Speaker for May: William D. Adams

William D. (Bill) Adams is the author of numerous articles and his photos have been published in a number of magazines, calendars and books. He is the co-author/photographer of “Commonsense Vegetable Gardening for the South” with Tom LeRoy and his most recent book is the “Lone Star Gardener’s Book of Lists” with Lois Trigg Chaplin. Bill and Tom have again teamed for the book—THE SOUTHERN KITCHEN GARDEN due out in Fall 2007.

Bill worked in mass media most of his career appearing on radio and TV programs, and writing a weekly column. Adams also served as the Harris County Master Gardener Coordinator with over seven hundred active members.

These days, after retiring from the Extension Service Bill is concentrating his energies on gardening, writing and photography. He is a much-requested speaker at Garden and Civic Clubs and he is a regular contributor of articles and photography to Neil Sperry’s Gardens magazine. Bill also writes the Gulf Coast Gardening Calendar for Mother Earth News.

Bill has been a member of Garden Writers Assn. since 1972 and is currently serving as a Southern regional director.

Jerry Naiser

Message From the President

The State Master Gardener Conference in Kerrville offered pleasant surroundings, a very suitable conference center, and an interesting selection of seminars. The food was wonderful, and the conversations stimulating. I talked with several presidents of county associations and shared ideas with them. During the county showcases I was struck by the fact that what we are doing here matches up very well against any of the larger counties, and I think we can all be very proud of our efforts to have a positive impact on the community. In fact, I think we should consider entering our association next year in the Association of the Year category, so record all of your activities with photos and in words, so we can present the full picture of all we are doing here at next year’s conference. While I don’t think we should tailor our activities just to ensure getting state awards, I do think we have some really great programs that we need to tell other associations about so they can get their own started. Filing for awards is one way of getting other groups interested in what we are doing. Because I entered the Master Gardener Desk Reference for an award, I was approached by another county for help in developing one of their own. That was even before we won! So thanks to those of you who put time into filing awards applications, because your entries help set standards of achievement across the state. So thanks Holly Plotner and Cheryl Harrison—your entries were very strong and you are both winners to all of us! And thanks to Jackie Johnson for bugging me to enter the Desk Reference.
To add to the growing list of events to which you are contributing your time and expertise as Master Gardeners, I can mention the Ag Day BBW at the State Capitol, a huge event for Extension, and thanks to those of you who handed out the new TAM Mild Peppers to event goers—Ron Miller, Sam and Leslie Myers, and Bob and Virginia Tagtow. It sounded like you had a lot of fun, and Skip and Jeff and the Extension organizers were very grateful for your help.

Zilker Garden Festival was very successful this year, thanks in part to the amazingly wonderful weather we had Saturday and Sunday, and in part to the increased publicity and planning for the 50th anniversary, but in larger part due to all of your volunteering at many levels as event organizers, cart drivers, plant sales workers, plant clinic volunteers, AAGC volunteers, and in selling tickets and promoting the event with bumper stickers and by prodding everyone you know to come. Thanks to everyone, because I think all of you helped in some way either before or during the event. The Greenhouse folks all deserve a great amount of praise, and especially Anne Van Nest, Molly Clark, and Marian Stasney for planning everything so carefully, and to Holly Plotner, Don Telge, and Ron Miller, among others, for offering great advice from their past experiences.

April is turning out to be very busy for us as well. On April 14 and 15 Wayne and Kathie King ran a plant clinic at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center Plant Sale event, at which they had a very enjoyable, busy, but cool time. Thanks to them and those who helped out. Wayne and Kathie have gotten many requests for plant clinics these last two months, and they are starting to have to turn some requests down, because they can’t handle all of these themselves. The plant clinics are a wonderful way for us to get out our message to the public, and it would be really great if some of you would consider running one plant clinic each this year to give the Kings a break. It isn’t difficult, and the Kings can explain everything to you. They have everything very organized.

On April 18th Wayne and Kathie King (for example) ran a plant clinic at IBM for their employee Earth Day event during the day, then got the materials to Zilker in time for Holly Plotner to run a plant clinic at the evening seminar. Rosalie Russell organized another great public seminar at Zilker that night called The Right Plant in the Right Spot. Thanks to Carolyn Williams, Sue Nazar, and Wizzie Brown for their talks. I really enjoyed trying out my new talk on Which Grass is Right? I also enjoyed Sue’s props—I wish she really had wrapped herself in deer netting and sprayed herself with Liquid Fence like she was planning—now that’s grabbing an audience’s attention!

