

UrbanDirt

IN COOPERATION WITH THE TEXAS COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

Come to a Garden Party

By Barbara Finney

You are invited to step through a garden gate and join a party in a secret garden full of the most incredibly beautiful blooms that you have ever seen! One is **Garden Party**, shown here, a seedling from **Double Date x Tamibon**. Its mother was Hibiscus of the Year in 1999 and passed along its ability to flower well in hot weather. The big double has the form of

its mother and the wonderful color contrasts of its father. The plant is tall, strong, upright and branches well. Garden Party is an exciting seedling! Another beautiful bloom you will see is **Snowfire**, a cross of **Al Schlueter x Lady**

in Red. The bloom is tomato red-orange with pink, white or yellow irregular splashes and a deep two-inch mahogany eye. The plant is upright and strong, branches well with good foliage and is a very good bloomer. Perhaps my favorite in the secret garden is **Barry Schlueter**, a cross of **Al Schlueter x Trademark**, with a wonderful blend of colors in a heavily textured bloom with excellent form.

The plant is vigorous, compact and well branched. These exotic beauties and many more are the newest creations of a very small group of talented hybridisers of *Hibiscus rosa-sinensis*, an evergreen, everblooming member of the *Malvaceae* family commonly known as tropical hibiscus or just plain hibiscus. The old, familiar cultivars are attractive but the new varieties are unbelievable. Friends ask if they are real. Others say that they have never seen anything so beautiful. We have more of these wonders available to us here in Houston than most areas because we have a world class hybridizer living and working in our midst. He is **Barry Schlueter** of Webster, Texas, who is operating a professional hibiscus hybridizing business in our own backyard.

His dream is to make these dazzling new beauties available to everyone. The fulfillment of this dream requires a lot of hard work not to mention expertise guided by inspiration and love. He grew over 4,000 seedlings last year but only about a dozen will ever reach the market. He uses his knowledge of genetics to produce plants that meet his very exacting standards as well as the demands of the marketplace. The primary focus of the research is to produce blooms that are unique. At the same time, the plants must be compact and well foliated with branches that are strong

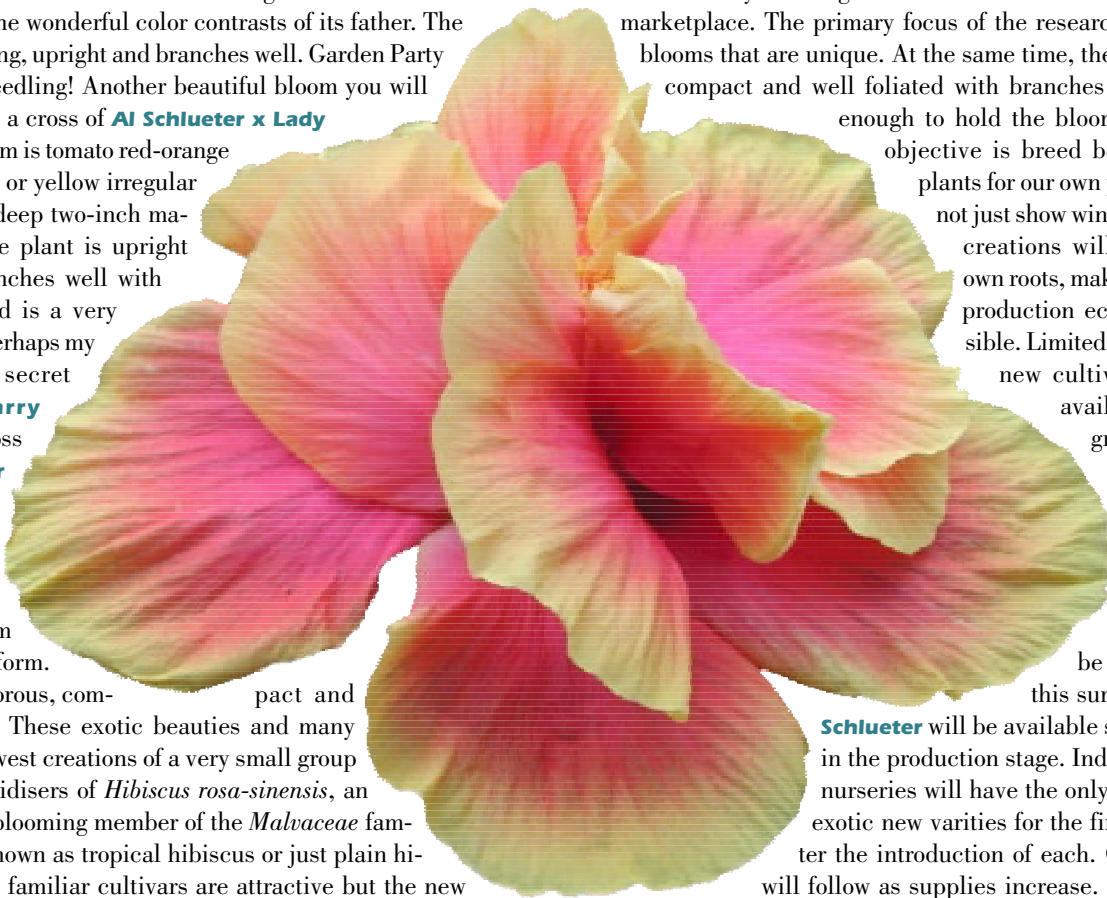
enough to hold the blooms upright. His objective is breed beautiful garden plants for our own private gardens, not just show winners. Most of his creations will grow on their own roots, making commercial production economically feasible. Limited quantities of his new cultivars have been available from retail

