

# UrbanDirt

IN COOPERATION WITH THE TEXAS COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

## Your County Agent

By Michael Morrison, CEA Horticulture

**W**ithout you I would be nothing  
As a volunteer you help me through the day,  
And make my job easier they say.

Throughout the day the people call  
They think I should know it all  
"I think my garden is full of bugs"  
"My tree is getting yellow right now."  
"My lawn is turning brown somehow."  
"My garden's dying, someone grieves."  
"My bush is losing all its leaves."

They bring in the bugs and critters they find at home;  
They carry in soil from sand to loam  
Insects including spiders and weevil  
They want to know if bites are evil.  
Bringing in leaves and branches of ailing trees;  
They ask advice on killing fire ants and bees  
And how to rid their home of gnats  
They want a trap for critters and cats.

Hey you! When do I plant my beans?  
And when do I harvest my turnip greens?  
They tote in sickly shoots,  
And unknown weeds pulled up by the roots.  
Come out and look at this tree that has rot  
Expecting something from Ripley's Believe it or Not.  
Asking how to get rid of hornets' nests  
Trying to identify a garden pest.

They ask how much to water and spray  
As Carol, Becky and Scott help along the way.  
Sometimes long hours the agent hears  
Questions, complaints, gripes and fears;  
I do my best to help them all,  
Learning a little bit more with each call.  
On the advice the folks can depend  
The county agent is their friend.  
But without you as a volunteer at your best  
I would not be a success.

### Editor's Note:

*In the August issue of Urban Dirt the last line of 'Your County Agent' by Michael Morrison was inadvertently omitted and so at the request of the author we are reprinting the poem. We apologize for any inconvenience.*

# President's Thoughts

By Virginia Joiner

Our fall Master Gardener class started on August 28. The beginning of a new class is always an exciting time for every one at the Extension Center. The new class members bring with them an excitement for new beginnings. One of the prime directives for the Master Gardener class is to increase the horticulture knowledge of those attending. The structure of the class is ever changing to better meet these goals.

We achieve success with our classes because of the strong commitment and guiding hand of our Master Gardener Class Committee, headed by **Marge Chambers**. **Sally Harpole** is the fall 2003 class coordinator and she has a wonderful supporting staff. They are **Bonnie Morrow**, **Clarence Sapp**, **Ann Colvert**, **Harry Arbor**, **Karla Kline**, **Barbara Lyles**, **Marge Chambers**, **Anne O'Neal**, **Ellis Carmichael**, **Linda Wert**, **Herman Franco**, **Charles Reass** and **Roy Wood**.

With this in mind I want to thank **Barbara** and **Bob Kish** for being in the right place at the right time and seizing an opportunity for our fall sale. They rescued some plants from a local nursery that Barbara and Bob were visiting. With the help of **Ken Dorman** the plants were brought to the Extension Center. They will be a great addition to our fall sale. With Master Gardeners like this, we will always succeed.

I want to thank **Jim Hobkirk**, for participating in the Entomology course offered by Texas A&M University. Jim's services will be greatly appreciated as he assists Marve in our Entomology Department.

We have several construction and carpentry projects coming up in the future which will require the services of some of our volunteers. As soon as the plans are approved, we will put out the call for assistance. Please keep these project in mind for future volunteer opportunities.

## *In Memory of...*

*We were saddened to learn that Barbara R. Johnson, graduate of the Spring Class 1997, passed away on June 12, 2003. Barbara maintained a continuous membership in HCMGA from graduation until the time of her death.*



## Harris County Master Gardener Association

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

## 2003-2004 Board of Directors

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(281) 469-2766

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(281) 855-5600

**CEA - Horticulture**..... Carol Cammack  
(281) 855-5600

**Horticulture Secretary** ..... Becky Deasy  
(281) 855-5600

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**Publicity**..... Linda Carlson  
(281) 955-8013

**Urban Dirt** ..... Carol Cammack  
c-cammack@tamu.edu

# Michael's Corner...

By Michael Morrison

## ZZ is taking over !!!

We are not talking about a band here....this is a fairly new plant. Everyone likes to call it the ZZ plant for short. *Zamioculcas zamiifolia*, from the Araceae family is very popular these days. A member of the Aroid family along with the philodendron, and spathiphyllum, this is a tender perennial (inside for us here in Houston in the winter) that is quite unique in several ways.

