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April Meeting - Gardening Panel and Plant Exchange

**Master Gardener Panel**

A panel comprised of Angie Dixon, Mary Kastl, Patty Leander, Ron Miller, Joe Posern, and Velia Sanchez-Ruiz will share their most basic Spring gardening tips, and then spend most of their time answering our questions. The focus is broad, and will cover everything from landscape to edible plants. This will be a great refresher for us to use in our many TCMGA springtime activities, as well as in our own home gardening.

So bring your questions, and share in the enjoyment of hearing experienced folks give us practical answers.

**Spring Plant Exchange**

The theme for this spring’s plant exchange is “Anything Goes.” Saying that, it would still be great to see lots of drought resistant plants. I suspect that some of us need to replace tender plants and vegetables too!

Please don’t bring invasive plants, and for those plants that spread rapidly, please label appropriately. Also, please make sure the plants are in good condition and are properly labeled or be ready to talk about the care of the plants. No muddy messes please! Don’t forget to bring extra seeds, cuttings, garden magazines, pots and other garden related items that you’d like to share with other Master Gardeners.

We’ll also need help setting up and cleaning up, so plan to stay a few minutes longer. And please take home any of your extra plants.

Master Gardener Meeting information:

**Wednesday, Apr 3, 2013 starting at 7 pm**

Zilker Botanical Garden

Master Gardener meetings are open to certified Master Gardeners and trainees.
In the Vegetable Garden
by Patty Leander

Spring is upon us - but don't blink, or you may miss it! Wildflowers usually reach a crescendo this month, so enjoy the show, and be sure to save some mature seedpods for planting in the fall.

It would certainly be disheartening to deal with the mass of oak leaves and pollen if we didn't have the beauty of bluebonnets, larkspur, poppies and roses to help diminish our exasperation with the non-stop raking, blowing and golden pollen that signals a new gardening season. I felt sorry for the guys that had to collect lawn refuse the week after spring break – I've never seen so many leaf bags waiting for pick-up! The leathery leaves from Escarpment live oaks, so prevalent in my neighborhood, are not my favorite for composting or mulching in the vegetable garden, because they or notoriously slow to decompose. They are still a source of organic matter, though, and they make suitable mulch if shredded with a lawn mower or chipper, or when mixed with other leaves or grass clippings.

This month, harvest broccoli, cabbage, beets and other cool season vegetables as they mature, and then remove them from the garden; otherwise they will become stressed as the temperatures rise, and will attract unwanted pests. The harvest period for sugar snap peas is delicious but short; once they begin to show signs of powdery mildew it's probably best to pull them out rather than treat them with fungicide. On the other hand, Southern peas, okra, melons and pumpkins like a warm, cozy environment. So plant them this month, along with a second planting of bush beans and summer squash if you have the space. All are easy to grow from seed. Once your seeds are up and growing, and warm weather has settled in, take the time to mulch around all of your vegetable plants.

A 3-4” layer of mulch will help retain moisture, regulate soil temperature, and over time, will decompose, releasing nutrients into the soil. Dried grass clippings, alfalfa hay, chopped leaves, shredded hardwood, rotted manure or poultry litter are all suitable materials to use as mulch.

Mound soil, mulch or hay around the base of potato plants as they grow - it’s ok to bury some leaves in the process. The potatoes will develop laterally from the stem. The goal is to keep the tubers covered so they are not exposed to sunlight.

As tomatoes grow, gently direct their stems to keep them corralled inside their cage – this is much easier to do when they are young. Spray every 2-3 weeks with a liquid fertilizer, and side dress each plant with...
In the Vegetable Garden

1-2 tablespoons of granular fertilizer when the first fruit starts to form. Watch for signs of early blight – yellowing leaves with black spots that start at the base of the plant. Remove infected leaves, mulch the soil and try an organic fungicide called Serenade. Follow the label for proper application instructions.

Keep an eye out for aphid and spider mite infestations, especially on young, tender leaves. Spray with insecticidal soap, or dislodge with a strong spray of water, directing spray at the underside of leaves. These are persistent pests, so be sure to inspect plants regularly, and treat as needed.

if sugar snap peas come down with powdery mildew it’s best to pull them up and discard

fertilize tomatoes when the first fruits start to form

Hilling up potatoes

Photos: Bruce and Patty Leander
Fire Ant Management with Naturally Derived Products
by Wizzy Brown

It’s that time of year again when fire ants begin to be more prominent in the landscape. I think the majority of the people reading this article are familiar with imported fire ants, so I will not delve into their biology. I am going to focus on naturally derived treatment options. First, let’s talk about formulations.