growers but some are now being mass produced by a wholesale grower. The first of these, **Snowfire**, will be available later

this summer and **Barry**

Schlueter will be available soon. Others are in the production stage. Individually owned nurseries will have the only access to these exotic new varieties for the first few years after the introduction of each. Chain nurseries will follow as supplies increase. Barry dedicates

other cultivars to friends or charitable causes based on what he refers to as cosmic whimsies and random acts of kindness and senseless beauty. His beautiful creations are as unreal as his cosmic whimsies but the generosity of his spirit and his love for his plants and the people in his life are very real and very touching. We are fortunate to have him in our midst. **For more on Barry's blooms, see page 6...**



Past President's Thoughts

By Jean Fefer

BY THE TIME YOU READ THIS I will be past president and I will have handed HCMGA over to the very able **George Williams**. I appreciate all that he has done this past year as a director and as the leader of the steering committee for the MG classes. This is my chance to thank, in print, some the people who made my year so rewarding. I know that a lot of people tune out on the Academy Awards when it comes time for an awardee to do their thanking, but here goes anyway. The executive board with **Mary Lynn Randall**, **Ann O'Neil** and **Ann Robinson** worked like a well-oiled machine. **Tom Robb** did his usual efficient and timely job with membership, email, directory, and I'm not sure what all else, but it was all appreciated. **John Plotski** kept us informed about the Texas MG doings, **Linda Carlson** and **Katherine Peterson** did a yoeman's (yoewoman's?) job with publicity. **Clyde Cannon** was always ready to help out with practically anything. I could take up the whole article with this but the list of accomplishments is prohibitive. I want to say a special thanks to **Billy Duncan**, **Jinks Hammer**, **Pat Cole**, and **Barbara Kish**, a part of the "Greenhouse Gang" for all their work. **Mary Ann Wagner** was a friend who stayed on in the Tuesday educational program slot even though she wanted to move on to other things. I think she really means it this time so we are looking for people to serve on the Program committee which could actually deal with both the evening and the noon programs.

If you went to the **Awards Banquet** you have some idea of how dedicated some of our members are and how many people there are to thank. Just this last Tuesday the place was literally swarming with gardeners and it wasn't even Hamburger Tuesday. I was taking a senior citizen group through the grounds and I was amazed at

how great everything looked, the real measure of dedication considering the temperatures we were experiencing. I absolutely could not end this paragraph without a few words of gratitude to **Carol Cammack** for her friendship, support and guidance. She's also a cat person so I should have known.

I want to introduce a new wrinkle into the newsletter and will do it again if it ever seems appropriate. I recently read a book that could be of interest to our group and want to share it. The author is Oliver

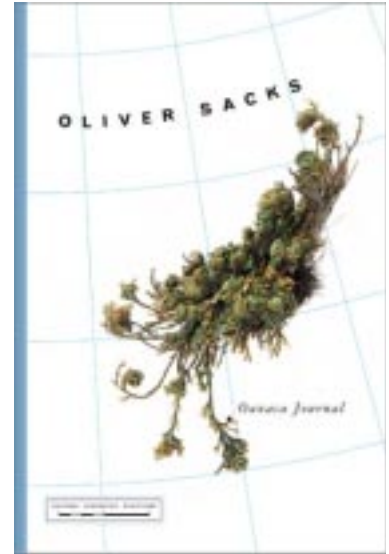
Sacks who is a clinical professor of neurology at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine. He is also a member of the American Fern Society and he accompanied that group and curators of the New York Botanical Gardens on a specimen gathering trip to Oaxaca. The book is called *Oaxaca Journal* and is just that, a day by day account of the trip to the Mexican state that is richer in fern species than any other part of Mexico. So you're not into ferns? – never fear. This book is much more than that. It is also a travelogue for Oaxaca. Along the way you will hear about: chili peppers during a visit to a spice shop; cacao trees and the history, uses and production of chocolate (Do you know how many cacao beans it takes to buy a rabbit?); rules for collecting botanical specimens, latex production, mescal processing from maguey stems; the relationship of insects, birds and animals with flowers; and a few other fascinating bits of information, including ferns. This small book is packed with interesting stuff. If you like this one, you might want to try *Uncle Tungsten*, which is an autobiographical account of his childhood, but is really a history of chemistry, or *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*. Remember, he is a professor of neurology.