It has an underground tuber like a potato that stores and holds the water. The thick glossy leaves hold water as well as the fleshy stems. It can go for months without being watered and performs well in low light level situations. Where most plants have a tough time, the ZZ shines. Even though the plant does well in lower light levels, by placing it in brighter light it performs even better. Make sure that you keep the plant away from any hot direct afternoon sun as it can burn; filtered afternoon sunlight works well. The foliage will elongate under low light conditions. Every two weeks a light watering has this plant performing well. It can be used as a stand alone specimen in the home setting. Pests are not an issue. Sounds too good to be true, but this is the plant for everyone that kills plants. The ZZ grows fairly slowly and the new stalks that come up are twisted but open out as it gets taller. The branches grow up to 24 inches in height. The ZZ can have fruit, and is said to bloom in mid summer, but I have yet to see one bloom as of this date. The hardiness for the ZZ is said to be Zone 9-11. I suggest that this plant stay in a nice pot on the patio, inside the home, or at the office. Propagation is from leaf cuttings, but don't be in a hurry, it took a few of mine over year before I saw results.



photo by Michael Morrison



photos by Michael Morrison

This plant fits every need for what an indoor plant should be. Low water use, handles low light, tough under indoor conditions, and handles neglect well. I will be giving a few away this year during our monthly meetings, and Becky has one behind her desk if you want to see one.

I expect this plant to become an heirloom plant and most people love it because it hard to kill!

Smile, have fun in the garden and drink lots of water.

# Upcoming HCMGA Events

## Bear Creek Monthly Meetings

On **September 2**, the **Hamburger Tuesday** program on 'Hardy Tropicals & Tropicals as Annuals' will be given by **Dawn Parish**. Dawn is the daughter of our own Hamburger Chef **Dave Parish**. Dawn is currently a Research Associate at Stephen F. Austin State University where she currently maintains the living plant collection within the SFA Mast Arboretum. She is responsible for maintenance of the arboretum and the horticulture greenhouse facilities.

The **monthly HCMGA meeting** on **September 16** will feature **Scott Reeves**, Head Propagator for TreeSearch Farms here in Houston. Scott will give a presentation on 'Plant Propagation at TreeSearch Farms'. Be sure to join us for this interesting and often unseen look into what it takes to produce plants for commercial sale.

## Field Trip to Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

There will be a field trip on **September 10** to the LadyBird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin. The bus will leave the Extension Office at **8:00 am** and will return around **6:00 pm**. The cost is **\$20** and includes lunch, entrance to the center and snacks on the bus. To RSVP contact **Becky Deasy** at (281) 855-5611.

## Fall Plant Sale & Symposium

The Annual Fall Plant Sale will be held **September 27** from **8:00 am - 2:00 pm** at the **Harris County Extension Office**. A large assortment of perennials, many for butterfly and hummingbird gardens, will be available. There will also be woody ornamentals, herbs, irises, daylilies and roses, as well as a good a selection of unusual and hard to find plants. Volunteers will be needed to work at the sale.

Set up for the sale will begin Friday morning **September 26** around **8:00 am**. Come help us set up and you'll get a chance to make some **early purchases**, AND you'll get **volunteer hours** for your effort.

The Master Naturalists are sponsoring the Symposium this year. Topics will include a presentation on the plants available at the sale as well as Butterflies & Hummingbirds, Composting, Dragonflies & Damselflies.

## Bear Creek

### Sept 2 – Hamburger Tuesday

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

**Noonish** Home cooked burgers, then **Dawn Parish** on 'Hardy Tropicals & Tropicals as Annuals'.

### Sept 10 - Field Trip to Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center.

**8:00 am - 6:00 pm. \$20.** Includes lunch, entrance to the center and snacks on the bus. To RSVP contact **Becky Deasy** at (281) 855-5611.