On Saturday April 21st I am planning to have an Open House and the Demonstration Garden, with propagation by Kevin Washington, a Grow Box demonstration by Vicki Blachman, a plant clinic, and composting, mulching and pruning demonstrations by me and whoever else will come. I hope we get a good turnout. KAZI was kind enough to let me on the air again to announce it and encourage folks to come. I’ll give a full report next month.

The Propagation Team is also having a propagation seminar for the public in Sunset Valley on Saturday, April 21st. These seminars are always very much appreciated by those who attend, so thanks in advance to those who are putting this on—I hope you’ll report next time on who was there and what you offered.

I hope you will all go to the Greenhouse Volunteer BBQ and shade cloth
The prickly pear cactus, familiar native landscape plant for most of Texas, was named the state plant in 1995. Specifically *Opuntia engelmannii* var. *lindheimeri* was picked for our mascot. There are about a dozen types of prickly pear that are native to the Southwest deserts. All have flat, fleshy pads that look like beaver tails. These flat segments or pads are modified branches or stems that store water, photosynthesize and support flowers and fruit. The prickly pear flowers are usually yellow, but they can also be red or purple.

Many prickly pear have large spines (modified leaves) that grow from tubercles (small bumps on the stem) that contain fine, red or yellow, tiny barbed spines called glochids. These are clustered around the large spine and detach easily from the pads. They are difficult to see and hard to remove once they lodge in the skin. These glochids are the annoying and painful part of the prickly pear. Some prickly pears are classified as spineless (Beavertail, Santa Rita and Blind Pear) but they all still have glochids.

The native habitat of the prickly pear is to grow in a coarse, well-drained soil found in dry, rocky flats or slopes. Some even grow in mountainous forests. Some plants (Texas, Santa Rita and Pancake) can reach 6-7 feet in height.

Prickly pear are very easy to grow and drought resistant. They form a great natural fence and are a fire barrier plant. To start a new plant, just break off the individual pads (older than 6 months), let it callous for a week or two then stick it in the ground and it will probably grow. Plant the pad shallowly and it may need anchoring with rocks. Do not water.

The fruit of prickly pears are edible and sold in stores as “tuna.” They can be eaten raw or cooked and used in jellies or preserves. The pads are also available in many local supermarkets. These “nopales” can be used raw in salads, tasting somewhat like “sour green peppers,” cooked in omelets, or eaten fried as a vegetable. Watch out for the annoying glochids and pick the young, glossy, green pads to eat. The older ones are fibrous and tough. Peeled and dried prickly pear cactus slices, known as “leather britches” can be used in soups or stews. Prickly pears could also be used for medicinal purposes in the future. There are studies into the use of
prickly pear pulp to lower bad cholesterol and to help with diabetic treatment.

**Spined Prickly Pears**

*Bearded Prickly Pear (Opuntia strigil) to 3 ft
Beavertail Cactus (Opuntia basilaris) to 18 inches
*Blind Prickly Pear (Opuntia rufida) to 6 ft
*Brown Spined Prickly Pear (Opuntia phaeacantha) to 3 ft
*Engelman’s Prickly Pear (Opuntia engelmannii var. lindheimeri) to 5 ft
Hedgehog Prickly Pear (Opuntia erinacea) to 18 inches
Pancake Prickly Pear (Opuntia chlorotica) to 7 ft
*Plains Prickly Pear (Opuntia polycantha/ O. tortispina) to 1 ft
*Purple Prickly Pear (Opuntia violacea.O. macrocentra) to 3 ft
Spiny-fruited Prickly Pear (Opuntia spinosbacca) to 4 ft
Tuberous Prickly Pear (Opuntia macrorhiza) to 6 inches

*Hardy Prickly Pear (Opuntia humifusa) 1 foot
*Erect/Spineless Prickly Pear (Opuntia stricta) to 6 ft
*Border Prickly Pear (Opuntia atrispina) to 2 ft

**Spineless Prickly Pears**

Thornless Prickly Pear (Opuntia tuna) 6-7 ft
Indian Fig Opuntia (Opuntia ficus-indica) to 15 ft.

* Native to Texas

Anne Van Nest
As I write this article this morning, it is a cloudy, drizzly day...perfect for staying inside and catching up on a little paperwork. It also brings to mind the Friday before Zilker Garden Festival as I drove down MoPac in the pouring rain so I could drive golf carts that afternoon. About the time I arrived, the rain had stopped and I wondered how the morning shift had fared and thanked my lucky stars that I had signed up for afternoon duty. The morning crew, of course, was drenched but somehow remained optimistic even as many of the vendors had not arrived yet. But soon after the rain stopped, vendors began arriving and the Zilker parking lot and garden were transformed. Luck was on our side that day and despite this auspicious start and the lack of close-by parking on Saturday, Zilker Garden Festival was a huge success!

