

UrbanDirt

IN COOPERATION WITH THE TEXAS COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

Cylinder Garden Success

By Carol Cammack



Sammy Cylinder

Now in its 18th year, the Cylinder Gardening program has completed another successful year. The Cylinder Gardening program began in 1986 under the leadership of Master Gardener **Glen Graves** partnering with the Men's Garden Club of Houston, The Leadership Center, the **Harris County Master Gardener Association** and **Texas Cooperative Extension**. The Cylinder Gardening program teaches students to grow vegetables from seed to harvest in one semester. The system uses bottomless cylinders (1/2 of a 5 gallon bucket) as small, individual gardens for growing vegetables. This works especially well in areas with poor soil that would normally need extensive amendments and labor to support an actively producing garden. Cylinder gardening requires little land and little gardening experience. Installation and removal of the garden is quick and clean. Teachers praise the simplicity of the program, particularly those who have never gardened before. The students can't wait to get out and work in the garden. Many are amazed to see the plants develop and can't believe they can actually grow their own food.

During the 2003-2004 school year there were 9559 pre-kindergarten through 5th grade participants. 5373 children from 46 schools in Harris County participated in the Fall with 30 Master Gardener volunteers assisting. 4186 children at 43 schools and 28 Master Gardeners took part in the Spring 2003 session. Ridgecrest Elementary was recently honored by the Fordham University Graduate School of Education with "School Change Award". With over 400 children enrolled each semester, Cylinder Gardening was the cornerstone of their award application. Ridgecrest along with only 5 other schools nationwide will receive \$5000.

There are many people to thank for the success of the program including **Glen Graves** who not only began the program but continues to serve as a volunteer at Askew Elementary and as a member of the Cylinder Garden Steering Committee. Another thank you goes to the **HCMGA** as materials needed for the project, once provided by the Men's Garden Club, are now completely donated by the Association. For the past two years, **Blue Bell Creameries** has donated all the buckets for the program. Thanks go to **Scott Hume** for contacting Blue Bell, making the arrangements and to **Nancy Webster** and her husband for traveling to Brenham to retrieve the buckets. More thanks go to Master Gardeners **Larry Brouwer, Ashwin Shah** and **Diana Bernsen** who all worked hard to cut the buckets as well as the numerous other Master Gardeners who assisted in cleaning and preparing the buckets for cutting. Last, but not least, a BIG Thank You goes to all of the Master Gardeners who volunteer their time delivering materials and working with the teachers. The volunteers are really what make this program so successful.

2003-2004 Cylinder Garden Master Gardener Volunteers

Lynn Anderson

Carol Baez

Teresa Ball

Mary Baty

Janis Bell

Robin Blevens

Angela Bowman

Ron Brown

Mary Cessac

Tamara Christensen

Leigh Christensen

Darrell Cornwall

Julio Dwiggin

Karen Ensign

Jose Figueroa

Hernan Franco

Diane Garcia

Melissa Geis

Deborah Gilstrap

Max Gonzalez

Glen Graves

Mary Ellen Hahn

Lynne Hester

Jim Hobkirk

Scott Hume

Jamie Humphries

Cedric King

Richard Lund

Bernard Mahoney

Marina McConnell

Tracy McLaren

Theron McLaren

Magaly Nagpal

Linda Newton

Ross Palmie

Nancy Parsons

David Pena

Julia Perry

Dianne Reiff

Ashwin Shah

Timothy Smith

Yvonne Sparks

Kim Stone

Gayle Storey

Bob Strawn

Brian Taranto

Richard Veracruz

Margaret Wallace

Kim White

George Williams

Edward Wood

President's Thoughts

By Virginia Joiner



Our new Spring Sale Chairman, **Linda O'Keefe** along with **Heidi Sheesley** of Treeseach made wonderful selections for the Spring Sale. Everyone came through for us but Mother Nature. It rained and rained. We have always talked about a day like that hoping we would never have to experience one. The other three sales, because of your hard work, were great successes which afford us a healthy budget to finish this fiscal year.

A big thank you goes to the Master Gardener that purchased the rain slickers for the organization when the rains came during our January Fruit Tree Sale. They were put to good use at this sale. I want to thank everyone that participated on Friday and especially those that endured the rain on Saturday.

Grady and I made the trip to Corpus Christi for the state convention along with 36 other Harris County Master Gardeners. The convention was well planned from start to finish. The welcome reception at the Botanical Gardens was enjoyed by everyone. We toured the beautiful gardens and were delighted with what we saw. I came away wishing my Plumerias were blooming. Nueces and Aransas-San Patricio counties can be very proud of their efforts on behalf of all of the Texas Master Gardeners that attended. The classes and speakers were first rate.