### Sept 16 - General Meeting

**6:30** - Desserts

**7:00** - Scott Reeves 'Plant Propagation at TreeSearch Farms'

### Sept 26 - Fall Plant Sale Set Up

**8:00 am.** Extension Office. Perennials & Ornamentals available for sale. Educational workshops begin at 10:00 am.

### Sept 27 - Fall Plant Sale & Symposium. 8:00 am - 2:00 pm

Extension Office. Perennials & Ornamentals available for sale. Educational workshops begin at 10:00 am.

# Events Around Town

## Gourds Galore Show and Sale

Come to a Gourd Show and Sale on September 20th. We will be open at 9:00 am till 4:00 pm at the Houston Garden Center in Hermann Park.

You will find Gourds of every size and for every occasion; also you may purchase raw gourds if you want to try your hand at decorating this autumn. You might even find some gifts for the holiday seasons coming up. There will be speakers and children's activities scheduled for the morning and the afternoon.

Think Autumn!!! Mark your calendar and I hope to see you there. For more information contact **Linda Carlson** at [glennac@academicplanet.com](mailto:glennac@academicplanet.com).

## Xeriscape Conference 2003

"Water: Our Future, Our Legacy" is the theme for Xeriscape Conference 2003, to be held in **Albuquerque**, New Mexico, on **October 17-18**. Seminar topics during the event include landscape ecology, water use, sustainable planning, water harvesting, and irrigation policies. The xeriscape conferences, presented every 18 months by the Xeriscape Council of New Mexico, have grown to become the nation's largest meetings on landscape water issues that have local, regional, and national ramifications. The registration fee of \$100 for the two-day conference includes all presentations, educational materials, lunches, refreshments, and admission to the exhibit hall. For more information about the conference, call (505) 468-1021 or visit the website at <http://www.xeriscapenm.com>.

## Wildscapes Workshop

Texas Parks and Wildlife and the Native Plant Society of Texas will hold their sixth WildScapes Workshop on **September 13** at the central campus of the University of Houston. Join us for educational programs including the incredible migration of the monarch butterfly, building a healthy soil, an exciting native plant sale, and the best of Texas Backyard Habitats and how to create one for your backyard. Registration includes an ample packet of information, admission to all programs and the plant sale, drinks and a tasty lunch.

For additional information contact Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Diana Foss (281) 456-7029 locally, or visit the Native Plant Society of Texas' website to download an agenda and registration form:

<http://www.npsot.org/Houston/events/WSWorkshop.htm>.

## Elsewhere...

**Sept 13 – Wildscapes Workshop. 8:30 am - 3:00 pm.** University of Houston. \$25 fee by September 10. Contact Diana Foss (281) 456-7029. <http://www.npsot.org/Houston/events/WSWorkshop.htm>.

**Sept 20 – Gourd Show & Crafted Gourd Sale. 9:00 am - 4:00 pm.** Houston Garden Center at Hermann Park.

**Oct 17-18 – Xeriscape Conference 2003** "Water, Our Future, Our Legacy." Albuquerque, NM. <http://www.xeriscapenm.com> or call (505) 468-1021.

**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 contact Gaye Hammond (713) 236-2600 or [gayeh@oqlaw.com](mailto:gayeh@oqlaw.com).

# Precinct 2 News & Events

As our new year begins at Precinct 2 we are pleased to see so many interns jumping in and getting involved. Congratulations to **Linda Garren** and **Pat Stier** who have already completed their volunteer hours, that's amazing considering the class just ended the first week of July! New committees have been formed and are meeting to set their plans and goals for the year. Several interns have taken the lead, **Greg Zindler**: Compost, **Cassie Pham-Korman**: History, **Yvette Darnell**: Herb Garden, **JC Whiney** and **Rita Vasak**: Water Gardens, **Ginia Keen**: Tool Shed. We were all so glad to see **Neal Murray** back in the garden on Wednesdays; he's been greatly missed. Welcome back, Neal!