More than $85,000 in revenue was generated. Attendance was excellent and many of the vendors were so pleased with the event that they have already committed for 2008. I know that many of you were there Friday, Saturday and Sunday and your contributions did not go unnoticed. Thank you for all of your hard work and dedication to Zilker Botanical Garden.

At the April meeting of AAGC the 2007-2008 officers were elected. Officers to be installed at the May meeting are:

Laura Joseph, President
Debra Keith-Thompson, VP Community Support
Hope Dyson, VP Education
Don Freeman, VP Horticulture
Nelda Moore, VP Operations
Marion Alsup, VP Public Affairs
Donna Friedenreich, VP Public Information
Jessica Carter Forkner, VP Publications
Steve Reynolds, VP Special Projects
Dolores Rumpf, Recording Secretary
Charlotte Cranberg, Corresponding Secretary
Bill Ater, Treasurer
Alisan Clarke, Historian

I believe you will recognize several of these individuals who are Master Gardeners. Please join me in congratulating them on their election. You can be assured that TCMGA is well represented on the Austin Area Garden Council.

The next issue of “Down the Garden Path” will be published in early June. If you did not receive a copy of this publication earlier this spring, please let me know (mandarash@austin.rr.com or 918.9609) so that I can add your name to the mailing list.

If you or anyone else you know might be interested in purchasing an advertisement in the summer issue of “Down the Garden Path”, I will have information on sizes and costs available at our May meeting. As was the case in the spring issue, the entire issue (including advertisements) will be in full color.

I look forward to seeing you at our May meeting.

Manda Rash
AAGC Representative
At the Phone Desk

The next time you are at the Extension Office, get to know the receptionist, Kelsey Stoker. She is one of the friendliest and most pleasant people to be around. She is the person who answers the main phone line at the Extension office and refers the calls to the MG desk. She works with me to keep the phone desk schedule up to date, handles changes and cancellations, and if you are a regular and don't come in for your shift, sometimes she'll call just to see if you are ok. Introduce yourself to her if you haven't met her yet. And thank her for putting up with all of us Master Gardeners!

I would like to recognize and thank several Master Gardeners who lend their voice and expertise to the Master Garden Program by showing up month after month after month at the phone desk to field calls from the public. Tommie Clayton and Susan Decker have been working at the phone desk on a weekly basis for as long as I can remember. They are truly the infrastructure of the phone desk system and give a lot of their time to keep it running efficiently. Thanks, ladies - y'all are both awesome!

There are some other 'regulars' down there who also deserve kudos. These are the folks that usually contact me within a day of receiving my e-mail notice for help at the phone desk. It's as if they are just waiting at home to hear from me!! They usually work once or twice a month and I so appreciate their willingness and dedication: Maggie Walsh, Patti Kubala, Holly Plotner, Jackie Johnson, Manda Rash, John Papich, Rosalie Russell, Joyce Cooper, Ron Winn, Linda Drga, Velia Ruiz, Ashley Gibson, David Lutz, Vicki Blachman, Karen Wilkins, Kevin Washington, Will Grover, Mary Kastl, Leslie Ernst and Michelle Butler. And this would include the Mr. and Mrs. Master Gardeners who work together at the phone desk: Wayne and Kathie King, Sam and Leslie Myers, Bob and Virginia Tagtow and Jim and Jane Nelson. What great teamwork!

All of these Master Gardeners contribute by answering phone calls, retrieving messages, training interns, following up on pending requests, mailing out publications, and sometimes by simply lending an ear to a homeowner who just needs someone to listen. If you would like to work at the phone desk but can't remember exactly what to do, let me know and I can schedule you to work alongside any of the knowledgeable folks listed here. It is a great way to learn, earn CE credits and make new friends.

Thanks also to those Master Gardeners who may only volunteer once every month or two - your presence and work at the phone desk is critical and helps keep the phone messages down to a minimum. And the callers are always happiest when they can talk to a real, live person.

Congratulations to all the interns who have taken the plunge down at the phone desk and continue to request shifts. Hope you are enjoying your time there and perhaps you'll consider making 'phone desk time' a regular part of your volunteer routine.

