

# URBAN DIRT

Published by the Harris County Master Gardener Association

Vol. 9, No. 5



## PLANNING FOR HOUSTON'S FALL GARDENING SEASON!

by Pam Libby

Most parts of the country get only one chance each year of creating that perfect garden, while we in Houston, get two. Actually many of you may not think that is much of an advantage after suffering through this very hot summer.

Relax!! Sip your lemonade. I'm not asking you to get out there now and start cultivating. No, actually you can wait until November and perhaps, even December before working up another sweat. Those are good times to plant dormant trees and shrubs and to put in your fall herb and vegetable gardens.

Changing the subject a bit, this is my last newsletter. I have enjoyed working with the many Master Gardeners who have contributed articles and who have helped to put it together.

I would also like to thank the mailing team, they work very hard to see that you get your issue out on time. I especially want to thank Stephanie Gebhardt, she has worked tirelessly on the editing of the many drafts that I submitted for each issue.

Although it saddens me to leave, I feel that after almost ten years, it's time to turn the paper over to a new and innovative staff. Frankly, I'm just tired out. I know you need fresh ideas and I'm sure that in the coming months you will see some wonderful changes in the newsletter. There is now the possibility of using some new software that will make the paper more consistent in its format, so I think you'll really like that. If you have any ideas for articles or formats, please submit them to the Extension Center.

I will still be a Master Gardener and will probably have to decide on some new areas to explore. Of course, I will still be available to help with the newsletter in any way I can.

**Have a wonderful fall harvest and enjoy our "second planting season!"**

### MEETING SCHEDULE

#### SEPTEMBER 19, 2000

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

#### SUBJECT:

**"Neighbors from H\_\_\_" or "The Anatomy of a Large Garden."**

Speaker: Beth Grunden, MG.

#### OCTOBER 17, 2000

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

#### SUBJECT: A Computer, Powerpoint Presentation about "Gourd Culture"

Speaker: John Stacy, First V.P. (1999) of the Texas Gourd Society.



## PRESIDENT'S THOUGHTS

By Kenneth Dorman, MG President

*Gar-den-ing:*

1. *n. The art of killing weeds and bugs to grow flowers and crops for animals and birds to eat.*

This is from A DICTIONARY FOR WEEDPULLERS, SLUGCRUSHERS & BACKYARD BOTANISTS by Henry Beard & Roy McKie, and it is a pretty apt description, in my case anyway.

The squirrels, mockingbirds and jays have taken a toll in my backyard. I managed to harvest 7 figs and the next time I went to the tree four mockingbirds gave me a scolding.

Frances hit the nail on the head in her column last month. I was so flattered to be nominated for President, I didn't stop to think about what I was getting into. However, the Board of Directors was kind to me at the first meeting and hopefully I will come close to living up to the accomplishments of the past Presidents.

That said, let me mention we need some new help with a lot of the committees. As of this moment we need someone, or more, to head up the Spring Symposium, which Barbara Shepard managed so well. Anyone interested please call, e-mail or leave a note in my box. Ellen (Nel) Barner wants to retire from the Herb Garden so we need someone there. I think I heard Pam Libby say she was tired of doing the Newsletter, but I hope I didn't. And, Anice Bilberry and Marjorie Chambers are looking for a couple of helpers with the Hospitality Committee, as is Clarence Sapp on the Publicity committee. A lot of the other Committees have new faces and, like me, will be most appreciative of any help they can get.

This should be a good year for Harris County Master Gardeners.

(Continued on p. 10)

## HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION

#2 Abercrombie Drive • Houston, Texas 77084  
Phone (281) 855-5600 • Fax # (281) 855-5638

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

<b>President</b> .....	Kenneth Dorman (713) 785-9122
<b>First Vice President</b> .....	Anne O'Neill (713) 744-0945
<b>Second Vice President</b> .....	Jean Fefer (713)467-0231
<b>Past President</b> .....	Frances Robeson (281) 890-4259
<b>Secretary</b> .....	Ann Robinson (713) 528-7454
<b>Treasurer</b> .....	Diane Ballentine (281) 373-1205

### Executive

**Committee:** Mary Lynn Randall, Bob Heinicke,  
Linda Carlson

**Directors:** Nancy Kuykendall, Glenn Graves, Dave Mason, Charlie Reass, Clarence Sapp.

### ANCILLARY POSITIONS

#### Advisor & County Extension Agent

**- Horticulture** ..... William D. Adams  
(281) 855-5600

#### Harris County Extension Agency

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(281) 855-5600

**Volunteer Coordinator** .....Debbie Mendieta  
(281) 855-5600

**Urban Dirt Editor**..... Carol Cammack  
(281) 855-5600

**Gulf Coast Fruit Study Group**..... Yvonne Gibbs  
(713) 462-7052

**Membership** ..... Tom Robb  
(713) 465-5987

**Greeting Committee** .....Margaret Mason

**Hospitality Committee**..... Anice Bilberry,  
Margie Chambers

**Publicity Committee** ..... Clarence Sapp  
(713) 460-4414

**Book Committee** .....Patty Usnick  
(281) 578-8948

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## A MOST GRACIOUS THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING CYLINDER GARDENING VOLUNTEERS SPRING 2000

A. L. Williams	Ken Shrum
Alisa Rogillo	Lois Patterson
Ann Nemeth	Mary Roberts
Bob Crawford	Mimi Stevenson
Carol Baez	Nancy Stone
Chester Smith	Pat Irwin
Elaine Roach	Rebecca O'Connor
Frank Brocato	Rickey Weiner
George Williams	Sandra Farris
Glen Graves	Sherri Clemons
Hope Dyson	Susan Taylor
Jack Snapp	Therese Walton
Jack Todd	Theron McLaren
Jessie Smith	William Thiessen
John Pierce	Yvonne Gibbs
Ken Miller	

## SUMMARY OF CYLINDER GARDENING ENROLLMENT SPRING -2000

No. of Schools	Enrollment	Volunteers
Houston Independent School District:		
26	2763	19
Alief Independent School District:		
1	24	1
Cypress-Fairbank Independent School District:		
1	44	1
Galena Park Independent School District:		
3	208	1
Humble Independent School District:		
1	75	1
Private Schools:		
12	347	6
Spring Branch Independent School District:		
11	547	5
<b>Totals</b>	<b>4008</b>	<b>34</b>



## FROM THE ORCHARD . . .

by Yvonne Gibbs

Unfortunately, we did not receive the article regarding the Orchard in time for publication. Please watch for Yvonne's article in the next newsletter.

