The Compost Bin

A Publication of the Travis County Master Gardeners - A volunteer program of Texas AgriLife Extension

August 2011

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Color Through the Seasons with
Trisha Shirey
Director of Flora & Fauna
Lake Austin Spa Resort
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### August Meeting Speaker — Trisha Shirey

**Color through the Seasons at Lake Austin Spa Resort**

“As a very young child, I remember being amazed by the stunning zinnias that came from a little packet of seeds. It seemed like magic and I was hooked for life,” says Trisha Shirey, Director of Flora and Fauna at Lake Austin Spa Resort. Trisha will take us on a stroll through Lake Austin Spa Resort as if we are spa guests, showing images of the annual and perennial flowers, trees and shrub displays — which both delight the guests and attract wildlife. She will share her personal favorite plants for sun and shade and her secrets for growing them organically.

*Garden Design* magazine named Lake Austin Spa Resort one of the 10 best spa gardens in the world in 2010 and the gardens have been featured in *The New York Times, Texas Gardener* and many other publications. Over the last 26 years Trisha has worked at Lake Austin Spa Resort creating organic herb and vegetable gardens, an organic orchard, and a wealth of flowers to enhance the grounds and brighten the delicious low fat dishes served in the dining room. Plantings are designed to be Texas tough, but beautiful. Despite the foraging deer, flowers are in evidence year round. Many of the gardens are designed to delight butterflies and hummingbirds, which are seen in abundance.

Gardeners feel like they know Trisha because she is a regular guest of both the PBS program “Central Texas Gardener,” produced by KLRU Austin and guest host of the popular “Gardening Naturally” radio show on KLBJ-AM. On these programs she shares tips and techniques on her major loves: gardening, crafts, aromatherapy and all things organic.

Trisha has served three terms on the Board of Directors of Eco-Fair Texas (most recently as President). The organization was formed to support organic and sustainable agriculture for urban and rural communities. Trisha authored the chapter on fertilizer and contributed to other chapters in *Great Garden Formulas*, a recipe book for gardeners.

Come join us as Trisha leads us through her garden of delight. You’ll gain concepts and knowledge you’ll want to instantly implement in your garden!

**Master Gardener Meeting information:**
Wednesday, August 3rd, 2011 starting at 7:00 pm.
Zilker Botanical Garden
Hello Master Gardeners:
A Message From Your President

Gardening by the Friend

Something happened today and it didn’t involve talking about the hot, hot weather. I met a new gardening friend, Renee Studebaker, who formerly wrote a gardening/cooking column for the Austin American Statesman. Renee and I have been exchanging emails for about a year and decided it was time to meet face-to-face. We arranged a lunch, followed by browsing through one of our good local gardening centers, all the while solving most of the world’s problems . . . and became friends.

We discovered we know loads of the same people, many of them MG’s, and laughed at what a small community of hardcore gardeners we really are. It made me stop and think about how fortunate I am to have such a fun, fascinating, intelligent group of friends that I call my gardening family! Lucky am I to have joined into this organization of people who think about the same things I do, talk about the same plants and gardening problems that we all face and enjoy the rewards of having our hands always in the soil.

I love having the opportunity to hear our monthly speakers as I always learn new ideas, hear about new varieties, new soil amendments, but I also love seeing so many of you and just talking about our latest/greatest gardening quests. Isn’t it special to enjoy each other’s company. I think it is such a powerful bond that brings us together, this gardening gene we share.

Now to the weather . . . it’s darn hot and it’s probably going to get hotter. I wilt just heading outside to water my potted Meyer lemons, succulents, potted roses, etc. But, being the old Texas I am, I find I can still do what it takes to keep things alive.

I was listening to a radio d.j. who was interviewing Lyle Lovett recently. When ask if he could tolerate this long heatwave, his reply was “Look, we live in Texas. It’s hot. Get over it.”

So, here’s my ending statement. It’s August in Texas . . . what did you expect?!

Stay as cool as possible, watch the skies for gathering thunderheads, think rain and the upcoming fall months and enjoy gardening with friends!