Patty Leander
The Greenhouse Bench

Thanks also to all the certified Master Gardeners and Master Gardener Interns who worked and shopped in the TCMGA plant sales area (as well as helped with preparations the week and month prior) at Zilker Garden Festival. ZilkerFest was a big success with loads of herbs, hanging baskets, roses, vegetables, patio pots, perennials and shrubs being sold. Thanks to everyone that helped overcome the weather challenge of torrential rain during set up day. If you didn’t get a chance to see our booth mascot “Charlie,” his picture is included with this issue of the Compost Bin. Thanks to Marian Stasney and her neighbor Jo for the artistic addition.

It has been a bit quieter in the greenhouse after a very busy time during February and March with our attention focused on the Zilker Garden Festival and A Passion for Plants—an East Austin Garden Fair. Our first work day after ZilkerFest saw us still potting up tomatoes (will this ever end) and getting things put back in order after the chaotic ZilkerFest time. Thanks are extended to Molly Clark and Holly Plotner for persevering through their exhaustion to put our plants back in order the day after the Festival.

The deluge of rain during March was much needed and added significant quantities to the greenhouse rain collection system. Just before switching off the city water and turning on the rain water to irrigate inside the greenhouse, the tanks indicated 1700 gallons and we have been using rainwater to irrigate ever since and still have 1100 gallons in each of the tanks.

Hope everyone had a great time catching up on news and making new friends at the post Zilker Fest BBQ at the greenhouse at the end of April.

Anne Van Nest
After some not-so-average April weather, May is here along with its warm days, warm soil and mild nights - ideal conditions for our spring vegetables. If you haven’t planted okra or southern peas yet, now is the time. Soaking okra seed overnight will help soften the hard shell for faster germination.

Be on the lookout for leaf-footed bugs and other garden pests – as you can see, the baby critters do not always favor their parental units. Also check under leaves for egg clusters. Just the wipe of your thumb and you can eliminate the problem before it even starts.

If you are growing squash, keep an eye out for the orange and black squash vine borer moth and her small, brown eggs. If you are only growing a few squash plants, it is easy to find the eggs along the stem and just wipe them off. If the larva emerges and burrows into the vine, surgical removal will be required. Split the stem, remove or ‘disable’ the larva, then cover the stem up with soil or mulch. In my experience, most squash plants will survive this procedure if performed before much damage has occurred.

Inspect your crops regularly for pests and disease. Early treatment = better control. Serenade® is a fairly new biofungicide that is labeled for organic use. It is made from bacteria (*Bacillus subtilis*) that inhibit growth of bacterial and fungal pathogens on the leaf surface. It should help with problems such as early blight and leaf spot of tomatoes.

Hope many of you have enjoyed some red, ripe home-grown strawberries by now, with squash, beans and cucumbers just around the corner. The joys and tastes of a spring vegetable garden and the anticipation of what is to come do wonders to compensate for the plagues and pestilence that come with the territory.

Here’s to a bountiful harvest,
Patty Leander
An Owlet is Born

One day in early March, rather than taking a drive through my favorite fast food franchise on my lunch break, I decided to take a drive “in the country.” Well, sort of. Working in Round Rock I have much easier access to the rural community--although that is quickly changing--than folks living in Austin. I headed east of IH-35 on FM3406 toward Old Settlers Park. As I was sitting at a traffic signal waiting for the light to change, I was trying to "minimize my disturbance bubble, and maximize my awareness bubble." Something looked out of place in the upper branches of a large deciduous (or dead) tree about 200 yards from the road on private property. My curiosity quickly got the best of me, so I turned left and pulled over onto the right of way. I grabbed the extra pair of binoculars I carry in my car and proceeded to explore my new find. It was a large open nest built of sticks, and something large and owl-like was sitting in the nest looking out across the field. Occasionally, it turned its head to check out a sound but otherwise stayed in the same position. I decided further investigation was needed, so I came back the next day armed with my “good” binoculars and my digital camera.
As on the previous day, my mystery bird was again sitting in the nest surveying the field. Because of the ear tufts on its head, I felt certain it must be a Great Horned Owl. I quickly fired off about two dozen photos and headed back to work. The afternoon seemed to drag by because I was anxious to get home and review the photos I’d taken. After sharing them with several birding experts, I received yes and no votes about the identity of the species. More evidence was needed. I continued to visit the site about once or twice a week, taking photos at least once a week. About two weeks ago I was rewarded with this photo. An owlet was born, there’s no doubt about that.