At the banquet on Friday evening we took First Place in the large county category with our presentation for Master Gardener of the Year, **Angela Chandler**, Precinct 2, Second Place in Visual Arts for **Ray Wallace's**, The Biosphere Beneath our Feet, and Honorable Mention in the Publication section for **Scott Hume's** Phone Room Manual.

We look forward to seeing a lot of you at the Awards Banquet, June 15th at the Pineforest Country Club. You have the opportunity to participate in a wonderful evening. The Pine Forest Country Club offers a beautiful setting for us to visit with friends and make new ones. The Chef at Pine Forest will prepare a gourmet meal for you to enjoy. All in all it is a special evening.

Wear your smiles and come into the garden.

Harris County Master Gardener Association

3033 Bear Creek Drive (281) 855-5600
Houston, TX 77084 FAX (281) 855-5638

2003-2004 Board of Directors

President Virginia Joiner
(281) 469-2766

1st Vice President Neal Murray
(281) 488-5783

2nd Vice President Katherine Peterson
(281) 497-3555

Past President George Williams
(713) 783-4231

Secretary Anne Ashworth
(832) 593-6073

Treasurer Marge Chambers
(281) 347-5508

Directors: Zahira Breedy, Angela Chandler,
Grady Joiner, Richard Lund, Doug McLeod,
Linda O'Keefe

Ancillary Positions

MG Advisors:

CEA - Horticulture..... Michael Morrison
(281) 855-5600

CEA - Horticulture..... Carol Cammack
(281) 855-5600

Horticulture Secretary Becky Deasy
(281) 855-5600

Volunteer Coordinator Scott Hume
(281) 855-5600

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

Greeting Committee Margaret Mason
Gloria Robb

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

Hospitality Committee Jean Gordon

Membership Tom Robb
(713) 465-5987

Publicity Linda Carlson
(281) 955-8013

Urban Dirt Carol Cammack
ccammack@ag.tamu.edu

Michael's Corner

By Michael Morrison

It was Hot! Hot! Hot!

The State Master Gardener Conference this year in Corpus Christi was a great time had by all. Last year in Tyler, we had eight participants at the conference, and this year we had thirty six. It is a nice feeling to have so many Harris County Master Gardeners present at the state convention. The fellowship and visiting with other Master Gardeners from around the state was refreshing and very interesting with topics abound. The mariachi band played at the evening outdoor festival at the Corpus Christi Botanical Garden with interesting food and a wonderful garden to tour. The orchid greenhouse stole the show with hundreds of orchids to look at and admire.

The best part of the conference was the banquet awards dinner. All tense and wondering how Harris County would fair in the large association division. Hats off to the compost king, Mr. **Ray Wallace**, and his presentation. His visual arts presentation on "The Biosphere Beneath Our Feet", won second place. Ray devoted a lot of time and effort and should be commended on a wonderful program. Many volunteers helped **Scott Hume** develop the Master Gardener Phone Room Manual. Lots of hours were spent in the development of this manual to help interns when doing the phone room duty. It won Honorable Mention in the Publication Awards division and that all of us are honored to have such a wonderful volunteer organization and the "Grumpy Master Gardener", as the coordinator and the job they did to receive this award.

To cap off the evening, it finally came down to the Master Gardener of the year. I could see the tension mounting as they announced third place, then second place. At that moment I knew that our own **Angela Chandler** was going to run away with the prize. Sure enough, the speaker announced the First Place winner of the Master Gardener of the year. All thirty six of us at the four tables jumped up and went into a vocal frenzy. Angela seemed to be in shock and overjoyed and happy all at the same time. The several folks that came from Precinct two were smiling ear to ear along with everyone else. Harris County finally won first place with such a spirited and wonderful Master Gardener. Angela has done so much for the Master Gardener program and for the community that with the many programs, committees, plant sales and other related work that she has done and continues to contribute is just outstanding. Congratulations to all three winners and thank you for all you do for the citizens of Harris County and for the great state of Texas!

Next year will be in Denton and we are already talking about chartering a bus.

Have a great summer, smile, laugh, and congratulate our winners!

2003 Texas MG Report



In 2003, Texas Cooperative Extension trained and certified over 1,600 Texas Master Gardeners. To gain certification, each Master Gardener contributed a minimum of 50 hours of volunteer service. In 2003, 5,450 Master Gardeners served Texas by providing 353,643 hours of their time and talents through Extension educational projects. This volunteer service, equivalent to 170 full-time employees, increases the human capacity of Texas Extension by 16 percent. The economic value of this service translates to a \$5.8 million benefit to the State of Texas. Together, Master Gardeners and Extension professionals share a passionate commitment to enhance horticultural and environmental education in Texas.

