

Urban Dirt

IN COOPERATION WITH THE TEXAS COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

Urban Dirt Goes Online

By Tami Pipkin, *Urban Dirt* Editor and
Carol Cammack, *CEA Horticulture*



The questions I'm most frequently asked are: "Is it possible to speed up delivery of *Urban Dirt*?" and "Is it possible to get *Urban Dirt* via email?" In response, we have decided to take the big step of delivering **Urban Dirt** electronically.

Of course, all of this only affects those of us with email addresses. So if your membership doesn't list an email address, you will continue to receive the printed edition of **Urban Dirt** in the mail as usual.

Try them both, then decide

First, let me address the transition schedule and implementation plans. For the June and July issues of *Urban Dirt*—this issue and the next—we'll be sending out both paper and electronic copies. This will give you a chance to try out both methods of delivery.

Your electronic copies will be sent as Adobe Acrobat PDF files. In order to read and print PDF files, you will need **Adobe Acrobat Reader**. This is a free program available from **Adobe Systems, Inc.** at <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep.html>.

Beginning with the August issue, unless we hear otherwise from you, those of us who are digital will be receiving **Urban Dirt** electronically.

Why are we doing this?

There are all kinds of reasons why now is a good time to take the plunge:

1. Readers will get *Dirt* up to a week earlier. Wouldn't you rather spend 2 minutes downloading **Urban Dirt** than wait another a week for it?

2. We can incorporate high quality photos, color, and live Internet links while keeping file size to a minimum. (About 2 minutes to download.)
3. Resource conservation. All our resources are at a premium—manpower, printing, postage and other direct costs. We use nearly 200,000 sheets of paper—that's a *full ton* of paper—to produce **Urban Dirt** annually. Whew!
4. PDF offers many benefits—the ability to view and print in color, live "links" to resources, emails and websites in each edition, filling out forms electronically, and more.

I just want paper, what do I do?

If you're not on the email list, do nothing: *Urban Dirt* will continue to come to you in the mail as usual. If, after comparing versions you prefer to receive the paper version, just let us know. You can change your preference at any time by emailing **Tom Robb** at trobbs@hal-pc.org. Just be sure to include your *full name* as well as your *email address* in your email. It'll make Tom's job of connecting an email address and a member much easier, and will ensure your preference is noted correctly.

We're moving to electronic distribution as a service, and we want you to continue receiving **Urban Dirt** in a way that works best for you. If you're happy with the PDF version, great. If you want the paper version, just let us know.

Please let us know what you think: feel free to send your comments and suggestions to **Carol Cammack** at c-cammack@tamu.edu.

We look forward to hearing from you!

Factoid: What is PDF?

Adobe® Portable Document Format (PDF) is a universal file format that preserves all the fonts, formatting, graphics, and color of any source document, regardless of the application and platform used to create it. Adobe PDF files are compact and can be shared, viewed, navigated, and printed exactly as intended by anyone with free Adobe Acrobat® Reader® software. Acrobat Reader can be downloaded for Windows, Macintosh, Linux, OS/2 and various UNIX platforms.



President's Thoughts

By Jean Fefer

It's really true! "*Time flies when you are having fun.*" I would not mislead anyone by saying that the past year has been 'a piece of cake,' but there is a lot of fun involved and interaction with a lot of interesting and dedicated people makes for a rewarding experience. By the time you read this you will know who your leaders for next year will be and the slate is an excellent one.

For the future, I would like to encourage MGs to let the board know if you are interested in serving either on a committee or on the board itself. I know that we have talented people with special skills outside the gardens, but unless you tell us we will never know. To keep an organization like ours going it takes more than dedicated gardeners. We need people with computer skills, organizational skills, people skills, financial knowledge and commitment to the goals of HCMGA.

This month we will be recognizing the people who worked so hard to make this year a success. All three sites, Bear Creek, Mercer and Precinct Two are represented among the awardees. **Tom Robb**, **Joyce Flott** and **Mary Ann Wagner** made up the **Awards Committee** to make the difficult decisions. Thanks to them for their work. The **Awards Banquet** is planned for June 18th and it will be at the Omni Hotel in the ballroom. Make your reservations early. There was a flyer in last month's Urban Dirt for that purpose and another this month.

