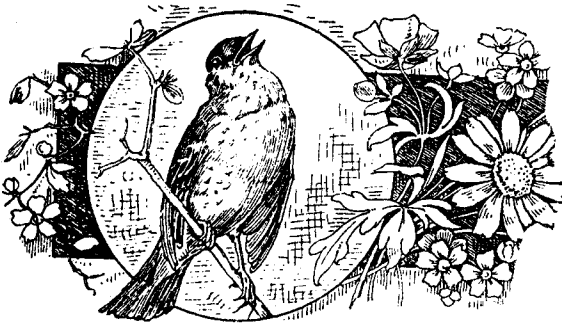


URBAN DIRT

Published for the Harris County Master Gardeners

March/April 1998

Vol 7, No.2



AT LAST, IT'S SPRING!!

by Pam Libby

This is the very best time of the year to garden in Harris County. You can go out in the cool of the morning and really work hard, without feeling that old southern urge to swoon (from the heat, of course). And when you're finished with the day's work, you can sit out on the patio and enjoy a glass of lemonade and admire your work. The camellias, gerberas, redbuds, hyacinths, daffodils, tulips, narcissus and snowdrops are the first to bloom, along with the pretty pink magnolias. Then the hawthorns and azaleas will follow and soon it will be bluebonnet time. The sweet almond will flower and all the citrus trees as well, aren't you glad you worked so hard all year. Of course, there is still plenty of work to do, if you have prepared your beds, it's finally time to transplant those seedling tomatoes and you can put in some peppers, asparagus roots, lettuce, eggplants and kale. Early march is about the latest for parsley as the heat will get them later on.

I guess you are noticing plenty of little seedlings in your beds (are they reseeding annuals or weeds?) a few weeks should tell the truth of it. Most likely it's bad news, but a little work with the trowel may be all that's necessary. Remember to water well after you fertilize. More and more of us are going organic with that fertilizer, I hear they're even making a fish emulsion that doesn't smell too bad. I don't know where to find it though, so don't call me, unless of course you've found it and want to let me know.

This is also the year that I've decided to treat myself to a good field guide about Texas birds. I already have the guides for snakes and insects (by necessity). There are so many beautiful birds in Texas. We really are lucky. People come from all over to go to Rockport and other Texas coastal areas to see the bird migrations. I guess that's another reason, I'm beginning to get serious about organic solutions, the other reasons are just plain selfishness, after all it is our drinking water, our land and our skies that will be effected. Okay, off the soapbox, have a lovely spring and do come around to the Extension Center and see the marvelous gardens our volunteers have been putting in. My grandchildren were delighted with The Children's Garden and all the other gardens are really taking shape too. I know volunteering is hard work, but I'm beginning to think the volunteers are having quite a bit of fun too! May be you should consider joining the fun!!

MARCH: 3/17/98

Executive Board 5:30 p.m.

Dessert and Coffee 6:30 p.m.

General Meeting 7:00 p.m.

SUBJECT: "Endangered Plants of Texas"

Speaker: Dr. David Creech, Professor, Stephen F. Austin, Univ.

APRIL: 4/21/98

Executive Board 5:30 p.m.

Dessert and Coffee 6:30 p.m.

General Meeting 7:00 p.m.

SUBJECT: "A Kinder and Gentler Flood Control"

Speaker: John Koros, Environmental Manager, Harris County Flood Control



From Your President...

Last fall I had a very pleasant experience with 16 other Master Gardeners and their guests. We boarded canoes and glided down Buffalo Bayou. It was a beautiful warm fall day. We embarked from the banks at 610 South Loop and San Felipe right under the bridge. In the beginning it felt a little eerie. As my canoe was one of the first to launch, we waited under the bridge for the others. The noise from the traffic overhead was close to deafening. The water was very low and shallow. It swirled in easy ebbs beside us. It's color was murky, as I had expected, but the feeling was exhilarating. All those cars above us (as I am one of those every day) had no idea that there were people below them out for a nature experience.

