

# UrbanDirt

IN COOPERATION WITH THE TEXAS COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

## How Does Your Garden Grow?

Reprinted from 'Connections' a quarterly publication of the Christian Community Service Center.

The Community Garden continues to prosper due to the nurturing of CCSC volunteers, the involvement of the **Harris County Master Gardener Association**, and the hospitality of our host site, Central Presbyterian Church. Over 3,200 pounds of organic fruit and vegetables were harvested and distributed to clients through our Emergency Services food pantry last year. But what goes on "behind the scenes" to make this venture a success? It takes dedicated partners.

Community Garden volunteers are among our most energetic and devoted! Their talented hands add compost to beds, transfer seedlings, arrange tomato cages, pull up pesky weeds, and much more! We are particularly grateful for these wonderful folks when the rain is unpredictable or the thermometer bubbles over 98 degrees! Our garden simply wouldn't be as fruitful without the **Harris County Master Gardener Association**. In 2002, this charitable organization donated over \$800 as well as hundreds of plants and seeds. **HCMGA** members contributed hundreds of volunteer hours, lending their extensive expertise to benefit CCSC clients. It was Central Presbyterian Church that originally offered the vision for the garden, and dedicated their space, tools, and water to bring this project to life! Three years later they continue to support us in countless ways.

This year, CCSC will see two new apple trees standing amidst the figs, pears and oranges. We will see continued success with lettuce, cucumbers, melons, squash, peppers and much more. The **Master Gardeners** are continually reevaluating our plant list to accommodate the needs and preferences of clients. We pray that God will continue to smile on the Community Garden as it helps feed the hungry in our midst.



photo by Ken Dorman

# President's Thoughts

By Virginia Joiner

The expression "as seen through the eyes of children" took on real meaning for me recently. I took a group from the new class of Master Gardeners through the gardens on their first day. While I was telling them about the many different areas, I thought of how all of this must appear to them. I began to see it as if it were my first time. The gardens are truly beautiful and represent many volunteer hours. We are rewarded over and over by the time we share with other Master Gardeners and by the results of our work in all of the gardens that fall under the canopy of the Master Gardener Association. The gardens at the Extension Center have come such a long way in the past three years due to your volunteer spirit. The flood of 2002 only made us more determined to succeed and overcome the diversity of our gulf coast climate.

There are many other ways the gardens and our volunteer time reward us. The groups and single individuals that come to tour the gardens help to expand our knowledge as well as their own. When groups of children come through the garden it is an exciting and fun filled time for all of them. Everything is so fresh and new to them. We need to take the time to see the gardens and our other endeavors through the eyes of children and to enjoy the rewards of being a volunteer.

My 5-year-old granddaughter, Catherine, was visiting recently. As we both like to swing we were sharing time in our favorite way. She told me how much she liked the ponds and my flowers. Some of the flowers are a result of seeds from her mother's garden. Catherine brought them to me and I let her sprinkle them in my garden so that we could enjoy them together. The bees, butterflies, hummingbirds and our beautiful red dragonflies were adding color and activity to the scene. She looked up at me and said, "Grandma, your garden is Jurassic Park III. These shared times with a future Master Gardener are priceless treasures.

**Susan Russell**, County Extension Director, after 33 years of service to the Extension Service, retired on August 30<sup>th</sup>. At her retirement reception, on behalf of the Harris County Master Gardener Association, I presented her with a beautiful garden bench. We wish her well in her retirement and hope that she will enjoy many hours contemplating her garden from her new bench. Her absence at the Extension Center will be felt by all of us. She has been very supportive of our programs and her door was always open.

Wear your smiles and I will see you in the gardens.



## Harris County Master Gardener Association

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## 2003-2004 Board of Directors

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**CEA - Horticulture** ..... Carol Cammack  
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**Horticulture Secretary** ..... Becky Deasy  
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**Volunteer Coordinator** ..... Scott Hume  
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**Gulf Coast Fruit Study Group**... Yvonne Gibbs  
(713) 462-7052

**Hospitality Committee** ..... Bea Patterson

**Membership** ..... Tom Robb  
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**Publicity** ..... Linda Carlson  
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**Urban Dirt** ..... Carol Cammack  
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# Michael's Corner...

By Michael Morrison

## Spring Bulbs

It is that time of the year to dig into the ground and put something in there and cover it up! One of my favorites are bulbs. Talk about maintenance free!

Narcissus is my favorite and old heirlooms do wonderful here in Houston. I remember a few years ago looking at some old home sites in the Nacogdoches area. You could tell exactly where the house used to be because of the bulbs coming up in the old flower beds surrounding where it was.