For those who do not know, Yvonne Gibbs is the Coordinator of the Orchard. She does a wonderful job. Working in the Orchard is one of the most desirable volunteering opportunities in the MG Association. You can learn first hand lessons in grafting, pruning, and general growing tips that will yield you a crop of Texas's finest fruits. Please contact Yvonne Gibbs for more information, she is nearly always working in the Orchard on Tuesday mornings. Please consider joining this group, it's truly a wonderful experience.

## NOTES from the MILLENNIUM DISPLAY GARDEN

As the Cut Flower program phased out, it became apparent that the existing flower bed structures were in need of repair or redevelopment. Much of the wood was rotting, and the area needed to be reconsidered for purpose as well as design. As we began to consider the restructuring of the site, the idea was presented to develop the area as a display garden, and to coordinate its physical structure with the existing Herb Garden.

The Millennium Display Garden was conceived as a reflection the many talents of Master Gardeners, as they combine their knowledge of plants, structures and design. Once the physical garden structure is completed, individual Master Gardeners and MG intern teams will develop and maintain individual areas of the garden. The design philosophy and plants in each individual area will be described in printed materials available to the public.

Dave Mason, Diane Ballentine and Roy Wood brought the project to the Board of Directors in October 1999. With BOD approval, more detailed plans were drawn up and work was begun.

### Design and Development - Dave Mason

**Concept** - In October 1999, I was asked that to take on the task of designing a Display Garden in the area across the road from the Herb Garden. The challenge was accepted and several alternative plans were considered. The following is a review of various elements of the site which needed to be considered and their incorporation into the final plan.

# DOWN THE GARDEN PATH



So is it hot enough for you?



It was good to see Loyal Herman Ayers recently. He popped in on us at the office and got to enjoy hamburger day and everything. He comes back to visit ever so often after taking a job in Arkansas.



Linda Carlson and Frances Robeson have been busy working on our first Gourd Show. Come out and support their efforts on Saturday, September 30<sup>th</sup>.



Glen Graves is recovering well from his recent knee replacement surgery. He was up at the Extension Office just two weeks after surgery. Modern medicine can do wonderful things !!



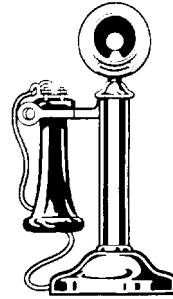
Congratulations to Donna Fay Hilliard, coordinator for Precinct #2 Master Gardeners. She won a grant and was awarded a trip to Washington, D.C. for being one of the Top 100 Woman Volunteers recognized by Eckerd Drugs. Keep up the good work, Donna Fay!



Did you catch Theron McLaren's gardening in the Houston Chronicle on Sunday, August 20<sup>th</sup>? It was a really neat article done by fellow Master Gardener, Kathy Huber. We will try to keep a copy of the article in the MG room for viewing.



## MG PHONE DUTY: March/April



*"A thank you for those who served on the line of duty."*

**Mondays:** Patty Hart, Penny Bowin, Shirley Eller, Donna Curren, Jan Bindra, Margaret Tutton, Jennifer Warren, Janet Roberts.

**Tuesdays:** Michelle White, Mary La Borde, Gale Pierce, Mary Jo Coselli, Art Chester, Sue Justice.

**Wednesdays:** Nancy McTeer, Doug McLeod, Sandra Martin, Brenda Hill, Ann Williams, Darlene Jeter.

**Thursdays:** Barbara Kish, Steve Wood, Carol Eichorn, Dominic Zuckero, Mary Kaye Frazier, John Foree, Ida Morton.

**Fridays:** Johnnie Foster, Mary Jo Coselli, Mary La Borde, Alisa Rogillo, Nancy Sauer, Mary Kay Frazier.

### A Note from the Editor...

If you would like to submit an article to the *Urban Dirt* newsletter, please email it as text, not an attachment to [ccammack@tamu.edu](mailto:ccammack@tamu.edu) or place the article in the editor's box at the Extension Center, mail it or fax it to the Extension Center. We would love to have items about yourself or fellow Master Gardeners for publication.

All articles are welcome, but articles submitted in an electronic format or typed are greatly appreciated. When you send articles that you have typed, please do not add a lot of special fonts or formatting. Just use large fonts (at least 12 points). I will be glad to accent your article with special additions, if you include a separate note with your preferences. Also, don't add pen or pencil marks to your typed copy, just a sticky note. I scan the typed copies and these marks interfere with reproduction of the text. Remember that white paper always turns out crisper. Of course, all of the above does not apply to hand written articles, which I always retype.

The next issue will be for **November/December 2000** and **must be submitted by the cutoff date of October 1, 2000. If you can submit articles earlier, that would be great, but Oct. 1, is the last possible date that we can accept your articles for the Nov./Dec. issue.**



I want to wish Glen Graves a speedy recovery with his second knee replacement surgery. The warranty ran out on the first surgery, and now it needs to be done again. After his hospital stay, he will be in rehabilitation for a while. Glen is a very special Master Gardener to us and a dedicated worker. We hope to see him running up and down the halls in the office soon.

