



November/December 2000  
Volume 9, Issue 6

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## Plant Sale & Gourd Show A Success!

*By Bill Adams – CEA Horticulture*

Thanks to all of the Master Gardeners that helped with the Fall Gourd Show and Plant Sale. Setting up tents/tables, moving plants, selling plants and then putting back the tents, etc. is just-plain-hard-work. We couldn't have done it without you.

Steve Wood & Co. with their bentwood trellises were a big hit! Such enthusiasm and then it came time to transport them home. I have a slide of two ladies tying their trellises into a VW convertible.

Linda Carlson and Frances Robeson told me gourds were hot and the folks really turned out to look and buy (I picked up a few presents myself). Exhibitors must have done well. They were asking us if we planned to have a gourd show next year.

The greenhouse crew produced some nice plants and Pat Cole is already talking about growing bigger and better plants for the next sale. The greenhouse is finally in better shape and we are beginning to refine our efforts in this facility.

Diane Ballentine and crew sold lots of wonderful daylilies, Glen Graves pedaled Louisiana iris, Dave Mason and Nel Barner sold herbs and Linda Gay from Mercer arboretum helped folks select some beautiful gingers and other

tropicals. Anne O'Neil has taken on book sales (a really big job because we sell tons of books) and Ken Dorman was the plant sale chairman—hip-hip-hooray! Marge Chambers proved she can cook as well as clean—we even had help from a 4-H Ambassador, Stacy Perkins.

Fortunately we also made some money and thus we will be able to grow more than nutgrass in the Millennium garden.

## President's Thoughts

*By Kenneth Dorman, MG President*



By the time you read this the Fall Sale and Gourd Extravaganza will be over and, even though I had to turn this in before the sale I know everything was a huge success. I'm also sure we had a lot of wonderful volunteers that not only gave freely of their time and talents, but also bought a lot of new plants. So, thank you very much.

Speaking of plants my **DICTIONARY FOR WEEDPULLERS, SLUGCRUSHERS & BACKYARD BOTANIST** describes *annuals*, as any plant that dies before blooming and *perennials* as any plant, which had it lived, would have bloomed year after year.

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*Gourds, if you bought any, are described as brightly colored bottle-shaped vegetables that, when dried and polished, provide decorative touches in homes in remote rural areas where lava lamps, zebra-stripe pillows, velvet paintings, and rotating mirrored balls are often unavailable.*

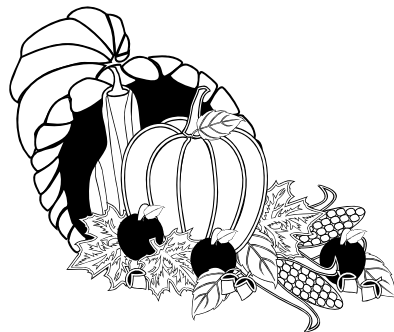
How about the new red wagons we had for the sale! Are they uptown or what? Mention of uptown reminds me that we have requests from the Upper Kirby District and the Christian Community Service Center for help with gardens. They are both located on Richmond in the Timmons, Buffalo Speedway, Kirby area. CCSC is a coalition of churches whose mission is to serve the poor, hungry, homebound, disabled and otherwise needy. We helped them build a vegetable garden that will provide fresh produce for their pantry and we will continue to monitor and help maintain this garden. My thanks to the two MG interns, Alisa Rogillio and Larry Martin that came to assist at CCSC. They were great with the 50 young volunteers we had. The Upper Kirby District has gotten approval from the Houston Parks Department to renovate Levy Park and they have asked for advice and help from HCMGA. These and others like our Precinct 2 project and El Centro de Corazon need a big influx of new MG volunteers. The Board of Directors has voted to set up a committee to oversee and act on new requests so we also need members to sit on this committee. We hope to train a Master Gardener class next year at the Upper Kirby location, but until then we need help. Please give positive consideration to helping wherever you can. There will not be a lot of actual digging and hauling for a while and the location of CCSC and Upper Kirby District should be appealing to many of you.

Jean Fefer's husband Morton, obtained a \$500.00 grant for the HCMGA from Exxon-Mobil. It was used immediately on renovations and repairs for the greenhouse. Many thanks to Morton and Exxon-Mobil. Jean, as you probably know, is 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President, Education Committe chairperson and co-commander of the greenhouse.