*Narcissus tazetta* does great anywhere south of I-10 and on the coast. It blooms early and is a paper white that graces the landscape with its white color. *Tazetta italicus* is a creamy flower with a yellow cup and is another heirloom. Talk about a cold hardy Narcissus, well 'Grand Primo' is a great one. It has petals that overlap, with a deep green foliage. It blooms in February with clusters of creamy-white, intoxicatingly fragrant blooms. 'Grand Primo' is several hundred years old and is adapted to all parts of the state from Dallas/Shreveport and south. It is sterile so it only spreads by division.

Daffodils like 'Ice Follies' have one yellow trumpet type flower and narrow blue green foliage. They need full sun. Then there is the wild pseudo narcissus that can naturalize on its own. Mrs. Beesly in Nacogdoches has won several awards for best home because in the winter, she just puts away the lawnmower and her entire three acre yard is full of Narcissus. One year I helped her divide and replant the entire yard full. She is incredible and her yard is breathtaking. As you drive by all you see is yellow.

The Texas Star Jonquil, *Narcissus x intermedius* blooms in February with clusters of small yellow color and a fabulous fragrance. 'Sweet Pea' is a deep yellow colored Jonquil that has fragrant clusters. Then there is *Narcissus jonquilla* called 'Sweetie' with its tiny flowers and a fragrance like honeysuckle. The most common in the industry is the Campernelle which is half daffodil and half Jonquil. It is the toughest and the most common in East Texas. Greg Grant told me the best way to begin bulb planting is to throw them over your shoulder and plant them where they land and then plant warm season perennials around them. Remember, after they bloom to let the foliage grow out, and do not mow until tax day so the next years flower will be there for you to enjoy.

**Anne O'Neil** likes the *Sprekelia formosissima* 'Orient Red', the spider lily *Hymenocallis Johnsonii amaryllis*, and the *Leucojum astivum*. The *Leucojum* know as 'Snowflakes' is fine for our climate. It will take sun or shade and will thrive in damp, heavy soils. It flowers in spring and is one of my favorites too. Other great bulbs, according to **Carol**, are all of them. So many bulbs, so little space to plant them!

Let's not forget the St. Joseph's lily. A wonderful heirloom plant from the Amaryllis family dating back to 1799. It is cold hardy and has red flowers with a white stripe. How about the *Gladiolus byzantinus* with its deep green stalks of leaves and blossom curves with a show stopping magenta color. Another favorite of mine is the Zephyranthes rain lily, and crinums too.....So many bulbs!

If you missed the chance to buy bulbs at the Chandler Arboretum sale a few weeks ago in Baytown, or either of the Master Gardener sales, you will have another opportunity at Bulb Mart October 9-11th.



Rain Lily *Haibranthus robusta*

photo by Michael Morrison

# HCMGA Volunteer Opportunities

By Scott Hume, Volunteer Coordinator

The **"Bucket Brigade"** -- that group of strange people who collect and cut up the 5 gallon buckets into the cylinders that are provided to the schools has had some interesting additions. **Larry Brouwer** who has been working the table top saw to cut the 1000 or so buckets we have each semester has been joined by **Dianna Bernsen** who has shown an amazing comfort working with a table top saw! So much for stereotypes. We still need someone to volunteer to go to Blue Bell Creameries to pick up the buckets.

The **Hospitality Committee** which has been led for so many years by Bea Patterson is still in need of someone to step forward to take her place. C'mon guys. It's an important job that needs to be filled!!

Another **"Downtown" Volunteer Opportunity?** Today Michael and I go on a "site visit" to Hermann Park. The Friends of Hermann Park has asked for Master Gardener volunteers to help out in all the gardens around Hermann Park as well as in their greenhouse. If we like what we see today I will get back to you with a more detailed description, contact numbers, etc. Stay tuned.

And Now... And Now... And Now... No, it's not "Slime in the ice machine" but almost as gross...How many know what Slime Flux is or what you can do about it? Better still, do you want to know how you should really feed your trees? Or what pruning of those Oaks and Pines is really necessary? Well, that's the purpose of our new "study group." The **Tree Study Group** has had its first meeting – with a terrific slide show by Bill Adams – and is scheduled to meet again at 6:30 PM on **Thursday the 16<sup>th</sup> of October**. We've been lucky enough to get **Lannie Dreesen**, an incredibly interesting Arborist/Forester to talk to us about care and pruning of mature trees. Y'all come, heah!

As usual we have areas that are still in urgent need of help... **Assistant Coordinators** still needed for the following Gardens

**Herb Garden:** Ivana Shumberg

**Vegetable Garden:** David Parish

**Water Smart Garden:** Bob Midkiff

If you have ideas, comments or need more information about any volunteer activity please contact me at: [oshume@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:oshume@ag.tamu.edu), (281) 855-5635.