And while I’m still not absolutely certain this is a Great Horned Owl, I have talked with other birders who have seen a Great Horned Owl in that nest over the past few years. Regardless of the species of bird, it’s been a wonderful experience. Nature is all around beckoning us to slow down and look for the extraordinary things in life. We just have to be open to the possibility of discovery.

*Great Horned Owl (Bubo virginianus) Facts*
(Source: [http://www.desertusa.com/mag00/jan/papr/ghowl.html](http://www.desertusa.com/mag00/jan/papr/ghowl.html)
[http://www.birds.cornell.edu/AllAboutBirds/BirdGuide/Great_Horned_Owl_dtl.html](http://www.birds.cornell.edu/AllAboutBirds/BirdGuide/Great_Horned_Owl_dtl.html))

- Great Horned Owls are big and bulky (3-4 pounds), standing 18-25" tall with a wingspan of 36-60" long. Males and females are similar in appearance, except the female is the larger of the two.
- Their call is a series of deep hoots, from 3 to 8 notes long, and sounds like "Whose Awake, Me Too", with the "Me Too" part descending in tone or who-who-ah-who, who-ah-who.
- Great Horned Owls are one of the earliest spring nesting birds; eggs may be laid in January or February through April. They use abandoned stick nests of a hawk or heron or crow, but also nest in rock alcoves, hollows of trees, abandoned buildings, or sometimes on the ground. Generally 2-3 white eggs are laid, although they may lay up to 6 eggs. Both the male and female incubate the eggs for 30-35 days. The young are fed by both parents and fledge from the nest at 45-55 days old.
- Their ear tufts are large and set far apart on the head. Just like a dog, Great Horned Owls use these ear tufts to convey body language - when they are irritated the tufts lie flat and when they are inquisitive the ears stand upright.
- Their ears are located on the sides of the head, but are offset, not symmetrical like human ears. The openings of the ears are slightly tilted in different directions - often the right ear is longer and set higher up on the skull.
- Contrary to popular belief, owls cannot turn their heads completely around. They can rotate their heads 270 degrees, thanks to extra vertebra in their necks. Because their eyes are fixed in their sockets - they can't move their eyes up or down or side-to-side - the owl has to move its whole head to compensate for the fixed eyes.
- Great Horned Owls eat a wide variety of prey, both small and large. The Great Horned Owl is the only animal that regularly eats skunks.
- Great Horned Owls can live greater than 12 years; some captive birds have lived to 29 years old.

Ramona Urbaneck
Skip’s Corner

The Birth of a Hummingbird

Most gardeners never get to see a hummingbird nest, much less the birth and growth of a hummingbird. These two web sites provide amazing photos from the eggs to leaving the nest. Be sure to click on NEXT PAGE at the bottom of each page as each site has several pages of photos.

http://community.webtv.net/Velpics/HUM
http://community-2.webtv.net/hotmail.com/verle33/HummingBirdNest/

“Now It's Official (well, sort of): People Who Play In the Dirt are Happier!”

Scientists are now discovering what every 5 year old boy and most true gardeners have always known. Playing in the dirt makes you feel all good inside. I'm not kidding. Researchers working with human cancer patients a few years ago found that those treated with a certain soil bacterium (Mycobacterium vaccae) "reported significant increases in their quality of life." Other studies have linked exposure to certain bacteria in early childhood to protection against allergies and asthma later in life.

Now recent studies in England have taken things a step further indicating that exposure to the same harmless soil microbe not only provides the earlier reported immune system enhancements but may also reduce our vulnerability to depression. When they treated mice with the same Mycobacterium vaccae they found that it activated the brain neurons that produce serotonin. Mice treated with the soil microbe also responded differently to a stress related test, continuing on after untreated mice gave up, as reported in the journal-Neuroscience.

Lead researcher Dr Chris Lowry summed it up well with the statement, "They also leave us wondering if we shouldn't all spend more time playing in the dirt."

Now you have official scientific permission to go out there and get dirty. When your neighbors peer over the fence at you wallowing about in the garden just lift up a handful of rich soil and say, "Here’s to your health!"

Skip Richter, Travis County Extension Horticulturist
Skip's Plant Pick: “Two Dozen Blooming Vines to Beat Summer Heat”

Central Texas summers can be brutal. As the mercury climbs, gardeners seek refuge indoors and yard work is relegated to early morning and late afternoon hours.