Our **First Wednesday Program** is back after a short break. We had a record turn out with 46 people. **Nell Shimek** presented a wonderful program on Daylilies. A special thanks goes to the First Wednesday Committee, **Pat Stier**, **Gloria Gibson** and **Sue Hurst**. We had our first potluck lunch and it was delicious. Our September program will feature **Anita Nelson** with a presentation on Water Gardens. Don't forget to bring a dish to share.

One of the biggest projects going on is the Fall Plant Sale. The committee is working hard on many new aspects to make this the best sale yet. We are having our first **Plant Sale Preview Show** on Wednesday, Sept 24th at 7:00 pm at Clear Lake United Methodist Church 16335 El Camino Real, Houston, TX 77062. We know anyone who sees **Heidi Sheesley's** program will be back to buy tons of plants! A special thanks to **Angela Chandler** for heading up the committee, **Ruth Touchstone** for organizing the greenhouse, **Linda Garren** for creating the flyer and **Bob Beyer** for helping develop the CD ROM. Sales are a lot of work and we couldn't be successful without everyone's hard work.

## Upcoming Events:

**First Wednesday Program:** Wednesday, **September 3rd**, the Harris County Master Gardeners at Precinct 2 will welcome **Anita Nelson** of Nelson Water Garden and Nursery for a program on Designing Water into the Garden. Please join us at 1202 Genoa Red Bluff, the program starts at 10 am and is free and open to the public. Everyone is invited to participate in a potluck lunch after. Call (281) 991-8437 for more info. On **October 7th**, at our **First Wednesday Program**, County Extension Agent **Michael Morrison** will present a program on Landscape Design at 10 am at 1202 Genoa Red Bluff, everyone is welcome to our potluck lunch after.

**Plant Sale Preview Program:** Join the Master Gardeners at Precinct 2 for an evening presentation with **Heidi Sheesley**, owner of TreeSearch Farms, featuring plants available at our Annual Fall Plant Sale. The program will be held **September 24th** at 7:00 pm at Clear Lake United Methodist Church, 16335 El Camino Real, Houston, TX 77062.

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# Precinct 2 News & Events

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**Garden Treasures Fall Plant Sale:** The Harris County Master Gardeners will hold their annual plant sale featuring perennials, heirlooms and Texas Native Plants for the Gulf Coast Saturday, September 27th from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm at Clear Lake United Methodist Church, located at 16335 El Camino Real, Houston, TX 77062. Also available at the sale: organic fertilizer, compost, tree stake kits, plant markers and more. Join us throughout the day for free demonstrations on Low Volume Irrigation, Composting, Tree Planting, and Citrus Budding. Call for additional information: (281) 991-8437.

**Herb Day:** Saturday, Oct 18th from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm, Precinct 2 will hold it's first annual **Herb Day** at the Genoa Friendship Garden. October is the perfect time for herbs so joins us in a day of learning about them. **Pam Harris**, President of the Herb Society will lead a hands on workshop Planting an Herb Chair for the Garden, **Lana Sims** of Our Family's Herbs and Such will speak on cultivation. We'll be offering other hints and tips on using and growing herbs throughout the day. \$25.00 covers supplies for the craft and lunch. Pre-registration is required, space is limited, please call (281) 991-8437 for more details.

## Precinct 2 Events

### Sept 3 – First Wednesday

**9:30 am** Registration

**10:00 am Anita Nelson** speaks on Water Gardening.

**11:00ish** Pot Luck Luncheon

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

### Sept 24 – Plant Sale Preview

**7:00 pm - Heidi Sheesley** from

Tree Search Farms will give a presentation on the plants available at the sale. Clear Lake United Methodist Church, 16335 El Camino Real, Clear Lake.

### Sept 27 – Fall Plant Sale

**8:00am - 5:00pm** - on the front

lawn of the Clear Lake United Methodist Church, 16335 El Camino Real, Clear Lake.