**Debbie Mendieta,  
Volunteer Coordinator**

My regular work days are Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. My phone number is 281-855-5635. Feel free to call me, if I can be of any help to you. Also, my e-mail address is: d-mendieta@tamu.edu

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## GREETINGS FROM THE GREENHOUSE

The Greenhouse looked a little empty right after our recent plant sale. We are very pleased that the idea of starting some of our own plants from cuttings for that sale appears to have been a good idea. Thanks to all those who brought in cuttings. We were swamped a couple of times and were not able to use everything that came in, in the best way. We learned a lot about the kind of care some plants need to produce saleable plants and what kinds of plants sell the best.

Thanks also to the Master Gardeners who worked so diligently in the greenhouse to get everything growing and in shape for the sale and to those who helped at the sale. We did not have a lot of leftovers.

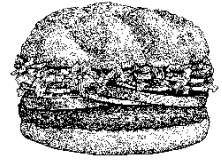
We've been working hard in the greenhouse so we can do it again for the Fall plant sale and again want to thank those who brought in cuttings, and plants for us to work with. We were especially interested in any unusual plants that might be hard to find in a local nursery and natives were always welcomed. Our cut-off date was June 30, so we could inventory the plants that looked like they would make it, and decide what we would need to order from other sources.

There are a lot of happy plants currently residing in the greenhouse and our job now will be to keep them happy and lush and trimmed back so they won't take over the world. The variety of plants is broad and interesting. If you haven't been out there recently, take a peek. It looks terrific. Billy Duncan, Pat Cole, Jean Fefer

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## ONGOING EDUCATION COMMITTEE INFORMATION

I want to thank Tom Robb for transporting us to the magical islands of Hawaii on our first Tuesday of the month



hamburger day. After viewing his slides, all of us were ready to board the first airplane. The plants were so lush, so green, and blooming so beautifully, it was difficult to return to reality and our August heat and drought. Thank you Tom!

In September, Lou Jacobs is going to discuss Plumerias. He will share his secrets to enticing this exotic plant to bloom. Many of us who grow Plumerias could use hints on the care of these beautiful plants.

Vermi-composting is our topic in October. Mary Sacilowski is going to present a program on worm composting. Mary is intending to bring all her composting materials for a demonstration. And she plans on sharing her worms. This is a great in-home project. I have heard people even store their worm containers under their beds.

Linda Gay will be with us in November to discuss vines for the Houston area. As you all know, Linda is the Horticulturist at Mercer Arboretum and one of the favorite speakers at our Master Gardener classes. This is sure to be an excellent program.

I want to thank all of the Master Gardeners who have helped me with this program: Glen Graves, who presented two wonderful presentations last year; Tom Robb, who shared his wonderful slides this past month; Lou Jacobs, who will be with us in September, and Charlie Reass, who consistently sets up the slide projector and audio system each month. They have done so much to make this program a success. Thank you.

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

Mary Ann Wagner






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## NEWS FROM THE SPEAKER'S BUREAU

by Karen Breneman

Welcome to all new members who attended the orientation meeting on July 28, 2000. If you are interested in the speaker's bureau, but were unable to attend, contact Debbie Mendieta at 281-855-5600 or Nancy Davis at 261-398-2089. They will make sure you receive the handouts from the meeting and add your

name to the list.

The green form for reporting hours has been updated with the addition of a request for the zip code for the presentation. This is important to document the congressional district served. If you are using the old green form, please include this information. Be sure to fill in and return the forms to Debbie at the Extension office. All your hours are important to the Master Gardener Association.

No, I have not changed my mind about resigning as coordinator. By the time you read this, Nancy will have returned from vacation and be the official coordinator. Thank you again for all your help and good work.

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## MASTER NATURALIST CLASS

by Karen Breneman

The Gulf Coast Chapter of Texas Master Naturalist is a new and exciting outreach program dedicated to developing and certifying well-informed volunteers.

Its mission is to educate the public about managing and preserving natural resources and habitats within our Houston area community. The program furnishes participants with essential information and strategies to restore and conserve our indigenous species and habitats.

The Fall 2000 Master Naturalist Class begins Monday September 25, 2000 and runs weekly through December 6, at the Harris County Agricultural Office, #2 Abercrombie Dr. The classes will be held in the evening from 6 to 9 p.m. with field trips on Saturdays. The training class is limited to 25 people with selection criteria to include interest in the program, availability for volunteer service and commitment to stewardship of our natural resources.

The fee for this training is \$100. Deadline for applications is September 20, 2000. Call 281-855-5600 for more details and application.

This wonderful program is sponsored by the Texas Agricultural Extension Service and Texas Parks and Wildlife. The instructors are enthusiastic experts in their fields. If you enjoy nature, join us to help share that enjoyment and in the education of others. I know you will find the time well spent. If you have any questions, please contact me.

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## WRITERS INFORMATION

by Karen Breneman

Most who know me, know I am trying to write fiction, primarily garden and nature related mysteries, while learning how to write saleable material, I discovered the Houston Writer's League annual conference. The next conference is scheduled for March 15-18, 2001 at the Houston Marriott Westside, 13210 Katy Freeway. The fee for the conference is \$275 dollars; however, if you register before December 1, 2000, the early bird fee is only \$199. Both fees cover all workshops, keynote speaker's lunch, Literacy Lunch, Awards Banquet and Sunday morning brunch. Single day registration for Friday or Saturday is also available at \$165 with early bird at \$135, this fee includes the lunch on that day only.

The conference is open to any one interested in writing. The workshops cover topics of interest to the beginner as well as to the multi-published author.