I hope more of you have had the opportunity to see the Millennium Garden during the sale and before meetings. It is truly magnificent both in visual pleasure and in the fact that so many different people contributed to so many different aspects. The only thing they have in common is their friendship, good humor AND sweat. The building of the Tower of Babel was probably like this, only on a smaller scale.

To go back to getting volunteers to work after graduation and in areas other than at the Extension Service complex, do any of you have any suggestions? How do we do it? What needs to be offered that we are not offering? Surely there are some retired people out there that want a meaningful avocation to occupy some of their time. Call me at 713/785-9122 or e-mail me at [kendorman@gateway.net](mailto:kendorman@gateway.net). Even criticism would be welcome right now. Also remember we need a boss for the Spring Symposium.

Well, that's enough. I hope you are enjoying good gardening and pleasant times outdoors. Come to the next Hamburger Tuesday, it is a wonderful gathering with lots of good fellowship.



## Upcoming Events

**November 21, 2000**

**Extension Office  
Master Gardener Monthly Meeting**

6:30 p.m. - Desserts  
7:00 p.m. - "Bromeliad Culture"  
by Odean Head

**January 16, 2001**

**Extension Office  
Master Gardener Monthly Meeting**

6:30 p.m. - Desserts  
7:00 p.m. - "USDA Guidelines/Soil Food Web"  
by John Ferguson of Nature's Way Resources

**November 4, 2000**

**10:00 a.m., Extension Office  
Sites of Houston Tour**

Visit the Orange Show, Beer Can House, Art Car Museum, The Flower Man and Mr. Porters OK Corral. For more information call Jean Fefer 713-467-0231.

**Tuesdays Mornings**

**8:00, Extension Office  
Tuesdays Workdays**

Get your volunteer hours in, make friends and enjoy the garden.

**First Tuesday of the Month  
Lunch, Extension Office  
Hamburger Tuesday**

After a rewarding morning of activity in the garden, enjoy a home-cooked burger and an informative presentation.

Nov. - Linda Gay

Vines for Houston

Dec. - Glen Olsen

Natives for Houston

## News from the Speakers Bureau

by Nancy Davis



Karen Breneman deserves a huge "Thank You" for all the years given to the Speaker's Bureau. Thank you, Karen, from all your friends who know about

the endless hours that you have given to projects. Karen is a tireless volunteer that will continue her work in other areas of ecology. Good Luck, Karen and have fun. We will be watching and applauding you and other Master Naturalists.

The phone at my house has been ringing since I said "yes" to Karen and assignments have been numerous. Master Gardeners are great people and are willing to help. Thanks to those of you, who have accepted speaking assignments.

If you would be willing to speak to small groups, please call me at 281-398-2089 and I will add you to the Speaker's Bureau. The slide presentations are really easy to present and garden groups are wonderful and interesting people. My life has been enriched by taking this new experience and learning new information is fun. So start having fun by giving the gift of information - gardening information.



## A Welcome Visitor

By Frances Robeson

"You have a visitor," my next door neighbor said in greeting as I opened my front door in response to the ringing of the doorbell. Immediately I saw that he did not mean himself as he directed my gaze to a giant butterfly.

"A tiger swallowtail!" I said in excitement. "It is a regular visitor to that little tree." That little tree is a Mexican Bauhinia. Its small white, feathery flowers are a favorite nectar source for this butterfly in my garden. This same plant grows in the Butterfly/Bee Garden at the Extension Service and is much visited by tiger swallowtails there also. Planting one of these small trees will almost certainly guarantee that you too will have this large butterfly as a guest in your garden.

I got my tree on a Tuesday a few years ago when Horticultural Agent Tom LeRoy was cleaning out the greenhouse. It was growing in a four-inch plastic pot. I later bumped it to a gallon pot and finally found it a permanent home in the courtyard garden by my front door. It has done well there in spite of several winter freezes that killed its top branches.

This bauhinia germinates quickly from its bean type seed (it is a legume after all). I have never seen one for sale in a nursery, but it is easily available to Master Gardener volunteers either from gathering ripened seed or by digging a small plant from beneath the mother plant where a good many are found throughout the year. Call it just another perk for being a volunteer.