I've had a good time this year and hope you have too. We have accomplished a lot. It's back to the greenhouse for me. See you there.

How many cacao beans
does it takes to buy a rabbit?

Jean Recommends...

Oaxaca Journal
by Oliver W. Sacks

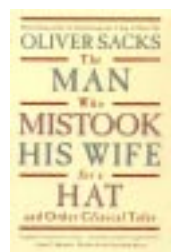


And, by the same author:

*Uncle Tungsten:
Memories of
a Chemical
Boyhood*



*The Man Who
Mistook His
Wife for a Hat*



Hamburger Tuesdays

By Mary Ann Wagner



ON JUNE 4, MIKE LOWERY OF ANOTHER PLACE IN TIME NURSERY presented a wonderful program on shade plants we could use in our gardens. He brought samples of the plants he recommends. There were begonias, vines, and unusual ferns. There were some incredible Staghorn Ferns that were almost two feet across from his personal garden. Mike gave us great ideas to add variety to our landscapes.

On July 2, **Carolyn Fannon** will be with us to present her program on coastal prairie grasses. Her slides are fabulous. The grasses are beautiful with early morning dew glistening in the sunlight. Carolyn has the slides of the Atwater Prairie Chicken doing his dance for her.

August should be exciting. **Dawn Parish**, our Dave's daughter, is coming down from SFASU to present a program on the proven plant winners trialed at the Arboretum, the Azalea Garden, and the Native Plant Center. She will discuss annuals, perennials, shrubs, etc. Dawn is teaching and doing research at SFASU.

August will be the last program I am scheduling. I have turned in my resignation to the Board. I hope someone will come forward to take over this committee. I would be willing to help and advise. However, it has been three years since I conceived the idea of an educational program for our Hamburger Tuesday. Our first program was on September 7, 1999. At that time there were about 25 to 30 people present. We had almost 75 people at Mike Lowery's presentation. The success of this program is due to all of our members' wonderful support. Thank you so much.

The Flower Garden

by Jennifer Lowenthal

HAVE YOU EVER NOTICED THAT AFTER YOU FIX UP AN AREA OF THE garden, that its surrounding areas need to be spruced up also. Well, after we installed that awesome fountain, we realized that the area around the fountain is not as nice as we would like it to be.

In this next year we are going to add a bench to sit by and soak up the good vibes coming from the water fountain. We are also going to add a pergola to cover the bench mainly as a decorative touch. We feel this pergola will incorporate some much needed structure in the garden. For the plantings, we went to **Virginia Joiner**. She gave us **white rain lily**, which we planted around the outside edge as a border. She also gave us some **variegated iris** that was planted on two sides of the fountain. Thank you Virginia. We appreciate your help and guidance. We are really excited about the changes to come.

The rest of the garden looks great. It is hard to believe but, the petunias were still in full bloom in mid-June. Of course, they are the **wave petunias** that we are talking about. To get that full look that we have achieved, simply plant the transplants about 6" apart. But beware, they will spread and invade any surrounding plants. Give them room. We start our plants in late fall. We have a new blue variety that we will plant later this year. We can't wait to see this plant in action. Many of the spring plants are finally reaching past their prime. We pulled out the snapdragons in the middle of June. Those are some tough annuals. If it is planned out right we can get a plant to make it through three seasons. Now if we can only find a solution to the sun without reaching for the succulents. Not that I have anything against succulents. I guess that is it for now. Everything looks good in the garden. As always we have a few weeds to pull, a few plants to change out, and lots and lots of watering to do. And I know it may be hard, but just try to remember what autumn was like. Until then, have a cold glass of lemonade and watch the garden from the inside of a nice cool house.

Harris County Master Gardener Association
 #2 Abercrombie Drive (281) 855-5600
 Houston, TX 77084 FAX (281) 855-5638

Board of Directors

President George Williams
 (713) 783-4231

1st Vice President Virginia Joiner
 (281) 469-2766

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 (281) 497-3555

Past President Jean Fefer
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 (281) 855-5600

Horticulture Secretary Becky Deasy
 (281) 855-5600

Volunteer Coordinator Scott Hume
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Gulf Coast Fruit Study Gp... Yvonne Gibbs
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Membership Tom Robb
 (713) 465-5987

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 (713) 744-0945

Urban Dirt Layout Tami Pipkin
 UrbanDirt@houston.rr.com

Carol's Comments

By Carol Cammack, CEA Horticulture

SUMMER IS HERE. I CAN TELL because *it's hot!*

June 30th marks the end of our fiscal year and that means lots of changes are coming. By the time you get this newsletter we will have a new Board of Directors, a new County Agent and most of our membership will be vacationing in some other (cooler) part of the world.