New projects highlight the Texas Master Gardener program in 2003. These projects focus direct support to the 110 county Master Gardener programs through advanced education, an expanded network of training professionals, digitally enhanced training materials, and increased financial resources.

The Master Gardener Specialist program was developed in 2000 to empower Master Gardeners who wish to assume increased roles in Extension educational programs, thus further multiplying Extension's capacity. As trainers, demonstrators, and public educators, Master Gardener Specialists provide volunteer leadership to Extension programs in Fire Ant Management for Communities, Junior Master Gardener programming, and Firewise Landscaping (sponsored by the Texas Forest Service). In 2003, the Master Gardener Specialist program expanded to include trainings in Plant Propagation and Entomology. Currently over 140 Master Gardener Specialists from 51 counties have been certified to support five educational programs.

An "Agent Only" Site for Master Gardener Coordinators was established on the Aggie-Horticulture website. Over 70 Extension professionals are currently registered to access the site which contains 33 Power Point presentations for use in training Master Gardeners and the public. Presentations were contributed by Extension Agents and Specialists and Master Gardeners.

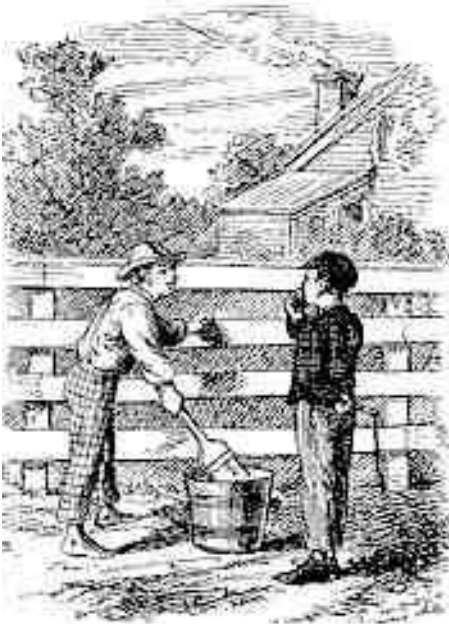
The Master Gardener Trainer Network expanded significantly in 2003 to meet the expressed desire by Agents and Master Gardeners to maintain high-quality, face-to-face training for new Master Gardeners. Extension Specialists have been the primary trainers who travel across Texas to train Master Gardeners. In 2003, 11 County Extension Agents formally committed to train Master Gardeners outside their local counties. Ten years ago, Extension employed twice as many Extension Horticulturists as County Extension Agents-Horticulture. Today, the number is reversed and the county level horticulturists are becoming primary educators for the 1,600 new Master Gardeners trained annually.

A Texas Master Gardener License Plate for automobiles was established by the 78th Texas Legislature via legislation sponsored by Representative Dianne White Delisi, a Texas Master Gardener from Bell County. On November 1, 2003, the plates became available through the Texas Department of Transportation. Within the first two months, 75 sets of Master Gardener License Plates were sold. Of the \$30.00 annual fee per set of plates, \$22.00 will be directed to Extension to fund graduate student assistantships and activities related to the Texas Master Gardener Program. The legacy of this project is "to develop the next generation of Extension Master Gardener Coordinators."

The Texas Master Gardener program continues to be the largest in the United States and leads the way with innovative projects to support this volunteer development program.

Volunteer Opportunities

By Scott Hume



It ain't work!!!

with the formation of several “committees.” They may eventually extend their talents and activities to the entire association. For instance, we will be setting up a **Publicity Committee** which will be looking into new and useful ways to get the word out. They will be exploring a post card with a “free coupon” that can be redeemed at the sale. There will be a **Data Committee** which will be looking into ways to add names, e-mail and snail-mail addresses from sale attendees to a data-base so they can be notified of upcoming events. This Data Committee will also track the way each plant we select sells – so we can use that information for the next sale. There will be a **Multimedia Committee** which will be in charge of producing hand-out CDs for the sale and workshop attendees. There will be a **Publication Committee** which will work under and learn from **Becky Deasy** who has for too long labored alone to put together all the great sale booklets and plant signs. Finally, we will be assigning tasks and times for volunteers at future sales so that we have adequate people reliably present for the jobs that arise – such as having a fresh and adequate crew to dismantle the tents after the sale. That way we won’t have to rely on people who have already served 6 or 7 hours that day to stay for another 1 to 2 hours to “clean up.” And we will be rewarding our volunteers with perks such as buying early and free lunch – all based on documented hours of volunteering. No showing up at the end of set-up to get in on the early sale opportunity. I guess that sounds a little like “No more mister nice guy.” Well, not exactly. More like, “You get what you pay for!!”