### Oct 7 – 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 18 – Herb Day

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

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

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

# Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens

## September Programs

### Volunteer Orientation and Training

**Thursday, September 4** or **Saturday, September 6** from 9:00 am to 12:30 pm. Come out to Mercer and learn what it takes to be a volunteer. Enjoy the many wonderful opportunities Mercer has to offer. **Orientation**, from 9:00 am to 10:30 am, will provide information about Mercer and what volunteering is all about. **Garden and Greenhouse Training**, from 10:45 am to 12:30 pm shows what volunteers may be doing at Mercer as they join the ranks of those that give their time.

### Lunch Bunch: Costa Rican Flora and Fauna

**Wednesday, September 10** from Noon to 1:00 pm. Bring a sack lunch and join **Nancy Greig** from the Cockrell Butterfly Center as she shows slides of her treks through Costa Rica. See the beautiful plants and animals of this tropical paradise.

### Weeds, Weather and Other Garden Woes

**Saturday, September 20** from 9:00 am to 11:00 am. Join **Greg Harmison** as he discusses quips, quotes and thoughts on gardening. This program mixes humor with practical advice to provide a fun look at gardening attitudes and how they apply to gardening practice.

## 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.

*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 [mercerarboretum@cp4.hctx.net](mailto:mercerarboretum@cp4.hctx.net). On the web at <http://www.cp4.hctx.net/merc>.*

# Garden Gifts...

## News from our Outreach Gardens

By Kenneth Dorman

**A**s of this writing the summer doldrums are in full control of both vegetable gardens and I think I may be catching them as well.

Grackles have joined forces with the mockingbirds to completely decimate the figs and the melons have finally finished. The only plants producing are the bell and chile peppers, the eggplants and a volunteer cream pea vine growing in the compost heap. I have been picking the peas on that one vine and taking them home where **Sylvia** shells and freezes them until we have enough to cook. So far we have had two batches of fresh peas. The okra has blooms and will be producing soon and the sweet potatoes will be ready in late September. There are volunteer red Lasoda potatoes growing in the sweet potato beds so we will have an interesting mix at harvest time.

We learn something every growing season and this spring and summer we learned we should have stayed with the plant varieties we used last year. The Louisiana Long Green and the Parks Purple Whopper eggplants are not nearly as fruitful as our old, regular green eggplants and the Suyo Long cucumber is not even half as productive as the Sweet Success. I need to talk to Urban Harvest about "truth in advertising", since the Louisiana Long Green eggplants only got about 4" long. The Derby snap beans were not as prolific as some others we have planted and the Sweet Chelsea and grape tomatoes did not produce the big tomatoes we need for the Pantry. "Back To Basics," will be our motto from now on. I'm afraid we may be down about a third from last year's 3200 pounds, a loss mostly of tomatoes, cucumbers and eggplants.

Since starting this epistle we have got back the results of the soil test and actually we are in pretty good shape if we can believe what the Aggies have told us. The phosphate content of the raised beds was super high as were the natural beds and I find some fault with this. They look like the regulation reading given for every soil sample from Harris County I have ever seen. Our raised beds are soil from Nature's Way and we use only cottonseed meal with a rating of 7-2-2 and Earth Essentials at 7-1-5 and since they are open on the bottom they naturally drain and flush the nutrients out. The bad thing about maps is deciding whether or not to trust them, but we are. We are going to amend our soil as recommended and try to cut down the phosphate although I don't know how to do it and still use the cottonseed meal.

The Zeebest okra is just fantastic. Even if it did not make a single okra pod the plant would be worth planting just for the beauty of it. Huge bright green tropical leaves on plants six feet by six feet would make a wonderful planting in any garden. The okra is the icing on the cake. This is another of the Stewart's great contributions to Houston gardening. We grow this okra completely isolated and save the seed.