Broadcast baits are typically spread over the entire treatment area using a hand held spreader set on the lowest setting. Sometimes applicators feel the need to apply bait on the highest setting so they can see a lot coming out, but this often causes over-application of chemical and wastes money. Baits are fairly easy to use since the ants do most of the work. Baits are attractive to fire ants, so the ants seek it out, pick it up and carry it back to the mound to share with others in the colony. Baits should be fresh, and not get wet for at least 12 hours after application.

Individual mound treatments can be dusts, liquids or baits. When baits are used as a mound treatment, they should be sprinkled around the outside of the mound; not on top of the mound. Fire ants do not look for food on top of the mound. Liquid mound treatments are mixed with water before drenching the mound. When using water with a liquid treatment or to water in a dust product, start watering on the outside of the mound and spiral in towards the middle of the mound.

Let’s move on to active ingredients.
The most common naturally derived active ingredients for imported fire ant management are d-limonene, pyrethrins, diatomaceous earth and spinosad. D-limonene is a citrus oil extract that is typically mixed with water and used as a mound drench. Pyrethrins are derived from a flower. They can be paired with diatomaceous earth* and formulated as a dust, or used as a stand-alone formulated as a liquid. In dust form, it is sprinkled over the top of the mound and depending on the product label, may or may not be watered in (check your product label!). In the liquid form, pyrethrins concentrate is mixed with water and applied as a mound drench. Some pyrethrins products may be combined with piperonyl butoxide**. Spinosad is a microbial insecticide that comes from bacteria. Spinosad acts as a contact and stomach poison, and works fairly fast. Spinosad for fire ant control is most often formulated as bait that can either be broadcast or used to treat individual mounds.

* Diatomaceous earth is made from ground up diatoms and works by abrading the waxy coating of the exoskeleton and causing water loss leading to insect death.
**Piperonyl butoxide is a synergist that enhances the use of pyrethrins. This synergist inhibits the breakdown of pesticides by insects. Without piperonyl butoxide, it is possible that the insect may break down the pesticide before an effect (death) can occur.

For more information or help with identification, contact Wizzie Brown, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist at 512.854.9600. Check out my blog at www.urban-ipm.blogspot.com
Spring Forward into Fall Blooms  
by Carolyn Williams

Yes……spring has arrived a little early this year, due to a very mild winter. The area nurseries are full with people pushing and shoving to get their favorite plants. But now is also the time to be purchasing or asking gardening friends to divide a favorite fall plant. Now is the time to think about fall blooms in the garden!

You can begin by adding plants that will give you late summer color when most are dormant and waiting for those cooler nighttime temperatures. Plant and enjoy Gayfeathers and American Beautyberry. The dark purple color will add “splash” when the landscape is in its August parched look. Think of it as the heralding trumpet for the coming fall season!

Other plants that will follow the summer season into fall, and are great Austin area buys, are Abelia, Acanthus, Chile Pequin, Esperanza, Firebush, Flowering Senna, Globe Mallow, Hibiscus, Mexican Honeysuckle, roses, Turk’s Cap, Skeletonleaf Goldeneye and Russian Sage - to name but a few favorites. These plants are a wonderful addition and a “backbone” of many area gardens.

Vines are always a welcome vertical color splash. Purple Hyacinth Bean and blue Morning Glory are a striking combination, while Cross Vine adds its wonderful tangerine fall color to the landscape.
Spring Forward into Fall Blooms

For beautiful fall color, try some plants of Autumn Sage, Black/Blue Salvia, Copper Canyon Daisy, Fall Asters, Forsythia Sage, Henri Duelburg Sage, Mexican Bush Sage, and Mexican Mint Marigold. The reds, blues, purples and yellows blend well together, and work hard to make your landscape an autumn riot of color! Add a Flame Leaf Sumac tree and pots of mums, and you will enjoy just walking around your garden. The seasonal leaves of the Sumac, Crape Myrtle, Cedar Elm and Pomegranates add the essence of autumn.

Plant now for your home and garden to be embraced with the amber shades of autumn!

Photos: Carolyn Williams
Zilker Garden Festival

Saturday, April 6 &
Sunday, April 7, 2013
10am - 5pm daily

Zilker Botanical Gardens
2220 Barton Springs Rd
Austin TX

$7 Adults*, $3 Children (age 5-12)
Parking $5**

For over 50 years, the annual Zilker Garden Festival has been a one-stop, garden shopping destination when spring arrives in Austin and Central Texas. A family-friendly event, the garden festival offers something for everyone.