# Volunteers Desperately Needed for the Speakers Bureau

By Beth Grunden

If you are a gardener, want to share your knowledge, get your volunteer hours, and have fun, we could use you for the Speakers' Bureau. People call daily to request speakers for their garden club, church group, or civic organization. This may be for a daytime, evening, or (occasionally) a weekend talk. Although this is a volunteer job, it is one way that the Master Gardeners make some money for equipment and programs, while providing a useful service to the community. Since neither Mercer nor Precinct 2 has a speakers' bureau, we get calls from all over and often have trouble filling requests.

Volunteers may speak as often as they like, even just twice a year, and may always turn down a request. You do not need to be an expert to be a speaker. Requirements are that you are enthusiastic about your subject, like to speak to groups, are willing to learn to use the audiovisual equipment, and willing to learn to use the MG's slide or video programs or put together your own program(s) on topics such as trees for Houston, bulbs, vegetables, tropicals, native plants, fall color, water conservation, etc.

The Speakers' Bureau has slide projectors and a LCD projector and laptop for PowerPoint presentations. You may prefer to give talks without audiovisual aids and just using your own cuttings or plant materials, etc. Whatever your interests or presentation method, we can use you.

Speakers usually wish to travel in their own area of town and speak only on specific topics of interest. Therefore, some speakers are used more frequently than others, as fewer requests come in from some areas or for some topics. We particularly need speakers who live in the Northwest area, in Katy, or in Southwest Houston, or will travel to other parts of Houston. We try our best to respect all speakers wishes in regard to topic, time of day, and area of town.

Interested? call **Beth Grunden** at 713-461-7159 or email [egrunden@houston.rr.com](mailto:egrunden@houston.rr.com). Please help!

# Upcoming HCMGA Events

## Bear Creek Monthly Meetings

On **October 7**, the **Hamburger Tuesday** program on 'The Blackwood Educational Institute' will be given by **Catherine Conlon**. Created and inspired by Permaculture Designer Cath Conlon, Blackwood offers students a bridge between the indoor school classroom and the outdoor classroom as well as adult workshops and corporate and private retreats in a peaceful, natural setting. Catherine gives a great program on the plants and wildlife you can expect to see at the Institute as well as an overview of the programs they offer. **Hamburgers** will be served at 11:30ish and the program will begin around noon.

**The Gulf Coast Fruit Study Group** will be meeting **October 7** at 7:00pm. **Rick Matt** will be speaking on Asian Persimmons. Over the past several years, Rick has established 22 acres of fruit trees on his Northwest Houston property, including more than 1000 persimmons. **Bob Randall**, of Urban Harvest will also give a presentation Citrus for the Gulf Coast

The **monthly HCMGA meeting** on **October 21** will feature our own **Bill Adams'** take on **Fall Gardening**. As you all know, Bill is an excellent speaker who always brings us interesting, useful information. Don't miss this opportunity for an enjoyable learning experience. Desserts will be served at 6:30 and the program will begin at 7:00 pm. Our meetings are always open to the public, so bring a friend!

The **November 18th** monthly meeting will be our annual **Potluck dinner**. Mark your calendars and get out your recipe books now so you'll be ready for this tasty event! **Barney Lipscomb** will be speaking to us that evening about 'Texas' Botanical Heritage - Past, Present and Future!

## Bear Creek

### Oct 7 – Hamburger Tuesday

**8:00 am** Work up an appetite

**Noonish** Home cooked burgers, then **Catherine Conlon** on 'The Blackwood Educational Institute'.

### Oct 7 – Fruit Study Group

**7:00 pm - Rick Matt** will speak on Asian Persimmons and **Bob Randall** on Citrus for the Gulf Coast area.

### Oct 21 - General Meeting

**6:30** - Desserts

**7:00** - **Bill Adams** - 'Fall Gardening'

### Nov 4 – Hamburger Tuesday

**8:00 am** Work up an appetite

**Noonish** Home cooked burgers, then **Gudron Opperman** on 'Winter Color for the Garden'.

### Nov 18 - General Meeting

**6:30** - POTLUCK DINNER

**7:00** - **Barney Lipscomb** - 'Texas' Botanical Heritage - Past, Present and Future!'

# Other Upcoming Events

## 61st Bulb and Plant Mart

One of the largest horticultural events in Texas, the **Annual Bulb and Plant Mart** sponsored by The Garden Club of Houston, will be held **Thursday, October 9, Friday, October 10, and Saturday, October 11**, 2003 at Westminster United Methodist Church, 5801 San Felipe at Bering, just west of the Galleria area.