Agents and Editors attend looking for new material and appointments are available to present your material. A manuscript contest with 12 different categories is associated with the conference. The deadline for the contest is December 1, 2000. You do not have to register for the conference or be a member of the Houston Writer's League to enter the contest.

(Continued on p. 11)






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## WEB SURFIN

by Tom H. Robb, Jr.

E-Mail users have really taken off. As of this writing, the distribution list contains about 475 names and

workable addresses. I say workable because for a few addresses the message comes back that the name is <Unknown>. So after several fruitless attempts, I've taken these names off the list. If you are not receiving e-mail notices from me at least once or twice a month, your name may be one of these and the cause might be that I misread and entered your address incorrectly. Send me an e-mail at <trobb@hal-pc.org> with your current e-mail address and I will take care of it.

In the last issue of Urban Dirt, I mentioned that Gloria and I were taking a trip to Ireland. We did and it is a beautiful, green, cool land. Several of you mention vacation trips you are planning and since the Internet is filled with helpful sites for vacation planners, I thought this might be a good time to bring some of them to your attention.

Wherever you plan to go, you will want to know about the weather there so you know what type of clothing to carry. **Weather.com** is located at [www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com) and will give you weather forecasts for any major area anywhere in the world.

You can get all the information you need about hotels and lodgings, also anywhere in the world, at [www.hotelguide.com/](http://www.hotelguide.com/), even being able to make online room reservations. Another good hotel site is "**Accommodation Search Guide**" at [ase.net/index.html](http://ase.net/index.html).

"**AirLines of the Web**" is dedicated to free online information and reservations for airline travel. If it flies and it is on the web, you'll find it at [flyaow.com/](http://flyaow.com/). Another good site for airline information and reservations is "**Travelocity.Com**" located at [travelocity.com/](http://travelocity.com/)

Do you want to travel by rail? **Amtrak's** website claims "Explore vacation possibilities, tap into great discounts and even purchase rail tickets online. You'll find everything you need to begin experiencing the wonders of an Amtrak vacation. Find this at [www.amtrak.com/index5.html](http://www.amtrak.com/index5.html)

In the last issue of "Urban Dirt" I included a site for currency conversion. Repeating, the **Full Universal Currency Converter** contains currency information on 180 currencies in over 250 geographical location. This is at [www.xe.net/ucc/full.shtml](http://www.xe.net/ucc/full.shtml)

An extremely useful site, not only in planning a vacation but for everything else, is "**World Time Server**" which provides the most accurate current local times of any

world clock on the Internet. No matter what time zone a country or city is located in, this site is your best resource for determining any time, anywhere. This is a free download that rests on your desktop. Activating it not only gives you the time but your computer clock is reset by an atomic clock. Get it at [www.worldtimeserver.com/](http://www.worldtimeserver.com/)

If your travel is in the U.S., Rand McNally Road Trip Guide at [www.randmcnally.com/rmc/home.jsp](http://www.randmcnally.com/rmc/home.jsp) gives you maps, directions, places to stay, events and destinations - everything you need to plan your road trip and explore America. Another good trip planning site is "**The AutoPilot Highway Trip Planning**" system which produces personalized and comprehensive itineraries that include the locations of enroute facilities which you select. You can even work in particular points of interest, including hotels and restaurants. Approximate travel times and mileage are included. Surf this at [www.freetrip.com/](http://www.freetrip.com/)

Don't forget to visit **Harris County Master Gardeners website** at [harris-cnty.tamu.edu/mg/](http://harris-cnty.tamu.edu/mg/) and my own website "**My Garden**" at [www.hal-pc.org/~trobb/horticul.html](http://www.hal-pc.org/~trobb/horticul.html).

And last, but not least, many of you know that Gloria and I have taken a number of trips with **Elderhostel** which offers educational adventures for those 55 or older. Many have asked for information concerning Elderhostel. They are online at [www.elderhostel.org](http://www.elderhostel.org). They present their entire catalog and give you the opportunity to sign up for programs online.

Enjoy your vacation and Happy surfin'

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## TOUR ALERT!

Stephen F. Austin University Arboretum is having it's **Fall Plant Sale** on October 7, 2000. We have arranged for a bus to leave the Extension center at 6:30 a.m. for the trip to Nacogdoches. You will have a chance to sign up at the regular August and September MG Tuesday night meetings. I'm still working on the specific details about cost and lunch, but we will be back before 7:00 p.m.

If there is anyone out there who has a tour they would like to see us take, please let me know. Is there one that you would like to have repeated?.. like New Braunfels or Peckerwood, or Moody. Give me a call or an email - some take a little more organizing, so don't be shy.

See you on the bus. Jean Fefer 713-467-0231,  
[JeanAFefer@aol.com](mailto:JeanAFefer@aol.com)

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**TO THE GLORY OF THE GOURD on  
SEPTEMBER 30, 2000**

*"Sugar in the gourd and honey in the horn,  
I never was so happy since the hour I was born"*  
An old folk song ("Turkey in the Straw")



Gourds are hot! Not for storing sugar in the pantry anymore as the pioneers did from necessity, but as objects of beauty in their own right.

Like Cinderella's pumpkin they are being transformed not by fairy godmothers but by artists. They are being made into elegant serving pieces: bowls, trays, cups, and carafes. Others are made into Christmas ornaments, birdhouses, and yard art flamingoes. And some become exquisite pieces of art.

To make this the "Year of the Gourd" we planted a gourd garden at the Extension Center. We planted as many kinds of seed as we could get our hands on. They were planted on trellises and on a fence: tiny Navajo Bells, cannon balls, birdhouse, bottle, dinosaur, and bushel. They have grown into a green tangle worthy of a garden in Oz and are in the care of our Tuesday volunteers directed by Marge Chambers, with ample fertilizer applied by Bill Adams.