Yes, our new Horticulture Agent, Bill's replacement and your new Master Gardener Advisor will be starting work July 8. His name is **Michael Morrison** and he is originally from the Beaumont area. He holds a Master's Degree from Stephen F. Austin and is currently in Florida doing something with golf courses.

That's all I know, except that he's taller and younger than Bill... he may have a little

more hair too. I'll leave the rest as a little mystery for you to solve. You can gather clues by coming in to meet him, greet him, quiz him and generally make him feel welcome.

I suppose this will be my last formal article as Master Gardener Advisor in

team: attending all the functions and helping Michael get the hang of things. Once he has the hang of things, then I'll still be at all the functions to offer commentary (and assistance). I'll be filling the empty hours working to continue and improve upon our already excellent youth gardening programs in Harris County. Don't worry, I'll be calling on you to help with this too. My time as the official Master Gardener Advisor has been wonderful. I've learned a lot and really enjoyed getting to know everyone better. This is starting to feel like a goodbye letter. Thank goodness it's not.

On to other things. Our experiment with eDirt is going wonderfully. We have had an extremely small number of recipients say they don't wish

to receive the Dirt through cyber space. This is wonderful news for our **Bulk Mailing Committee** who, I'm sure, will go on strike if they have to fold 1,100 newsletters one more month. Not to worry guys, it looks like the mailing list will be down to around 400 by August! Many thanks to **Tami Pipkin** and **Tom Robb** for making this transition go so smoothly. Many more thanks to our Bulk Mailing Committee for hanging in there.

On a similar note, if anyone is interested in attending a demonstration and training on how to download, open and make the best use of eDirt we would be glad to schedule such an event. *Please* give me some feed back on this... specifically whether or not you think it would be useful and if you would attend. I look forward to hearing from you: c-cammack@tamu.edu.

See you in the garden.

**He's taller and younger than Bill...
he may have a little more hair too.**

**I'll leave the rest as a little mystery
for you to solve.**

Urban Dirt. Don't get too happy to see me go though. I'll still be here as part of the

UrbanDirt Advertising

Urban Dirt is now accepting gardening related advertising and plans to publish a maximum of 8 – business card-sized ads per month. The cost will be \$35 for three months, beginning with the issue following receipt of your ad copy and payment unless you specify otherwise. You may send your ad as camera-ready hard copy, on disc, or via email. Deadline is no later than the 15th of each month. Please return the form below, your ad copy and your check for \$35 to:

**Harris County Master Gardener Association
#2 Patterson Rd., Houston, TX 77084**

Name _____ **Phone** _____

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Date _____ Check enclosed Ad copy enclosed

Please begin publication with the: next issue other (specify) _____

Volunteer Opportunities

By Scott Hume

WE ARE GOING TO START this month's rambles with something new...

A Trivia Test

What did *Hill Street Blues*

Sergeant Phil Esterhaus say to his charges as he sent them off to work?

"Houston, we have a problem..."

No, that's not the answer... That's a repeat of what we said last month. There are still some serious deficiencies in our phone room schedules for August, October and November. Although I have had some kind people say they could do a day or so, there is no one signed up for Mondays in August and no one for Fridays in October and November. There are also several times when there is only one person scheduled. *Help!!* If you can sign up for a couple of those days—it doesn't have to be a month stretch—you can sure help to dig us out of a big hole.

Where do you want to go?

I got a question from a new volunteer that alerted me to one more job I have to do. She asked, "What do you have as a community service activity that is inside the loop?" It made me realize that I had very little idea where (geographically speaking) all the projects are. Darn, do I have a lot to learn!!

I started asking and found that the **ccsc garden** which Ken Dorman keeps telling us about is near the intersection of Timmons and Richmond—"inside the loop!" Then we got a "second desperate request for help" from Sonja Davis at **4-H & Youth Development**. Sonja has a basic gardening project going at the Fleming Middle School (4910 Collingsworth—the Northeast corner of "inside the loop".) For three Thursdays—July 11 and 18 and August 1—she has to go out of town and needs a Master Gardener to fill in.

So... if you're interested in either of these projects please call **Sonja Davis** at (713) 440-4900 or **Ken Dorman** at (713) 783-0311.