So... if any of these “committees” and tasks appeals to you, don’t be shy. Let me know.

oshume@ag.tamu.edu or (281) 855-5635

There’s a saying that goes something like, “Blink twice and everything will change that quickly...” Well, guess what? You blinked!! That’s my way of telling y’all that there are a whole lot of changes going on.

Before we talk about the new, let’s give some praise for all of the old – namely, all the efforts that have gone into several activities over the past few months. Thanks go to all those who volunteered to man our Master Gardener Booth at the House Beautiful Show at the Reliant. Then there were all the enthusiastic workers who came out in the rain to assist with our last Plant Sale and Symposium. Next was the great volunteer support we got putting on our first Outreach Education Workshop – **Basics of Plant Propagation**. Not only was it a great success, but then the volunteers provided many great suggestions that will ensure that our “next one” will be much improved. And finally, we need to thank all those who volunteer to act as tour guides for all those busloads of visitors who arrive at unusual times. You have made very lasting and favorable impressions on a large number of people. Thanks.

The biggest news is that we will be organizing our plant sales very differently in the future. If “imitation is the sincerest form of flattery” then we are going to flatter Precinct 2 and Mercer Arboretum and try to organize our sales the way they do. There will be much more division of labor before the sales

HCMGA News & Events

New Master Gardener Chat Group

As a result of recommendations at the Corpus Christi Convention, a Yahoo chat group for the Texas Master Gardeners has been established. To subscribe visit:

TexasMG-subscribe@yahoo.com. To view/visit the group messages go to: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/TexasMG/>

Urban Landscape: Issues & Solutions

Saturday June 12 from 9:00 to 4:00 p.m. at the Harris County Cooperative Extension auditorium. Cost is \$40 and includes lunch. **Mark Bowen**, the featured speaker, will present **Make Your Landscape More Sustainable with Southeast Texas Natives**. Other subjects include **Legal Aspects**: an explanation of the latest bills in the state legislature affecting homeowners and homeowner associations, **Lawn and Tree Care**, **Texas Superstar Plants** and **Environmentally Friendly Insect Control**. For more information contact Harris County Cooperative Extension at 281-855-5600.

Bear Creek Events

Hamburger Tuesday – June 1st. Volunteer in the garden then enjoy a hamburger lunch around 11:30 a.m. **Ceil Dow** will be speaking on **Gingers**.

Tree Study Group Meeting - June 10. The tree study group will meet at 7:00 pm at the Harris County Extension Center for the regular monthly meeting. The topic is **Micro Irrigation Techniques** by **Angela Chandler**. This is a hands-on demonstration using all necessary parts to install an irrigation system or modify an existing system. This demonstration will focus on trees, but can be applied to any landscape area. For more information contact Cindy Overton 713-782-3530.

General Meeting – June 15th. The **HCMGA Awards Banquet** will be the meeting this month. This banquet is for everyone – not just those receiving awards! It will also include election of officers for 2004-2005. The HCMGA substantially subsidizes this occasion so the cost is only \$10 per person. Plan now to attend. Reservation forms are available in the Master Gardener Office, RSVP by June 8.

Hamburger Tuesday – July 6. Volunteer in the garden then enjoy a hamburger lunch around 11:30 a.m. **Dr. David Byrne** will be speaking on **Stone Fruits**.

General Meeting – July 20. After refreshments at 6:30 pm, **Dr. David Creech** will be speaking on **New Plants You Can't Live Without**.

Bear Creek Events

June 1 - Hamburger Tuesday

8:00 a.m. Garden Volunteer Hours
11:30 a.m. Home Cooked Burgers
Noon: **Ceil Dow** on **Gingers**.

June 10 - Tree Study Group Meeting. 7:00 p.m. **Angela Chandler** will speak on **Micro Irrigation Techniques**.

June 12 - Urban Landscape: Issues & Solutions. 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 pm. Cost \$40. Featured speaker is **Mark Bowen**.

June 15 - Master Gardener Awards Banquet - Pine Forest Country Club. 18003 Clay Rd. \$10
6:00 p.m. Registration
7:00 p.m. Dinner, Elections and Awards Presentations.

July 6 - Hamburger Tuesday
8:00 a.m. Garden Volunteer Hours
11:30 a.m. Home Cooked Burgers
Noon: **Dr. David Byrne** on **Stone Fruits**.

July 20 - Monthly Meeting
6:30 p.m. Desserts
7:00 p.m. **Dr. David Creech** on **New Plants You Can't Live Without**.