Happy gardening to you all,

Carolyn Williams

Above: The infinity pool is beautiful and enticing overlooking White Rock Lake on a hot, muggy August afternoon at the Dallas Arboretum. Photo by Anne Van Nest
In The Vegetable Garden
by Patty Leander

Extreme drought conditions have haunted us this summer, but as a gardener I can’t help but marvel at the color that I see around town and in my own backyard: yellow bells, crape myrtle, ruellia, bird of paradise and datura. These are just a few of the Texas tough plants that beautify our landscapes despite the water restrictions and relentless heat. It is not so easy to keep vegetables going under these conditions, but I tip my hat to okra, eggplant, sweet potatoes, Southern peas, hot peppers and even a few cucumbers that are trying their darndest to make it to my dinner table. They may wilt as the temperatures climb toward 100° every afternoon (who doesn’t?) but they are resilient and as long as they get sufficient water and a break from the sun and heat at night they are able to recover enough to face another day.

Nutrients and organic matter added in spring need to be replenished before fall planting begins, and a soil test is good place to start. See http://soiltesting.tamu.edu/files/urbansoil.pdf for instructions and to download a form. A routine analysis ($10) will test the major nutrients and will offer basic guidelines for fertilization. A general recommendation for fertilizer in a vegetable garden is to add approximately ½-1 cup of high nitrogen, low phosphorus fertilizer per 25’ feet of row. A basic 15-5-10 lawn fertilizer is adequate, though double the amount if using an organic formulation like 8-2-4 since it has a lower percentage of nutrients. A 3-4” layer of mulch is extremely important this time of year as it helps conserve moisture and moderate soil temperature, and over time it breaks down and enriches the soil. Mulch also protects drip and soaker hoses from UV rays. If you don’t have a stockpile of leaves from spring for use as a mulch then try using dried grass clippings, alfalfa hay or pine straw.

Mid to late August is a good time to plant seeds of cucumbers, squash and green beans so that they can ripen in the milder days and cooler nights of fall. These fast growing veggies will produce in 50-60 days so you can enjoy a plentiful harvest before our first frost, which usually arrives in mid-November. Seeds should be planted directly in the garden in moist soil, so be sure to water your prepared beds a day or two before planting. To plant the seed just pull the mulch back, plant the seed, then cover lightly with mulch. If you use a timer for soaker hoses or drip irrigation be sure to check and replace the batteries when the power is low.
Any sprouting seeds or transplants will benefit from a little protection from the hot afternoon sun this time of year. Shade cloth, old window screens, umbrellas, cardboard, burlap, even old sheets hung on the west side of the plants will work. This sun protection is only temporary until your plants get established — or the heat subsides — whichever comes first. Because of the heat and lack of moisture in the soil I’m going to hold off on planting cool season vegetables like broccoli, cauliflower, turnips, carrots and radishes until September, and hope that we are blessed by rain before then. Otherwise it takes too much precious water to get these plants established in this heat. Most local nurseries will carry transplants of broccoli, cauliflower and other cool season crops, but if you like to grow your own seedlings it’s best to start them now.

Many Americas are engaged in too much “recreational sitting” in front of the TV or computer, but working in the garden can be a productive means of physical exercise. I got a fun gift for my birthday in June — a nifty pedometer that tracks time, steps, miles per hour and calorie expenditure. It’s fun to wear throughout the day and watch how those steps, minutes and miles add up. I read recently that we should strive for 10,000 steps a day, and gardening will help us achieve that goal (or at least get a little closer) while increasing our intake of health-promoting vegetables at the same time. Bending, stretching, walking, lifting — every move we make in the garden contributes to our physical well-being. It’s a total win-win!
The Conscientious Gardener: Cultivating a Garden Ethic
By Sarah Hayden Reichard

“I believe that a garden ethic reflects the conscientiousness of those who care for land by nurturing gardens”, author Sarah Hayden Reichard writes in the Introduction to this book. She continues, “Gardeners revel in the beauty of a flower, the wonders of pollination turning that flower into a lovely or delicious fruit, the snap of a fresh pea pod picked from the vine and eaten on the spot. They are connected to their plot by a love of the living. But the garden ethic also arises from an increasing awareness that, over time, practices and products have crept into our craft that decrease its long-term sustainability. As we have moved from an agrarian society to one based in urban and suburban landscapes, we have lost contact with habits common to our ancestors — such as using naturally decomposing materials rather than synthetic fertilizers to improve soil fertility or nurturing predatory insects and birds instead of deploying the latest, greatest, also usually synthetic products to control pests. A garden ethic gives us the information and structure to return to those less harmful procedures, helping us to view the garden, like the land, as a fully functioning ecosystem — and to incorporate the awareness that its impacts extend far beyond its footprint. Invasive species that escape into wildlands, the mining and transportation of materials such as peat from regions thousands of miles away, and the use of inefficient engines in garden equipment all contribute to the loss of biological diversity beyond our garden gates.”