On Thursday and Friday, the Mart will be open from 9:30 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. and on Saturday, from 9:30 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. As experienced and beginning gardeners alike have come to expect, the Bulb and Plant Mart will again feature the widest selection of top-quality bulbs from domestic and international suppliers and an expanded collection of hard-to-find and unusual plants, perennials, trees, shrubs and vines. Many of the plants and bulbs will be unique offerings from the gardens of Club members, grown specifically for the Mart.

From amaryllis to zephyranthes, more than 500,000 bulbs will be available at the Bulb and Plant Mart, including large bulbs such as daffodils (Narcissi), hyacinths, and more than 55 varieties of tulips, iris, amaryllis and crinum lilies; and among small bulbs, the most popular anemones, ranunculus, crocus, freesia, ixia, watsonia and zephyranthes (rain lilies).

In outdoor areas, shoppers will find a wide selection of plant materials, including herbs, citrus, and unusual varieties difficult to find in most retail outlets. Also featured will be favorite plants of Garden Club members, such as gingers, Louisiana irises, gloriosa lilies, and many interesting vines and ornamental trees.

Visitors to the Mart will receive at no charge a horticultural guide for Houston, prepared by the Club. The newly revised booklet includes descriptions of the items for sale, along with proper planting and horticulture information. And, as is always a feature of this Mart, experts will be available to answer specific questions or generally educate the customers on gardening.

The Bulb and Plant Mart offers free admission and convenient parking. While a limited number of wagons are available, shoppers are encouraged to bring their own carts or wagons for ease in transporting your purchases around the Mart.

All funds raised from the Bulb and Plant Mart benefit civic beautification and environmental projects of The Garden Club of Houston which are landscaping of grounds and gardens of The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston and Rienzi, the gardens of The Hospice at the Texas Medical Center, and the Eco-lecture Series of the Museum of Natural Science. The Club also donates thousands of bulbs annually to Houston parks, churches, schools, and public spaces.

For pre-order forms and additional information regarding the 61st Annual Bulb and Plant Mart sponsored by The Garden Club of Houston, please check our website: <http://gchouston.org>.

## Elsewhere...

**Oct 9-11 – Bulb & Plant Mart.**  
**Thurs & Fri 9:30 am - 5:00 pm.**  
**Sat 9:30 am - 2:00 pm.**

Westheimer United Methodist Church  
5801 San Felipe at Bering.

<http://gchouston.org>

**Oct 17-18 – Xeriscape Conference 2003** "Water, Our Future, Our Legacy." Albuquerque, NM.

<http://www.xeriscapenm.com>

**Oct 25 & 26 – Texas Rose Extravaganza. All day.** Houston Rose Society 2 day seminar on rose horticulture. Holiday Inn - Intercontinental Airport.

<http://www.houstonrose.org> or  
Gaye Hammond (713) 236-2600

# Precinct 2 News & Events

## News from Precinct 2

Expansion plans for the Perennial Garden are under way and the committees have been meeting and are beginning to implement their plans. The Water Garden Committee has come up with a beautiful plan for adding a pond to the garden. Thanks to **Rita Vasak** for an excellent presentation of the plan and to **J.C. Whitney** who spent a lot of time on the design and has been out in the garden working hard staking out the forms. The Tropical Garden committee has picked out their expansion area with **Ruth Touchstone**, **Bob Beyer** and **Barbara Morrison** heading up that effort. **Shirley Jackson** and **Pat Mitrowski** are coming up with plans to display plants from the Bible, a place meditate and think about the history of some of our favorite plants. The Rose Garden Committee, headed up by **Eleanor Borda**, has come up with a wish list for its expansion plans. A rose propagation day has been scheduled for October. A special thanks goes to Eleanor who has been laid up with a broken leg for keeping her committee going.

At the **October First Wednesday** Program **Michael Morrison** will be giving a presentation on Landscape Design, it's his first presentation at Precinct 2 and we are looking forward to it. Don't forget to bring a dish to share at our potluck lunch immediately after the program.

The First Wednesday Committee has been hard at work on many special projects, it's not just First Wednesday anymore. We are working on our first annual **Herb Day**, with a workshop featuring **Pam Harris**, Planting an Herb Chair, **Lana Sims**, Herb Cultivation, with demos from Master Gardener's on Herb Vinegars, Pesto (which will part of the luncheon) and Sugared Rose Petals. **Saturday, October 18th** 10 am-2 pm at the Geona Friendship Garden, \$25.00 includes lunch, pre-registration is required. We're expecting a wonderful day in the garden. **Linda Garren**, **Gina Keene**, **Gloria Gibson**, **Pat Stier**, **Marlene Oren** and **Ruth Touchstone** all deserve special thanks for helping to put this special day together. Next on the agenda, Road Trips! We'll be planning several field trips throughout the year. The very first outing is on October 7th with a trip to Mercer and a guided tour by **Linda Gay**. Then in November we'll be making Living Wreaths at the First Wednesday Program and November 10th we'll hold our quarterly evening meeting and the EHCAC.