Because we have had a good year and feel that the event should be really special HCMGA is subsidizing the dinner over 50% so take advantage and have a great evening. You earned it! **Bill Adams** has agreed to be our Master of Ceremonies. In addition to presenting the annual awards we will be electing the officers for next year. It should be a very enjoyable evening, no cooking required.

We have a **Graduation** this month on June 27th. Congratulations to the new MGs who managed to put in their time on the phones and fulfill their other commitments.

A note from the greenhouse is also in order. **Mary Lynn** is reducing the greenery and filling in the Millennium Color Border. This is not easy to do and keep everything looking lush and pretty. At times one has to pull up some of the plants before they are actually past their prime, because the replacements are ready to go in. It requires a certain amount of coordination between the garden coordinator and the greenhouse in order to start the seeds at a time that will match the needs of the garden. We are getting better at it. **Jinks Hammer** and I have been selling some of the plants that were not sold at the Spring Sale by bringing them into the front lobby at general meetings and on class days. Lots have sold and if you purchased a **Kaempferia Grande ginger** keep your eye on it. It may have looked like a pot full of dirt, but the first thing that happens is a lovely lavender flower, which gives way to the gorgeous 2-3 foot tall leaves. Gingers often have rather insignificant flowers so it's nice of this one to show up before it gets upstaged by the rest of the plant.

I need to say a few words about the **Precinct 2 Hypertufa Workshop** that I

attended on May 1. Master Gardener **Pam Harris** was the workshop leader and it was a lot of fun and I have a hypertufa trough curing in my back yard. They had a good crowd, the price was right, lunch was tasty and it was a chance to chat with the participants. We are thinking of having a similar workshop at the Fall Plant Sale. If you have any other ideas about activities for the September sale let us know.

The new board is also interested in any ideas you may have about speakers, either for the First Tuesday programs or for the monthly general meetings. Is there someone that you have heard or heard about that you would like us to bring in? Is there a subject that you are interested in and would like to hear a knowledgeable person talk about? Let me know by email: JeanAFefer@aol.com or by phone: (713) 467-0231 and I'll pass it on to the program committee.

That's it for now. I've enjoyed my year and thanks to all who made it work so well.



To keep an organization like ours going it takes more than dedicated gardeners.

Hamburger Tuesdays

By Mary Ann Wagner

On our first Tuesday in May, **Angela Chandler**, a Master Gardener from Precinct 2 presented a wonderful program on low-volume drip irrigation systems. Angela brought samples of the materials needed to install one of these systems and a wonderful handout to describe the procedure. We had a great crowd; there were probably 70 people present. We had lots of questions and when the program was finished, many of us were eager to try to install a system in our own yards.

Mike Lowery of **Another Place in Time** nursery will be with us on June 4 to discuss shade and unusual plants.

In July, **Carolyn Fannon** will present a program on coastal prairie grasses. Her slides are spectacular. She has caught these grasses with early morning dew glistening in the light. There are slides of small creatures cavorting on the grasses and slides of the Atwater Prairie Chicken doing his dance for her.

August will be my last month as coordinator of the first Tuesday programs. I hope someone will come forward who is willing to take my place. I certainly would be willing to assist; I just feel we need new ideas.

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



Precinct 2 News

By Angela Chandler, Precinct 2 Coord.

We really enjoyed our First Wednesday this month (May). **Pam Harris** gave a really good class on Hypertufa Containers, which was enjoyed by all. We had a good turnout and having the class in the garden was fun. Thanks to **Pat Mitrowski** and **Kaye Courey** for organizing this event.