This book is divided into eight chapters that explore topics important to both gardens and conservation. Fertile, porous soil (The Skin of the Earth) and clean water, our most precious resource, are critical to our existence, but garden practices affect their health and sustainability; these natural resources are explored in the first two chapters. Chapters 3 and 4 guide plant selection. What are native plants, and should you use them? When are they appropriate, and when is a nonnative a better choice? How can you determine which nonnative species will invade, and why are people so concerned about them in gardens when the problems they cause occur in wildlands? The plants you select, as well as other aspects of your garden, such as its structure and water features, can attract desirable wildlife and repel undesirable animals, topics explored in chapter 5. However, gardens also invite unwanted plant, insect, and other species, and how to safely control and even prevent their presence is the subject of chapter 6. The final two chapters, on global warming and reducing waste, look at the big picture as a spur to change. Gardeners can help prevent climate change through simple measures such as reducing soil tillage, switching to push mowers, growing some of our own food, and planting trees to shade the house in the summer. We can also help shrink landfills by composting, not buying overpackaged goods, and either reusing or free cycling garden items.

The book ends with an appendix summarizing more than twenty years of the author’s research on garden plants that can become invasive, with a table of the species worldwide, their impacts, and where they are known to be problems.

Sarah has set a lighthearted tone throughout and thankfully doesn’t get all preachy, it’s engaging reading and often quite easy
New Books for Texas Gardeners

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Heirloom Bulbs for Today
By Chris Wiesinger and Cherie Foster Colburn

For those tired of high-maintenance and short-lived plants, Chris Wiesinger, “The Bulb Hunter” shares his knowledge of versatile, sustainable, and low-maintenance bulbs. *Heirloom Bulbs for Today* introduces the best of the bulb world, addressing common questions and explaining the characteristics, history and ways to use each bulb, whether in the landscape or the home. Chris teams up with landscape designer Cherie Foster Colburn to offer an innovative look at old-fashioned flower bulbs. While most garden guides simply tell the culture of the plant, *Heirloom Bulbs For Today* also tells the culture of the people who grew the plant, unearthing each bulb’s past and those who loved it.

Gorgeous botanical illustrations and vivid photographs by South African artists Loela Barry and Johan Kritzinger add rich flavor to the featured bulbs found flowering with abandon in historic gardens, homes, and cemeteries, transporting readers on their own bulb hunt. With undeniable Southern charm, Wiesinger describes the adventures he encounters while collecting these old favorites, dubbed the “comfort food” of the plant world.

*Heirloom Bulbs for Today* will delight even the most seasoned gardeners. Hunting bulbs is hard work, and Chris’ search for these hardy favorites — the comfort food of the plant world — take him into every corner of the world to find these treasures and the stories behind each one.

Detailed botanical portraits and Chris’ intimate secrets of how to know and grow his “ladies” give gardeners every tool they need to be successful. Vivid photographs of the bulbs flowering in historic gardens, homes, and cemeteries transport readers on their own bulb hunt throughout the country. With Cherie’s sample landscape plan using these carefree plants, Loela takes readers through every season of the year to see what the garden will look like in bloom. Easy to follow instructions on forcing bulbs inside are also included.

Sarah Hayden Reichard is Professor of Conservation Biology and Adjunct Professor of Landscape Architecture at the University of Washington. She is also Curator of the Hyde Herbarium at the University of Washington and heads the Rare Plant Care and Conservation Program, both at the University of Washington Botanic Gardens. She is coeditor of Invasive Species in the Pacific Northwest.
An excerpt from the book,

That first rescue hunt took me to a little German community less than an hour away from Texas A&M, where I went to school. I'd heard this used to be the third largest town in Texas, but there wasn’t much there anymore. In the early 1900s the area was littered with cotton plantations. The town’s success rode on the back of the Southern Pacific rail line that hauled cotton to the East coast. It was known for its beautiful Victorian homes built during the cotton era.

