

URBAN DIRT

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GARDEN LORE

by Pam Libby



At last, it is the lovely late fall season here in Houston and many of us are going back into our gardens after a long, hot summer, only to find we have neglected some of our garden areas. To my surprise, red ants had evaded my usually groomed flower and herb beds. It was then that I noticed that many of the old stories about natural plant insecticides did not seem to work on the tenacious red ants here in Houston.

My tansy bed had a healthy ant mound and my mint bed also had a large mound. This was contrary to everything I had heard about the mint family offering protection against insects. My "penny royale" had died out during the heat of the summer, so I was not able to judge its famous insect repellent properties.

How many of you have had luck with companion planting or old remedies that have worked for you (or did not work, it's important to know that too)? I'm planning to plant some garlic around my roses this fall and maybe also work some Epsom salts into the beds, I'll let you know the results. Feel free to write up a little note about your experiences using garden lore and put it in my box at the extension center or fax me at (713) 937-8203. Hopefully, we will have some trends show up that might work in Houston and perhaps we can even encourage someone to do a little bit of a formal (or informal) research based on our findings..

Things to do in November: Complete planting of your spring bulbs, except for tulips, which need 4-6 chilling in the refrigerator. Finish cleaning your beds and apply mulch for winter protection.

You can now seed:

Alyssum, baby's breath, Texas Bluebells, Bluebonnet, Calendula, Candytuft, Coreopsis, Daisy, Four O'clock, Hollyhock, Larkspur, Pansy, Petunia, Pinks, Poppy, Scabiosa, Snapdragon, and Viola.

"Veggies" you can plant: Beets, Cabbage sets, Chives, Onions, Parsley, Peas, Radishes and Spinach.

Have a wonderful Holiday Season!

NOV:11/17/98

Executive Board	5:30 p.m.
Dessert and Coffee	6:30 p.m.
General Meeting	7:00 p.m.

**SUBJECT: "HOUSTON'S
JAPANESE GARDEN"**

Speaker: Virginia Vargas, Japanese Garden Society

No Meeting in December

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!





PRESIDENT'S CORNER

by Joe Thompson, MG President

Please note: Due to time constraints, our president was unable to submit his article for this edition. However, we look forward to hearing from him in the Jan/Feb 1999 issue.

LITTLE SEEDS OF THOUGHT

from Wendell Biggers

Here are the yield figures from Wendell's Summer 1998 Garden (note -- this was a drought year):

Tomatoes: The winner was the "Carmello" tomato with a yield of 27.4 pounds per plant, second was "Champion" with a yield of 26.8 and third was "Goliath" with a respectable 26.2 lbs. per plant.

I planted a total of 107 tomato plants and had a total yield of 2,437.4 lbs. of tomatoes. The average yield per plant was 22.8, down from last year's 25 lb. yield per plant.

I had severe blossom end rot with "Bingo," and some blossom end rot with "Viva Italia."

Melons: The cantaloupe "Caravelle" gave the best yield by far at 125.9 lbs. per hill, it also had the best taste. The second best yield was the cantaloupe, "Carole" at 438.7 lbs per hill. I might add that this cantaloupe had a poor taste. The third highest yield per hill went to the watermelon, "Desert Storm" at 336.8 lbs. I planted a total of 2,093.4 lbs. of cantaloupe and 547.1 lb. of water melon.

I also planted 20 lbs. of La Sota red potato seed which yielded 130 lbs (with only one good rain).

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FROM THE ORCHARD . . .



by Yvonne Gibbs

Our crop of pears was very good this year. The dry summer reduced the incidence of fungal leaf, fire blight and other problems. The pears were pretty and unblemished. We were able to have a nice showing for our pear

outing in late August. We included fresh ripe Jujubes, Figs, and Muscadine grapes along with candied and dried jujubes, pears, and figs.

We are going to have a good harvest of luscious persimmons. We will do a persimmon tasting during our October 23 Technical program, in conjunction with NAFEX.

I was absent for 2 weeks from Sept 13 until the 28th. As fate would have it, my husband and I were given tickets to Hawaii by our children. We spent one week in Oahu on Waikiki Beach with Diamond Head in view and one week in Maui on Kaanapali Beach.