We have put in low-volume irrigation in the perennial garden. It was two days of hot and soggy work, but it is working great. I know the plants appreciate it, and it gives gardeners more time to attend to other things. We had a lot of MG's turn out to help. **Janice Patrick, Paula Poynter, Olivia Meyers, Janelle Kister, Mary MCGowen, Kaye Courey, Pat Mitrowski, Anna Swinderman**, gosh, so many I am sure I am leaving someone out!

We are busy getting ready for the Summer 2002 Class. **Dick Benoit, Jim Crabb, Denny Dinman**, and **Anna Swinderman** have worked getting the greenhouse and potting area all cleaned up. **Paula Poynter**, the class facilitator, has been organizing and finalizing schedules and paperwork. We are looking forward to a good class, with applications arriving weekly.

Neal Murray and **Jim Frantz** have been picking berries until they have pink fingers! They produced pretty well this year, and Neal is adding some new varieties to make future years even better. We finished adding some new water lines out to the new fruit tree wind rows, so we will be adding low-volume irrigation out there soon.

Theresa Holloman brought out and planted sweet potato slips... I sure hope the rabbits give them a chance to get started. We are looking forward to remodeling the herb garden soon. A good summer project!

Bear Creek Events

June 4 – Hamburger Tuesday

8:00 a.m. Work up an appetite
Noonish Home cooked burgers, then
Mike Lowery, *Shade and Unusual Plants*

June 11 – RSVP Deadline for Annual Awards Dinner

June 18 – Annual HCMGA Awards & Recognition Dinner

6:00 p.m. Registration
6:30 p.m. Dinner and program
Omni Hotel Houston Westside
13210 Katy Freeway, 77079

Join Master Gardeners from across Harris County as we celebrate another year with dinner, an awards ceremony, and election of next year's officers. Cost is \$10 (thanks to HCMGA subsidies), and reservations must be received *no later than* June 11th.

A registration form is included with the enclosed flyer. Contact **Becky Deasy** at (281) 855-5611 for further information.

June 27 – MG Graduation

7:00 p.m. Ceremony for the Fall 2001 class



Precinct 2 Events

June Events

Join the Master Gardeners at Precinct 2 for an informative presentation on gardening for the butterflies. At our **First Wednesday Program, June 5th**, avid butterfly gardener **Robin Patcholder** will share tips and tricks for attracting beautiful butterflies to our gardens. The class is held at the Harris County Master Gardener Office at 1202 Genoa Red Bluff, it's free and open to the public but reservations are required. Please call (281) 991-8437 to reserve a spot. Stay and enjoy a delicious lunch for only \$3. Registration begins at 9:30 am, the program at 10 am with lunch to follow.

There will be no July First Wednesday Program at Precinct 2 because the summer Master Gardener classes will be in session.

Carol's Comments

By Carol Cammack, CEA Horticulture

HOPE JUNE FINDS ALL OF YOU well. Things at the Extension Office have been busy as always. Another class has just completed, we're getting ready to elect a new **Board of Directors**, graduate another class, prepare for the **Awards Banquet**, finish up another semester of **Cylinder Gardening** and prepare for the summer class at the Precinct 2 Genoa Friendship Garden.

Many new things are coming down the line as well. Urban Dirt is going electronic and we're adding advertisements to it. Any Master Gardener with a personal business may want to consider taking out an advertisement. I know many folks would like to support the businesses of a fellow Master Gardener. I also hope as many of you as can will opt to take the newsletter via email in order to save a tree or two. Thanks again to **Tami** for making the newsletter look great and integrating all our new ideas with smiles.

The awards banquet is even taking on

a new look this year thanks to **Jean Fefer** and the **awards committees** hard work. We are in for a special treat this year. I hope this gives us a chance to bring together all three of our Master Gardener groups for a fun evening where we can all mingle and see what's happening around the county. Which reminds me... if you have pictures of yourself or other Master Gardeners volunteering at any of our sites, please send them to me so we can put together a set of 'Memories' for the year. Digital format is preferred.

The gardens and orchard are looking beautiful thanks to all the hard work of the

If you have pictures of yourself or other Master Gardeners volunteering at any of our sites, please send them to me so we can put together a set of 'Memories' for the year.