Each fall, the crimson blooms of the oxblood lily, *Rhodophiala bifida*, emerged around the oak trees and next to these stately homes. When I began my search of the oxblood lily, also called the schoolhouse lily because of the timing of its bloom at the start of the school year, my mentor and friend, Dr. Bill Welch, who had done extensive research on the heirloom plants found in Texas, shared his knowledge with me.

Although many people believe the oxblood lily to be native to Central Texas, it was actually an introduced plant from Argentina brought by colonist and German-born botanist/farmer Peter Heinrich Oberwetter. Upon Oberwetter’s arrival to Texas in the late 1840s, he started a collection of native rain lilies and began sending them out to friends all over the world.

When the Civil War broke out, he sided with the Union, probably because political upheaval had sent him packing from Germany in the first place. Like many other German colonists, Oberwetter fled to Mexico to escape persecution. Most likely in Mexico he first saw a version of the oxblood lily that became one of his passions. Returning to Texas after the war, he brought with him a number of different bulbs, but the oxblood lily is the plant most commonly associated with his legacy as a plantsman.

Called “The Bulb Hunter” by *The New York Times*, Chris Wiesinger is known for his relentless pursuit of heirloom bulbs and his desire to understand their history. Chris earned a degree in horticulture education at Texas A&M University and is owner of The Southern Bulb Company.

Cherie Foster Colburn, who also attended Texas A&M and Texas Woman’s University, is an award-winning garden writer and children’s book author (*Our Shadow Garden*, illustrated by children in treatment at M.D. Anderson Cancer Center). As a professional landscape designer, certified Master Gardener and owner of Nature’s Tapestry, Cherie specializes in low-maintenance residential and commercial plans.

Artists Loela Barry and Johan Kritzinger, South African natives, co-own JoLoe Art. Loela is degreed in landscape architecture and certified in floral design, both from Texas A&M University. Johan is a registered professional chemical engineer and photographer. Both Loela and Johan are artists in several mediums, including their own unique version they call “chemical art.”
Succulent Container Gardens
By Debra Lee Baldwin

With their colorful leaves, sculptural shapes, and simple care, succulents are beautiful yet forgiving plants for pots. If grown in containers, these dry-climate jewels — which include but are not limited to cacti — can be brought indoors in winter and so can thrive anywhere in the world.

In this inspiring compendium, the popular author of Designing with Succulents provides everything beginners and experienced gardeners need to know to create stunning container displays of exceptionally waterwise plants. The extensive palette includes delicate sedums, frilly echeverias, cascading senecios, edgy agaves, and fat-trunked beaucarneas, to name just a few. Easy-to-follow, expert tips explain soil mixes, overwintering, propagation, and more.

Define your individual style as you effectively combine patterns, colors, textures, and forms. Discover how top designers interpret the dramatic options, in ideas ranging from exquisite plant-and-pot combinations to extraordinary topiaries and bonsai. Expand your repertoire with plump-leaved plants that resemble pebbles, stars, and undersea creatures. Short on space? Create vertical gardens and hanging baskets, and use daisylike rosettes in wall displays.

Each of the more than 300 photographs offers an inspiring idea. A-to-Z descriptions cover 350 of the best succulents, plus companion plants. Whether your goal is a gorgeous potted garden for a sunny windowsill or outdoor living area — or simply making great gifts — this is a comprehensive primer for creating vibrant, living works of art.

Succulents, which store water in fleshy leaves and stems to survive periods of drought, offer spectacular blooms and foliage of every color — including cherry red, sky blue, and purple-black. In her books and presentations, Debra introduces various types of succulents, discusses their care, describes what makes each interesting and unique, and explains how to create lovely, low-water gardens and containers. With Debra’s expert guidance, you’ll soon discover how to use these easy-care, sculptural plants to beautifully express your personal style.

An excerpt from the book,

Potting Mixes: What the Experts Use
It seems every succulent collector or nursery owner has a preferred potting mix. Some examples:
A former CSSA president in New Jersey combines three parts commercial potting mix that is high in bark or horticultural coir with two parts pumice and one part calcined clay.
A specialist in succulent bonsai recommends a mix of one part compost, one part coir, one part loam, and four parts pumice or perlite.

A designer of succulent topiaries and wreaths uses no soil but rather inserts cuttings into tightly packed sphagnum moss.

A kalanchoe collector’s preferred mix is 50 percent pumice, 25 percent loam, and 25 percent decomposed granite sand.