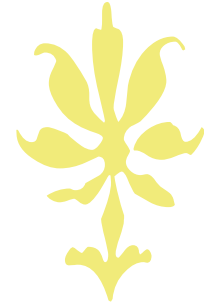
And now introducing... the Tool Man.

Yes, that's right the position has been filled!! Boy, has it!! Brian Koehl has come forward with an enthusiasm (which makes me feel old) and a wealth of ideas (which makes me humble) about how to get things organized. For instance, he set up his own e-mail address **MGToolman@yahoo.com** so you can contact him with requests, complaints, ideas, etc. He also plans to begin a "red tag" program. You have a tool that doesn't work, or needs repair or sharpening? Well, just attach one of Brian's red tags to it when you bring it back to the shed. Brian will know what to do next. Neat idea? You bet. Brian's got lots of them!! So give him your hearty welcome and support.

Remember... we bipeds are not the only "volunteers" out in the gardens. A 3 foot long snake—which we are pretty sure was a cottonmouth—was seen swimming around in the fish pond and bog. It was a strong reminder that when you go out there you should be careful where you walk or put your hands. We do share this plot of land with other "volunteers." Which brings us to...

The Trivia Answer

Sergeant Esterhaus finished each morning roster call with, "*Be Careful Out There!!*"



Bear Creek Events

July 2 – Hamburger Tuesday

8:00 a.m. Work up an appetite
Noonish Home cooked burgers, then Carolyn Fannon, *Coastal Prairie Grasses*

July 16 – General Meeting

6:30 p.m. Coffee
7:00 p.m. Dr. Bob Randall, Executive Director – Urban Harvest, *Growing Vegetables this Fall*

August 20 – General Meeting

6:30 p.m. Coffee
7:00 p.m. *STOMP: STOPping Mosquito Proliferation*

Precinct 2 Events

August 7 – Hamburger Wednesday

9:30 a.m. Registration
10:00 a.m. Linda Lain, *Growing and Using Herbs in Houston*
Noonish Join us for lunch, \$3.00

We will be back on schedule **August 7th** and looking forward to welcoming Master Gardener **Linda Lain**. Herbs are a beautiful and beneficial addition to any garden. Linda, a member of the Herb Society, will teach us about growing and using these wonderful plants.

Our program is free and open to the public and held at HCMGA Office at Precinct 2, 1202 Genoa Red Bluff. Please call to reserve at spot (281) 991-8437. Registration begins at 9:30 am, the class at 10:00 am. Stay and enjoy lunch with us for \$3.00.



'AINT THAT WORK ?

More Barry Schlueter Hibiscus Hybrids

Coming soon to Houston area nurseries



Garden Party is a seedling from Double Date x Tamibon. Its mother was U.S. Hibiscus of the Year in 1999 and passed along its ability to flower well in hot weather. The big double has form like its mother, though the petals are bigger and the bloom is larger, and in Garden Party I managed to capture the wonderful color contrast from Tamibon, the father. The plant is tall, strong, upright and branches well. Garden Party is an exciting seedling!



Snowfire is a cross of Al Schlueter x Lady in Red. BOSS 5/22/00 Space City. Tomato red-orange with pink, white, or yellow irregular splashes; very dark two-inch mahogany eye. Fully overlapped; excellent texture. Very good bloomer. Plant is very upright and strong; branches well. Excellent foliage. One of our best, and will be first sold by HInes Horticulture to nurseries in the Greater Houston area in 2002. Wider distribution in years to come.



Barry Schlueter is a cross of Al Schlueter x Trademark. The seed parent, my own father's cultivar, donated its wonderful form and great plant. Trademark provided most of the wonderful colors in the new cultivar. Texture is heavy, it opens well, form is always pretty. The plant is vigorous but compact and well-branched. It will soon be available at nurseries.

Genoa Friendship Garden

HCMGA Precinct Two Satellite

By Angela Chandler

THE SUMMER 2002 CLASS IS off to a good start with thirty future Master Gardeners enrolled. Class Facilitator, **Paula Poynter** is once again doing a wonderful job of managing the class. Paula has a good team of helper's that prepared handouts and are assisting with the class **Marleine Oren, Janice Patrick, Kaye Rose, Josie Watts, Janelle Kister, Mary McGowen, Theresa Holloman, and Ann Nette Pearce**, have all pitched in. **Carol Cammack** started us off well with a very complete presentation about the opportunities for and responsibilities of a Master Gardener. The new interns are already

putting this information to use as they spend time in the garden.

We have been busy redesigning the herb beds so they will provide more accessibility and visibility. We completed this project in record time with the help of interns **Denny Denman, Claudia Costa, Shirley Jackson, Carol Richardson, Marsha Christjohn, Sherry Prince, Brandon Sladacek, Valerie Murray**, and herb committee leader, **Neal Murray**.