The combination of heat and humidity can turn our backyard recreational areas, including patios, decks, and children's playscapes, into a broiling inferno. The heat causes our air conditioning units to work overtime trying to keep up. Western walls, especially rock and brick surfaces, really heat up and radiate that heat into the home even after the sun goes down.

Vines offer a beautiful way to beat the heat. They can provide a natural screen to shade that brick wall on the west side of a home. They also make an attractive outdoor wall or ceiling for a patio or deck.

We have many great vines to choose from for our central Texas landscapes. I prefer to divide them into three basic groups: annual and tropical vines (must be replanted each year), perennial vines (die back to the ground each winter and return in spring), and woody vines (above ground portions usually survive over the winter).

Here are a couple of dozen of the many excellent flowering vines for central Texas landscapes:

**Annual and Tropical Vines (some may return in protected locations or after a mild winter):**

**Mexican Flame Vine** (Senecio confusus) – This bushy, twining climber produces clusters of 2" orange somewhat daisy-like blooms throughout the summer. Attracts butterflies and hummingbirds. Tends to stay somewhat compact rather than taking over an area. May return from roots some years. Full sun.

**Cypress Vine** (Ipomoea quamoclit) - Small (1") red flowers and a canopy of feathery foliage somewhat like that of the cypress tree. Reseeds profusely. Full sun. Flowers attract hummingbirds. Sun to part shade. Its relative, Cardinal Climber (Ipomoea x multifida) is very similar except the foliage is less lacey. Also reseeds profusely.

**Black Eyed Susan Vine** (Thunbergia alata) – Beautiful yellow or orange blooms adorn this twining fine all season long. This vigorous grower needs at least 12 feet of space to sprawl and do its thing. Reseeds. Full sun. Spider mites love it too so have your water wand ready during summer months.

**Hyacinth Bean** (Dolichos lablab) - Fast growing bean vine with beautiful stalks of purple flowers over 12" long. Blooms begin to set seed in late summer and fall. Leaves are green with burgundy undersides, adding to the vine's appeal. Great for an outdoor deck area. Full sun.

**Morning Glory** (Ipomoea sp.) - Fast growing vine with large blooms in shades of blue, white and red. Mites can be a problem at times, but the gorgeous blooms are worth it. The moon vine (Ipomoea alba) is a close relative that blooms at night. Great for an outdoor deck area. Full sun.
Rangoon Creeper (Quisqualis indica) - This plant starts off as a 3' shrub then starts sending long vining shoots out and the plant becomes a vine. Produces large clusters of flared trumpet blooms which start out white and turn to red. May return from roots some years in a protected location. Full sun.

Blue Butterfly Pea (Clitoria ternatea) – This is a "tame" vine that won't take over and thus is great for restricted areas. Its showy dark blue flowers with white centers are best viewed up close. Full sun to part shade.

Dutchman's Pipe (Aristolochia) - Several species of vines with unique pipe-shaped blooms, best viewed up-close. Most are too cold tender to survive our winters. Fast growing. Full sun to part shade. Note: White-veined Dutchman's Pipevine (Aristolochia fimbriata) is perennial but since it spreads 2' or less is well suited either garden beds or to hanging baskets.

Perennial Vines:

Coral Vine or Queen's Wreath (Antigonon leptopus) - Vivid pink clusters of delicate lace-like blooms that hang down like pink chains. Blooms from late summer to fall. Attracts pollinator insects like bumblebees. A white blooming form is also available. Full sun.

Sky Flower (Thunbergia grandiflora) - Fast growing vine that covers an area quickly to provide a fast screen. Large blue flowers are a very attractive accent and appear late in the season. Attracts hummingbirds. Full sun.

Passion Flower (Passiflora sp.) - several species offering blooms in various colors including red, blue or purple. Larval food source for Gulf Fritillary butterfly. Flowers are fascinating and complex. Best viewed up-close. Full sun.

Snail Vine (Vigna caracalla) - Pale purple blooms that curl around on themselves reminiscent of a snail's shell. Best viewed up-close. Full sun.

Potato Vine (Solanum jasminoides) - Grows 10-15' bearing 1" star shaped light blue blooms in late winter through spring. A white blooming form is also available. It is hardy in zones 7-10 and does well in full sun to moderate shade. Its tame growth habit and shade tolerance open up new options for using vines in the landscape. Variegated Potato Vine (Solanum jasminoides 'Varegata') sports variegated green and yellow leaves and white blooms.

