

Urban Dirt

IN COOPERATION WITH THE TEXAS COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

The Flower Garden

by Jennifer Lowenthal

Factoid: Did you know that the Bear Creek Flower Garden is one of nearly 200 All America Selections Display Gardens?

AAS' mission is to provide home gardeners with information on significantly improved flower, bedding plant and vegetable varieties.



From 1993 to 2002 there have been 626 All-America Selections winners, of which 62 have been Petunias.

AS THE WEATHER WARMS UP, we get a little itch to go play in our gardens. Well, this year it was a big itch. Since many of the plants did not survive the winter, we get a chance to start over. But, instead of working on a new planting scheme, we decided to add a water feature to the garden. We are making a disappearing fountain. The fountain should be finished by the time this publication is mailed out. This was a pretty big project for us but, we gladly welcomed the challenge.

The fountain itself is made of concrete. We made a lined box to be placed underground to collect the water. Then the fountain is placed in the box. After the fountain is in position, a grate is laid in the box and then covered with decorative rocks. I did leave out a few steps here and there. If you are really curious just stop by and we can give you all the details.

We did have some help with a few of the steps in the project. Lots of guidance came from **David Parish**. We had a few steps that we really were not sure how to do. Thanks David. Also, we had help making the box from **Samuel Zabbia**. Thanks Sam. We learned a lot from this project. The garden has not had a new feature like this one in some time now. We feel that this fountain will attract more visitors to the garden along with adding a pleasing sound to listen to while strolling about.

Many of the flowers are really in full bloom now. The garden is so colorful. We have many petunias that are flowering. Large mounds of **Petunia F1 'Tidal Wave Silver'** can be seen as soon as you walk into the garden. Also, the show stopper **Petunia F1 'Prism Sunshine'** is shinning away with its creamy yellow blossoms. Most visitors comment on the beauty of this petunia. As always, the **Dianthus 'Melody Pink'** is still flowering. This plant has not stopped flowering since we planted it 2 years ago. We love this large sea of pink flowing in the garden. We are very excited to see the flowers on a new **Geranium F1 'Black Magic Rose'**. The foliage on these plants can't be beat. They have chocolate colored leaves with green edges. We originally planted a flat of these little treasures before the freeze. They are definitely not frost tolerant. (This is a test garden.) So, **M.K.** started some seed for us in the safety of her home and now they are in the ground. They look really good. It will only be a couple of weeks before they start flowering.

We are really enjoying this wonderful weather while we have it. It won't be long until we start gardening in the early morning or late evening because of the summer heat. Not to mention having to water often. In fact, I think I will go outside right now and take advantage of this awesome time of year. Enjoy.

AAS Winners growing in the Bear Creek Display Garden include (left to right) **Petunia F1 'Tidalwave Silver'** (2002 winner), **Petunia F1 'Prism Sunshine'** (1998 winner), **Dianthus 'Melody Pink'** (2000 winner), and **Geranium F1 'Black Magic Rose'**.

Photos courtesy of All America Selections.



President's Thoughts By Jean Fefer

I think we did it again! We had a brilliant plant sale on April 13th, starting with an entertain-ing and informative talk by **Heidi Sheesley**. I'm sure the talk inspired the purchase of many of the plants that were lined up waiting to be adopted into good homes. Thanks also go the **Deba Cox** who did the work coordinating the sale and helping to choose the plants. We are grateful to **Diane Ballentine, Clyde Cannon** and **Ray Wallace** for sharing their expertise with the public. The free symposium was appreciated by the public.

You may recall that in the past we have charged a fee and required registration for the lectures. We also provided food on those occasions. I believe this worked out well and what they didn't have to spend on the symposium, hopefully they spent on plants. I haven't heard the final figures yet but I worked the cashier's table and had the impression we did very well.

Thanks also to the builders of the plant carriers. I know that **Clyde Cannon** and **Bob Kish** were involved in that but there were others as well. The herb soap was another welcome innovation for the sale from the Herb Garden Group.

Upcoming State Conference

By this time you have probably received your invitation to the **Texas/Oklahoma Master Gardener Conference** in Wichita Falls, May 30-June 1, 2002 (in spite of the fact that it says 2000 on the front cover). **Felder Rushing** is on the program so if you missed him here two years ago this would be another chance to be entertained by a unique gardener. Registration deadline is May 15.