Intern **Shirley Jackson**, helped **Janice Patrick** and **Beth Frohme** plant daylilies and finish some mulching chores in the perennial garden. Intern **Pat Pate** helped harvest swiss chard and cut back the four

o'clocks that were threatening to overtake the Fireman's Cap and Pavonia.

Interns **Pat Pate, Paul Perisho, Marge Bryan**, and **Denny Denman** helped Greenhouse Manager, **Johnny Jones**, strip off the green fiberglass panels from the greenhouse. The new material is going on and will be finished before the end of June. We are looking forward to a better fall sale this year now that we will have a greenhouse that will grow off healthy plants.

We are still battling pesky rabbits in the veggie garden, and they have taken a liking to new rose growth and the tips of some perennials as well. We are hoping the

continued on page 8

Garden Gifts

News from our Outreach Gardens

By Kenneth Dorman

First thing, I want everyone to know I did not actually see a large leaf-footed bug catch and eat a hummingbird. Only one *big* enough to do so, and as **Tom Robb** writes in his e-mails <grin>.

We may have the champion cucumber garden of Houston at ccsc. As of June 12, we had got 393 pounds from 10 vines and they are still blooming. We picked a couple in the 3–4 pound range and then **George** found one that went 5 pounds, but was beaten out by **Mike Hammer** who got one of 5.5 pounds. I think we will leave one on a vine by itself and see if it will get as fat

as a watermelon. I have fed them only once since George and Walter set them out. We have so many cucumbers I told the Pantry people to put one in every sack, whether they want them or not. This is worse than zucchini.

Before we planted I made out an estimated harvest list and so far we seem to be on or over plan, using my scales of course. We

finished the onions with 162#, forecast 130 and the potatoes with 123#, forecast 120 and are way over plan on melons and beans, which are still being harvested, as are all the other crops. By the time you read this we will have delivered over 1,500 pounds to the Pantry.

Some of the potatoes had splits in them that I had never seen before so I took a couple to the Extension Service one Tuesday and asked **Bill Adams** and **David Parish** what they thought. Both were of the opinion the splits were a function of unequal watering, which is possible. We water for a couple of hours every other day, but the beds drain extremely fast and they may

have dried out. *Or*, we may have watered too much. Anyway, the potatoes were ok to eat and since we are giving them away no one complained. We did not see this phenomenon at Bonita Street where they hand-water every day with a wand, and that leaves us right where we were since we don't know how much or little they watered every day. But, it was even watering and that may be the difference. Very few

of their tomatoes had any cracking and we had a lot of cracking with the Early Goliaths, and this is definitely caused by uneven watering.

The Executive Director of ccsc, **Michelle Shonbeck**, came by the garden one Friday when **Mike and Jinx Hammer**, the **Stillmans** and I were there to thank us for all the hard work and the

amount of produce we are sending to the Pantry. She is a nice lady and brings her daughter to the garden to pick beans and cucumbers and to just enjoy and learn about vegetable growing.

We have seeded one bed with black eye peas, one with cream peas and one with Zeebest okra and will add more peas when the corn is finished. I intend to try some Egyptian spinach when I find the magazine with the article about it so I can learn the real name and where to order seed. If it is what I think it is it will be more like a mustard green/spinach cross and very good. I



**We may have the
champion cucumber
garden of Houston...
393 pounds and still
growing.**

**This is worse
than zucchini!**

have had greens in Egypt and other Middle East countries that were similar to the magazine description and liked them.

Speaking of planting, **Walter** and I were picking beans the other morning and it was hot and we were sweating and we decided we were tired of picking these particular beans so they are out of here. After a proper rest we will plant something else where they were. I think the same fate is about to happen to the corn and tomatoes and the cucumbers. We didn't get the tomatoes we should have. George thinks we planted them too thickly and he may be right since we put six plants in thirty-two square feet. They looked good, but are only going to produce about seventeen pounds per plant so next time if we try four plants per bed we will have to get twenty-five pounds per plant to get the same total. We may just change the varieties.

The heat is taking a lot of the fun from gardening and writing about gardening right now and I can't find any witty or wise sayings in my books so I am going to stop right here for this month.

Love yourself and enjoy life.

Genoa Friendship Garden

continued from page 6

hawks that live in the neighboring property take a liking to rabbits soon. **Dick Benoit**, **Jim Crabb**, and intern **Denny Denman** have put up some rabbit fencing around the bean patch and we are going to plant a row just for the rabbits. Maybe that will help.

Balram Ramsoondar has been steadily harvesting for us on Mondays. He and **Jim Frantz** are brave enough to go into that tall jungle of tomato plants looking for the ripe ones. It's amazing what compost will do for a tomato plant.