The latest of our summer class interns earning their 60 volunteer hours are **Diane Bryant** and **Christa Kaiser**. Congratulations and thank you for all your hard work.

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# Precinct 2 News & Events

Continued from page 8

## October Upcoming Events:

**First Wednesday Program, October 1st:** with **Michael Morrison**, Landscape Design. Fall is the perfect time for planting, especially with all the new plants we end up buying at the fall plant sales! Come and get some great ideas for your garden. 10 am at 1202 Genoa Red Bluff. Potluck lunch immediately after the program.

**Tuesday, October 7th:** Precinct 2 Master Gardener **Field Trip to Mercer Arboretum** with a guided tour by Linda Gaye. Call (281) 991-8437 for details.

**Saturday, October 18th:** Precinct 2's **First Annual Herb Day**. 10 am to 2 pm at the Genoa Friendship Garden, 1202 Genoa Red Bluff. Workshop: 'Planting an Herb Chair for the Garden', with **Pam Harris**, Speaker **Lana Sims** on 'Cultivation of Herbs', demonstrations and tips from Master Gardeners. \$25.00 supply fee includes lunch. Pre-registration is required, please call (281) 991-8437.

## November Upcoming Events:

**First Wednesday Nov. 5th:** Living Wreaths by **Angela Chandler** and **Janice Patrick**. Just in time for the holidays come and make a beautiful wreath that will add a special touch and holiday spirit to your home. 10 am, 1202 Genoa Red Bluff. Reservations required, please call (281) 991-8437. \$25.00 fee.

**Monday, November 10th** Precinct 2 will hold their **Quarterly Evening Meeting** at the East Harris County Activity Center, in the conference room at 7 pm. **Michael Morrison** will share his adventures from his Alaskan trip. 7340 Spencer Hwy.

## Precinct 2 Events

### Oct 1 – First Wednesday

**9:30 am** Registration

**10:00 am Michael Morrison** on Landscape Design.

**11:00ish** Pot Luck Luncheon

1202 Genoa Red Bluff. For reservations call (281) 991-8437.

### Oct 7 – Field Trip to Mercer

**Arboretum.** Guided tour by Linda

Gaye. Call (281) 991-8437 for more information.

### Oct 18 – Herb Day

**10:00 am - 2:00 pm**

**Pam Harris** leads hands-on workshop on Planting an Herb Chair. \$25.

1202 Genoa Red Bluff. For reservations call (281) 991-8437.

### Nov 5 – First Wednesday

**9:30 am** Registration

**10:00 am Angela Chandler & Janice Patrick** on Living Wreaths.

**11:00ish** Pot Luck Luncheon

1202 Genoa Red Bluff. For reservations call (281) 991-8437.

### Nov 10 – Quarterly Evening Meeting

**9:30 am** Registration

**10:00 am Michael Morrison** on Alaskan Gardening

**11:00ish** Pot Luck Luncheon

7340 Spencer Hwy. For reservations call (281) 991-8437.

# Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens

## October

### Garden Workday: Daylilies

**Saturday, October 4** from 8:00 am to Noon. Join us in the gardens for a workday in the daylily gardens. Help us dig, divide, pot and replant our daylily collection and learn about caring for these beautiful plants. Wear garden work clothes, you will get dirty.

### Lunch Bunch: Tool Talk

**Wednesday, October 8** from Noon to 1:00 pm. Bring a sack lunch and join **Greg Harmison** for a program on tools and their care. Learn how to treat your tools right and they can provide a lifetime of use.

### Fall Holiday Centerpieces

**Saturday, October 25** from 9:00 am to 11:00 am. Join **Pat Hermez** of the Houston School of Floral Design for this hands-on workshop. Learn to design a fall holiday centerpiece combining fresh flowers & foliage, natural vines, branches and ribbon treatments. Class size is limited to 30. Reservations guaranteed through payment on a first-come first-served basis. Mercer Society members \$20. Non-members \$25. Make checks payable to The Mercer Society.

## November

### Lunch Bunch: PLANT NOW for a Beautiful Spring

**Wednesday, November 12** from noon to 1 p.m. bring a sack lunch and join Suzanne Chapman to learn what to plant now for a beautiful spring. Don't be one of the many people who wait until it is too late to plan and plant a spring garden. This class will help ensure your yard is the envy of the neighborhood.