A haworthia grower mixes equal parts grit or plaster sand, pumice, and peat-free commercial potting soil.

A collector who owns a wide range of succulents says it does not matter what base is used, so long as one-third to one-half of the final mix is pumice.

An article in the CSSA newsletter recommends that at least half the mix consist of “an air-trapping substance” such as perlite, pumice, or calcined clay.

A lithops collector’s mix is “more white than brown” — one third commercial potting soil with twigs removed, and two-thirds perlite or pumice. He also may add decomposed granite “to help toughen the plants.”

A nursery owner who sells at shows prefers an easy-to-rewet mix of half-and-half coir and perlite.

A cactus and succulent nursery in New Mexico recommends three parts soilless potting mix, one part coarse sand, and one part volcanic scoria, perlite, crushed gravel, or crushed limestone.

A designer at a Denver nursery mixes half-and-half potting soil and poultry grit (crushed granite).

A cactus and succulent show judge, emphasizing the importance of oxygen for roots, recommends not adding vermiculite, because it compacts.

Debra Lee Baldwin is an award-winning writer and editor based in Southern California. She has written hundreds of feature articles and columns about architecture, homes, gardens, landscaping and interior design, and people who have made significant contributions to our culture. An award-winning garden photojournalist, She wrote Designing with Succulents in addition to Succulent Container Gardens. She is a regular contributor to the Los Angeles Times and major gardening magazines. Debra’s specialty is showing how top designers use these architectural, waterwise, low-maintenance plants in a wide variety of creative, eye-catching applications.

Above: *Nigella damascena* (Love-in-the-Mist) flowers and culinary herbs on display at Lake Austin Spa Resort.
Proven Winners in My Garden

by Bob Beyer

There is a brand name for a plant collection in the garden center trade called Proven Winners© but to me the only true “proven winners” are those plants which perform well in my own garden conditions and micro-environments over a sustained period covering all seasons. So my advice is don’t be fooled by marketing titles, but become your own expert on which plants are proven winners for your specific use and garden conditions. For example, in my yard, I have identified several micro-environments which require very different plants and plant types. These different growing conditions vary because of drainage, amount of light, duration of light, soil depth and composition, and exposure during our severest seasonal climate conditions. So my definition of a “proven winner” is based on plant performance in my own garden under the conditions that exist there. Therefore, a proven winner to me may not be one for other gardeners.

My criteria for ornamentals are those that are adaptable, durable, have high ornamental value, and low care requirements. With this in mind, I have chosen my 25 highest recommended “proven winners” for Austin gardens. These have proven themselves in my NW Austin garden over the past 5 years. Also I chose only plants that are known to be available from Central Texas nursery sources. Keep in mind that there is no such thing as a perfect plant.

**Crape Myrtles** (*Lagerstroemia indica*) in all sizes and cultivars: Deciduous, summer blooming, fall color, attractive bark, drought and cold tolerant, requiring only minimal pruning when young. Only drawback is that they sucker at the base and from roots so those need to be trimmed occasionally. Look for varieties that are mildew resistant.

**Texas Mountain Laurel** (*Sophora secundiflora*): Evergreen, fragrant spring blooms, drought and cold tolerant, minimal pruning when young, can be maintained as large shrub or small tree. Only drawback is that they often get infested with a webworm in spring which chews on new growth, but this is a temporary problem which doesn’t hurt the plant.

**Variegated Eleagnus** (Elaeagnus cv.): colorful evergreen foliage year round, drought and cold tolerant, variegated varieties need only minimal trimming. This plant has no known disease problems

**Rose of Sharon** (*Hibiscus syriacus*): Deciduous, summer blooming, drought and cold tolerant, blooms reminiscent of tropical hibiscus and showy, easy to propagate.

**Japanese Yew** (*Podocarpus spp.*): Under utilized conifer, evergreen for year-round color, minimal pruning, prefers partial shade, not tolerant of alkaline soils.

**Pineapple Guava** (*Acca sellowiana*): Evergreen, small tree or large shrub, silvery foliage underside, showy unusual blooms in spring, edible fruit in fall, ornamental bark, minimal pruning.

**Desert Willow** (*Chilopsis linearis*): Small deciduous tree with willow-like foliage, loaded with exotic blooms in summer, drought and cold tolerant, requires trimming for shape.