Master Gardeners. We've had a few glitches along the way this spring, mostly with weeds and irrigation systems but I think we've got that all under control finally. There is still plenty to do, so come on out on a Tuesday and have a little fun in the sun and soil.

On May 14th I attended the **Master Gardener Graduation** ceremonies at Mercer Arboretum. It was a wonderful evening with a candle lit dinner on the terrace. **Greg Grant** gave a great talk (with a few glitches) on **Crapemyrtles**. I found out that 'Crapemyrtle' is the correct spelling. Apparently there are still a few hold outs still using two words or two "e's" (crepe). There was also the usual ranting about the multiple **Crape Murders** committed annually with pruning shears. At any rate, it was a lovely evening and **Nellene Harvey** (their volunteer coordinator), **Linda Gay** and the other Master Gardeners are to be congratulated on all of their hard work and dedication to making the Master Gardener program at Mercer so successful.

One other nifty thing happened there: the birth of something resembling a Master Gardener pledge. Nellene asked all the graduates to rise, hold up their right hand and repeat the following: (Let's all do it together... come on stand up and raise your right hand.) *I, "Master Gardener's name" promise to volunteer at "Mercer Arboretum, Extension Office, Genoa Friendship Garden or other" for as long as I am physically able.* Perhaps we'll integrate this into our next ceremony.

Happy Gardening!

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 _____
 Address _____ Fax _____
 _____ Email _____
 Date _____ Check enclosed Ad copy enclosed

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

Web Surfin'

By Tom H. Robb, Jr



Email is a wonderful way to send and receive letters, photos and learn about what's happening to our friends around the world. Email has lately become a scary place of viruses, spams and scams of all kinds. Have you noticed how many emails you seem to be getting lately that start off with "You're receiving this message because you requested to

be added to our mailing list" and yet somehow you can't remember ever having made such a request. So you respond to the "unsubscribe" link that the message gives you – and then you're really hooked. Because most of these messages are feelers and when you respond with your request for removal from the list, you have verified that you do exist and the spam really begins to come in. And trying to stop it can be as difficult as trying to stop water from coming over a waterfall.

Three times this month I've received the scam letter, supposedly from someone in another country who is trying to get money out of their country and will be willing to share it with you if you will only consent the give them your bank account number so they can wire the money into your account. None of the three were identical, but they all meant the same thing—they wanted a way to get into your bank account—not to put something in but to take something out.

Another thing which has been on the increase is the number of messages with virus-laden attachments. Virus protection programs, if kept current, can usually take care of this. Without it many people have serious damage done to their computers and particularly to their irreplaceable data.

Of course, many mail programs allow you to install filters that will block out certain types of messages and many web service providers also offer programs that will be the blocking for you. Those of you who are using HAL-PC as a service provider probably become aware that for only \$2.00 a month, HAL will route your email through a Junk Email and Virus Scanner. This month I began this service and it appears

to be just what I was looking for.

Although virus protection programs, such as **Norton AntiVirus™** or **McAfee VirusScan** give you notice that a virus is present in the mail, if it is quarantined you have to remove the original file from quarantine – its still in your C:\TEMP files. With HAL's service the virus infected attachment never reaches your machine.

All messages that the program considers to be Junk Mail are retained in "The Message Center" and you are given the option of having them sent on to you or deleted in the Center. The Junk Mail Assistant allows you to adjust the settings with the Filter Categories, Filter Sensitivity, Approved Senders, and Blocked Senders. This latter is great—for those email senders that seemly pay no attention to your request to be removed from their list—simply add them to the Blocked Senders List and you don't hear from them again. On the other hand, senders whose mailing list you want to retain, can be added to the Approved Senders List and they won't be stopped.

The first day my service was activated, the Message Center trapped three messages with virus infection and 21 pieces of "Junk". Only 1 of this "Junkpile" was a message I wanted to see and I had only to check it and push the "Deliver" Button.