If any of our members would like to get together to go as a group you can call me (713-467-0231) or **John Plotzki**, who is one of our representatives to the TXMGA. We are looking for a second member to serve as a representative. We are allowed two because of our size. **Glen Graves** is going to serve as *pro tem* representative for this meeting. If you are interested in serving in this capacity please call me or stop me in the hallway.

Advertise in Urban Dirt

The Board of Directors of MG voted at the last meeting to start accepting a limited number of advertisers for Urban Dirt. Other Master Gardener Associations include ads in their bulletins and it is another way for MGs to get information about things they are interested in. Preference will, of course, be given to gardening related ads. The form at right can be used to sign up for advertising space. If you know of anyone who might like to advertise and they are not a Master Gardener, you can show them a copy of the newsletter or tell them it can be viewed on our website. Mailing costs are increasing and this will help defray some of the expenses.

Helping Habitat Communities

News from the world beyond the Extension center includes another contact with a Habitat community and a chance to make an aesthetic contribution. I mentioned some time ago that the president of Houston Federation of Garden Clubs had contacted me about helping her to create gardens to enhance the entry to a

Habitat community in north Houston. We met with the Habitat director and the residents of the development who approved the plan that we proposed. The project is now in its final stages and soon will be ready for planting. Keeping in mind that the residents are hardworking, often single parent families, we proposed gardens that require a minimum of maintenance. Clyde Cannon's roses and Diane Ballentine's day lilies are a part of the plan along with some Mexican heather and lirioppe. I plan on following up on this to see how it goes.

The **Greenhouse Gang** is always busy and summer is no exception. We still have flowers for the Millennium Garden that need to be planted and a few things for the Vegetable and Herb gardens. Our next sale will be the Fall Plant Sale, probably in September. We will need to start making plans for that and of course there will be fall plantings for all of our own gardens. It is not too soon to plan. So - don't be strangers, check out the greenhouse when you come in and also check the task board in the MG room. See you next month.

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) _____

Hamburger Tuesdays

By Mary Ann Wagner

On our first Tuesday in April we had a preview of summer. **Roz and Pat Merrit** brought the most beautiful specimens of tropical hibiscus blooms. The tropical hibiscus is a plant that gives us bright showy blooms all summer long. The Merrits are experts on hibiscus and are always willing to share their information. In addition to showing wonderful slides, Pat discussed how to propagate hibiscus. She also discussed the care and feeding of them.

On May 7, **Angela Chandler**, a fellow Master Gardener from Precinct 2, will present a program on how to install and maintain drip and low volume spray irrigation systems. This should be very interesting for those of us who do not have sprinkler systems.

Mike Lowery of Another Place in Time Nursery will be with us on June 4 to discuss shade and unusual plants. If you have visited this nursery, you know that Mike has the best assortment of ferns and other plants that need shade.

In July there will be a program on coastal prairie grasses. **Carolyn Fannon's** slides have captured these grasses with early morning dew and with small creatures on their stalks. She even has slides of the Atwater Prairie Chicken cavorting in front of her camera. Her program is spectacular.

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



Web Surfin'

By Tom H. Robb, Jr

I realize that many mail programs have features that allow you to know when you have new mail without going into the mail program itself. But then again, many—and indeed most—do not. This past month I came across a neat, free program that has proved very beneficial.

It's not a brand new program, although the latest version was released on March 4, 2002. It's called **ePrompter**, and it now features a mini-email client and the following features (from the website description)

ePrompter™ now allows you to compose, forward and reply to the messages that have been retrieved for you.

ePrompter™ automatically checks up to sixteen password protected email accounts for AOL, Earthlink, Go.com, Hotmail, Juno, Lycos, Mindspring, MSN,

Netscape, POP3, USA, Yahoo and hundreds of other email domains – all at the same time.

ePrompter™ features a unique rotating tray icon, and a choice of four unique screensavers that let you know at a glance the number of new messages in each account, which you can easily read and/or delete online or offline with the click of an icon. It's extremely easy to set up and use.

This is a really handy application to check those free e-mail addresses you use as dummies to protect your real address. You can check up to 16 accounts at any one time. As I said, it's free and easy to easy to install. It can be downloaded at <http://www.eprompter.com>.

Tip: in the PDF version of *UrbanDirt*, clicking on any URL will take you to that site.