We will have these gourds on display at the Fall Extravaganza Gourd Show and Plant Sale on September 30, 2000. We have invited gourd artists from around the state to bring their work to show and sell.

Gourd growing as a branch of horticulture does not get much attention. We will make up for that in our Gourd Show by covering the history, cultivation, preparation, and utility of the gourd. We expect to see wonderful gourd art. We want to promote the gourd and encourage its growth and use so that it will continue to make us happy.

--Frances Robeson



**MASTER GARDENER 2000  
STANDING/SPECIAL COMMITTEES:**

- Audit ..... Mary Lynn Randall
- Bulk Mail Committee: .....John Plotzki, Susan Wier
- Delegates to State MGA ..... John Plotzki, and Dave Mason
- Greeting Committee..... Margaret Mason
- Historian: .....Joyce Flott, Charlie Reese
- Hospitality ..... Anice Bilberry and Marge Chambers
- Master Gardener Handbook Buzz Busby, Frances Robeson
- Membership .....Tom Robb
- Newsletter ..... Carol Cammack
- Publicity:.....Clarence Sapp
- Telephone Committee..... Lois Patterson

**EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH**

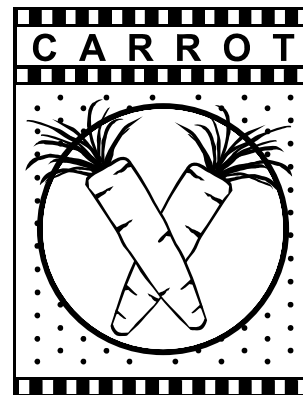
- Cylinder Gardening ..... Norm Arnold
- Precinct 2 Office Coordinator..... Donna Fay Hillard
- M G Classes..... Volunteer Coordinators
- Ongoing Education ..... Mary Ann Wagner and Jan Gisler
- Speakers' Bureau ..... Nancy Davis, Karen Breneman

**FUND RAISING**

- April Symposium..... Barbara Shepard
- Book Sales .....Ann O=Neil, Patty Usnick
- Seminars .....William Adams
- Tomato & Pepper Sale..... Mary Lynn Randall

**EXTENSION CENTER  
GARDENS AND GREENHOUSE**

- Flower Gardens..... Jennifer
- Greenhouse ..... Billie Duncan
- Herb Garden ..... TBA
- Millennium Garden..... Diane Ballentine
- Orchard..... Yvonne Gibbs
- Rose Garden .....Clyde Cannon
- Vegetable Garden ..... David Parish



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## HERBSIDE

by Nel Barner



When October finally gets here and the Urban Dirt comes out again, this hot, hot summer will be just another memory. I can hardly wait! There's not much to do 'round here at home, but sit inside and wait for a cold spell, and then run outside to yank a couple of weeds or prune the stuff that actually thrives on this heat. One of those, of course, is our "Plant from Hell." For it, the hotter the better (because it's from you-know-where). Meanwhile a few experimental herbs, that I have in my garden, like a variegated oregano, are looking more and more like brown, flaky breakfast cereal. My pot of Silver Oregano is still hanging in there though. It isn't worth taking cuttings of yet, but maybe it'll revive in the fall. Janice Teas has a wreath made out of one of hers. Since this is a rather upright variety, it would easily lend itself to such a topiary form. And it sure smells wonderful! If only we could grow some little wreaths and sell 'em at a plant sale, they'd go quick as a wink!

Aside from planting cool-weather annuals, our other fall plans for the herb garden include a new herb mailbox with updated schematics. These may not be ready by October, as I'm still in the middle of working on them, but someday they'll exist. Changes were sorely needed, as some plants grew way too big for their spots, and while others didn't make it. Some ran rampant and had to be removed, and still others had picked up their roots and tiptoed over to another spot (this phenomenon can be observed by gardeners willing to camp out all night beside a duck blind, using night-vision aids). And don't forget the scented geraniums: we planted those backwards. We hope to fix that problem and reconcile it on paper, but not until next spring. We will have fewer scented geraniums and a wider variety. That way they won't blend in together so much. Last year we hacked them *way* back-because no one could figure out where one plant began and another ended. We wanted to prune them into neat little balls, but ended up with 4 -inch trunks. But most survived the humiliation and the mild winter and said, "We're baaaack!" My only question is: "Who ARE you?"

The question of what are you will have to be readdressed, as the flower bed signs are falling apart. In Houston, anything made of wood lasts only two to three years at best. So, we've got to come up with some more permanent signs.

By fall, the herb garden will have a new neighbor across the driveway - the Perennial Garden. That means more gardeners will come strolling over here and we can come strolling over there. As a gesture of good will, we are donating two antique roses Mme.- Mme. Joseph Schwartz and Louis Philippe - to the perennialists. Originally when we planted the fragrant duo, we had noted that Buchanan's

Nursery signs and some garden books claimed they grew 3 to 5 feet (for example see pages 137, 152 and 186, Antique Roses for the South by Bill Welch). Ours, however, reached 6 feet last year and Clyde Cannon says they'll only get bigger. Clyde should write his own book: Everything you Really Really wanted to know about Antique Roses.

In their place we'll plant a red Martha Gonzales that I grew from a cutting taken last year from my front yard. She's not fragrant, but I know from experience she's compact and not very thorny. Maybe then the Craft and Color bed will have more room for plants that were squeezed out years earlier. Now, we must remember to call Ms. Gonzales by her full name, otherwise, in a bed like Crafts and Color, somebody will start calling her the Martha Stewart Rose.