You might want to check with your provider and determine if they have such a program available. By the way, I still am going to maintain a virus protection program on my own machine as further protection. HAL's service uses McAfee so I will continue to use Norton. With two separate systems I feel fairly well protected.

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

1st Vice President Anne O'Neil
(713) 744-0945

2nd Vice President Diane Ballentine
(281) 373-1205

Past President Kenneth Dorman
(713) 783-0317

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

Volunteer Coordinator Scott Hume
(281) 855-5600

Gulf Coast Fruit Study Gp... 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

Volunteer Opportunities

By Scott Hume

As many of you may know by now I've been sitting at that desk in the Master Gardener office for over a month and so far have made one major change. There is an **In-Box** with my name on it in which y'all are supposed to drop things—your hours done “off campus,” the “Unfinished Phone Call” slips so we can follow-up on incomplete

phone questions, and maybe even a suggestion or two?

So far no one has taken the time to write out any cute little “suggestion slips” to drop in my In-Box. Nope. They've taken a more down-home direct approach that sure gets one's attention!

There's no tool man here

At the top of that list of “suggestions” is what y'all are supposed to do with the tools in the back shed. It seems that lately way too many folks take a tool from there to use and then leave it lying around outside when they're done with it. As it was quite forcefully pointed out to me, “*we don't have a tool man!!*” to pick up, clean off and put back all those wandering tools. It seems to fall to those still around at the end of the day—especially Tuesday—to gather them up and return them to their homes. So please heed the signs we have plastered up every where out there... “*If You Use It... PLEASE Return It (Clean!)*”

Now about that “Tool Man” comment. It seems that the above-mentioned tirade (oops, I mean suggestion) was right on target. We really do need someone to adopt the tool sheds and the chemical cabinets and make some sense of them. It sure would be nice to throw away all the dead and abandoned items that are out there,

salvage those that can be, and come up with a system for keeping track of what we have, what we need to replace or restock, and so on. Are there any organizational mavens out there who are turned on by such a challenge?

Houston, we have a problem...

For reasons that we shall not discuss, there are some serious deficiencies in our phone room schedules for August, October and November. There is no one signed up for Mondays in September 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.

Finally, about the Tom Sawyer picture at the top of the page... My job is *not* to trick you into thinking that white washing the fence is fun for which you should pay me!! My job is to help you find the activities that are both needed and that you find enjoyable and rewarding. So that In-Box really is for you to give me ideas and suggestions about how we all can do a better job. Please use it! And come out on Tuesdays at least and find something fun to do.

Thanks.



Additional Opportunities

Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens

Master Gardeners wanted! Volunteer at Mercer Arboretum and enjoy all it has to offer: beautiful gardens, climate controlled potting shed, friendly people and Master Gardener credit hours. Contact Volunteer Coordinator **Nellene Harvey** at (281) 443-8731, for more information.

Peckerwood Garden near Hempstead.

We need people to welcome the visiting public, collect money, sell memberships to support the garden, and give out general information on the garden. Specific plant knowledge is great, but not required. Most visitors ask about what's in bloom. (Further details, page 9.)

Anyone interested **Suzanne Chapman** at Mercer by email (**SChapman@cp4.hctx.net**) or phone (281)443-8731 or at home at (281)873-7055.

Master Gardeners will get CEU credit for the time they give as this is a widely diverse botanical facility. And it's a great place to volunteer on a weekend.

Garden Gifts News from our Outreach Gardens

By Kenneth Dorman

WELL, OUR VANDAL CAME back. Poor person; I wish there was some way to answer the call for help, but who to help? It is difficult for me to not be angry when something I love is injured, but the anger only makes me feel worse so I try to overcome it. The hurt is shared by **George** and **Walter** and **Mike** the same as me. This time it was only a few big onions ripped from the beds, some taken, some left on the asphalt.

I cut our first cucumbers on April 15 and also thinned ten pounds of green onions and took them to the Pantry at CCSC. The next day is when our vandal reappeared so maybe he/she saw me pulling onions and got the idea to do the same, I don't know. On April 24th Mike picked our first beans. Last year our first cucumber was May 4th, and beans April 25th. A large French hybrid melon appeared on the fence so I encased it in the left foot of a panty hose and tied it onto the mesh.