Upcoming Events at Bear Creek

May 7 – Hamburger Tuesday

8:00 a.m. Work up an appetite

Noonish Home cooked burgers, then Angela Chandler, *Drip and Low Volume Spray Irrigation*

June 4 – Hamburger Tuesday

8:00 a.m. Work up an appetite

Noonish Home cooked burgers, then Mike Lowery, *Shade and Unusual Plants*



Precinct 2 Events

May 1st: May Craft Event in the Garden

Master Gardener **Pam Harris** will conduct a hands-on workshop in the art of creating beautiful stone garden troughs. You'll learn by making your own container to take home. \$25.00 covers all supplies and lunch. Come and join us in the Genoa Friendship Garden at 1202 Genoa Red Bluff for a day in the garden. Reservations are required for this program, please call (281) 991-8437 to reserve a spot. Registration begins at 9:30 a.m., class at 10 a.m.

June Events

June 6th at 10:00 am: Butterflies are delightful to watch in the garden, avid butterfly gardener **Robin Pacholder** will give tips us on gardening to attract them. This program is free, but please call to reserve a spot. (281) 991-8437 Lunch available for \$3

Special Announcement

The Harris County Master Gardener Association at Precinct 2 will offer **Summer Master Gardener Classes** at their southeast location. Classes will be held June 4th through July 3rd on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. at 1202 Genoa Red Bluff.

Registration begins March 2, 2002. Space is limited so enroll early! Call (281) 991-8437.

Carol's Comments

By Carol Cammack, CEA Horticulture

April brought many great things to the Master Gardener program. **Scott Hume** was hired as the Volunteer Coordinator. We had many excellent applicants – all Master Gardeners and so it was a tough decision. Scott is very enthusiastic, extremely qualified and is already off to an excellent start. Stop by and give him a hearty welcome if you're in the neighborhood.

The spring Master Gardener class finished up. I know this enthusiastic group will bring a lot to the organization.

The Spring Sale was another great success (we sold out of many things). **Bob Kish** and **Clyde Cannon** added a special touch to the sale by offering plant trugs to the sale as did the **Herb Garden group** with the wonderful herbal soaps. Clyde is also putting the finishing touches on the new deck and already has plans for his next project. The **Flower Garden group** is hard at work on a very cool water feature and the Gardens look beautiful. Looks like spring is finally here!

This month I thought I would highlight some important and exciting state Master Gardener news.

First, the **Texas/Oklahoma Master Gardener Conference** is going to be held May 31 and June 1, 2002, Wichita Falls. This is a great opportunity to interact with other Master Gardeners from our area. Houston has never been well represented at this event and I would like to see lots of Master Gardeners attend. There will be many excellent speakers including **Felder Rushing** and Texas Department of Agriculture Commissioner **Susan Combs**. This represents the first time a TDA Commissioner has attended the Master Gardener Conference. Commissioner Combs will address the conference on Friday, May 31 at 3:30 p.m.

Following the presentation, the Texas Master Gardener Program will bestow upon Commissioner Combs the title of **Honorary Texas Master Gardener**. This is the first time the title of "Honorary Texas Master Gardener" has been given by the Texas Master Gardener Program. Two guidelines

govern this honorary title: 1) the individual is not a certified Master Gardener or employee of Texas Cooperative Extension and 2) the individual's vocational or avocational efforts significantly support the Texas Master Gardener Program mission, to increase the availability of horticultural information and improve the quality of life of Texans through horticulture. As TDA Commissioner, Susan Combs has contributed significantly to the mission of the Texas Master Gardener Program.

Conference registration information

Friday and Saturday \$85: Full registration includes conference activities and three meals.

Saturday Only, \$55: The Saturday only registration fee includes conference activities and two meals.

The registration deadline is May 15th. Workshop space is limited, please register early.

You should have received conference information in the mail, but for more information contact **Steve Chaney**, County Extension Agent–Horticulture by phone at (940) 716-5580, by email at **s-chaney@tamu.edu**, or online at **http://www.texasmastergardeners.com/tmga.html**. We also have extra registration forms in our office.

