

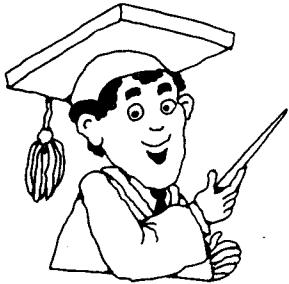
URBAN DIRT

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Edited by: Pam Libby

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GRADUATION DINNER

On Thursday, January 13, 1994, we will be having our graduation celebration dinner for those students who have completed the Master Gardener

course and service requirements.

Since not all the potential grads have completed their service requirements as we go to press, we will be announcing the names of the graduates in the next issue of Urban Dirt. Congratulations to the new grads!

IT'S A NEW GARDENING YEAR...

And along with the many challenges and demands of gardening, is the special joy that comes from discovering something new, growing something special or introducing a new friend to gardening. This is also the role of your Master Gardener Association.

When you're making your new year's resolutions, why not consider becoming more active in your MGA. There are openings in the herb garden, the speaker's bureau, the greenhouse, the orchard, the cylinder gardening program and many more. Each offers an opportunity to learn and to grow while you are making things grow. Happy New Year and happy gardening!

JANUARY MEETING: 1/18/94

Executive Board 5:30 pm
Dessert and Coffee 6:30 pm
General Meeting 7:00 pm

SUBJECT:
"Propagation"

Speaker: Tom LeRoy, County
Extension Agent -Horticulture

FEBRUARY MEETING: 2/15/94

Executive Board 5:30 pm
Dessert and Coffee 6:30 pm
General Meeting 7:00 pm

SUBJECT:
"Prune Friendly"

Please remember: Bring plants to
sell!





PRESIDENT'S CORNER

by Barbara Ferer

Just a reminder, this year's Home and Garden Show is in February. We will need volunteers to take tomato plants to the show, to work at the show and to take down the exhibit on Sunday evening between 5:00 to 5:30 p.m. If you want to help, contact Murray Kast at 467-7491 for more information. Sign-up sheets for working staff will be available at the January meeting.

Thanks to everybody for their wonderful participation at the holiday meeting. Hope you had happy holidays and are now ready to get back into the gardening routine.

PRUNING WOODY ORNAMENTALS

by William C. Welch
Extension Horticulturist

Now is the time to determine if woody ornamentals need pruning. If you can't justify the removal of each limb or branch, put up your clippers and go spade the garden instead.

Some of the right reasons for pruning include removing dead or winter-killed growth or balancing the top with the root system when setting our new plants. Exposing the structural form of plants such as crape myrtles can be done by removing small, twiggy limbs that cross one another or simply by removing overly dense growth. Diseased or insect-injured wood, as well as storm or accident-damaged limbs, should be removed as soon as possible.

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FROM THE ORCHARD...

By Yvonne Gibbs



In November, we had a self-drive tour to member, John Panzarella's home in Lake Jackson. This was a combined meeting with the Brasosport Garden Club and The Brazoria County Extension Service.

There was a fruit tasting of Persimmons and many varieties of ripe citrus. Lee and Lou Jacobs, among others, made the trip and were thrilled at all the information they received on container growing of citrus plants. The discussions were great. John gave us a wonderful tour of his place. He has a great many citrus plants grown in containers. Members made Meyer's Lemonade and lemon grass tea.

John has been the editor of the Green Thumb Newsletter for several years. This December, he completed his last issue as editor with an antidote for curing your dog from digging in unwanted places, ie. Azalea beds. He suggested "use the poop scoop and place the contents where they have been digging and put fresh stuff on again as needed." That did the trick for him. I'm sure he won't mind me passing this on.

The new editor of the Brasosport Garden Club Newsletter is Doreen Howard. I will miss John's touch, but he will still be an Acting Director.

The Gulf Coast Fruit Study Group will have their next meeting on the second Tuesday in January (Jan. 11), at 7:00 p.m. at # 2 Abercrombie in the Extension Auditorium. We will be holding our Third Annual Fruit

Tree Auction. There are always great varieties that you can't get anywhere else.