We planted tomato plants on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August, which is an auspicious day, being the 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday of my first granddaughter. If the tomatoes mature like her we are in for a beautiful and bountiful crop. At the same time we planted some butternut and Kuta squash seeds in the old cucumber bed and I expect we will get a nice bunch of tasty winter squash later in the year. As soon as a bed comes free we stick something in it and we are getting anxious for the cool weather so we can start arugula, cilantro, lettuce, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, broccoli, collards, chard, kale, mustard, 1015 onions and potatoes. We have saved seeds for Crawford Heirloom and Laura lettuce, Rucola arugula and cilantro.

The heat in the garden has been brutal, over 100°F from about 2:30 pm until after 5:00, for four days in a row and a few of the tomatoes started to wilt in spite of being watered by **Bob** every day so we covered them with row cover. I had to replace one that finally gave up the ghost, but thanks to a timely rain and a cool front the others are looking better. The squashes have come up and are prospering under the pear trees in the fruit tree bed, **Jean Fefer's** greenhouse crew planted cabbage and chard seeds for us and will start the collards, lettuce and broccoli next week so we progressing slowly toward full production again.

Think cool, peaceful thoughts, love yourself and as many bad drivers as your mind will allow.

# Web Surfin'

By Tom H Robb, Jr



**D**id you ever think about how much your computer knows about you? It probably knows your closest guarded secrets - your Social Security number, your credit card number, how much money you have in the bank, what web sites you've visited (including those that you wouldn't want your children to see), what products you've bought and a lot, lot more. And if you think that because this information is safely confined to your computer alone just visit the wrong Website, or download the wrong program, or open the wrong email attachment - your computer will tell everything it knows to a complete stranger.

Viruses have always been a problem but we also have programs that protect us against them - you do have a virus protection program that you update at least once a week - don't you? Spam is another problem that is getting so bad that the government is looking at legislation to deal with it, but here again, you don't have to open such email. There is another villainous intruder that you probably would never know existed in your computer and that intruder is SPYWARE.

You've heard that if something is free there is often something wrong with it - not always something bad but something that you need to be careful of. Many computer programmers, in order to avoid the high cost of promoting their programs, agree to allow companies to advertise with banners or pop-up advertising through programs which are known as ADWARE that are loaded along with free programs known as FREEWARE. However, don't confuse Adware with Spyware.

Adware merely lets the people who actually pay for use of the program get their value through advertising. Such a program, although annoying, is only that - annoying - and, after all, the program that contains it is free. Many times you can have the ads removed by paying for the program. Spyware programs, on the other hand, can become insidious and are often added along with Adware. These programs track your habits - what sites you visit, which can be used to determine your interests - what products you buy - what music you prefer --- and send this information back to the Spyware company. And it can be done by stealing resources from your computer.

This doesn't sound too bad until you realize that your habits are being recorded and kept on someone else's computer and can be sold or otherwise misused. And it can become more than just tracking your actions, it can be programmed to steal your identity. The really bad thing is that these programs enter your computer without your consent and without your knowledge. They will not show up in your list of programs. And since Spyware programs communicate with the Internet, they open the way for computer "hackers" to use security flaws in the Spyware, itself, to access your system to run programs, upload and download data, and even take over your computer.

Fortunately there are a number of programs which can ferret out these intruders. Most have a modest cost but fortunately some of the better ones are free - and don't contain either Adware or Spyware. One of the best is "Spybot -S&D"(Search & Destroy), produced by PepiMK Software in Germany, which can be found at <http://security.kolla.de>. Your downloads are switched over to download sites in the U.S. and you can

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# Web Surfin' continued

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select from a large number of languages including English. This software scans your computer, looking for over 7,500 Spyware related cookies, programs and other files and puts a check in the proper box. You can identify each one by clicking on it and a pop-up box will give you the details about that particular Spyware program. You can then "Fix" that program. When I first ran this program, it uncovered 72 different Spyware programs that I had no idea were on my machine.

You need to be careful - some regular programs will not run without the attached Spyware program. Spybot will usually tell you which these programs are and will not, of itself, check the box. But if you should choose such a program, Spybot has a recovery routine that allows you to reinstall the "fixed" file. Of the 72 program mentioned above as being on my computer, only 3 were related to other programs.