## Herbside

By Nel Barner

Would you believe, that as I write this, is STILL unbearably HOT? The number one topic for all us Master Gardeners this September has been the high temperatures and humidity. That makes it nearly impossible to focus two months in advance and write something for November. For the Herb Garden, that means Calendulas, Johnny-Jump-Ups, Violas, Tat-soi with a little Cilantro thrown in. On the bare wall, where MG's now sit mopping their sweaty brows and chugging bottled ice water, there will one day be Pennyroyal, Lemon Balm and Conical Mint. Maybe even Charlie Reass' Aloe Vera will be sending up another flower stalk in time. Come on cool temps!!

What plants fared well under such high

heat so we can plan for our own herb gardens next summer? Well, if you need tall background specimens, try *Hibiscus sabdariffa*, Turk's Cap or the two-toned pink amaranth. Ever since we put some in the Crafts and Color bed the first year, we've had volunteers popping up every summer since. Need a few seeds for next year?

Our most talked about individual, of course, is the Asian Culinary bed's Tea Tree. It has been trimmed back a few times, but it keeps on growing, due to 3 mild winters in a row. Quite something to see, but don't look at its base - our Aussie friend has grown through its pot and 'down under!'

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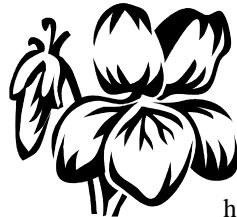
No one can resist its soft, aromatic needles. It reminds conifer lovers of cedar trees. Tea tree oil is very powerful stuff. Just a li'l dab'l do ya' for fire ant bites, relieving swelling, itching and infection. It's also anti-fungal. Someone told me to try it on my toenail fungus. The oil got rid of it all right. It also got rid of the toenail - by dissolving it! Headlines: "Harris County Extension discovers perfect fire ant killer - in own back yard. Oil from Tea Tree in Herb garden found to completely dissolve ants' exoskeletons, burning them to death" or "Harris County Extension fights fire ants with fire - tea tree oil from own specimen plant."

Basils, as always, have done well, although the heat tends to fade the purple varieties. The Holy Basil and the African Blue are in competition for attracting the most bumble bees. If you have any Basils near Turk's Cap or salvias, watch for wars between bees and hummingbirds. The hummers are quite the warriors.

Not too many creeping ground covers have done well. Most have met 'unthymely' deaths. The Mini Bocapajan, on the other hand, is thriving. It's duking it out with the

'plant-from hell'. Maybe good will triumph over evil?

Martha Stewart has answered a question many have asked: what part of the Daylily is used as an herb? On one of her shows she and a guest chef breaded and stir-fried daylily buds. The chef said they are a part of oriental cuisine. Which oriental cuisine, she didn't say, but I think it's Thai. Gotta try the recipe next spring.



Wouldn't zucchini squash be considered herbal if we use this criterion? Lots of folks eat the opened blossoms (so much more attractive!). If more people did so, zucchini would no longer be ridiculed. Why? Eating the blossoms will lessen the number of fruit the plant bears. Fewer zucchini mean less zucchini sliced, diced, casseroled, zucchini bread, zucchini this, zucchini that . . . and people will appreciate it more. Gone will be the sudden knock on the door by neighbors with a bumper crop to give away - to YOU!

Maybe we should do the same thing with sweet violets. Let's use them more in desserts - sugared violets in cakes, cookies and candies! Violets aren't so 'sweet' once they start self-sowing into your lawn. They can only be eradicated by the strongest herbicides or by hand. My mother and I spent years weeding our back yard to no avail. The seed pods explode underground or at ground level, so weeding can actually help spread them. During droughts, the grass would die out the violets stayed green. Next door neighbors envied us, so we gladly gave away tons of violets for their yards. And they did the same with their neighbors. Haverford, Pennsylvania must be the sweet violet capital of the world by this time.

**A Note from the Editor...**  
We would love to have submissions about gardening, yourself or fellow Master Gardeners for publication. If you would like to submit an article to the Urban Dirt, please email it as text to [c-cammack@tamu.edu](mailto:c-cammack@tamu.edu).  
  
Non - electronic submissions should be typed on white paper using large fonts, with no extraneous markings. Handwritten articles are also welcome. Mail, fax or drop these items in the Editor's Box at the Extension Office.  
  