Desert Trumpet Vine or Pink Trumpet Vine (Podranea ricasoliana) - A sprawling arching plant that seems confused as to whether it wants to be a shrub or a vine. It may be trained to a post or trellis, or formed into an arching shrub with a light shearing in May and July. In late summer it begins to produce blooms similar in shape to its cousins Catalpa, Desert Willow and Yellow Bells Esperanza (Tecoma stans). The pink blooms with burgundy markings are borne in clusters at the terminal end of the shoots. The blooms continue to the first frost. Although its growth habit is woody, I list it as a perennial because it usually dies to the ground in winter. This plant is only marginally hardy in zone 8b so keep it mulched well for winter protection.

Woody Vines:

Coral Honeysuckle (Lonicera sempervirens) - A running vine that is must be pruned to keep in a confined area. Coral blooms form clusters of tubular flowers. A yellow form is also available. Full sun to part shade. Full sun to part shade.

Honeysuckle 'Pam's Pink' (Lonicera x americana 'Pam's Pink') - Gardeners familiar with the invasive growth of Japanese honeysuckle will appreciate the non invasive habit of Pam's Pink, named after Texas rose rustler Pam Puryear. This vine bears wine and cream colored blooms. Not as prone to powdery
mildew as most other honeysuckle varieties such as 'Gold Flame'.

**Crossvine** (Bignonia capreolata) - The native form sports rusty brown-red to yellow blooms. A dazzling variety 'Tangerine Beauty' is a show stopper with its tangerine to coral blooms. It blooms profusely in spring and sparsely later in the season. Full sun to part shade.

**Trumpet Creeper** (Campsis radicans) - The "wild" version is often cursed as a rampant weedy vine. Newer cultivars like 'Madame Galen' & 'Georgia' offer larger blooms and have a place as a strong vine for a large arbor. Full sun to part shade.

**Wisteria** (Wisteria sp.) - Several species and varieties are available. Long cascades of blue to purple flowers in spring. Looks great trained along the top of a fence and cut back heavily each winter, or pruned into a "mini tree" form. Don't let it take off up a tree or power line as it doesn't know when to stop. Full sun to part shade.

**Carolina Jessamine** (Gelsemium sempervirens) - Evergreen vine that puts on spring show of trumpet shaped yellow blooms. Full sun to part shade. All parts of the plant are poisonous.

**Lady Banks Rose** (Rosa banksiae) - Long arching thornless canes bear yellow blooms in spring. Needs lots of room to do its thing. Full sun. A lightly fragrant, white blooming form is also available.

**Yellow Butterfly Vine or Gallinita** (Mascagnia macroptera) - Semi-deciduous vine named after the butterfly-shaped seed pods which form after the yellow clusters of flowers drop. Full sun. May freeze to ground some years. Give it plenty of room and support to sprawl as it is a vigorous grower.

**Sweet Autumn Clematis** (C. ternifolia aka paniculata) - Most types of clematis are best left on the pages of seed catalogues if you garden in central Texas. Sweet autumn clematis is an exception adapting well to our climate as it sprawls in an unmannerly fashion over whatever support you provide. In late summer to early fall it explodes in a billowy white mass of quarter sized white blooms with a vanilla fragrance. For best results add a couple of inches of compost to the soil and maintain moderate moisture. Sun to part shade. The roots do best if shaded by a low growing groundcover or a blanket of mulch.

**Star or Confederate Jasmine** (Trachelospermum jasminoides) – Better have plenty of room for it to grow as this vine can easily grow to 20 or more feet in good growing conditions. Not a true jasmine, but still has that wonderful jasmine-like fragrance when the 1" white blooms appear in late spring. Good for shading a west facing brick wall as it has the "holdfasts" that enable a vine to climb masonry structures. Just be ready to keep trimmed to prevent it from climbing onto wood exteriors.

Limiting this listing to two dozen was a chore as there are so many that I left off the list that also deserve consideration. With so many wonderful choices there is truly a vine for every part of the landscape. Even apartment dwellers can use vines. A container set up against a porch pillar or beside a stair or balcony railing make a great home for several of our less vigorous vines. Take a look around your landscape. There are probably a number of places were a vine could serve you well to beautify, shade or screen a view.

This summer in our plant trials I'll be trying about a dozen annual vines that are either new to me or not familiar enough to recommend yet. If you have some space with decent sunlight and are interested in trying a few out let my secretary Shannon (854-9610) know and I'll be happy to share a few as long as supply lasts in exchange for your comments on how they performed. They will be available as small transplants in early to mid May.

