscaping Workshop to learn the techniques that can make your yard and garden “water smart.”

The workshop is open to the public and will be held **Sat., March 1, 2003**, 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., at the University of Houston-Clear Lake Bayou Building. More than a dozen local experts will present workshops on topics ranging from organic gardening to water gardening to landscape design. Keynote speakers are noted author Malcolm Beck, who will discuss organic gardening methods, and Heidi Sheesley, owner of Treesearch Farms, speaking on water-smart plant selection.

Attendees will learn water-smart landscape design techniques and how to choose the best plants for our area, reducing the need for significant inputs of fertilizers, pesticides and water. These lush, beautiful water-smart landscapes can stand up to droughts, floods and bugs.

Tickets are \$35 when purchased by February 21, or \$45 at the door. Obtain a registration form by calling (281) 333-5067 or visiting <http://www.watersmart.cc>. Admission includes continental breakfast, lunch, exhibits, a wide selection of classes, landscape plant sale, and book signing.

Texas Cooperative Extension is hosting the program in conjunction with the Environmental Institute of Houston, Galveston Bay Estuary Program, Gulf Coast Waste Disposal Authority, Houston Endowment, Reliant Energy, Texas Sea Grant, and The Jacob and Teresa Hershey Foundation.