Our guide had explained some of the history of the bayou prior to our launch. The bayou had been mistreated for many years. As the dumping ground for sewage and contaminants of all kinds that eventually dumped into the Gulf. By the mid-60's it would have been dangerous for anyone to have accidentally fallen into the bayou because of all the pollutants. But finally, the city saw the value in cleaning the bayou. A lot of people worked hard and along with federal dollars a recovery program was begun. Today the results are quite extraordinary. Although still not safe for swimming, it is safe for recreational purposes such as canoeing. And if you should fall in, you are in no danger, at least not from the pollutants.

We were the lucky ones to be able to enjoy the bayou that day. After leaving the bridge area, the amazing thing was the quiet. Gliding along, there were no sounds of the city we were surrounded by. All was peaceful and pretty. We disturbed a Great Blue Heron several times. We got to observe the back side of some beautiful houses and yards in River Oaks that are surrounded by tall hedges or fences from the street side. We saw the success or non-success of several projects aimed at keeping these yards from eroding into the bayou. There was a llama and donkey in one yard. After stopping for snacks, I took a short walk in the woods. I was surprised by the whiz of the mountain bikers flying by.

(Continued on p.5)

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(713)370-6521
Secretary.....Debbie Mediety
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Ownby, Martha Brem,
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Whitwill

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Study Group.....Yvonne Gibbs
(713) 462-7052
Membership.....Tom Robb
(713) 465-5987

For a list of standing/special committee members, please see page 7.

FROM THE ORCHARD...



by Yvonne Gibbs

This years' Fruit Symposium and Fruit Tree Plant Sale was a great success. Everyone deserves a trophy for first prize. Everyone did a great job. Many thanks to the hard work of our

Planning Committee:

Dr. Leon Atlas, Dr. Bob Randall, Dr. Ethan Natelson, Rick Matt, Bob Marks, David Parish, George McAfee, Tom LeRoy, Bill Adams, Prema Kuratti, Yvonne Gibbs.

Thanks also to all the volunteers who gave up their Saturday to help make our day, those who worked inside, manning the sign-in table, the book sale table helping the speakers, and those who ran the many errands:

Pat Cole, Carol Williams, Gabriel Hui, Charlie Reese, Terri Delaney, Patti Usnick, Leonard Robicheaux, and Nell Watson who brought her wonderful peanut brittle.

We also need to thank those who worked outside with the plant sales, answering the many questions, running, grafting plants, and helping everyone with their purchases. It was a mad house out there, but everyone had fun and they sold and grafted a mountain of fruit. Thanks to these participants: Bill Adams, Tom LeRoy, Bill Rohde from Tree Search Farms, Inc., David Parish Preston Geeland, Lois Sutton, Worth Stoneham, Linda Estes, Valerie Hurlbert, Raquel Horn-Sigman, Michael Sigman, Que Cu Nguyen, Becky Deasy, Bob Midkiff, and any others who were not on my workers sheet.

Many thanks to our four Speakers:

Dr. James Kamas, George McAfee, Bob Marx, and Mrs Ce Cowart.

We had great programs with lots of information. We try to educate the beginners and update the more advanced fruit enthusiast.

Many thanks to Bonnie Childers for his expert citrus grafting. That was quite a work-out. I saw the lines waiting for him to graft their citrus.

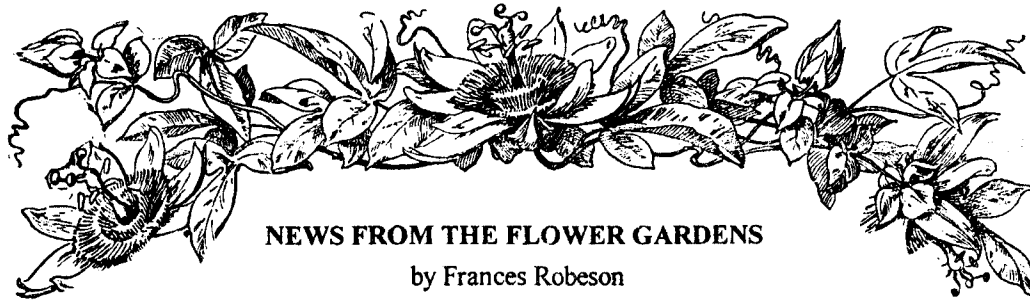
Many thanks to Dr. Bill Kembrough for his demo on knife sharpening. He suggests everyone get the Lansky Kit to keep your knives and tools sharp.