Treesearch Farms, Inc. will be our sponsor for this January's meeting. They will be providing the fruit trees for the auction as they have done for the prior auctions. Bill Rohde and Heidi Sheesley have been great sponsors and friends to the study group. We are sorry they have closed their retail division, but grateful they will be holding the doors open for us on Saturdays to allow us to get the trees we have been getting from them. These are trees with the right root stocks and the right variety grafted that will do well in our area.

The grapes have been pruned and the wood collected. Hope some of you had a chance to help prune and collect some grape wood, but even if you missed that opportunity you can still get in on the pruning of the stone fruits. This is set for Saturday, January 8th at 1:00 p.m. and should last a couple of hours. The rain date is Saturday, January 22th. It is a great opportunity to get the graft wood of all the varieties you have been waiting to try. We will be pruning most of the fruit trees. Also, there will be instruction on how to prune. Sharp and clean tools are a must.

The apples have been rouged out and a row of new stone fruits will be planted in their place. A row of Tex Royal peaches will be planted in addition to other fruit. We also have quite a few fig varieties. Come to the meeting and bid on your favorite tree. Proceeds go to the Horticulture Fund, which pays for speakers and expenses.

See you in the orchard, Yvonne Gibbs.

A reminder for those interested in knowing how to grow fruit in the home orchard, plan on taking the classes offered by the Houston Arboretum and Nature Center by Dr. Leon Atlas. Call 681-8433 for more information.

A BEAUTY WITH A PAST

by Betty Cawlfild



Cardinal flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*) - A short lived perennial, usually 1-4 ft. tall with an erect, leafy stem topped by a conspicuous bloom spike of two-lipped, vivid red flowers, each about 1-1/2 inches long and bearing a long, narrow exerted filament tube. Leaves 3-5 inches long, toothed,

variable, often red or bronze-tinged. In moderately acid soils from southeastern Canada to the Gulf of Mexico. Propagate from offshoots, cuttings, layering, seed or nursery plants. Blooms July through October, often later.

*As if some wounded eagle's breast
Slow throbbing o'er the plain,
Had left its airy path impressed
In drops of scarlet rain.*

Oliver Wendell Holmes

It's no surprise that a beauty such as cardinal flower has an interesting past. Among the earliest plant travelers from the New World, this member of the bluebell family made such a hit in Europe that it has been in cultivation there since 1626. The floral symbol of distinction and splendor, it has long been considered one of the world's finest wildflowers. The plant was so greatly admired by early French Canadian settlers that they shipped it to France. History has it that Queen Henrietta Marie, upon seeing the flower for the first time, laughed excessively and likened it to the Roman

Catholic cardinal's red stockings. Thus, despite the flower's fancied resemblance to the popular red bird, the species and common names derive from the bright clothing of the church dignitary. *Lobelia* commemorates Matthias Lobel, 17th century Flemish botanist. His contemporary, John Tradescant, an English gardener and plant hunter, counted cardinal flower among his garden treasures and referred to "its handsome appearance which should not be wanting in curious gardens as it excels all others in the richness of its scarlet flowers."

Cardinal flower is best viewed in fall when migrating hummingbirds are pollinating the flowers - the long floral tubes are too narrow for penetration by most insect pollinators. This plant is also attractive to sulphur butterflies.

This is no common wildflower of sunny wayside and prairies. The elusive beauty prefers areas of dappled shade in moist-to-wet woodlands. Its liking for banks of ponds, streams and ditches makes it a great water plant. As one writer put it, it seems to want "its feet in the water, its face in the sun." But whether guarding a shady ditchbank or standing erectly at attention on the sandbar of a woodland creek, the glowing dazzler tends to play hard-to-get, usually requiring a bit of searching.

In autumn, when spring's wildflower spectacular is but a faded memory, the sight of cardinal flower - resplendent in crimson robes, hummingbirds aswarm around its regal beauty - evokes the question: "Did nature save the best for last?"

This lovely article was submitted by Master Gardener, Ginger Geist. It is from the August/September issue of The Native Plant Society of Texas Coastal Region Newsletter. In addition to her membership in the Master Gardener Association, Ginger is a member of the Native Plant Society.