The next issue will be for Jan/Feb 2001. The submission cutoff date is December 1, 2000.

**HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION**

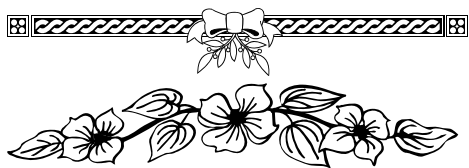
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## The Flower Garden

by Jennifer Warren

As our weather begins to cool, we in the annual flower garden are eager to get our hands dirty. Interestingly enough most of us wear gloves. But yes, we are happier workers when the weather is at a nice 78 degrees. Even the flowers like the cooler weather. However, we did have some eye-catching plants that loved the summer heat. The biggest was the Mexican Sunflower--Tithonia. It truly looked like a jungle out there. This plant grew almost a foot a week with a maximum of 15'. So all of you that want this giant need to watch out. Every year this plant comes back twice as thick as the year before.

Tithonia does have its good qualities. The flowers are a bright orange and the butterflies absolutely love it. We have found that weeds have a hard time growing underneath the big foliage. The solution to the extreme size of this plant is to get the newly developed Tithonia "Fiesta Del Sol". This is an All-American Selection (AAS) Winner. It is the first dwarf Mexican sunflower. The maximum height gets no taller than 3'. We planted it this summer and it did pretty well for its first year.

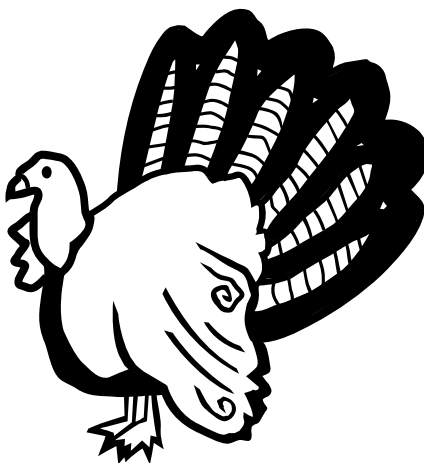
The dwarf variety that surprised us all was also on the All-American Selection list--Dianthus "Melody Pink". We planted this in early summer. All of us were skeptical about this plant making it through the summer. This plant was awesome. Not only did it make it through the summer but, it bloomed all summer long and into the fall. The flowers got to a height of 2', which are great for cutting to bring indoors.

For all you Cosmos fans out there the AAS has selected Cosmos "Cosmic Orange" as a winner. This plant was more compact than the usual cosmos you find in this area. It got about 2'tall. The flowers are bright orange 2" blooms. We had no problems with this plant. It died back in the midsummer but came back just as good for a second show. It also bloomed well into the fall.

Most everything else in the garden tried very hard to survive. We were having problems with our sprinkler system, but with the help of two wonderful Master Gardeners we are back in business. Many Thank You's to Clyde Cannon and Murray Kast. We all appreciate the work you did in that scorching heat.

More news--the cylinder garden will be moving into the flower garden. We welcome the cylinder garden to join the many flowers that wow us every week.

In December and January, we are going to have a couple of small projects that would help make the garden a more inviting place to visit. A sitting bench and an arbor are on the agenda. If you are interested in getting involved in the flower garden, come one Tuesday morning. We have a great time. And you never know who you will make friends with. Until next time-keep planting flowers.



## Web Surfin'



by Tom H. Robb, Jr.

A couple of weeks ago I had an e-mail from one of our members wanting to know how to save all of the great web addresses that she was collecting. I suggested that she 'Bookmark' them into her web browser or, in the case of Microsoft Explorer, save them in 'Favorites'. In the past I have received a number e-mails asking how to use the 'bookmark' feature so I thought that for this issue I might jot down a few things about this wonderful way of saving Internet addresses. I know that most of you know about 'Bookmarks' but there are a few things that you can do that you may not realize are possible. I use Netscape for my primary browser but for the most part you will be able to do essentially the same things if you use Microsoft Explorer. The main difference is that Netscape saves 'Bookmarks' and Explorer saves 'Favorites'.

Whenever you look through a reference book and find items that you want to be able to return to, you insert a bookmark. By the same token, when you come across a WebPage that you want to be able to return to, you 'Bookmark' it. Try any of the following:

- Use your mouse to click the 'Bookmark' icon and then click 'Add Bookmark'.