In other state Master Gardener news, **Cooky Oberg**, a Master Gardener Intern in Galveston county and member of USA TODAY's board of contributors, published a national article on the Master Gardeners in the April 4, 2002 issue of USA TODAY. The Texas Master Gardener program is highlighted and Extension (land grant universities) is credited as administrators of the program. This article represents the first national article in the popular press ever published on the Master Gardener program. See **http://www.usatoday.com** and enter Master Gardener in the site search engine to read the article. State Master Gardener recognition belongs to the individual Master Gardeners. That's you! Thanks for all your hard work. See you in the garden!



Harris County Master Gardener Assoc.

#2 Abercrombie Drive (281) 855-5600
Houston, TX 77084 FAX (281) 855-5638

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

Herb Garden News

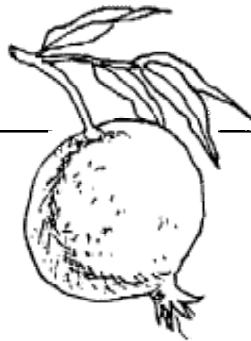
Well, we are simply ecstatic with the looks of things in the Herb Garden. Have you seen it lately?

The Eastern Culinary Bed is now bursting with new life thanks to **LeeAnn van den Bold** and **Toula Hagidimitriou**. The two of them just completed the Master Gardener coursework last fall (like me), and took on the bed with a lot of interest but not too much expertise (also like me!) They got some great help at **Another Place in Time**, in the Heights, and the bed now has 21 different plants in it, including **Japanese Mustard Green**, **Vietnamese Coriander**, **Japanese Field Mint**, and something called **Asafetida**, which I'll have to look up to learn about. Thanks so much Toula and LeeAnn!

Jean Shanley has been filling in the Craft and Color Bed, and she's done a lovely job. If you haven't smelled **Patchouli** before, give that beautiful plant a sniff. The **scented geraniums**, in Margaret Mason's bed, also are worth some olfactory exploration. Her **Lavender** Bed, too, is doing quite well, thanks to a very raised bed and lots of pebbles for drainage. Lavender is tough in Houston, but not impossible. One plant survived over from last year.

The Rosemary and Salvia Bed is getting a good freshening, thanks to **Jeanette Powell**, who has recently agreed to take over that bed. Jeanette, incidentally, breeds Box Turtles. And a big thank you goes out to **Pete Petre**, who has kept himself very busy trimming trees. In the Herb Garden? Well, yes. Actually we have an **Australian Tea Tree**, a **Bay Tree**, a **Bay Laurel** (kind of a tree), three **Pomegranates**, and an **Olive Tree**. Pete also trimmed the Holly, next to the stairs. Thanks Pete! You sure do work hard.

Let me just mention something about the **Mexican Mint Marigold**, in the Tex-Mex Bed, because it is so robust and such a great plant. First, it grows two to three feet and can be evergreen all winter. If a freeze gets it, you can cut it down to the ground and it will come back. Its leaves are used for tea, and potpourri. Importantly, it is an excellent substitute for Tarragon, which we can't grow in Houston. **Madeline Hill** suggests we toss it into salads, poultry and fish cookery, being sure to add it late in the cooking process. Incidentally, that's **Becky Kern** and **Nancy Verwest** in charge of the Tex-Mex Bed. Come check it out!



Herb Garden Plant List

Brassica juncea var. japonica, Japanese Mustard Green. Brassicaceae.

Ferula asafoetida, Asafetida. Apiaceae.

Laurus nobilis, bay, bay laurel, sweet bay, sweet laurel. Lauraceae.

Lavandula sp., Lavender. Lamiaceae.

Melaleuca alternifolia, Australian Tea Tree. Myrtaceae.

Mentha arvensis var. piperascens, (syn. *M. arvensis var. japonica*), Japanese Field Mint. Lamiaceae.

Olea europaea, Olive tree. Oleaceae.

Pelargonium sp., Scented geraniums. Geraniaceae.

Pogostemon sp., Patchouli. Lamiaceae.

Polygonum odoratum (syn. *Persicaria odorata*), Vietnamese Coriander. Polygonaceae.

Punica granatum, Pomegranate. Punicaceae.

Tagetes lucida, Mexican mint marigold, Mexican tarragon. Asteraceae.

(Ed note: I compiled this list, so any Latin or botanical errors are mine, not Heidi's.)

