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August Meeting Speaker — Travis J. LaDuc, Ph.D.

The Reptiles and Amphibians of Central Texas

Dr. LaDuc is the Assistant Curator of Herpetology at the Texas Natural Science Center - University of Texas at Austin. Many of us would like to learn more about area snakes, lizards, toads and other reptiles that live in our gardens. It will also help to know their hideouts and homes in all seasons, what they eat, and what dangers and benefits they might pose to humans. So, if you want to know what is hiding and thriving in your yard, be there August 1.

Master Gardener Meeting information:
Wednesday, August 1, 2012 starting at 7 pm.
Zilker Botanical Garden
RAIN!! I got multiple inches of refreshing rain and I hope you did too. It certainly revitalized my mid-summer garden, and even kept my tomatoes producing a little longer than usual. Speaking of tomatoes, I attended a fun tomato tasting at Sunshine Community Garden in June. What a thrill to see and taste so many tomato varieties at one time. The big winner was a small tomato called ‘Black Cherry’. This delicious little orb won accolades for best texture, most attractive and “Best in Show”. It also won in the tastiest category, followed closely by ‘Cherokee Purple’, which, unfortunately, also won “Best Loved by Pests”.

I planted 27 different varieties of tomatoes this season, and you’ll never guess what the top producing tomato was in my backyard. Well, it wasn’t even one of mine. It was an ‘Early Girl’ planted and cared for by my daughter, Allie. While some of my tightly-packed tomatoes suffered from overcrowding, too little sun and competition for water and attention, Allie did everything right – she only planted one tomato, but she provided good soil preparation, plenty of sun, lots of growing room, and ample water. And she was rewarded with more tomatoes than she cared to pick. I was happy to take her excess, and we have been freezing, roasting, sharing and eating our fill.

Long sleeves and long pants are almost a necessity this time of year to protect from mosquitoes as well the intense summer sun. I love a well-worn pair of overalls, but for these hot and humid days, I switch to a long pair of men’s cotton sleep pants from Old Navy or Target. Not only are they loose-fitting and lightweight, but they also have pockets. They come in prints and plaids, and almost any time of year, at least one pattern is on sale as they introduce another. So you never need to pay full price. I noticed them on sale online for $6.97 – a gardener’s bargain. Thanks to Central Texas Gardener’s Linda Lehmusvirta for sharing this style tip (and I’m sure she would credit the folks at Angel Valley Organic Farm, where she first saw the farm team working in these comfortable pants).
Be sure to empty any and all sources of water in your yard to keep the pesky mosquito population down. If you are storing water in any type of container that does not have a tight-fitting lid – bird baths, buckets, rain barrels – treat the water with a product containing *Bacillus thuringiensis israelensis*. These products, such as Mosquito Bits®, can usually be found at most garden centers.

Even if we are not growing much at this time of year, gardeners must always be thinking ahead, and now is a good time to dream and plan for the upcoming fall vegetable garden. Make note of the vegetables you want to grow, planting dates and space requirements then draw up a diagram for your vegetable garden. Think about crop rotation and try to move plants from the same family to a different spot in the garden as this will help avoid recurring problems with pests and diseases.

Fall is a great time to make a second planting of fast growing, warm-season vegetables like beans, cucumbers and summer squash. These vegetables take around 50-60 days to produce when seeded directly in the garden, so if we plant them in mid to late August we should get a generous harvest before the first frost, which usually comes in late November.

Seeds of broccoli, cauliflower, collards, kale, cabbage and Swiss chard can be started this month for transplanting in September and/or October. They need about six weeks to reach transplant size. In preparation for cool season crops now is a good time to clear out your garden area, amend it with compost and fertilizer, top with mulch and let it rest until planting time comes around in September.
Horse & Deer flies
by Wizzy Brown

Horse and deer flies are biting flies that are closely related. Females bite and feed on blood, but males do not bite, and instead feed on nectar. Females take blood from cattle, hogs, horses, dogs, deer and other animals, including humans. The flies cut open skin with their razor-like mouthparts, allow blood to pool and then suck up the blood from the wound. Horse and deer flies are potential mechanical vectors of various diseases such as tularemia, anaplasmosis and filariasis.