Thanks again to Tree Search Farms, inc., Bill Rohde and Heide Sheesley and your staff, for again making the plant materials available to us, doing the set up and take down, and making the sale such a success. Thank you for your generosity with your time, energy, and resources. You are wonderful and great friends. Bill and Heide, we love you, and thank you

PRUNING DATES: Every Tuesday, Starting in January, until all the trees are completed. We have had three incredible days of pruning and three incredible pruning crews. The pruning sessions have been completed each time well before noon. This included cleaning up the area and the tools and putting away the equipment. The peaches have been finished and part of the persimmons are done as of this printing. The grapes were done in December. Many thanks go to Penny Miller, Robert Miller, Mary Jo Chen, Gabriel Hui, Carl Meyertons, Bill Hendricksen, Diane Cody, Norma Rogers Powell, (Urban Harvest) Loyal Ayers, Clarence Johnson, and Bob Flott. Some of the volunteers have been out working all of the Tuesdays, some twice and some once. Everyone has just pitched in like they always do. I had the pleasure of introducing myself to the two newest classes of M G's. I think we are going to have a few fruit enthusiasts in those classes.

Planning Committee Meetings will be held an hour before regular meetings. Planning members should call to let us know if you are coming before each meeting. Call me at 713-462-7052. We need the input of everyone. Thank you.

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NEWS FROM THE FLOWER GARDENS

by Frances Robeson

During the dreary days of winter we might have wondered why we were out working in the gardens at all; with the sky gray, the air chilled, mud on the sidewalks, and ugly weeds in the beds. But a glance toward the bright spot that the Child's Garden had become, the thought of flowers yet to come, and the company and camaraderie of congenial fellow volunteers soon chase doubts away.

We meet each week in the gardens as people of different ages, genders, ethnic origins, opinions, and gardening experience, but we share a special bond in our desire to create beauty by gardening and to pass on the love of gardening to others. Sometimes there may be just two or three of us and other times many more, but we always enjoy each others company. We are always glad to welcome back someone who has been away for awhile. if you have not been out for some time, come on back. You will see that you have not been forgotten.

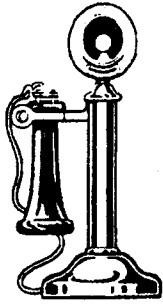
Our next major project will be to renovate the Perennial Garden which was last re-done in 1994. It has become a little too natural looking. We intend to do a complete make over with some exciting new plants.

The Child's Garden seems to be a great success which makes us very proud. The orange calendulas and purple violas, the bean tepee, the butterfly made of flowers, and the colorful vegetables in Peter Rabbit's Garden express the exuberant joy of gardening that we want to share.

The Johnny-jump-ups grew so thickly around Peter Rabbit that he was almost covered up. We tied a red bandana around his neck so that he could be seen by Farmer MacGregor. The sugar snap peas did a fine job of covering the tepee, growing more vigorously than the sweet peas planted with them. Sugar snap peas would then be our recommendation for a winter tepee. We intend to have pole beans and scarlet runner beans covering it this summer.

Our gardening efforts often attract the notice of persons entering or leaving the Community Center next door. One Tuesday as I was cutting calendulas an elderly woman asked, "are those what we used to call 'cal-in-da-las' and now they call 'cal-end-u-las?" I told her that I thought so and invited her to take home the bunch that I had in my hand. We had been cutting them every week just to prolong their bloom. She said that she would love to have them and rushed inside to get paper towels to wrap their stems in. It is fun to make other people happy with our flowers, be it child, elderly person, or anyone in between.

And I must tell you fellow Master Gardeners, do not be surprised at being asked for gardening advice at any time. I was recently, sad to say, stopped on Patterson Road by a DPS officer who informed me that both my auto registration and my inspection sticker had expired. I was very embarrassed. This was something I had not thought about at all. The officer was very polite and on seeing my Master Gardener badge and hearing that I was on my way to the Extension Center asked what he should do about his problems with his red tipped photinias. It is a good thing to wear our badges whenever appropriate in order to better serve our purpose of providing the public (all the public including DPS officers writing us citations) with answers to their gardening questions.