Houston Arboretum & Nature Center

May 5 – Urban Nature Series

2–4 p.m. *Bromeliad Show and Sale*

May 6 – Nature Story Hour

10–11 a.m. *Ages 3–5*

May 12 – Urban Nature Series

2–4 p.m. *Butterflies and Hummingbirds*

May 13 – A Birdwatcher's Discussion

7–9 p.m. *Bird Watcher's Club. Free.*

May 14 – Naturalist Certification Class

7–9 p.m. *Intricately Bound: The Adaptive/Environment Connection*

May 19 – Urban Nature Series

2–4 p.m. *Men's Garden Club Show & Sale*

May 25 – Naturalist Explorers Class

9 a.m.–12 noon *Cities Beneath our Feet. Ages 5–12*

May 26 – Urban Nature Series

2–4 p.m. *The American Crow*

May 27 – Building closed

2–4 p.m. *The American Crow*

May 28 – Naturalist Certification Class

7–9 p.m. *Birds of Texas*

The Houston Arboretum & Nature Center is a 155-acre non-profit nature preserve with a mission to provide nature education and act as a sanctuary for native plants and animals. It is located only 4 miles west of downtown Houston at 4501 Woodway Drive. Grounds are open every day from 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. The Discovery Room inside the Nature Center is open every day except Mondays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and houses interactive educational exhibits including aquariums, touch screens, a 15 ft. tree model, and microscopes with TV monitor displays. Admission is free. For information, call (713) 681-8433 or visit <http://www.houstonnaturecenter.org>.

Garden Gifts News from our Outreach Gardens

By Kenneth Dorman

Happy Days! We have four of us working in the CCSC garden; **George Williams, Walter Baker** and now **Mike Hammer**, the husband of Master Gardener **Jinx Hammer**. Jinx is one of our Directors, a mainstay in the greenhouse and she has turned out (trained?) a good, hard working gardener in Mike.

The garden this year is much improved; cleaner, better organized with a superior selection of plants and a lot more of them. Additionally, we now have enough of us to work with the non-gardening volunteers that come to help with the harvest. Walter and Mike are not Master Gardeners at present, but I think they are going to attend the August class; at least that is what their wives say.

All of the corn and quite a few of the beans at both gardens failed to come up due, I suppose, to the continued cold weather so we replanted them. George redid the corn at CCSC and we are awaiting its development with great expectation. It seems he once won a statewide 4H corn-growing contest in Mississippi for the most prolific crop.

All the other plants are beginning to look as they should and we expect to begin picking beans the end of April followed by onions and potatoes in mid-May. Cucumbers and tomatoes will be close behind along with bell peppers, poblano and chili peppers, eggplants, French hybrid melons and finally the corn. It has seemed to be a long time coming, but warm weather appears to be here. Patience, according to a German proverb, is a bitter weed, but it has sweet fruit.

As beds become available (onion, potato, corn and tomato) we will begin planting sweet potatoes, cream and blackeye peas and okra to continue the harvest until fall. The garden at the Bonita Street House of Hope parallels the CCSC in content and development, with the same replacement crops planned. Rodney and his helpers take good care of the plants and work is required of me here.

We have an abundance of oranges on the two Satsuma trees and figs are appearing on trees in both gardens. Next year we

will also have pears and peaches.

Reader advice needed

Both gardens have been blessed with an absence of insect pests and disease for the most part, but we have had a few mysteries I would appreciate reader help with. First is the virus we had on all three varieties of squash at CCSC, second is a bell pepper that died. I dug it up and found a wet, slimy mass in the roots that had a terrible odor. The soil around the plant was not overly wet; any ideas?

And, we have begun finding small snails in the strawberries and lettuce in the fruit tree bed. This bed borders the back of some apartments that have a lot of weeds and they probably come from there. I don't want to use the regular slug and snail killers, as they don't taste good so I put out some iron phosphate, but have not seen much result yet. Any of you have any suggestions other than beer or other baits?

We also have a couple beds of fire ants. I treated them with a supposedly organic pesticide that they found quite tasty and then used some Amdro, which had about the same effect. Since the beds are in the fruit trees and not the garden I am going to use the Orthene next. I put some Roundup on the neighbor's weeds; I hope they don't mind.