Both flies have large heads and large eyes, but horse flies are typically much larger than deer flies. Horse flies are heavy bodied, and range from ¾- 1” in length (Figure 1). Smaller species of horse flies are brown, black or grey, and often have green eyes. Larger horse flies are brown to black with slight striping. Horse flies usually have clear wings. Deer flies are slightly larger than a house fly. They are yellowish or black, with dark markings on the abdomen and wings (Figure 2). Deer flies have brilliant gold or green eyes that have zigzag stripes.

Life cycles of both flies are similar. Egg masses are laid on vegetation overhanging water. Once eggs hatch, larvae drop from the plant and burrow into moist soil. Suitable habitats include wetlands, bogs, saltmarshes, and edges of lakes, ponds, rivers and streams. Larvae feed on organic debris and small organisms that live in the soil. Larvae move to drier soil to pupate, and adults emerge in spring and summer.
Horse & Deer flies

It is difficult to locate larval habitats, and if found, it is often impractical to modify the habitat to make it unsuitable for the larvae. Flies are active on warm, sunny days, and are attracted to dark, moving objects, as well as reflective surfaces. The flies also cue in on carbon dioxide released from hosts. Since traditional repellents do not work very well to ward off these flies, it is best to wear light-colored clothing, or buy traps specific to luring in the flies.
Coming Events

**Rainwater Harvesting in a Thirsty World**

**Saturday, August 11**
10am-12pm

Zilker Botanical Garden
2220 Barton Springs Rd
Austin, TX 78745

Turn water scarcity into water abundance! New filtration and treatment technologies make rainwater harvesting relatively easy. Rainwater harvesting systems can be installed in existing buildings or incorporated into new construction. Master Gardener Ed Parken will discuss how to conceptualize, design, and implement sustainable water-harvesting systems for your home and landscape.

This seminar is free and open to the public, but parking and seating are limited.
Reservations are not required, but are recommended.
Signup at: [http://travis-tx.tamu.edu/horticulture/](http://travis-tx.tamu.edu/horticulture/) and click on seminar registration.

Empty, reserved seats will become open seating at 9:50 am.

Zilker park entrance fee is $2 per adult, $1 per child or senior.

**Planting the Fall Vegetable Garden**

**Thursday, August 16**
10am-12pm

Travis County AgriLife Extension Office
1600-B Smith Road
Austin, TX, 78721

In spite of the warm temperatures, it is time to prepare for the fall vegetable garden. Discover which warm season vegetables can be replanted now and which vegetables thrive in our mild winter temperatures. Learn the basics of soil preparation, how to plant seeds and transplants. Learn the varieties recommended for this area and the ideal times for planting. Novice and experienced gardeners will learn valuable information.
### TRAVIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION

#### 2012 EXECUTIVE BOARD

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#### Past Presidents (Non-voting):

- Bill Baldwin
- Bill Boytim
- Susan Cashin
- Tommie Clayton
- Susan Decker
- Don Freeman
- Manda Rash
- Peggy Stewart
- Becky Waak
- Will Walker

#### Ex Officio Member of the Board (Non-voting):

- Texas AgriLife Extension Travis County Horticulture Agent
  - Daphne Richards
  - 1600-B Smith Road, Austin, Texas 78721
  - 512-854-9600  drichards@ag.tamu.edu
This issue of the Compost Bin has been published thanks to the contributions of the following Travis County Master Gardeners and Wizzie Brown — Texas AgriLife Extension:

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Visit the websites: www.tcmastergardeners.org and http://travis-tx.tamu.edu

The End...

Time to Get Gardening!