Neal Murray and **Jim Frantz** pruned the old bearing canes from the berry patch and interns **Marge Bryan**, **Pat Pate**, **Paul Perisho**, **Georgia Lau**, and **Denny Denman** moved what seemed like an acre of compost to mulch them for the summer.

The WaterSmart Garden Phase One is in process. We have set the beds and are preparing to fill them for planting soon. The center bed will feature a water garden, and we will favor plants that have value to pollinators.

Janelle Kister has painted our old black bookcases and it was a big improvement. She is stenciling vines, bees, and butterflies on them. We will be able to better organize handouts and publications once they are completed.

Our First Wednesday for June was wonderful. Speaker **Robin Pachholder** presented very useful information about attracting butterflies to our gardens. She brought many cuttings from her own garden and we were able to see up close why each plant is attractive to the butters. She offered good advice about how and where to site plants for maximum benefit to adults and larvae.

Special thanks

We would like to thank our guest helpers:

Pat Mitrowski's son **John** for spending a day helping us with some heavy chores.

Angela Chandler's daughter **Jennifer Bateman** and her husband **Travis** for helping a full day cleaning up and setting up trellises for cukes.

Local businessman **Terry Valmain** for picking up and delivering concrete blocks for the herb beds.

Herb Garden News

by Heidi Vaughan

FIRST IS A BIG THANK YOU TO OUR **MYSTERY GARDENING ANGEL**, who pulled out the enormous, overgrown rosemary plant we've been wanting to get rid of. The job was *huge!* **Scott Hume** told us that it was a lady who quietly came in and removed it when none of us were looking, even though we told him we thought we'd need a few strong men. We are amazed and so grateful.

With that big rosemary gone, we suddenly had a lot of open space. Yea! Another big thank you goes to **Jeanette Powell**, who agreed to take over the Rosemary and Salvia Bed. She selected some lovely plants, too. There's some Russian Sage, **Perovskia Atriplicifolia**, blooming with profuse violet-blue flowers on foot-tall spikes. The foliage is aromatic and a lovely silvery-green hue. If you haven't tried this plant, you should. Why not? It's easy!

She also added the beautiful **Gaura Lindheimeri 'Siskiyou Pink'**, whose flowers look a bit like butterflies dancing around up there. Also planted was **Salvia Gregii**, with pink and peach flowers, and **Salvia Farinacea 'Victoria Blue'**, with blue and white flowers. These plants all do so well in Houston.

The Rosemary and Salvia Bed was a bit too heavy with rosemary, and possibly still is, but it looks so nice now. Thanks, too, to **Elizabeth Williams**, who helped plant that bed and clean up others. We've had a lot of help from volunteers lately, and it shows.

Margaret Mason deserves some special attention for her attractive Lavender Bed, which is in bloom. The best plant in the bed, **Lavandula Augustifolia**, is the sole survivor from last year, so Margaret planted another. Planted in March are **Lavandula Stoeches**, which is having a rest after blooming, **Lavandula Dentata**, or French lavender, which has grown a bit, and **Lavandula Goodwin Creek**. We'll tell you more about that one when it does something. Recently, **Lavandula Multiflora**, a fern-leaf variety, was also added, and it should grow to about two feet.

Unlike the salvias, lavender does not grow well here. The key to growing these plants in Houston is really good drainage (we use a few inches of pea gravel) and lots of sun. Also, lavender loves lime!

On a final note, the last we heard, our friend **Pete Petre** was on his way to Kerrville. We wish you the best, and we'll miss you.



Lavandula Stoeches



Perovskia Atriplicifolia

Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens

Tropical Plant Workshop

Saturday, **July 20**, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Join us in this all day affair to learn in depth about cultivation, care, and propagation of plants that thrive in our hot Houston summers. We will have experts to share their knowledge and demystify the idea that nothing will grow here during the summer. Class is limited to 40 so register early! **Cost:** Mercer Society members \$25; Non-members \$35.

Strictly Gingers Workshop

Saturday, **August 17**, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Did you know there are over 1400 species in the family of Zingiberaceae? Today there are over 75 different species and cultivars that are hardy to our zone. Ginger popularity is on the rise because of cultivation ease, truly exotic flowers and the titillating perfumes. Learn which gingers like and need sun and those that are shade needy. **Cost:** Mercer Society members \$25; Non-members \$35. Class is limited to 40 so register early! Box lunch included.

To register or for more information, please contact Mercer at (281) 443-8731 or mercerarboretum@cp4.hctx.net

Urban Harvest Classes

Constructing Nature Ponds and Wetlands

Saturday, **July 13**, from 9:30 a.m. to noon – U.S. Fisheries and Wildlife Service biologist Ron Jones, a specialist in the creation and restoration of ponds and wetlands.