Other plans in the works: a question has been asked repeatedly over the last two years, "When are you going to have a Specialty Herb Class?" Answer: I don't know, but if enough of you demand it, we'll see what we can do. I do know it takes a lot of planning by more than one person. The class I was in was excellent, with lots of hands - on opportunities, like propagating, guess-the-herb; compare the mints or basil, etc. We even had homework and a test. Lecture topics, some from guest speakers, included history of herb gardening, container herb gardens, medicinal and culinary herbs, vinegars and oils, and even herb trees. The best part, I think, was refreshment time - sipping herb tea and munching herb cookies. My class was almost entirely female, but I think we can do more to get increased male class involvement, (besides garden construction aspects). How about a class combining vegetables or trees with herbs? Waddya say guys?

Lastly, remember that October 16, 10:30-2:00 is our tour of the Round Top herb gardens. This time we'll get to see the new Medicinal bed, which will focus on herbs from Asia, Africa and the Americas. Not your same-ol'-same-ol'. We'll get to see, snip n' sip (tour, take cuttings, and eat Gwen Barclays' delicious cuisine). If you've not signed up, consider the date!

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## The President's thoughts, continued from p. 2

The potential for the new Millennium Garden is exciting to contemplate as is the program going on in Precinct 2 where Coordinator Donna Fay Hilliard has put together an outstanding organization. They just trained forty-four new Master Gardeners and have a larger class planned for 2001. The possibility of doing the same in some other Precincts is a good thought. We are so fortunate to have the guidance and inspiration of Carol Cammack and Bill Adams. Their expertise, wit and patience are the glue that keeps this enterprise together.

Remember the Fall Garden Sale/Gourd Show Saturday, September 30. The Greenhouse Group has propagated about 1,500 excellent perennial plants from cuttings and seeds that were donated by you. Now you get a chance to acquire some of what other Master Gardeners have growing. Plus there will be hard to find native plants, Louisiana iris, daylilies of all kinds, fruit trees suitable for Houston and much more. Frances Robeson and Linda Carlson have a wonderful Gourd Show that we will exhibit in the auditorium during the Sale hours.

A lot of you I don't know and I look forward to the opportunity to meet you over the next few months. Any and all suggestions are welcome. My attitude toward volunteer work is that the pay is job satisfaction and stress, anxiety and bickering are not part of it. Come and join in the fun!

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### REMEMBER

**DON'T MISS THE FALL  
GARDEN TOUR!**

**SAT. OCT. 21, 2000 –  
9:00 A.M. TO 3:00 P.M.**

**THIS IS A TOUR OF OUR  
MASTER GARDENERS'  
OWN GARDENS. IT'S  
FOR ALL MG'S AND  
THEIR GUESTS.**

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## Master Gardener Plant Exchange Corner

by Jamie Sejman

Do you have an abundance of plants and seed in your garden or hard to find plant that you are willing to share with other Master Gardeners? Many of us do and we would like to those gardeners to share their extra plants with others who will appreciate them as much as we do.

Many of us are on a budget or fixed incomes and are very limited in the ability to purchasing new plants for our gardens. The Master Gardener Plant Exchange Corner will be a great way to get a variety of plants without incurring the high costs of gardening today. This can be done by just sharing a little piece of our own gardens to help others. It's a good way to make new friends, too.

I hope you will become a part of the MG Plant Exchange Corner by listing your "Has" and "Wants" request. The following are of my personal plant exchange requests and may be used as an example of how requests will appear in future newsletters. If you would like to list your plant requests in a future newsletter, please send me an e-mail: sejman@netropolis.net or phone 281-894-8615 before 6:00 p.m.

Jamie Sejman: Sejman@netropolis.net or 281-894-8615 before 6:00 p.m.

**Has:** Pretoria (Bengal Tiger) Canna, Orange Cosmo seed, and Morning Glory free cuttings.

**Wants:** Pink Hardy Hibiscus cuttings.

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### \$\$ DID YOU KNOW \$\$

If you are an employee, retiree, spouse of a retiree or surviving spouse of a retiree of Exxon, Mobil or the Exxon Corporation, you can apply for a Volunteer Involvement Grant of \$500 after volunteering 20 hours for a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. The Master Gardener's Program qualifies.

Each eligible participant can apply for up to four individual grants per year. These may be for the same or different organizations as long as 20 hours of volunteer work is performed for each grant application. Each organization is allowed a maximum of \$5000 per calendar year from Exxon/Mobil Volunteer Involvement Grants. The forms are available from Exxon/Mobil Retiree Affairs (713-680-6808). Retirees of Mobil Corporation are not eligible for these grants, but may apply for the Mobil Retiree Volunteer Program.

Jean Fefer

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## PASSER *domesticus* UPDATE

by Karen Breneman

As a follow up to the article in our last issue, I thought I'd give you a progress report on what I and other Master Gardeners having been doing to control the problem of the English House Sparrow.

Between May 6, and July 18, 2000, I found and evicted 22 sparrow nests from two martin houses, half of the nests contained eggs. In one week sparrows can build a nest and lay eggs. Since it is harder to discard young birds than eggs, I try to check each house at least once a week.

Whenever I feel soft about destroying the eggs or young, all I have to do is remember the beautiful Eastern Bluebird and the graceful Purple Martin. One of these magnificent birds is worth more than a nest full of eggs of an invasive alien.

One martin house is a 12 unit trio, the other a 14 unit Lone Star. This breeding season, the Purple Martins nested in 10 of the units and successfully fledged over 14 young. If you do the math, there appear to be more nests than nest sites. The sparrows are very persistent and often rebuild in the same nest box after eviction. The martins only nest once a year, but the sparrows continue through most of the summer. The last martin flew the first week of July and all have essentially abandoned both houses. Not true of the sparrows. The morning after I discarded the nest on the 18th, they were constructing new nests.