MG PHONE DUTY

January/February

"A thank you for those who served on the line of duty."

Mondays: Lynn Blair Huber, Tomoko Nishiwaki, Jim Glynn, Michael Sigman, Ruth V. Gonzolez, Pat Schaper.

Tuesdays: Karen DeBerry, Peter and Ann McStravick, Derle Lindner, Pat Barna, Katie Gian, Cindy Blair, and Nancy DeMarco..

Wednesdays: Suzanne Kee, Becky Deasy, Chris Clark, Raquel Sigman, and Jane Marsh.

Thursday: Ann Patton, Ken Dorman, Heather Ellis, Jeana Martinez, Loretta White and Lorean Isken.

Fridays: Lynn Huber, Terry Brown, Terry Sidwell, David Bonilla and Greg Wilson.

A Note from the Editor...

If you would like to submit an article to the *Urban Dirt* newsletter, please contact the editor, Pamela Libby by placing the article in her box at the Extension Center. You can also suggest items about yourself or fellow Master Gardeners for publication in this column. For more information call Pam at her home number: 937-8437.

When you send articles that you have typed, please do not add a lot of special fonts or formatting. I will be glad to accent your article with these additions, if you include a separate note with your preferences.

Also, don't add pen or pencil marks to your typed copy. I scan typed copies and these marks interfere with the reproduction of the text. Another problem is tinted background paper. White paper always turns out crisper. Of course, the above does not apply to hand written articles, which I always retype. I do appreciate those who have taken the time to type their articles.

The next issue will be for the May-June 1998 and must be submitted by April 1, 1998.

MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

continued from p.2

I'm sure they would have also been surprised to see me, if they had decided to slow down long enough to observe.

Did we have any mishaps? I have to report that one canoe did overturn at one precarious turn around a fallen tree. Our own board member Glen Graves and two others soaked themselves. After donning plastic bags for warmth, they were back in their uprighted canoe. They never were able to get all the water out and were pretty cold by the time we stopped, but otherwise fine. Glen lost his camera. But I got some great pictures of our wet comrades and some even better ones of the beautiful bayou. If you ever get the chance to go, I highly recommend it.

—Mary Lynn Randall





DOWN THE GARDEN PATH...

The Extension Office is proud to announce that Debbie Mendieta has been hired as the new Volunteer Coordinator, a newly established part-time position. Debbie also serves as Secretary on the Master Gardener Association Board.



We were saddened by the loss of one of our "Charter Members," Master Gardener Mary Jo Turner who passed away on February 13, 1998. Our deepest sympathy goes out to the family.



Congratulations to MG's Jeff Gregory and Catherine Carlston. They were married on 12/2/97 and would you believe it, they met at Master Gardener Class?



A big thanks goes out to **ALL** those who helped make the Fruit Tree Sale and Symposium (Jan. 31) a **HUGE** success!



Bob Heinicke and Barbara Shepard are continuing to do a great job coordinating the Annuals and Perennials Specialist Class -- keep up the good work!



MASTER GARDENER 1998 STANDING/SPECIAL COMMITTEES:

Membership	Tom Robb
Telephone Committee	Dee Jeifries
Hospitality	Mary Jean Wilkinson
Greeting Committee	Frances Robeson/Mary Ann Wagner
Newsletter	Pam Libby
Bulk Purchases	Bob Heinicke

EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH

Speakers' Bureau	Karen Breneman, Ann Brown, Judy Michaels, Patty Rode.
Cylinder Gardening	Glenn Graves
Dialysis Center	Katherine Curry
Master Gardener Classes	Tom LeRoy with Volunteer Coordinators

FUND RAISING

Tomato and Pepper Sale	Mary Lynn Randall
May Symposium	Buzz Busby/Barbara Shepard
Seminars	William Adams/ Tom LeRoy

EXTENSION CENTER GARDENS AND GREENHOUSE

Greenhouse	Billy Duncan
Vegetable Garden	David Parrish
Flower Gardens	Frances Robeson
Herb Garden	Barbara Ownby
Orchard	Yvonne Gibbs

AUDIT

Louis M. Jacobs