Precinct 2 News & Events

Our most exciting news out of Precinct 2 this month is **Angela Chandler** winning the Master Gardener of the Year Award for a large county at the state Master Gardener Conference in Corpus Christi. Angela, we are so proud of you, we feel like we won the award too! There to help her celebrate were **Fred Chandler, Linda Garren, Ginia Keen, Pat Stier, Gloria Gibson, Regina Flaherty, Theresa Holloman, Pat Pate** and **Pat Mitrowski**. Everyone had a great time at the conference; we enjoyed the tours, the break out sessions and meeting other Master Gardeners from around the state.

In the garden, we need to congratulate **Christa Kaiser**, who has agreed to become chairman of the Rose Committee. Christa will be taking over from **Eleanor Borda** who has done a fantastic job overseeing the care of the roses. Thank you for all of your hard work Eleanor. We know Christa will do a great job!

Diane Bryant will be taking over the section of the perennial garden closest to the green house. She has plans to get the new summer class involved in the renovations of that area. Diane also has plans to install a marten house in the garden.

Ruth Touchstone has begun working on plans for a tropical garden to be put in this summer. We look forward to seeing these changes and additions in the garden.

Great progress has been made in the vegetable garden. The new beds are complete, and the pathways in between mulched and planting has been done. Thanks to **Angela Chandler** and **Barbara Morrison** for all their hard work on this project.

Unfortunately, the weather has temporarily postponed the digging of the new lily pond. We have our fingers crossed that it won't rain for a few days and the ground will be dry out enough to dig. Everything is in place and ready to go!

The class committee, headed by **Janelle Kister**, is busy getting everything ready for the new class to start. We are expecting a full class this summer and look for to working with a new group of gardeners. **Marliene Oren** and **Theresa Holloman** have been copying handouts. **Georgia Lau** and her husband are making plans to build a new cabinet to store out electronics in.

The herb garden is looking wonderful! Thanks to everyone on the committee for doing such a great job. The Herb Committee has been meeting to make plans for a fall herb event that is sure to be exciting-details will be coming soon.

Our First Wednesday May workshop was a huge success, thanks to **Gloria Gibson** for teaching us to make the rain gauges and to **Angela Chandler** for her demonstration on the many ways copper tubing can be used as garden art. It was good to see a lot of new faces! June 2nd at 10 am we will be welcoming **Janice Teas** from Teas Herbs and Orchids for a program on **Orchid Care**. Don't forget to bring a dish and stay for lunch. Just a reminder, there is no First Wednesday Program in July.

Precinct 2 Events

June 1 – P2 Master Gardener Class Begins.

June 2 – First Wednesday

9:30 a.m. Registration

10:00 a.m. **Janis Teas** on **Orchids.**

11:00 a.m. **Pot Luck Luncheon.**

Bring a dish to share. 1202 Genoa Red Bluff. For reservations call (281) 991-8437.

June 15 - Master Gardener

Awards Banquet - Pine Forest Country Club. 18003 Clay Rd. \$10

6:00 p.m. Registration

7:00 p.m. Dinner

July 7 – First Wednesday

No Program in July.

Garden Gifts

News from our Outreach Gardens

By Kenneth Dorman

We have had several nice events in the garden recently. **Carol Cammack** came by on a Friday when **George Williams** and I were there and took a lot of photos plus brightened up the garden with a pretty face and nice smile. We all went over to see George's handiwork at the Upper Kirby District Levy Park garden and it is beautiful. Really a lot of nice flowers in the Master Gardener plot plus many other smaller plots where a multitude of gardeners are growing an assortment of vegetables and flowers. They are about to start on Phase II there; it is a great project.

The next nice event was the arrival of another volunteer for the CCSC garden, **Elizabeth Castro**. Elizabeth is a recent graduate of the Master Gardener class and we look forward to having her join us, especially since she is much younger and better able to bend and pick beans and pull weeds. On the same day Elizabeth came we discovered a baby robin hopping around the garden followed closely by its mother. The baby can fly a little and I hope it survives the neighborhood cats. It is the first baby robin I have ever seen in this part of Texas, or any other part for that matter. The mother may have encountered one of our rogue male mockingbirds. Also on that day **Blair Parker**, the Director of Emergency Services at Christian Community Service Center came for a visit and loaded us up with praise and thanks for the produce we send her volunteers to distribute with the other foodstuff. She is a wonderful person and spreads a special kind of joy every place she is. This is what makes volunteering so rewarding. Another good day in the garden.