### Battening Down the Frost Cloth: Being Prepared for the Worst Winter Ever

**Saturday, November 15** from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. learn how to prepare your yard for winter. Are you ready for the first frost of the season? Will you know what to do before or after a freeze? Do you know which plants need protection and those that do not? Attend this program to be prepared for the worst winter ever, even if it doesn't happen this year.



*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 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 [mercercarboretum@cp4.hctx.net](mailto:mercercarboretum@cp4.hctx.net). On the web at*

*<http://www.cp4.hctx.net/mercercarboretum>.*

# Garden Gifts...

## News from our Outreach Gardens

By Kenneth Dorman

Some unseen varmint has been eating the leaves off our sweet potatoes at CCSC and I suspect the notorious sweet potato weevil is the culprit. They have really done a job on the plants in just a few days. I am going to spray some Safer Soap with a little pyrethrum mixed in as soon as the rain stops. We also have an infestation of mealy bugs on the eggplants. **Bob Strawn** took some of them in on his first day of class and got **Marv** to identify them, and we have stink-bugs on the bell peppers. On top of the damage to the peppers the stink-bugs appear to have given the plants a disease. I hope it is not a virus. We are not accustomed to insect pests in this garden, but I think our newcomer status has worn off and we have been discovered by the world of hungry insects.

Urban gardening has taken a new twist at our domain. The apartment complex next door has begun remodeling and the workers are using the space where the dumpster once was to store lumber and machinery. They knocked down part of the fence and ripped out everything right up to our first fig tree and the last raised bed. The fig tree looks ok even though a lot of its roots are covered by gunk on one side. The dumpster has been moved to mid-garden and the trash truck comes through the front fence now, running over one of our irrigation hoses. Irritating, but this too shall pass.

The okra plants are producing at a furious rate. I picked almost two hundred pods from eight plants on Labor Day. Unfortunately, we missed picking them for a couple of days and I had to discard about seventy pods that were too large. The African Blue basil from **Bob and Barbara Kish** and the unknown one from the greenhouse are blooming and attracting bees right in the middle of the squash bed so maybe we will not have to hand pollinate them this year. Thanks again, guys. Cucumbers and weeds are racing to see which can get the upper hand in the fruit tree bed and this right after Bob and I hoed and pulled weeds all one morning in this bed.

The compost heap has gotten to the point where we are going to have to bring in a shredder and work on it. I don't know why we have so much trouble doing this; we have been talking about it for two years now and just can't seem to get it done. I think we are afraid we will find a very large ant bed in the bottom of the pile. When we are ready to clean out the okra beds will be a good time to shred and the weather should be cool by then. So, we have managed to put it off again for a few more weeks.

We are moving some of the beds at Bonita Street House of Hope so they will get more sunshine in the winter and also will allow us to rotate our tomato and melon crops better. **Rodney** is still only working part time, but he has a man helping him that is a pretty good vegetable gardener so we are proceeding with getting ready to put crops in there as soon as we get them from the greenhouse.

As you can probably discern, there still isn't much exciting to write about in the two gardens right now. I did make it to 71 years old on August 31st, which was pretty exciting for me considering what I know about myself. I even got all my little books of witty sayings out looking for something to liven this mess up, but couldn't find anything appropriate. I did find a saying in a book of advice by Adair Lara that brought back a lot of old, old fond memories. To quote, "never fry bacon in the nude". Ah, Sylvia, Sylvia, those were the days!

The sweet potato weevils turned out to be caterpillars so I fed them some Bt and got rid of them, but the bell peppers have bit the dust and are in the dumpster since they were diseased. The rest of the garden is beautiful and we have fall tomatoes on a few of the vines so all is well at CCSC.

Take time to make sure all is well with you, love yourself and forgive the transgressions of as many of the rest of us as you can.

# Web Surfin'

By Tom H Robb, Jr



Now that the virus-spreading activities of the Blaster and SoBig worms have subsided resulting in everyone updating their virus protection programs a minimum of once every week (you did, didn't you?) and everyone installing an anti-spyware program such as SpyBot, we each have a fully protected computer - don't we? Wouldn't it be nice if that was fully true?

The truth is that the same type of never-do-well hackers that write and spread viruses, worms and trojan horses also utilize programs to scan the Internet, looking for ways to either install a malicious program or grab our files. You might think that it never happens to you - you don't even use your computer that much - and these people certainly wouldn't be looking for your computer. No but they use programs that scan and probe all computers who are on the Web, be it emailing or just surfing, looking for a way to get in. And if you are using wide-band DSL or cable you are even at a greater risk because you are connected to the net all of the time. And that is because while the dial-up user is given a different IP (Internet Address) each time the Internet is entered, the IP remains constant for the wide-band users and thus easier to identify.