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- Press <Ctrl +D> to bookmark the current page
- On the page that you want to 'Bookmark', drag the 'Location' icon over the 'Bookmark' icon and release the mouse.
- On the page that you want to 'bookmark', right click your mouse on a blank area and select 'Add Bookmark'
- To 'Bookmark' a link on any page, drag the link from the page over the bookmark icon and release the mouse.
- To 'bookmark' a link, right-click the link and select 'Add Bookmark'

Frames is a little trickier. If you want to mark the frame, right-click in an empty space in the frame you want and select 'Add Bookmark'. If you want to mark a link within a frame, right-click the link and select 'Add Bookmark'.

Using any of the techniques above will place the bookmark you have chosen at the bottom of your bookmark list.

Many websites use extremely long and complicated addresses. By using the bookmark feature you eliminate any chance of copying this address wrong and particularly it relieves you of the trouble of keying in such an address. And to retrieve a page you only have to do one of the following:

- Press <Ctrl+B> and the Bookmarks window will appear. Then select the bookmark for the page you want to go to and double-click it.
- Click 'Bookmark' and select the page you want to go to. Remember, your last bookmark chosen will be at the bottom of the list.

The procedures used thus far will save the address of your pages but since each address is added at the bottom of the list as they are saved, the list can become long and it may be difficult to remember what page each address is for. Fortunately there is a method for

organizing your bookmarks by using existing folders and/or creating new ones with a description of the type of page that is listed inside. For example, you might want to create a folder called 'Gardening' and file your garden WebPage in this folder. You can even get more selective and under 'Gardening' create other folders such as 'vegetable' or 'Plumerias' or 'herbs'.

In Netscape you can create a folder this way:

- Open your 'Bookmarks' (as described above) and select 'Edit Bookmarks.'
- In your list of bookmarks decide where you want your folder to be. It will be directly below the item you chose so highlight the item.
- Click on 'file' and select 'New Folder', enter a name for the folder, such as 'Gardening'. Optionally you can enter a description but it's not necessary. Click OK.
- If you have a bookmark elsewhere in the list that you would like to be in the new folder you can drag it from where it currently is located into the folder and then release the mouse button.
- Click the Close ( X ) button to close the window.

Websites are like people. They often move and change addresses. The postoffice will usually forward mail for a period of time after which the change of address is gone. Usually, when a website changes there is a change of address for a period of time, after which search routines may or may not find the address. So you need to keep up with your 'Bookmarks'. One way would be to periodically click on each of them every so often. This would work but if your list of bookmarks is very long it could take a lot of time and effort. There is an easier way. Let Netscape do the checking for you so you don't spend time visiting Web pages which haven't had changes since you last looked at them. Simply:

- Open 'Bookmarks' and click 'Edit Bookmarks'
- Open 'View' and select 'Update Bookmarks'.
- Decide whether you want Netscape to check all bookmarks or just selected ones.
- Select 'Start Checking'. Netscape checks each bookmark by attempting to connect with the website. This may take some little time depending upon the speed of your modem and the number of bookmarks to be checked.
- When Netscape completes the check it tells you so. Click OK.

After this check, you may notice some changes in your Bookmark list. Pages that have changed information will show a highlighted icon while bookmarks that could not be checked will be marked with a question mark. Try opening those with question marks and if you fail to connect, simply delete them by right-clicking the bookmark and selecting 'Delete Bookmark'. Hope this saves you some time and effort and...

Happy surfen'!!



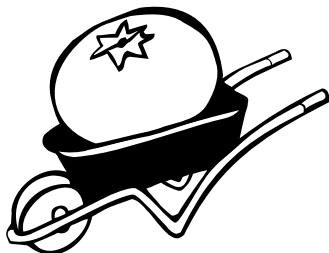


# The Biggers Y2K Summer Garden Results

by Wendell & Barbara Biggers

## Tomatoes

Our goal is to average 50# of production per tomato plant. Big Beef variety made it - 48.6# per plant during the season and 9.6# per plant of green tomatoes - TOTAL of 58.2# per plant - a record for us. Other good ones according to the Biggers are: Champion (an okay variety), Big Beef, Goliath, Early Goliath and Beefy Boy.