Brenda Smith (*The Lazy Gardener*) came by the CCSC garden to visit and take photos. She spent quite a while in the garden with **Mike Hammer** and I and was very complimentary. Brenda asked Mike if he were the *real* Mike Hammer and he assured her he was. She and I both were suitably impressed. Hopefully an article about the garden with a picture will be forthcoming in the Chronicle. This is a nice lady, indeed. After she left we bent the onion tops over so they would complete maturing and begin to cure. They will be ready to pull a week or so later (about May 7th, the same as last year.)

The real harvest began April 29, with seventeen pounds of assorted beans and twenty-four pounds of cucumbers and it is going on and on. We picked the first tomatoes, **Montfavet**, on May 1. Last year it was May 16, and I cannot explain that since we planted on the same date both years. The weather was cooler in the beginning this year, but has heated up much quicker. With night temperatures over 72°F most of the tomato plants stopped setting

fruit the last ten days of April so we may have a much reduced yield this year. And, even though we have quite a few tomatoes on some of the plants they seem to be smaller than usual. We will just have to wait and see what actually happens. We will, as Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "*Adopt the pace of nature; her secret is patience.*"

We had a volunteer plant come up in the fruit tree bed that looked like a potato, but I couldn't figure out where it came from since I did not remember throwing any potatoes away. Then a week or so later another plant with exactly the same foliage appeared near the first one, but in an onion patch. It was suggested they were **German Johnson's**, but potatoes would be easier than German Johnson's so we just let them grow. Eventually the largest plant began to bloom yellow and the leaves started to change a little so we decided it was a **Sweet Chelsea** and caged it. I pulled up the other plant to discard it and lo and behold it had potatoes on the roots! Go figure. While we are doing important trivia I will add that I discovered a leaf-footed bug large enough to catch and eat a hummingbird on a window screen at my house the other day. Now, I don't normally use lethal insecticides, but do keep some Wasp & Hornet spray for 'just in case', and I put about a half cup on that thing. He kept right on climbing up the screen so I left, 'just in case' I had made him angry. When I came back he was nowhere to be seen.

I ordered bush type sweet potatoes for both gardens and began planting them after the onion and potatoes were harvested. I had more than we could use so I gave the rest to **David Parish** to use in the Extension garden.

Walter went to Port Isabel to fish and play golf for two weeks. Right in the middle of the harvest he left us. All his brownie points are gone and he is in big trouble. Well, not exactly; the green-eyed monster got me there for a while. I hope he has had soft winds, killed lots of golfs and even caught a few fish. He has made this garden much more worthwhile for me.

I am finished with asking for reader response to gardening questions. I knew I wouldn't get any answers, but I tried once again anyway. Now the editors will think I don't have any readers, but in answer to one of my questions I have found that the iron phosphate did get rid of the snails. Not only did I not get any response to my questions, the only person I know about to come by to see the garden was **Jinx Hammer**, and she helped harvest. That's too bad because it has been really nice. One of the 1015 onions we pulled weighted 2.2# and the corn made it to the elephant's eye. Some of you ate that onion at the May Hamburger Tuesday. It was the most white one and very sweet.

We have some great church volunteers helping with the harvest now; **Susan Dickson** on Monday, **Georgina Franco** on Tuesday, **Karl** on Wednesday and **Mr. and Mrs. Stillman** and sometimes, **John** on Friday. They are a Godsend, especially picking beans and hunting cucumbers. Backs give out pretty quick nowadays for some of us.

Over at Bonita Street House of Hope the gardens are equally as good, and without a lot of my attention. **Rodney** and his helpers take loving care of the plants; as a matter of fact, loving care is palpable in the air around this place. I don't see **Tyrone Evans**, the Director, much anymore because he is out hustling sustenance for his organization. They have people coming weekly from prison, county lockups and other rehab centers and they are working! The tomatoes are stopping traffic along Bonita Street, as are the French hybrid melons that have climbed up and through the front fence. They are about out to the peach trees we planted in February. The good cooks here are using the snap beans and onions and new potatoes and making salads with the cucumbers. I am blessed to have been chosen to work in this wonderful place.