We explored both islands from helicopter, by car, and on an underwater ocean submarine. We walked up to the 10,023-foot high Haleakala crater on Maui, and down to 114 feet beneath the ocean on Waikiki. We took a sunset dinner cruise, swam in the ocean, walked for miles on the sunny beaches, and explored the rain forest with the waterfalls, wild fruit, and beautiful trees and flowers.

We watched hula dancers, men and women and enjoyed the relaxed atmosphere. We lived in shorts and bathing suits. It was a romantic place to be with incredible beautiful flowers everywhere. We ate pineapples until they ran out of our ears. It was the vacation of a life time for us. We took lots of pictures and have a video from the helicopter ride on Maui. I wanted to share my joy with all of you. It was too good not to.

I attended the German Heritage Garden Tour, Saturday, Oct 10th, it was wonderful.

We went to the Historic Ferdinand Lindheimer home on the banks of the Comal River. He is considered the father of Texas Botany. He began making collections of plants in the largely unsettled areas of East and Central Texas. Some of his collections are on view in the home. The home was built in 1852 and stayed in the hands of family members until it was restored in the 1960's. It's now a part of the New Braunfels Conservation Society.

The house is probably the best example of an early fechtwerk house still standing as it was built. Fechtwerk is the weaving of grape vine branches to form a base for the brick and concrete mix that is applied over them. The house never had an inside bathroom. They had an outside kitchen. It was a one bedroom house. The four children slept in a loft. The house was filled with original pictures of the family, and the gardens had plants still named after him.

We toured with the Rose Conservatory at 1300 Church Hill Road (old roses collected exclusively from Comal County and New Braunfels). Their rose garden had a central rose covered arbor leading to a raised gazebo which then connected to a covered pavilion. This has become a favorite site for weddings (funds to keep the garden going).

We were given a very interesting history by the retired County agent who has been entrusted with the care and development of the site. This was beginning to come under the care of the County Master Gardeners. They had just graduated their first class. They were our hosts and a very gracious group. They gave us tours at each spot along the way. They set up lunch for us at Landa Park under a big covered pavilion. We walked to the spot where the spring that feeds the Comal river flows.

We ended our plant quest at Schumacker's Hill Country Nursery and then boarded the bus for the return (with a quick pit stop at McDonalds). I ran behind to the Oak Ridge Smoke House for a loaf of their' homemade style cinnamon bread.

We thank our Comal County Coordinators, Florence and Lani for the wonderful job they did!

Mark Jan. 30, 1999 on your calendar for the Fruit Study Symposium and Fruit Tree Sale.

See you in the Orchard!

DOWN THE GARDEN PATH



A couple of our Master Gardeners and Extension Staff -- including : Bill Adams and Bob Midkiff were severely affected by Tropical Storm Francis back in September. They may need our help (and at least our understanding) restoring their landscapes.



Loyal Herman Ayers just underwent major surgery. He is feeling better and is on the road to recovery.



A big thanks to Diane Ballentine and all her helpers for coordinating both the reception for Dr. Pat Duncan, Mercer, and Tom's farewell reception. They did a great job!



MG Shelby Touchy has come on board to head up our local Junior Master Gardener Program. She has enlisted the help of MG Connie Maddox and they are very hard at work.



We had a tremendous turnout at the Market Garden Symposium on October 3rd. A big thank you to MG Volunteers: Jan Gisler, Pat Cole, Kapila Patel, Linda Estes and Bob Midkiff for all their hard work pulling this one off.



It was good to see MG Michael Bettler, who was speaking at the Market Garden Symposium. He did a great job! Also, Prema Kuratti had a lovely program with beautiful flowers and sumptuous treats.



Ask Yvonne Gibbs about her recent (well deserved) vacation to Hawaii. We're glad she's back though.



We got rave reviews about the recent Oct. 10, bus trip to New Braunfels. According to my sources, their Master Gardeners were most accommodating and helpful. Thanks to Frances Robeson for setting it all up!



Goodbye to Tom LeRoy, Extension Center Horticulturist, he is moving on to a job that will be nearer his home and therefore less of a commute. We will all miss him and hate to see him go. Good luck on your new job, Tom!



HAVE A HAPPY THANKSGIVING!