**Yaupon Holly** (*Ilex vomitoria*): Evergreen small tree or large shrub, comes in upright or weeping forms, beautiful red berries for winter bird food, not tolerant of alkaline soils. drought and cold tolerant.

**Mexican Bird of Paradise** (*Caesalpinia gilliesii*): Deciduous small tree, drought and cold tolerant, beautiful and exotic yellow and red blooms in spring and summer, reblooms, fine-textured foliage, prune for shape.
**Proven Winners in My Garden**

**Double Red Knock Out Rose (Rosa 'Radtko')**: Evergreen, drought and cold tolerant, very disease resistant, maintains compact shape with minimal pruning, showy double red blooms, maroonish winter foliage color.

**Needle Palm (Rhapidophyllum hystrix)**: The most cold hardy palm in the world, compact and durable. Shiny green fan-shaped leaves, tolerates sun or shade.

**Meiwa Kumquat (Fortunella crassifolia)**: A drought and cold tolerant citrus plant, small compact size which produces tasty fruit in abundance in the fall in addition to having fragrant citrus blooms. A little protection from northern winds will help this plant survive to 20 degrees.

**Hesperaloe (Hesperaloe parviflora)**: Evergreen, yucca-like plant with thread-like filaments is attractive year-round in addition to late spring spikes of bloom, very drought and cold tolerant.

**Sanolina spp.**: Evergreen, green form is more cold tolerant than the silver form, but all forms are very drought tolerant, compact fine-textured, scented plant that blooms in spring.

**Gold Bar Zebra Grass (Miscanthus sinensis ‘Gold Bar’)**: Deciduous, dwarf form of zebra grass to 2′ tall with brilliant banded variegation, prefers part shade and good soil.

**Yucca spp.** (most species): Evergreen, very drought, cold and soil tolerant, come in attractive variegated forms, and are carefree plants, agave weevil is only known pest.

**Fringe Flower (Loropetalum chinense)**: Evergreen, purple cultivars e.g. ‘Plum Delight’ are most popular but colors can fade in too much light, spring and occasional fall fringe-like blooms, colorful year-round foliage.

**Texas Sage (Leucophyllum frutescens)**: ‘Silverado/Bertstar Dwarf’, a dwarf compact cultivar is recommended, year-round silver color, summer sporadic blooms, very drought and cold tolerant, minimal trimming needed.

**Mexican Bush Sage (Salvia leucantha ‘Santa Barbara’)**: Perennial that blooms throughout the summer, compact silvery ornamental foliage to boot, very drought and cold tolerant. This cultivar is a dwarf form.

**Blackfoot Daisy (Melampodium leucanthum)**: A small spreading perennial, evergreen, blooms all summer, drought and cold tolerant.

**Century Plant (Agave lophantha)**: Very compact agave, drought tolerant, pups prolifically so it won’t be lost if hit by hard freeze, variegated cultivar ‘Quadricolor’ is very colorful.

**Threadleaf Arborvitaee** (Thuja occidentalis ‘Filiformis’): Evergreen, string-like foliage, weeping habit, drought and cold tolerant, a real eye catcher with textural appeal, may be difficult to find but worth the search.

**Glossy Abelia (Abelia grandiflora)** (any variegated cultivar): Evergreen, drought and cold tolerant, very colorful foliage for year-round garden color, variegated varieties slower growing and easier to maintain.
Proven Winners in My Garden

**Mexican Redbud** (*Cercis canadensis* var. *mexicana*): Deciduous, spring bloom, attractive small, crinkled round foliage, small tree that is drought and cold tolerant.

**Pygmy Water Lily** (*Nymphaea x ‘Helvola’*): For your small water garden, this cold hardy water lily is a miniature that blooms yellow in perfusion all summer long.

For more information about these plants, query the internet using their botanical names.

My garden is a continuous trial garden where, if space is available, I will try new plants and plant varieties that my research indicates are suitable for our area. I have plants growing currently that have promise for getting my “proven winner” designation but need more time to prove themselves in the garden. This list is certainly not complete and part of the fun of gardening is the trial and evaluation of different plants. Often, a plant won’t grow well in one area but will thrive in another; so knowing the correct location for it is a factor in whether it is a winner or not. Gardening is a continuous learning process just as a garden is always an ongoing project. So share your successes with other gardeners. We are both teachers and students at the same time. I am always on the hunt for another proven winner to add to my list.