Heat tolerant tomato varieties such as Sun Master and Heat Wave II were tested with poor results. Therefore, there will be no more testing of these varieties by the Biggers.

## Bush Green Beans

Contender variety is the most versatile and productive. Derby is okay.

## Long Bean

Tried some seeds of the Russian heirloom climbing LONG bean. It makes pods 12 to 18 inches long - good eating as snap beans or stir fry.

## Okra

We prefer the velvet varieties - not Clemson or the new hybrids.

## Cantaloupes

We had a record production of 2,000 pounds. In 2001 the Biggers plan to plant the Caravelle variety and the Mainstream variety from Wilhite Seed.

# MASTER GARDENER PLANT EXCHANGE CORNER

by Jamie Sejman

Anneliese Unterharnscheidt HAS a 3 ft. tall holly tree/shrub looking for a good home. The holly has spiny leaves, is frost hardy and drought tolerant and can be trained to treeshape early by clipping bottom branches or left in its present pyramidal shape. Expect red berries. It's in the ground now, ready for digging up in cooler weather. Home phone 713-669-0553 (leave message).



Ginger Geist HAS the following plants/cuttings: Giant (Mex.) Turks Cap red/pink, Mock Orange, Inland Sea Oats, Wedella, Algerian Ivy (large leaf English), Boston Fern, Airplane green or variegated and Philodendron. Ginger also HAS the following seeds: Texas Star Hibiscus and Inland Sea Oats. Home phone 713-973-9295 or e-mail dragonfly~swbell.net.

Jamie Sejman HAS the following plants: Morning Glory Tree - lavender, Pretoria (Bengal Tiger) Canna - orange and Canna - salmon/pink. Home phone 281-894-8615 before 6 p.m. or e-mail sejman@netropolis.net.

Ginger Geist WANTS the following plants for her shady property with a few spots of sun: Gingers, Natives, Perennials, Shade plants, Ferns other than Boston and Bulbs that naturalize. She specifically WANTS: Amaryllis - red, Persian Shield, Variegated Monkey Grass or Liriope, Rain Lilies, Chinese Ground Orchid and Star of Bethlehem. Home phone 713-973-9295 or e-mail dragonfly@swbell.net.

If you would like to list your plant requests in the next newsletter, please send me an e-mail: sejman@netropolis.net or phone 281-894-8615 before 6 p.m.

## Master Gardener Coordinator Resigns...

Debbie Mendieta our long-time Master gardener Coordinator has tendered her resignation. Debbie has put in many hours of hard work with the Master Gardeners and the Extension Office. She will be missed. Good Luck to Debbie in her future endeavors. Volunteers will be needed to help cover Debbie's duties in her absence. Contact Stephanie at the Extension Office if you can be of assistance.





# Hamburger Tuesday Update

*By Mary Ann Wagner*

After Lou Jacob's wonderful presentation in August, I hope everyone has Plumerias that are blooming. He shared his secrets to inducing this exotic plant to produce those beautiful flowers that remind us of the magical islands of Hawaii.

Mary Sacilowski presented a program on worm composting in October. Not only did she bring us a great deal of information, but shared her worms with anyone who was interested in taking one home. Vermicomposting has

become popular and anyone who has purchased this compost knows it is very expensive. This is a great in-home project.

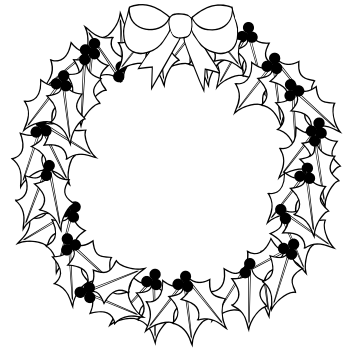
In November, Linda Gay will discuss vines for the Houston area. This should be very interesting to the Master Gardeners who participated in Steve Woods bentwood trellis classes during our gourd show and plant sale. Linda is one of our favorite speakers and always presents an outstanding program.

Glenn Olsen of the Native Plant Society will be with us in December. He will be discussing native grasses and plants that do well in our area. Glenn always inspires you to try to make your own garden more environmentally friendly. You will find yourself considering the

birds, butterflies, bees and other small creatures when you garden.

Our speakers in 2001 will cover many new topics. We hope to have programs on herbs, native hibiscus, carnivorous plants, butterfly gardening and container plants.

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



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