Cost: \$10 members/\$20 non-members, free to community gardeners.

Location: Urban Harvest office

How to Start a Community Garden

Monday, **July 15**, from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. **Cost:** no charge, but pre-registration is required by Thursday, July 11.

Location: Urban Harvest office



Plant the Fall Vegetable Garden

Saturday, **July 27**, from 9:30 a.m. to noon – staff horticulturist Lola Daniel.

Cost: \$10 members/\$20 non-members, free to community gardeners.

Location: Urban Harvest office

Taking the Classroom Outdoors

Tuesday, **August 6**, all day.

Cost: \$25.

Location: HISD Marcile Hollingsworth Science Resource Center

This all-day workshop is designed for educators and is taught at the Outdoor Education Classroom of the HISD Marcile Hollingsworth Science Resource Center, 13250 Summit Ridge (just east of Butler Stadium on S. Main.)

Registration & Location

Call Urban Harvest at (713) 880-5540 to register or for more information. Event information is on the web at <http://www.urbanharvest.org/upcoming/index.html>

Urban Harvest is located at 1900 Kane Street in the Old Sixth Ward, just west of downtown Houston.

MG 2 MG

Sharing plants, ideas, and more...

By Ginger Geist

I guess we're all slowing down in the summer. And the heat's stressful for the yank and pull method of transplanting plants. However, if you are still thinning those volunteer plants, please think mg2mg@mac.com before you think compost.



I'm using the summer to catch up with some gardeners that I was unable to visit earlier in the year—just to see the gardens where all these wonderful plants I've read about live. **Sandy Brewer** had emailed in such a long and tempting list that I wanted to see what such diversity looked like all in one garden. The answer is great! Sandy is a



Above and top: Examples of the diversity in Sandy Brewer's garden beds

“one of everything” type of gardener who has succeeded in creating a very “together” look. One trick to managing such diversity is her wonderful terraced beds, which create a different view from each side. After seeing one side, it's hard to believe it's the same bed from the another view. In this full sun garden there were lots of texture and something was blooming everywhere I looked. Luckily for me, she still had some volunteers to trade.

If you'd like to visit me, I'm in the Spring Branch area north of I-10.

Volunteer Hours

See below for instructions.

Name _____

Phone Number _____

Email address _____

Period covered – from _____ to _____

Date	Facility or Garden Name	# Contacts	Hours
Total hours this worksheet			

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.

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>.

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Harris County Master Gardener Association
2 Abercrombie Drive
Houston, TX 77084-4233



Web Surfin'

By Tom H. Robb, Jr

THE RESPONSE TO THE INTRODUCTION OF eDIRT (Urban Dirt by email) has been very good. So far I've received less than a dozen requests for retention of the hard copy and many of you have sent in high praise as to its contents. Tami Pipkin has produced not only a beautiful newsletter but also a wonderful set of tips and tutorials to go along with it.

As promised, the first three issues of eDirt and the tips and tutorials are now online. I've been slowly converting from the old version of the webpage to the new and in order to be able to put the new PDF files on line, the new homepage gives you the ability to look at the old as well as the new. Find it at <http://harris-county.tamu.edu/mg/> and begin pushing buttons.

For those of you who have been hesitant to try eDirt, go to the website address above. Click the **New Version** button to go to the new website. Select **Urban Dirt** which carries you to the Urban Dirt page. You can select any of the buttons on the Urban Dirt page and download the issue of eDirt shown or the tips, tutorial or volunteer hours worksheet. The volunteer hours worksheet can be filled in on your computer using Reader, and printed, and sent or faxed in. It also totals your hours as you enter them.

Downloading Acrobat Reader

If you do not have **Adobe Acrobat Reader** on your computer,

simply click on the Adobe logo just under the Master Gardener logo and it will carry you to the Adobe website.

At the Adobe website, scroll down to the bottom of the page where you will find three columns entitled **Step 1**, **Step 2**, and **Step 3**.

In Step 1 you will find three popup boxes entitled: **Language**, **Platform** and **Location Nearest You**. Under Language, English is already selected and unless you want another language go to Platform. Scroll down to find what operating system you are using such as Windows 95 or Windows 98. If you use a Macintosh computer you will select the Mac version that you use. As you enter you system version you will note that the two popup boxes in Step 3 will automatically show the version of Acrobat Reader that will be downloaded and the file size. The third box already shows "USA" for the Location.

Step 2 can be disregarded and Step 3 will have been filled in for you when you chose your platform. Therefore all you have to do is to click on the red **Download** button.

But do take a look at it before you decide that you would rather have the paper copy which is not in color, which will come to you later and many times abused by the mailman or the weather. Once you see the cyber copy I think you will decide that you want it.

Happy Surfin'