A new volunteer gets his feet wet

Another church volunteer, **Duane Smith** has come to work and he will be of

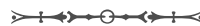
great assistance during the harvest and when we rework the beds each spring and fall. Poor man, he met me at the garden to look around and I put him right to work taking the row cover off the tomatoes while I worked in George's corn patch. I thinned the corn and transplanted some to areas that were bare and then did the old American Indian trick with the fish in the corn, only I used fish emulsion because I haven't caught enough fish the last two months to fertilize one stalk of popcorn.

An invitation to visit

I also planted four more peppers, one habanera, one cubanelle and two pasillio, to fill out an empty space in the fruit tree bed. The garden is completely full now and you should all come to see it early in May before we begin pulling onions and digging potatoes. It is absolutely beautiful and you will not get dirty. A garden built on asphalt does have a few advantages. It is never muddy, now that Walter and Mike have cleaned all the dirt out of the gutter, and weeds only grow in the cracks.

As Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "*Never lose an opportunity of seeing anything that is beautiful, for beauty is God's handwriting ^ a wayside sacrament.*" Peace and serenity to all of you.

Ralph Waldo Emerson said,
'Never lose an opportunity of seeing
anything that is beautiful,
for beauty is God's handwriting
— a wayside sacrament.'



Master Gardener *2* Master Gardener

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

Welcome to “Master Gardener to Master Gardener”. This email address (mg2mg@mac.com) is dedicated to connecting plants and people in a timely manner. You may be interested if you have plants to offer, would like to request plants or just don’t get enough email.

The idea is simple. I provide an email address for Master Gardeners who would like to exchange plants, ideas and resources on a one-to-one basis. I will forward, via BCC, your entire plant email message to everyone else on this list. Basically we’re networking. If we have a large response, I will automate.

Step One – Sign up

Sign up to be on the list by sending an email to mg2mg@mac.com. Send your name and how you would like me to contact you, if necessary: email and/or phone. Specify whether you want all your offers/requests distributed by email and/or the newsletter. Tami will try to list your offers/requests in the newsletter, if you want, but space availability will vary each month. Please, no plants in this very first email. You will get a reply with some guidelines such as those listed in Step Two.



Tip:

Not sure where to begin? Take a stroll through your yard. Do you have plants which need dividing or thinning? Someone else might be looking for those plants (and they may even dig ‘em for you! Free labor!)

Two easy steps to plant bliss:

- 1. Sign up at mg2mg@mac.com**
- 2. Send in your Offers and Requests**

Step Two – Start sharing

Email me (at mg2mg@mac.com) which plants you are...

•**Offering to give.** Please include in your offer, your name, your plant’s names and how you want the other master gardeners to contact you: such as email, phone, and/or mail; and

•**Requesting to get.** Same info. Your request could be for specific plants or for a general category.

It would be great to have plants available at meetings. I am not able to attend enough meetings to guarantee a table, so I am skipping this part of an exchange for now.

Here are requests & offers from two of our first participants. (*Ed note: there are more than 30 as we go to press.*) These offers and requests are numerous and diverse, so...

Step Three

Start connecting plants and people!

Teresa Byrne-Dodge

(713) 468-5528

To Offer:

- Louisiana iris (yellow), currently in bloom
- Katie ruellia (dwarf Mexican petunia), lots of volunteers all over the place that need a new home
- A running (not clumping) kind of small-leaved elephant ear that naturalizes really well in a tropical garden

All three plants are in the garden. Anyone interested should bring over a shovel and large plastic bag and help themselves. I live in the Memorial area, and my home phone is (713) 468-5528.

C.A. Williams

(281) 550-0006

To Offer:

- Asparagus Fern
- Mondo Grass
- Chrysanthemums (lavendar and yellow)
- Cannas (red or yellow)
- Rose Mallow (Hibiscus family)—pink with a red throat
- Mexican Bush Sage (S. Leucantha)
- Mexican Petunia
- Purple Heart
- Dutchman’s Pipe (seeds)
- Oxalis (Pink Woods Sorrel)

Plant Requests:

- Turks Cap, Boston Fern and English Ivy.
- Gingers
- Chinese Ground Orchid
- Oxblood Lily
- Red Spider Lily
- Hardy Red Amaryllis
- Obedient Plant
- Japanese Roof Iris
- Daylilies (preferably white, pink, yellow, or red)
- Native Passion Vine
- Varigated Potato Vine
- Dwarf Mondo Grass
- Wild Foxglove (Penstemon Cobaea)
- Butterfly Pea Clitoria Vine
- Rain Lilies

If interested, let me know either by email or give me a call at (281) 550-0006.

Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens

May Events

Monthly Gardening Workshop: Tropicals

Saturday, **May 4**, from 9 a.m. to noon, join Mercer staff and volunteers in an educational program on grooming and preparing tropical plants for planting outside after a winter inside a greenhouse.

Daylily Show

Sunday, **May 5**, from noon to 5 p.m., the **Cypress Creek Daylily Society**, an organization of daylily enthusiasts, presents a judged flower show featuring prize-winning daylilies.

Lunch Bunch: The Butterflies of Mercer

Wednesday, **May 8**, from noon to 1 p.m., bring a lunch and enjoy a program on the butterflies of Mercer by **Carlos Hernandez**, expert nature photographer.

Public Garden Tour

Saturday, **May 11**, from 10 a.m. to noon, join Mercer staff for a guided tour.

Garden Flower Arrangements: A Flower Arranging Class

Saturday, **May 18**, from 9 a.m. to noon. **Pat Hermes**, director of the Houston School of Floral Design. \$15 fee. Class size is limited and preregistration is required.

June Events

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.

Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens is a Harris County Precinct 4 facility 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 disability. Anyone requiring special assistance to participate in any program, or for more information, please contact Mercer at (281) 443-8731 or mercercarboretum@cp4.hctx.net.

LATIN CORNER

DREADFUL PESTO
Basilicus. Basil as pesto is almost as popular as pasta these days, but traditionally basil was an herb of dread and suspicion.

Culpeper wrote that it "is the herb which all authors are together by the ears about, and rail at one another, like lawyers."

Nicholas Culpeper,
Culpeper's Complete Herbal, 1813

basil'icus: princeley or royal

bicort'icus: having two barks

biflo'rus: having two flowers

bifo'lius: having or producing two leaves



Source: Gardener's Latin © 1992; International Code of Botanical Nomenclature 1993, 2000 \$60.G



Factoid: Did you know that Precinct 4 publishes a quarterly newsletter called **Parkscape**? To receive **Parkscape** free of charge, call the Public Affairs Department at (281) 893-3726, visit <http://www.cp4.hctx.net/publicaffairs/publications/paorders.htm>, or send your name and address to Harris County Precinct 4 Public Affairs, 1731 Hugh Road, Houston, Texas 77067. A PDF version of Parkscape is also available online at <http://www.cp4.hctx.net/Parks/images/psonline.pdf>

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

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Precinct 2 Satellite News

By Angela Chandler, Precinct 2 Coord.

In the garden, spring veggies are going in and coming up. **Dick Benoit** and his Monday helpers have got things looking neat and clean. We are having some problems with those pesky rabbits eating up all our beans as soon as they get 2 inches tall. At least they don't seem to like squash!

Johnny Jones has helped with much of the planting and still finds time to help in the perennial garden and the greenhouse. Johnny's work on the water feature is really coming along. This will soon be one of the highlights of the perennial garden. The Compost Pile is starting to look and work

like it should thanks to the efforts of **James Frantz** and **Paul Hicks**. They have planned to make a larger holding area so they can better manage garden refuse. James is tackling our fire-ants with organics. It's nice to work ant-free! **Neal Murray** and James Frantz have planned and executed the fruit tree makeover, and the first trees have been planted in the new wind rows. Neal has planned a redesign of the herb beds, so that is a project for the very near future.

The Perennial Garden looks better every time I walk through the gate. It's amazing how much work this group has

done. Friday workdays are fun and productive as **Janice Patrick, Paula Poynter, Kaye Courey, Kay Rose** and **Olivia Meyers** design and plant.

Kaye Courey received a donation of a rose garden! Yes, her friend and neighbor had to relocate a garden, and Kaye was able to bring many large bushes to our garden. They look very nice along the border of the perennial garden. Thank you, Kaye.

We enjoyed Mercer's **Suzanne Chapman** and her class on Container Gardening on First Wednesday. Suzanne brought many interesting plants and shared many ideas about plants for containers.

Mary McGowen brought her garden club out to visit recently. It was nice to have them tour the garden. There are some great First Wednesday's coming up. **Pat Mitrowski** has scheduled some good speakers, and lunch is always outstanding. Please join us!!