I will continue to check and discard all nests for a few more weeks. This way I can at least feel in some small way that I am controlling the alien population. When the sparrows are no longer nesting, I will clean both houses and insert the door tabs, which will remain until the first Purple Martin scouts appear in February.

I know that there are many other MG working to clear out this environmental threat to our native birds. How many *birds* did your houses fledge?

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## WRITER'S CONFERENCE INFORMATION-(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6)

For more information call me or check the conference website at [www.houstonwritersleague.org/conference](http://www.houstonwritersleague.org/conference). I plan on attending and taking advantage of the early bird rates. I found the last two conferences very informative and would be useful for both professional writers and also those who are interested in using their writing talents to help spread information and education to the public regarding Master Gardening. I'm still not published, but I'm getting closer. See you there?

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(continued from Page 3)

## NOTES FROM THE MILENNIUM GARDEN

**Site factors** - The site for the Display Garden area was occupied by the Cylinder Gardening Display and the Cut Flower Garden. Both elements would have to be moved before the site could be developed. The total area to be developed was 223 feet long by 40 feet at the east end, widening to 55 feet at the west. The new garden area was also across the road from the herb garden and the materials used in that construction would need to be coordinated with the Display Garden.

Drainage did not seem to be a problem as there was a 24 inch slope from west to east, with the existing drainage ditch bordering the garden for two thirds of the eastern length of the garden area. Mature trees at the east end and a clump of Weavers Bamboo in the southwest corner needed to be preserved. A culvert bridge across the ditch also needed to be considered in the new design.

With the cooperation of the Master Gardeners involved, new locations were found for the Cylinder Garden Display and the flower growing activities. Existing bed soils and field rock were removed from the area and conserved for future use.

The Display Garden design uses of a sinuous path from the west culvert, funneling into a large circle suitable for a seat or bench. The area was then divide into two beds by a wide, winding path. It was a consideration to make the path wide enough to accomodate a "Gator" or other maintenance vehicles. The path curves to the east, past the pond area, into a smaller circle, and then on down to the existing trees. There the path opens to another ditch crossing, where a second bridge will be built. The area under the trees is large enough to accommodate one or more benches, and perhaps a table. East of second bridge location, a shorter path leads into a large circular bed shaded by existing mature trees.

The beds are divided into nine separate irrigation zones. Each zone can be watered independently. The irrigation system drips water to the individual plant.

The outer wall at the back of the garden are intended to be higher than the walls at the path so that the garden presents a sloping in, dished aspect to some one walking down the path. These slopes will also make the garden more visible from the road. Sight lines from the west culvert ramp to the bamboo clump draw the eye into the garden and the path will invite visitors to enter. Other views from the road to the pond and the shade garden area will also welcome the visitor.

### **A Brief Building History**

Construction activities on the Display Garden began the second week of February, with the outlining of the beds and digging of the foundation trenches by a Harris County Trustee crew. Then on Monday Feb 14, Valentine's Day, a County ditching tractor excavated 4" wide x 2' deep trenches for the irrigation system. A very productive workday followed on Tuesday, February 15 when the irrigation pipe was laid, and the valves and pressure reducers installed.

The following Tuesday, existing water supply lines were realigned to make a space for a pond. Irrigation ditches were filled and the site was surveyed a second time prior to wall installation. The garden outline was then resurveyed after the irrigation work. The end of February saw the start of foundation wall installation. Some 14 tons of aggregate were delivered Monday, February 28. This material was laid three inches thick in the wall foundations before laying the first course of the walls.

Laying the wall started at the eastern end of the garden in March. As we approached the end of June the walls were almost finished. This was a considerably longer process than called for in the original time line. Each few feet of wall stone required measurement to insure that the course was level. Only a few crews of three men each could lay stone at any one time. No measure was spared to insure that the base course was level and properly aligned. A Harris County trustee crew started filling the beds with sand during the first week of July.

The pond excavation also took on its final form. The pond liner and gravel filter area were installed at the end of June. The walls were finally finished by mid-July and the beds composted by the end of July.

By the end of August, the irrigation system will be in place and tested. By this time the soil profile should become established and allowed to settle for about 6 weeks. The first plantings are anticipated to begin in October 2000.

Construction of the Oriental Garden area in the southwest corner began in late July. This area will feature items unique to an oriental meditation garden, and will be anchored by the Weavers Bamboo.

Trellis structures will be constructed along the southern and western walls of the garden, both to screen the fields behind the garden and to provide vertical planting interest. Master Gardener Joe Thompson will head the trellis and bridge construction.

The garden path surface will be decomposed granite. This material is expected to settle into a smooth, hard, well-drained surface. Installation of the path is planned for September when the weather is cooler.

The Millennium Display Garden is the product of many volunteer men and women Master Gardeners who devoted countless hours to its construction. Their pride of ownership is reflected in the quality and beauty of their work.

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## **MILLENNIUM GARDEN VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES**

### **Bog and Water Sections of the Millennium Garden**

Our hope in developing these two areas is to show you another options to gardening. It is really simple and self-sustained environment.

In the water garden you can chose from tropical day bloomers, hardy lilies and tropical night bloomers. These come in a vast array of spectacular colors. Some blooms extend above the surface of the water and some sit delicately on the water's surface. There is a large group that will bring fragrance to your water garden. A wonderful addition to your water garden if you have space is the lotus with it amazing blooms and leaves as well as the blooms end product, the seed pod.

You have the same choices in bog plants that you have in traditional gardening plants. You have different textures, foliage, colors, heights and plants that bloom. Some of the plants can be used as cut flowers. Pickerel Rush and Thalia blooms do well when cut and mixed with other greenery from the bog.