Used with permission from the Gardening In Central Texas blog www.centraltexasgardening.wordpress.com
Insecticidal Soaps
by Wizzie Brown

Insecticidal soaps can be used as a contact insecticide to control small, soft-bodied insects such as aphids, leafhoppers, mealybugs, thrips and whiteflies. It is important to properly identify and know a bit about the biology of the pest before treating with insecticidal soap so that a more targeted treatment can be performed.

The most common insecticidal soaps are made of potassium salts of fatty acids. The fatty acids disrupt the permeability and structure of the cell membranes causing cell contents to leak from the cell leading to insect death. Soaps work only on contact and have no residual activity once they are dry. This can be advantageous, categorizing soaps as a less-toxic product.

It is best to apply insecticidal soaps in the early morning or early evening when temperatures are lower and it will take longer for the product to dry. Thorough coverage is important to obtain good control. It must also be noted that insecticidal soaps may cause phytotoxicity, appearing as spotting on the foliage or burned tips. Read label for any phytotoxicity statements.
Coming Events

**Fall Vegetable Gardening**

*Saturday, August 6, 2011, 10 a.m. - 12 p.m.*

Zilker Botanical Garden
2220 Barton Springs Road, Austin, Texas 78746

Attention: Vegetable Gardeners...cooler weather gives you an opportunity to grow and enjoy food that flourishes in the fall and winter months. Broccoli, lettuce, Swiss chard, radishes and spinach are just a few of the favorites that grow well here. Join Master Gardener Patty Leader to learn about these varieties and strategies for bringing a bountiful fall harvest to your table!

This seminar is free and open to the public. It is presented by the Travis County Master Gardeners, a volunteer arm of the Texas AgriLife Extension Service in Travis County. For more information see www.tcmastergardeners.org or call the Master Gardener Help Desk at (512) 854-9600.

**Fall Transplanting and Dividing Perennials**

*Saturday, September 10, 2011, 10 a.m. - 12 p.m.*

Zilker Botanical Garden
2220 Barton Springs Road, Austin, Texas 78746

Fall is the best time to transplant and divide your garden perennials. Learn how to share your extra plants with others and re-locate perennials that may have overgrown their current place in the landscape. Get a jump on spring blooms by giving them a chance to develop a strong root system. Join Master Gardener Velia Sanchez-Ruiz in proper planning and execution of these essential garden tasks.

This seminar is free and open to the public. It is presented by the Travis County Master Gardeners, a volunteer arm of the Texas AgriLife Extension Service in Travis County. For more information see www.tcmastergardeners.org or call the Master Gardener Help Desk at (512) 854-9600.

**Home Fruit Production: Conventional Choices and Sustainable Options**

*Saturday, September 17, 2011, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.*

Austin Community College, South Campus
1820 West Stasney Dr., Room 1130
Austin, Texas

This seminar for home fruit growers will cover the basics of fruit production, site selection and preparation and cover the specific needs of fruit crops. In addition it will review the importance of choosing varieties and optimizing tree health and productivity. Much of the focus will be on understanding how fruit crops respond to our ever-changing weather conditions in the Texas Hill Country. Presented by Jim Kamas, Asst. Professor & Extension Specialist for Texas AgriLife Extension on how to enhance the sustainable production of conventional crops such as peaches and pears as well as exploring work on newly emerging fruit choices that can be grown with minimal inputs.

Questions? Contact Rosalie Russell, gisathccs@aol.com. TCMGA members earn 4 hours CEU. Space limited to 50 people.

Central Texas Trees and
Oak Wilt (FAQ)

Saturday, October 15, 2011,
10 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Zilker Botanical Garden

2220 Barton Springs Road,
Austin, Texas 78746

Join us to learn all about how to do right by your trees. Learn what varieties to select for your Central Texas landscape and gain a higher level of success by choosing those that enjoy our native soils and tough climate. Learn how to care for and prune your tree for long-term health and during times of stress such as construction or drought. Master Gardener Jerry Naiser will share his expertise on all things trees!

This seminar is free and open to the public. It is presented by the Travis County Master Gardeners, a volunteer arm of the Texas AgriLife Extension Service in Travis County. For more information see www.tcmastergardeners.org or call the Master Gardener Help Desk at (512) 854-9600.
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Visit the websites:  www.tcmastergardeners.org and  
http://travis-tx.tamu.edu

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The End...

Time to get out and garden!