This danger can be greatly reduced by the use of a firewall. A firewall is a device used to secure the connection between a computer or network and another computer or network. The firewall may be in the form of software or hardware or a combination of the two. However, hardware firewalls, although offering greater protection, are also more expensive and will normally be used on commercial networks. So for our purposes here we'll only discuss software firewalls.

Small bits of a large file (called packets) are transmitted over the Internet and put together at their destination. Each of these packets also contains a header, which contains the IP address of the sender and the IP of the receiver. The firewall examines each packet to be sure that it complies with the set security rules. Packets that don't meet the rules are blocked from going any further. This is known as packet filtering and is the basic function of any decent firewall. The true value of a firewall is the method used to do the blocking.

The firewall either rejects the packet, resulting in an error message returning to the sender, or denies the packet, which simply drops the packet without making any return to the transmitting computer. The second method is usually best because the return of an error message will tell the knowledgeable hacker that a firewall is present and allow him to take a different approach. If the packet was denied he will assume that no computer was associated with the IP address the packet went to and will go on to another address. This firewall operates in "Stealth Mode".

When you are connected to the Internet by a telephone line or cable, the TCP/IP (Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol) used to access most of the Web has more than 65,000 ports associated with it, which are places where data is allowed to flow from the Internet into your computer. So, unless protected by a firewall, your computer is like a house with 65,000 unlocked doors. And smart hackers can figure which of these doors is most likely to allow entry.

To determine your vulnerability go to Gibson Research's Shields UP! at <http://www.grc.com>. The

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# Web Surfin' continued

**Continued from page 12**

opening page takes a few moments to open into another page, which show "News and Views". Scan down to the "Hot Spots" section and click on "Shields Up". This page shows you your machine name, the number portion being your IP address (your Internet address). Scan down to the "Shields Up Services" box and run the tests "File Sharing" and "Common Ports". You can also run "All Service Ports" but it takes a fair amount of time since it checks out the first 1056 ports.

A more complete scan can be done at <http://www.hackerwhacker.com> by Wallyware's Hacker-Whacker . You get only one free scan at their site before you have to pay. However, at <http://www.networkscan.com> they offer a less involved test at no cost and can be used as often as you like. A good idea, if you have a firewall you would like to test, try the free test with the firewall turned off and then use the one free test with the firewall turned back on. This allows you to evaluate the job your firewall is doing.

You can also get a free test from E-Soft's Security Space tools at <http://www.securityspace.com>. These tests go far beyond port scans. They can probe the firewall for specific weaknesses, check the security of your browser and the integrity of your server. If you are interested, for a fee the company offers a number of services that will give your entire computer and all connections a thorough workout.

Two of the better-known firewalls are "McAfee Personal Firewall" and "Norton Personal Firewalls". These may be purchased as stand-alone programs or as part of security suites. An excellent firewall program called "Zone Alarm" can be downloaded for free from Zone Labs at <http://www.zonelabs.com>. They also sell "Zone Alarm v4.0" which, in addition to a firewall, includes antivirus, cookie control, pop-up adds, etc.

Windows XP has a pretty good firewall as part of its package (Mine passed with flying colors). To check whether or not your's has been initiated choose Start>Connect To>Show All Connections. Windows displays the Network Connection Window. Right click the Internet Connection and choose Properties. Click the Advanced tab. On the Advanced page make sure that there is a check mark in the box for "Protect My Computer and Network by Limiting or Preventing Access to This Computer from the Internet". To remove the firewall, click the box to remove the check. After running a test be sure to reenter the check mark.

*Happy surfin'*

# Garden Gossip

## News from Our Gardens

### The Rose Arbor

By Linda O'Keefe

A rose by any other name is an Antique Rose!

The Rose Arbor is filling up with examples of these timeless gems; *Buff Beauty*, *Chestnut Rose*, *Highway 290*, *Pink Buttons*, *La Marne*, *Maggie*, *Mutabilis*, *Nearly Wild*, *Red Cascade*.....the list goes on! All these and more will be selling for \$12 at the upcoming Fall Sale. Please note that the roses are for sale *all year round*, not just during the sales, so why wait.

*Lafter* (1948) is my most recent propagating success. An exceptionally healthy, free-blooming shrub with large, open flowers in a blend of yellow, orange and pink. The colors have aptly been compared to a sunrise! It is a fun rose, full of life and light with a soft, gentle fragrance. She just makes you smile!

There are also some exciting new arrivals at the Rose Arbor that are destined to be 'Mother Plants' for cuttings very soon; *Dame de Coeur* (the Black Rose), *Hermosa* (Lilac-Pink), *Magic Dragon* (Miniature Red) and the unique *Green Rose* (a real conversation piece). I will begin propagating these and some old favorites in the next few weeks so we will be ready with a new selection for spring. Do drop by the potting bench if you are interested in learning more about propagating roses.