I'm out of space. Next month we will

Continued on page 10

Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens

Tropical and Ginger Sale

Saturday, **June 29**, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., come to Mercer and find the perfect tropical or ginger for your garden. Some of the plants offered are gingers, angel trumpet, lobster claw *Heliconias*, hybrid *Agapanthus* and Himalayan bananas. A special “members only” (for Mercer Society members) will be offered from 8 a.m. to 9 a.m.

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 mercervarboretum@cp4.hctx.net

Peckerwood Garden Needs Your Help

Mercer's **Suzanne Chapman** volunteers at Peckerwood Garden, and writes that this remarkable garden needs volunteers.

Peckerwood Garden is part of The Garden Conservancy, a national organization striving to save great private American gardens for future generations.

Peckerwood is run by **John Fairey** who is an instructor at Texas A&M, but mostly a great plantsman who has made numerous trips to Mexico—originally with **Lynn Lowrey**—to collect plants seeds and cuttings to try them out for hardiness in our area.

John has worldwide gardening contacts. So amongst the many South American plants like **Agave** and **Yucca** relatives, he also has a great collection of conifers from the far east. He has many unknown Mexican Oaks, and lots of great herbaceous plants like rainlilies. The garden is a treat anytime of the year.

The garden is open to the public periodically on Saturdays and Sundays for a \$5 admission fee. This is where I need volunteer help.

We need people to welcome the visiting public, collect money, sell memberships to support the garden, and give out general information on the garden. Specific plant knowledge is great, but not required. Most visitors ask about what's in bloom. It's a great garden to see, and volunteers swap off and get to wander among the plants. They do have a website at <http://www.peckerwoodgarden.com> if anyone wants more info. The drive is about 35 minutes from FM1960 at 290.

Anyone interested should contact **Suzanne Chapman** at Mercer by email Schapman@cp4.hctx.net or phone at (281) 443-8731 or (281) 873-7055 (home).

Master Gardeners will get CEU credit for the time they give as this is a widely diverse botanical facility. And it's a great place to volunteer on a weekend.

LATIN CORNER

FRUITLESS PURSUITS

Cerasiformis.

“It is no use making two bites of a cherry.”

—Proverb

cerasifor'mis: *formed like a cherry*

cerifo'lius: *with waxy leaves*

chrys'eus: *golden yellow*

corda'tus: *heart-shaped*



Master Gardener *2* Master Gardener

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

HERE ARE A FEW EXAMPLES of what's been happening because of mg2mg...

Hats off to **Scott Hume** for his very short request "looking for the Orange Clock Vine — a *thunbergia (gregorii)* that is different from the black-eyed susan vine (*thunbergia alata*). Enclosed is a picture of it as shown by the California Gardens.com web site (they will only sell 10 at a time!!)." This great example contains specific information and his predicament. I wish him good results!

Another impressive gardener is **Charlotte Williams**. She arrived at my place with a trunk filled with potted and labeled plants such as **Hibiscus Moscheutos Disco White** (white with red throat). Some of these plants were for me... some going on to other folks (like a *Planta Claus*). I pulled the ferns and ivy that she had requested and dug a 2 gallon sized **Turk's Cap** she was not expecting. The fun of an on-site swap can be the spontaneous exchange of other plants. Charlotte has as much sun as I do shade, yet, she was able to help me. As we talked about plants after this year's freeze, she told me to give one **Hibiscus** more time to come back. Well, she was right! Nothing...nothing, and then one day it seemed like 2 feet of *Hibiscus* (label lost) appeared. Her *Hibiscus* and *Salvia* have happily adjusted to their new home partly because I was ready for them.

Member feedback

The following are responses to my question about "how's it going" to the gardeners using mg2mg.