Well, we finally had to help Mother Nature a bit with an aphid infestation. One of the Dona tomatoes was attacked by a huge number of aphids. I washed them off several times with water blasts, but they always came back. Carol said that the tomato foliage was so thick they were not getting washed to the ground and she was right, as a matter of fact I scattered them to the other plants in the bed. So, I gave them a little taste of Safer Soap and that seems to have their numbers down to where the lady beetles can keep up with them. The soap didn't appear to hurt the lady beetle numbers.

Our potato and 1015 onion harvest was good and we are picking three kinds of pole and bush beans, hot and sweet peppers, squash, tomatoes, eggplants and multitudes of cucumbers at CCSC with the French Orange hybrid melons still to come. At Bonita Street we have added sweet corn to the mix and it is getting high as the elephant's eye. **Walter** managed to plant fourteen rows of corn in a 30' x 4' bed. Of course the rows are only 4' long. It is really neat looking. At CCSC we have planted two beds of Zeebest okra and two beds of cream peas where the onions and potatoes were so all the beds are fully planted. Picking the okra will be a challenge again as it is planted in two foot high beds and will grow seven feet tall. I wonder what Hakeem is doing these days?

Brenda Smith of "Lazy Gardener" fame emailed and said she had sold a story on the CCSC garden to "Back Home Magazine" so I hope the HCMGA will be getting some more good publicity. If any of you know what "Back Home Magazine" is, buy a copy for me. She did an article for the Chronicle a year or so ago and I assume this is the same. She came to the garden and retook digital photos for the article.

The garden is a blessing for me and, I think, for all those that have any thing to do with it either in working or receiving. Most of us that work in these gardens can identify with the following statement: "If you never try, you can never be successful, but if you try you might surprise yourself." **Lama Thubten Yeshe**, The Bliss Of Inner Fire.

Smile and feel some peace.



CCSC Inhabitant Seeks Aphid Meal

Photo by Carol Cammack

Web Surfin'

Tech News for Master Gardeners

By Tom H Robb, Jr



Is it time for an Oil Change?

Oil changes normally are called for every 3,000 miles or 3 months - whichever comes first. But of course we're not talking about automobiles but about computers. So what do you need to do to keep your computer happy? Well, there are a lot of things that you should do ever so often.

Virus Protection. Computer viruses and worms are running rampant these days. Up until lately, most computer ills came about as the result of opening attachments in emails. Some of the current varieties can start their attack simply by opening the email itself. A virus protection program won't keep you protected unless you keep it updated because new strains are being produced almost daily. So to keep your computer healthy from "bugs", be sure to update your program and run a complete scan at least WEEKLY.

Disk Defragmenter. Data is placed on the disk of the hard drive the same fashion that sound is placed on a phonograph record or a CD Disk - in a spiraling track. Whenever a file is deleted, an empty space is created in this spiral. When a new file is installed, if it is larger than the one deleted, it is broken into pieces since the empty space is not large enough to hold the entire file. Over time, if enough of your files are broken, or "fragmented" the performance of your system can become sluggish. Unless you do a great amount of adding and deleting or if your hard drive is almost full, you probably need to run a Defrag Analysis only about every THREE MONTHS and perform a Defrag at least every SIX MONTHS. <Start> <Programs> <Accessories> <System Tools> <Disk Defragmenter>

Disk Cleanup. Trash on the Internet is almost as bad as dust was on the old stagecoaches. And like the dust collected on the stagecoach, trash collects in your computer. This consists of bits and pieces of different sites you have visited that created temporary files, which should have been deleted but were not. This trash builds up very rapidly and not only takes up a huge amount of hard disk space, but can also slow the performance of your machine. Windows XP has a great tool in "Disk Cleanup" which can remove all sorts of stray files such as Temporary Files, Internet Downloads, the Recycle Bin and others. Run at least once each MONTH. <Start> <Programs> <Accessories> <System Tools> <Disk Cleanup>

ScanDisk. Files often get corrupted. This can be caused by damage to the hard drive, interaction with another program, an electric power surge or even switching the computer off without first permitting windows to shut down. This can leave parts of files without proper coding to let the computer know where it is located and can corrupt the file of which it was a part. ScanDisk finds these errors and corrects them. Using Win 98, ScanDisk is found by <Start> <Programs> <Accessories> <System Tools> <ScanDisk>. In WinXP <Start> <My Computer> <Right Click - Local Drive x> <Properties> <Tools> <Error Checking - Check Now> <Select both boxes - Start>. You will be asked if you want the program to run the next time the computer is opened. You choose <Yes>.

Spyware. In the September 2003 issue we discussed the problems and possible danger of Spyware and what you can do to protect your computer. I hope that you have procured a Spyware detection and elimination program and are using it. Spyware can collect quite quickly, especially if you click on any pop-up advertising boxes or fill out any forms. Run your Spyware programs at least once each MONTH.