Although Spybot is excellent for disclosing Spyware already lurking in your computer, a companion program - also free - is SpywareBlaster, produced by "Avacool" at <http://www.wilderssecurity.net/spywareblaster.html>. SpywareBlaster edits the Window Registry to prevent known Spyware from launching in your Web browser. It is free and doesn't have to be run in the background. It doesn't scan your hard drive and needs to be run in conjunction with a Spyware detection program such as "Spybot-S&D". To remain effective, both of these programs need to be updated frequently just as virus protection programs need to be kept current.

There are so many free programs that rely on Spyware these days, you should be sure to read the license agreement and terms of Service before completing an installation. Most companies disclose that "monitoring software" must be installed in addition to the product but they don't call attention to it. When in doubt, don't install.

For additional information about Spyware you might want to look at "Adware, Spyware and other unwanted 'Malware' - and how to remove them" at <http://www.cexx.org/adware.htm>, "Simply the Best" at <http://simplythebest.net/info/spyware.html> or "Spyware-Guide" at <http://www.spywareguide.com>.

*Happy surfin'*

# Garden Gossip

## News from Our Gardens

### Millennium Color Garden

By Mary Lynn Randall



Cosmos 'Bright Lights' photo by Carol Cammack

Greetings! It has been much too long since anyone has heard from the Millennium Color Garden. For the last two years I was a little too busy with the treasurer's job, but I hope to report from the garden on a regular basis from now on.

The color garden looks good for this time of year. We generally plant from 100 to 120 flats of annuals twice a year. Some wonderful volunteers planted these plants in May with **Diane Ballentine** as overseer. They did a great job, and we can enjoy their work with all the blooms and color. As usual with a garden as large as ours, we have found that it always looks better to have big masses of the same plant to show off the best qualities.

Some of the summer favorites have performed with great gusto and beauty, and we have had some surprises. The tried and true summer favorites are: Rudbeckia 'Indian Summer', Coleus 'Limelight' and 'Wizard Velvet', Dwarf Cleome in rose and white, Cosmos 'Bright Lights Mix' in orange and yellow, Pentas 'New Look' in pink and red, and Zinnias 'Dreamland' in apricot, red, and yellow.

Some new things we tried that haven't been such a delight includes: *Platycodon grandiflora* 'Komachi' (Balloon flower in blue), Salvia 'Superba' Blue Queen dwarf and Salvia 'Hotline'

in red and white. Salvia 'Hotline' - white did not perform well and looks much too puny. We also planted *Gaillardia pulchella* 'Red Plume' which had a wonderful first flush. But this one must be constantly and carefully dead headed which is all too time consuming in a large garden. The Tithonia 'Sundance' dwarf has been great, but is now showing some virus problems. These need lots of spacing when planted, but only grow 3 feet in height and never stop blooming. We will try this again.

In the shade area the Caladium 'Florida Cardinal' and 'White Queen' have turned out beautifully, but we should have planted a larger grouping to really show them off. The impatiens have, of course, gotten leggy. They are not a favorite of mine.

But the two best surprises have been Zinnia 'Cut and Come Again', and the Marigold 'Bonanza Bolero'. The Zinnia 'Cut and Come Again' came from Burpee, have constantly bloomed, show no signs of stress or disease and are definitely show stoppers. The Marigold 'Bonanza Bolero' was planted in early May, have had no signs of red spider mites, or anything else for that matter, have a nice compact spread and a constant bloom of gold 2" flowers. The marigold seed was sent to us by the All American Gardens. These two surprises I definitely recommend.

Enough for now. Next time I'll tell you about the Costus gingers, the perennials and the roses. Till then, the best in gardening.

Continued on page 13

# More Garden Gossip...

Continued from page 12

## The Flower Garden

By Jennifer Lowenthal

Boy, is it hot out there. I guess it wouldn't be called summer if it was cool and comfortable. But, it does make fall a wonderful time of year. Actually, it is my favorite time of year. I feel like everything is still blooming in the garden. Not to mention the fact that I don't have to wait for things to start sprouting up. There is also the possibility in springtime for one more freeze from mother nature. Fall is definitely a great time of year.