Plan to arrive early and bring your wagon!
For full information, go to www.zilkergarden.org

When and How to Fertilize

Thursday, Apr 11
10am - 12pm

Travis County AgriLife Extension Office
1600 B Smith Rd.
Austin TX

Confused about how and when to fertilize? Learn how to select the correct fertilizer for your lawn, trees, bulbs, roses, or vegetables. This class will teach you how to conduct a soil test to get a clear picture of your fertilizer needs, read and interpret what a fertilizer contains, and determine how much you should apply. You’ll be taught how to fertilize and be a good steward to your land by avoiding fertilizer runoff. Please bring any soil test you have done in the past few years.

Registration required at https://agriliferegister.tamu.edu or by phone 979-845-2604. Keyword Search: Green Thumb. One class is $15, with price discounts for signing up for 3 or more classes at the same time. Class is limited to 40 people. It is presented by the Travis County Master Gardeners, a volunteer arm of the Texas AgriLife Extension Service in Travis County.
Oak wilt, one of the most destructive tree diseases in the United States, is killing oak trees in central Texas at epidemic proportions. Dr. David Appel, professor in the Department of Plant Pathology at Texas A&M, will teach which trees are affected by oak wilt, how to identify the disease, how it is spread, and how it can be managed. We will discuss preventative measures that can help you avoid this devastating disease.

Registration required at https://agriliferegister.tamu.edu or by phone 979-845-2604. Keyword Search: Trees Class fee is $25 (water and snacks provided). Free parking available. Sign-in at the security desk with your vehicle license number. This class is presented by the Travis County Master Gardeners, a volunteer arm of the Texas AgriLife Extension Service in Travis County.

The show offers visitors a chance to see rare and beautiful cacti and succulent species from around the world. Vendors from Texas, Oklahoma, and New Mexico will sell native and exotic cacti and succulents, and hand-made pottery at reasonable prices. There will be a daily silent auction and hourly plant raffle of rare and collectible cacti and succulents. Educational information, literature, and expert advice will be available. Come and bring a friend.

For more information about the Austin Cactus & Succulent Society and its programs, please visit www.AustinCSS.com
Austin Area Garden Events

**Wildflower Center’s Spring Plant Sale and Gardening Festival**

*Saturday & Sunday, Apr 13 & 14*
*9am-5pm*

Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center
4801 La Crosse Avenue
Austin TX

Choose from nearly 300 species of hardy Texas natives bred to deal with our Central Texas climate.

Admission: $9 adults, $7 seniors and students, $4 UT faculty, staff or students with identification, $3 children 5 through 12, members and children under 5 free.

For full information, go to [http://www.wildflower.org/plantsale/](http://www.wildflower.org/plantsale/)

**“Get Up, Get Green!” 2013 East Austin Garden Fair**

*Saturday, Apr 20*
*9:30am - 1:30pm*

Parque Zaragoza
2608 Gonzales
St Austin TX

The fair is free and open to the public. The 2013 fair, “Get Up, Get Green!”, will feature numerous booths, activities, and classes under the areas of Horticulture, Family Health & Nutrition, Greening Your Home, and Kiddos. This fair will be very fun, hands-on and interactive. There will be an assortment of DIY and demonstration activities, including make your own container garden station, produce tastings, garden planning, theatrical skits, cooking demonstrations, and free seedlings offered to participants. Mini-classes will also be held inside the Zaragosa community center throughout the day.

For more information, please email Lindsay Razzaz at lindsay.razzaz@ag.tamu.edu. Or, call 512-854-9616.
Heart O’Texas Orchid Society’s
42nd Annual Show & Sale

Saturday, April 27th 10:00am-5:00pm
Sunday, April 28th 10:00am-4:00pm

Zilker Botanical Gardens
2220 Barton Springs Rd
Austin TX

There will be hundreds of blooming orchids for sale, as well as helpful information for growing these beautiful plants from the 7 vendors and Orchid society members.

For full information go to www.zilkergarden.org
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<td>JaNet Barkley-Booher</td>
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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
- Carolyn Williams

**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
The Compost Bin Submissions
We are always looking for Master Gardeners who are interested in writing for our monthly newsletter, and we would love to see your articles, photographs, book reviews and gardening ideas.

General Guidelines
• Please first email the editor to discuss potential article ideas.
• Email contributions as attachments (preferably in Word with a .doc or .rtf suffix).
• Please send images as separate attachments (preferably .jpg suffix). Don’t forget to include photographer acknowledgments and captions.

Send your submissions, announcements, questions and suggestions to: editor.compostbin@gmail.com

“Spring drew on . . . and a greenness grew over those brown [garden] beds, which, freshening daily, suggested the thought that Hope traversed them at night, and left each morning brighter traces of her steps.”
— Charlotte Brontë, Jane Eyre