Change your oil in your car every three months and it will run better. Your computer will also feel better if you keep it serviced on a fixed schedule.

Happy surfin'

Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens

June Classes at Mercer

Wednesday, June 9. Noon to 1 p.m. **Lunch Bunch: First Aid For Trees.** Join local landscaper Bill Hynek for helpful hints on how to care for trees, and what to do if problems occur. Bring a sack lunch to enjoy during the program.

Saturday, June 12. 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. **Summer Plant Sale.** Mercer is hosting an annual plant sale that offers the perfect opportunity to find just the right plant for any garden. Some of the plants available at this year's sale, which highlights **gingers and tropicals** includes bamboo, palms, bananas, roses, shade plants and natives. Experts will be available to give information and advice on the types of plants best suited for your garden.

July Classes at Mercer

Wednesday, July 14. Noon to 1 p.m. **Lunch Bunch: Beyond Butterflies.** Join Eddie Holik from the Cockrell Butterfly Center for a discussion on the plants that attract bees, moths, birds and beetles. Butterflies are not the only welcome visitors to the garden! Bring a sack lunch to enjoy during the program.

Saturday, July 17. 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. **Tropical Workshop.** Find out why tropicals are perfect for your Houston garden at Mercer's all-day tropical workshop. Four local and out of town experts will discuss topics such as selecting the right bamboo; obtaining a tropical and prehistoric look with palms and cycads, and caring for "tender" tropicals. A tour of Mercer's tropical garden follows the program and lunch is provided. Class size is limited to 50 and reservations are guaranteed through payment on a first-come, first-served basis. The Mercer Society members' fee is \$40 and non-members fee is \$50. Make checks payable to The Mercer Society.

Texas Bamboo Society

Texas Bamboo Society Monthly Meetings. The meetings will be set up where demonstration or slide programs will run from 10 am to noon; lunch (brown bag, byob) then garden work from 12:30-2:00pm. For more information contact Linda Gay at lgay@hcp4.net, (281) 443-8731 or visit www.bamboocentral.com.

June 26. 10 am to 12 pm. **Control of Running Bamboos.** 12:30 pm to 2:00 pm. Digging and potting black bamboo (take a pot home!)

July 24. 10 am to 12 pm. **Identification of Clumping Bamboos.** 2:30 pm to 2:00 pm. Garden maintenance on bamboos, thinning, pruning, digging.

August 28th-29. Bamboo Festival. Held at Zilker Garden in Austin, TX, the festival will include the show and sale of bamboo. No Mercer meeting this month.



Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens is a Harris County Precinct 4 facility, under the leadership of Commissioner Jerry Eversole, 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 by email at mercerarboretum@cp4.hctx.net. On the web at <http://www.cp4.hctx.net/mercerc>.

Events Around Town

Urban Harvest Classes

Classes are held at Urban Harvest, 1900 Kane, unless otherwise noted. For detailed class listings and more information, visit www.urbanharvest.org or call (713) 880-5540.

Urban Harvest



Working with Gardens & Orchards
to Build Healthy Communities

Tuesday, June 1. Tee-Budding Citrus and Other Fruits by **Dr. Bob Randall**.

6:15 p.m. – 8:15 p.m. \$20. Registration required. Learn how to cheaply and easily join various varieties of the same plant on your tree or bush, an orange on a tangerine, a yellow rose on a red one.

Tuesday June 8. Gardening, Cooking, and Living Chinese Vegetables by **Emily Chen Dunbar**.

6:15 p.m. – 8:15 p.m. \$20. Registration required. Learn how to grow, prepare, and benefit health-wise from the many delicious Asian vegetables that grow easily and abundantly in our climate.

Monday, June 14. How to Start a Community or School Garden by **Gary Edmondson**.

4 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. Free. Registration required. Have you been thinking about starting a community or school garden? Learn the basic ingredients for a successful community garden, including planning, coordination, finances, and garden design.

Tuesday, June 15. Growing the Latino Vegetables by **John Jacob, PhD**.

6:15 p.m. – 8:15 p.m. \$20. Registration required. Discuss growing and eating lesser known vegetables of the peoples of the Americas, yuca or tapioca root, sorrel Jamaica or Red Zinger Plant, tomatillo, and chaya or the Mayan spinach tree.

Monday, June 21. How to Start a Community or School Garden by **Dr. Bob Randall**.

1 p.m. – 3:45 p.m. Free. Registration required. Have you been thinking about starting a community or school garden? Learn the basic ingredients for a successful community garden, including planning, coordination, finances, and garden design.

Tuesday, June 22. Oko to Agbo: From the Garden Plot to the Medicine Pot by **Alafia Gaidi**.