In the garden we are just trying to stay ahead of the weeds. To bad that the weeds are winning. We are working hard to catch up. Many of the usual annuals that grace us with their presence year after year have come back. Many of them include the Mexican sunflower (Tithonia), celosias in a variety of colors, and the always favorite zinnias. The mexican sunflowers are a favorite with the bees and butterflies. We haven't seen that many of the butterflies this year. My honest opinion is that the aerial spraying that is done to keep the mosquitos away has also driven the butterflies away. If you have any other ideas of why we don't see the butterflies as much please let us know.



photo by Carol Cammack

We are going to hold an open house for the All American Seeds Selection. It will be held during the Fall Sale which is the last week in September. I will be there to answer any questions that you may have about the All American plants. Some of the plants that will be featured will be Rudbeckia 'Prairie Sun', Vinca 'Jaio Scarlet Eye', the ornamental Millet F1 'Purple Majesty', and my favorite Gaillardia 'Sundace Bicolor'. Many of the All American Seeds do wonderfully down here in Texas. All of the plants that I have just mentioned have been tried in our garden more than once in the last year. And they have all been grown with much success. During the springtime we have a few of the All American Seeds that don't grow in the fall that will be available for viewing. Some of them include the Petunia F1 'Blue Wave', Carnation F1 'Can Can Scarlet', Petunia F1 'Merlin Blue Morn' (a beauty of a flower), and Eustoma F1 'Forever White'. We will always be glad to answer any questions that you may have about each of the flowers and plants that are in the garden. Don't be shy to ask.

One more thing before I go...**Brian Koehl** has completed the final copper sculpture for our garden. It is absolutely stunning. If you haven't seen it then you are missing a work of art. Every time the breeze blows, the sculpture turns gently and beautifully. Thank you again Brian. You did it again; we love it!

# 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>.

# September 2003

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b> Work Day & Hamburger Tues. at Bear Creek — Dawn Parish on Tropics <a href="#">page 4</a>	<b>3</b> Precinct 2 1st Wednesday — Anita Nelson on Water Gardening <a href="#">page 7</a>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b> Work Day at the Extension Office	<b>10</b> Field Trip to Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center <a href="#">page 4</a>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b> Wildscape Workshop at University of Houston <a href="#">page 5</a>
<b>14</b>	<b>15</b> Newsletter deadline 5pm	<b>16</b> Work Day & General meeting at Bear Creek — Scott Reeves on Propagation <a href="#">page 4</a>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b> Gourd Show and Craft Sale at Houston Garden Center, Hermann Park. <a href="#">page 5</a>
<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b> Work Day at the Extension Office	<b>24</b> Precinct 2 Fall Plant Sale Preview. Clear Lake United Methodist Church. <a href="#">page 7</a>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b> Fall Plant Sales & Symposia at Bear Creek & Precinct 2. <a href="#">page 4</a> & <a href="#">page 7</a>
<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b> Work Day at the Extension Office				

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## Editor's Note

by Carol Cammack

I recently had the pleasure of attending the Garden Writers Association Conference in Chicago. The conference itself included a day and a half of instructional workshops on writing and speaking and two days of garden tours. We visited private residences, the Morton Arboretum, the Chicago Botanic Garden and the Ball Seed Company trial gardens just to name a few. It was truly amazing to see these world famous gardens with many of the same varieties that

**Jennifer** and **Mary Lynn** mentioned in their articles growing in them. I took over 300 pictures on my trip, but I realized when I came back to the Extension Office that our gardens here are as beautiful as any you will find no matter how far you travel. Take some time to come by the office on a Tuesday, get your hands dirty and see what a marvel gardening can be!

Please keep the articles coming!! Submit all articles and comments electronically by the 15th of every month to:

**Carol Cammack, [c-cammack@tamu.edu](mailto:c-cammack@tamu.edu).**

I'm looking forward to hearing from you.



photo by Carol Cammack