Several gardeners responded that they were busy at work but were keeping the plant notices for when they had time to follow-up.

"Consider having a spring or fall plant swap if we can find a location and volunteers to organize it."



Photo California Gardens.com. © 2000 Martin Fletcher

Plant Wanted:
Scott Hume is looking for the hard-to-find Orange Clock Vine (*thunbergia gregorii*). If you've got some to share or know of a source, let him know!

"Hi Ginger,

I've been busy planting and haven't checked email as frequently.

Anyhow, feel free to utilize our plant swap as an example. I have traded with 5 people (includes you) and it has worked out great. Of course, I drove from the West side of town to the East side of Houston to pick one of my plant exchanges up but all in all I've met some really neat people. I've also been able to find 'homes' for my baby plants that I didn't want to throw away! I just hate throwing things away—especially plants—when I know that someone in the world could use them!

All of my new plants are doing well including those that you gave me. My Turk's Cap has really taken off about a foot and half high now. Seems to love the spot I chose for him!

Thanks for bringing up the idea of a plant swap!

Thanks again, Charlotte"

"Offers should include details about whether the plant is a seed, cutting or the whole plant. Is it potted, dug with soil, pulled without soil. Who digs?"

"mg2mg could be used to request/offer plants to be delivered at a monthly meeting or Tuesday workday."

I am delighted to see the response to mg2mg. 39 gardeners have signed-up and we are connecting plants and people.



Tip: To participate in mg2mg, email Ginger at mg2mg@mac.com.

Garden Gifts...

continued from page 8

have some poundage on the potatoes and onions; right now I am going to have a glass of wine and consider my backyard. Thinking of wine brings to mind the description of grape in my much used and abused gardening dictionary, "Grape, uninteresting larval stage of wine."

Be careful of the sun.

June 2002

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30	1 July	2 Hamburger Tues. at Bear Creek — Coastal & Prairie Gardens. page 3	3 No Hamburger Weds. at Precinct 2 in July. Page 3	4	5	6

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The Flower Garden

by Jennifer Lowenthal

Okay, it is hot now. With years of experience in the Texas heat I know that the best time to go play in the garden is in the early morning hours. If only we could catch up on all the work there is to do. It seems like there is always a list of gardening chores or projects waiting to be completed.

Speaking of projects, we have completed our water fountain. It was a challenge to us. But, it was really worth it. While in the middle of this project we had several set backs. Almost every week a new problem would surface. I guess that is what we get for using a picture to go by. I need to say thank you to **David Parish** and **Clyde Cannon**. They have helped us out tremendously. I could never say enough "thank yous" to both of them.

The garden flowers look fabulous. We bid the larkspur farewell until next spring. In its place we have planted some **zinnia** and **rudbeckias**. Of course, zinnias are our favorite summer flower. It is a carefree plant that can be reseeded throughout the summer. It also comes in a wide range of colors and shapes and sizes.

I have to mention that the **Fireman's Cap** is flowering. This is a small tree that has a tropical feel to it. The flowers are an exotic red inspiration to anyone. This past winter the plant froze.

However, as soon as the weather warmed up this graceful beauty put out new shoots of growth followed by stems of flowers.

Another flowering tree that surprised us was the **Olive Tree**. You would not believe that this tree also lost all of its foliage during the winter freeze. We were not sure if the whole tree was damaged. But to look at it now you would not be able to tell the actual damage that it suffered. The whole tree was covered in beautiful white blooms in the middle of May. We should see olives before too long.

I need to mention one particular plant. Many people have asked about the **dianthus** in front of the building. This is a new variety called '**Velvet and Lace**'. I am waiting to see how this plant is affected by the summer heat. As of the middle of May they are doing fairly well. We just gave them a deadheading and hope to see more blooms in the coming weeks. The flowers are a carnation-like shape. They have deep burgandy centers with pure white edges. We plan on getting more plants for the next cool seasons to come. Hopefully, they will be in stores near you in the next year.

Well, better work on that list of to-dos. Until next time... just keep gardening.