6:15 p.m. – 8:15 p.m. \$20. Registration required. Use science and folklore to study the cultivation and care of New World African and Continental African recipes such as a watermelon ginger drink and the black-eyed pea dish moi-moi.

Tuesday, June 29. Cooking and Growing with Vegetable of India by **Hetal Sheth** and **Diana Liga**.

6:15 p.m. – 8:15 p.m. \$20. Registration required. This class will cover the growing techniques, selection and preparation of many of the fruits, herbs, beans and vegetables of India. Hetal Sheth is a native of India and a member of the Bayou City Farmers' Market Committee.

Invasive Species Workshop

June 19 at Jones Forest in Montgomery County. The USDA entomologist from Lufkin will put on an Invasive Species workshop that will include a two hours class lecture on invasive insects including the ash borer beetle that is expected to invade the Houston area this summer. This Emerald ash bore beetle is devastating northern ash trees and could effectively wipe out many shade trees if it moves into our area. Beneficial insects, along with 10 or so invasive plants species will be also be discussed. After lunch there will be a two hour field study to learn about monitoring protocols for invasive plant species and the ash borer. CEUs will be available for foresters, arborists and nursery and landscape professionals. If you would like to addend this workshop, please RSVP to **Teri MacArthur** at texasnaturelover@earthlink.net.

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			

To submit your volunteer hours, please drop off completed forms in the inbox on **Scott Hume's** desk or fax it to (281) 855-5638. 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://hcmga.tamu.edu/hcmga/urban.htm> .

June 2004

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
		1 Hamburger Tues. Ceil Dow on 'Gin- gers' page 6	2 P2 1st Wed Janice Teas on 'Orchid Care'. page 7	3	4	5
6	7	8 Work Day at the Exten- sion Office.	9	10 Tree Study Group Meet- ing. Angela Chandler on 'Micro Irriga- tion'. page 6	11	12 Urban Landscapes: Issues & Solutions at Bear Creek page 6
13	14	15 Awards Banquet & Elections. Pine For- est Country Club. page 6	16 Newsletter Deadline 5pm	17	18	19
20	21	22 Work Day at the Exten- sion Office.	23	24	25	26
27	28	29 Work Day at the Exten- sion Office.	30			

UrbanDirt

Cylinder Garden Success.....	1
President's Thoughts.....	2
Michael's Corner.....	3
2003 MG Report	4
Volunteer Opportunities	5
HCMGA News & Events.....	6
P2 News and Events.....	7
Garden Gifts	8
Web Surfin'	9
Mercer News & Events.....	10
Events around Town	11
Volunteer Hrs Worksheet....	12
June Calendar.....	13
Editor's Notes	14

Editor's Notes

By Carol Cammack

Spring has been beautiful here in the Houston Area. As I write this, it is mid-May and we have yet to break 90 degrees. The Extension Gardens are in full bloom as is the rest of the city. I hope everyone has taken time to enjoy it. I know I particularly enjoyed the **Master Gardener Home Tour** this month. I would like to personally thank **Zahira Breedy, Glen Graves, Pat Howard, Grady & Virginia Joiner** and **Claire Lober** for opening up their homes to us. You are all truly 'Master Gardeners'.

I hope all of you find something useful, entertaining or educational in each issue of Urban Dirt. As always, we are indebted to each Master Gardener for all you do. And you do so much. Please forgive us if we ever happen to leave one of your names out of any Thank You list. Your work is always appreciated. Please let us know if we've forgotten to acknowledge someone. We'll make sure it is printed the very next month!

If you have anything you would like to contribute to Urban Dirt, please send it in. We would love to hear from you. Suggestions and comments are welcomed and appreciated as well. We do have space limitations so try to limit your articles to 500 words or less. Submit all articles electronically by the **15th** of every month to: ccammack@ag.tamu.edu .

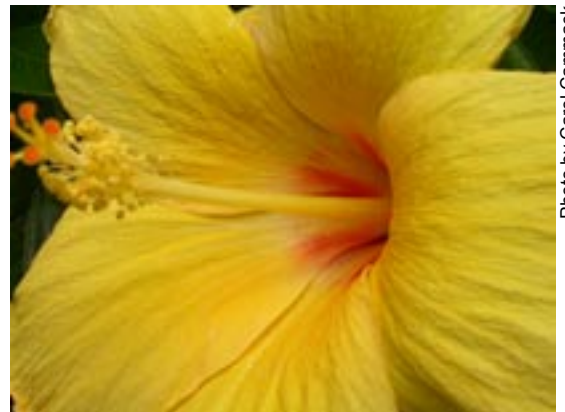


Photo by Carol Cammack