Many things thrive in the marginal area of your bog, but we will talk about that later. *Virginia Joiner*

*This area has been designed and developed by Master Gardener Virginia Joiner. Her husband, Grady, has been at her side every week of the project. Grady has enjoyed it so much that he has enrolled for the Fall, 2000 Master Gardener class. If you want to join Virginia and Grady in maintaining and learning more about the unique aspects of Pond and Bog Gardening, e-mail them at [gradyj@pdq.net](mailto:gradyj@pdq.net) or join them on site any Tuesday. The bog garden will be extended to the ditch area north of the Vegetable Test Garden, so there is plenty of work yet to do.*

### **Shade Garden**

"Shade" garden is not quite an accurate name for the garden close to the gate. Most of it gets full sun all day, a portion gets light shade from mid-afternoon, and none of it gets full heavy shade. What a challenge!

As with any garden or bed, we are aiming for year-round interest, some color, interesting plants, shapes, contrasts, combinations. We hope to use mostly perennials, woody ornamentals, some evergreen, some deciduous, although there will certainly be some annuals. Heights will be all the way from groundcover and trailing plants to medium-tall trees, shrubs, ornamental grasses. *Ann Robinson & Nancy Kuykendall*

*If you would like to join Ann and Nancy in this area of the garden, e-mail Nancy at [nkaa@hal-pc.org](mailto:nkaa@hal-pc.org); or Ann at [shana@hal-pc.org](mailto:shana@hal-pc.org); or join*

them on-site. Both Ann and Nancy are experienced Master Gardeners, and encourage you to join them in developing and maintaining this area.

### **Drought Tolerant Bed**

Our goal for the drought tolerant bed is to create a demonstration bed that would be used by a new home owner as a guide for a bed that can survive Houston summer heat. Most new homes are in areas where existing shade trees have been removed, and until new plantings mature, special consideration need to be given to drought and heat tolerant plantings. We want the drought tolerant bed to be both colorful and low maintenance. We are trying to use a purple, blue and yellow color scheme, although we will use other colors where appropriate. We want the colors to be as bright as possible, and to give some relief and joy in the summer heat. The bed will feature herbaceous and green perennials as well as small trees.

*Master Gardeners Bob Midkiff and David Parish have volunteered to develop this area. Bob has been active in many aspects of the Master Gardener program, and is eager to take on this new project. David Parish is taking a summer sabbatical from the Vegetable Test Garden to show what he also does with his home garden. Contact Bob or David if you are interested in drought tolerant gardening. To help Bob and Dave develop and maintain this area (Bob is kidding himself that it is really low maintenance), email Bob at [bmidkiff@worldnet.att.net](mailto:bmidkiff@worldnet.att.net), or David at [davidparish@ev1.net](mailto:davidparish@ev1.net).*

### **HEIRLOOM GARDEN**

The Heirloom Garden is searching for plants with an interesting history. If you know of any such plants, call Sally Patin at 281-469-6243, or e-mail her at [Bpatin@houston.rr.com](mailto:Bpatin@houston.rr.com); or contact Frances Robeson at 281-890-4259. We would like to know the common and botanical name of the plant, if available, and the history of the plant. You can give us transplants or seed. If you are not sure if your plant qualifies as an heirloom, consult "The Southern Heirloom Garden", by William Welch and Greg Grant; or "Passalong Plants", by Steve Bender and Felder Rushing. These books serve as references in collecting plants for the garden.

So bring in those plants that once grew in your grandmothers gardens...they may be just the ones we need to help make our garden area an authentic representation of American horticultural history.

*Master Gardeners Sally Patin and Frances Robeson have a passionate interest in preserving heirloom plants and their history. They welcome your interest and your plants in this unique garden project.*

### **Oriental Meditation Garden**

One of the focal points of the Millennium Display Garden is the southwest corner, where an existing planting of Weavers Bamboo will be used as a starting point for an oriental-style area that brings an overall feeling of peace and serenity. The winding path is lined in stone and boulder and ties this garden to the pond area. Bamboo and ornamental grasses give a sense of oriental charm.

Bamboo and reed screening will be used to define the area. Spirits of the ancestors riding the winds speak to us through the serenity of the pagoda wind chimes and in the tinkle of water in bamboo fountains. This corner of the Millennium Display Garden is a place for reflection and meditation.

*Master Gardeners Steve Wood and Bob Kish have volunteered to develop this unique area. If you have an interest in developing and maintaining this lovely place, please call Steve at 281-890-3226, or Bob at 713-464-5471.*

### **Daylily Garden**

The daylily has now surpassed the rose as America's favorite flower, and is considered by many to be the perfect perennial. Master Gardeners Diane Ballentine and Ida Mae Morton have undertaken to prove just that with their portion of the Millennium Display Garden. Daylily plantings will feature the work of several modern hybridizers, as well as an area devoted to local hybridizer's efforts and a bed of daylilies that perform well in the Houston/ Gulf Coast area heat and humidity. Companion plantings of flowering perennials, hardy mallow, althea, small trees and vines will complete the setting. Since daylilies are best viewed up close, several paths will wind through the planting area.

*Please join us if you are interested in developing and maintaining this area of the Millennium Display Garden. If you have daylilies to contribute, please contact Diane at 281-373-1205, or e-mail at [BayouLily45@aol.com](mailto:BayouLily45@aol.com), or contact Ida Mae at 281-391-2271.*

### **Perennial/ Herbaceous Border**

This magnificent bed runs the whole length of the southern side of the garden. It will feature green and herbaceous perennials, small trees, vines, etc. in a constant array of foliage, color, texture and bloom throughout the seasons.

*Master Gardener Mary Lynn Randall has volunteered to begin development of this wonderful garden. She needs a team of Master Gardeners and interns devoted to its development and maintenance. Please contact her at 713-263-9634, or e-mail at [mary\\_lynn@msn.com](mailto:mary_lynn@msn.com)*