On a personal note, Clyde Cannon continues to recover from his recent surgery and we hope to see his smiling face back at the Extension very soon.....we miss you Clyde!

*Hugs & Roses*



**Lafter, 1948** photo courtesy of The Antique Rose Emporium

# More Garden Gossip...

## Bog and Water Garden

By Virginia Joiner

During the heat of August the pond has beautiful clear water until mid-afternoon. When the afternoon heat is at its peak everything changes. The pond has a frothy head on it that is reminiscent of St Patrick's Day in your local pub. You know, the day that they color all of the light beers green.

A few months ago we discovered that along with the ditch minnows that swam into the pond during the flood a perch, north bound on an adventure, decided to spend a little time with us. The few ditch minnows have become many. Mother Nature's creatures are always ready, willing and able to set up house in a new location if the environment is right. While the perch and minnows were moving in, our beautiful comets and shubunkins decided the sights and sounds might be better a little further down stream. We kept thinking we might read in the newspaper this past spring about a young boy running home to his mother with these beautiful fish that he had found swimming in Braes Bayou. Such was not the case.

We pruned our native hibiscus because we wanted them to be in bloom for the fall sale. It is amazed at how quickly some plants will reward you with new growth and blooms.

We are in the process of re-planting the Canna ditch. We have moved the taller cannas to the ditch by the gate to the gardens. Because of their height we were not able to see and appreciate the hibiscus. Our selection for planting this time is the dwarf (3') canna. We are using some new varieties that we believe will appeal to the people that visit the gardens. When the ditch fills out it will be a showstopper just as it was before.

## Gossip in the Garden

Anonymous, submitted by Virginia Joiner

"Good Morning Glory, what's the Four O'clock news?"

"Johnny-Jump-Up lost his shoes.

Black-eyed Susan has her eye on you

And the Tulips want a kiss or two.

Iris just wants Rose to know

Sweet William is her favorite beau.

Busy Lizzie took her Butchers broom;

Poor Weeping Willow isn't feeling well,

And Hollyhocked her Churning Bell.

Then whispered "Forget-me-not in Elephants Ear.

Today a Texas Ranger knocked at my door.

Creeping Jenny found a Naked Lady lying on the floor.

Tomorrow who knows what gossip there'll be.

The flowers are such a large family.

Let's talk again soon.

Good Day-Lily



photo by Carol Cammack

# Volunteer Hours

See below for instructions.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_\_\_\_

Period covered – from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

Date	Facility or Garden Name	# Contacts	Hours
<b>Total hours this worksheet</b>			

**Submitting your volunteer hours** Please drop off completed forms in the inbox on **Scott Hume's** desk. Scott can be reached at (281) 855-5600 or [oshume@ag.tamu.edu](mailto: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://harris-cnty.tamu.edu/hcmga/urban.htm>.

# October 2003

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
			<b>1</b> Precinct 2 1st Wednesday — Michael Mor- rison on Land- scape Design <a href="#">page 7</a>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b> Work Day & Ham- burger Tues. at Bear Creek — Catherine Conlon <a href="#">page 5</a> Precinct 2 Field Trip to Mercer Arboretum <a href="#">page 7</a>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b> Work Day at the Extension Office	<b>15</b> Newsletter deadline 5pm	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b> 1st Annual Herb Day Precinct 2. <a href="#">page 7</a>
<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b> Work Day & General meet- ing at Bear Creek — Bill Adams on Fall Gardening <a href="#">page 5</a>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b> Work Day at the Extension Office	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>	

# UrbanDirt

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<b>President's Thoughts .....</b>	<b>2</b>
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## Editor's Note

by Carol Cammack

**V**irginia Joiner recently sent me this interesting tidbit she gleaned from Birds and Blooms magazine. In a section called Garden Chat, Rusty Roberts of Blue Hill, Maine writes to say that during World War II, kids were asked to pick the milkweed seed pods for use in life jackets for the soldiers. He said that he and his friends spent many enjoyable hours picking pods and donating them to the war effort.

I'm always amazed by how even what seems like the most trivial thing, like taking the time to pick some milkweed pods can make an impact...even save a life. I'd like to draw your attention to the article on Page 1 where our organization and some unnamed saints (**Ken Dorman**, and friends) have made an impact in the lives of people they will never meet. You may not realize it, but the time that each of you donates to the Master Gardener Association helps people you will never meet in ways you will never know...from the school children in our Cylinder Gardening program to the new volunteer whose spirits you lift by simply taking the time to greet them. Thanks for all you do.

Please keep the articles coming!! Submit all articles and comments electronically by the 15th of every month to: **Carol Cammack, c-cammack@tamu.edu**.



photo by Carol Cammack