Skip Richter, Travis County Extension Horticulturist
Black-Eyed Susan Vine - *Thunbergia alata*

Morning Glory—*Ipomoea sp.*

Passion Flower - *Passiflora sp.*

Rangoon Creeper - *Quisqualis Indica*

Honeysuckle ‘Pam’s Pink’ - *Lonicera x americana ‘Pam’s Pink’*

Coral Vine - *Antigonon leptopus*
Butterfly Vine - Stigmaphyllon ciliatum

Desert Trumpet Vine - Podranea ricasoliana

Blue Sky Vine - Thunbergia grandiflora
Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center Gardens on Tour 2007 - Saturday, May 12 at 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center and five private gardens
Admission: $25 for all gardens or $6 for each garden; children under five free
Info Phone #: 512-292-4100
Visit five fabulous private gardens and the Wildflower Center plus a special feature, the Stratus Properties green roof. Home previews available online. Wristbands on sale starting April 7 at select retailers.

May 12 & 13 – Salado Yard and Garden Tour. The 4th annual tour of yards and gardens in the historic village of Salado will highlight characteristic and varied private and public gardens for the Central Texas landscape. From large to small, rambling to organized, annuals to perennials, water wise plantings to courtyard container gardens, there is something for everyone to enjoy. The tour will be Saturday, May 12 from 10 am – 4 pm and Sunday, May 13 from 1 - 4 pm.

Gardens will be self-guided with volunteers helping to answer questions when needed. Tickets will be $15 to view all gardens and are good for the two days. Tickets can be purchased in advance at the Salado Civic Center, 601 Main, in mid April or on the day of the tour at the Salado Art Center on the grounds of the Civic Center. Maps will be available leading to each location with a description of each garden. Tours will be conducted rain or shine. Strollers and pets are not permitted and wheelchair accessibility is limited.

The tour is sponsored by the Salado Garden Club and the Public Arts League of Salado. All proceeds from the fundraising tour are used for the Village of Salado beautification and art projects. For further information visit the Village of Salado website at www.salado.com or call 254.947.8300.

Becker Vineyards 9th Annual Lavender Fest - Saturday, May 19 at 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Sunday, May 20 at noon to 6 p.m.
Becker Vineyards
Admission: FREE
Info Phone #: 830-644-2681
Lavender Vendors, Lavender Speeches, Lavender Craft Demos, Cooking Demos, Winery Tours, Wine Tasting, Lavender Luncheons (reservation only), Concessions, and more. Extra parking in the field.

Austin Daylily Society Open Display Garden - Monday, May 28 at 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
10903 Catthorn Cove - Austin
Admission: FREE
Info Phone #: 512-331-0243
Private display garden with over 600 daylily cultivars is free and open to the public on Memorial Day Monday.
The Water Garden Club of South Texas' 7th Annual Pond Tour - Saturday, June 9 at 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
13 locations
Admission: $5 per person
Info Phone #: 210-860-9093
Self driving tour of 13 ponds. Various club members open up their back yards to view their ponds. Rain or Shine. Tickets available through the club and various garden centers in San Antonio. Tickets sales also at pond locations. Brochure will be on website.

How Dry I am…Dealing with Drought Conditions
Saturday, June 23
10:00 AM-1:00 PM
Zilker Botanical Garden
2220 Barton Springs Road, Austin

Drought conditions periodically occur in Central Texas. If we’re not in a drought now you can be sure another one is on the way! Learn how to cope with dry stretches at this Seasonal Seminar Series that focuses on water conservation. The City of Austin, Texas Forest Service and Master Gardeners, a volunteer arm of the Texas A & M Cooperative Extension Service, share their knowledge at this free seminar.

“Landscaping with Native Plants that Loves Central Texas” is the first topic. Get exposed to natives that look great in the landscape. These plants have adapted to require less water and to survive the extreme temperature fluctuations typical of our region.

“Saving $$$...practical landscape water conservation techniques” features water saving ideas from the City of Austin. The talk also includes basic information on drip irrigation systems.

Learn to capture rainwater. A demonstration will illustrate how to transform a plastic garbage can into a rain barrel. Plants prefer rain water and this allows rain water retention for future use.

Prolonged droughts increase the conditions that are conducive to wildfires. Discover simple precautionary measures that will help protect your property from the devastation of a wildfire.

Creative Alternatives to Grass” explores other water saving ideas. Is it possible to not have grass and love it? Expand your possibilities with these proposals.

A Plant Clinic will be open during the entire seminar in an adjoining room. Bring samples in a plastic bag of your diseased or bug eaten plants to the Plant Clinic. Get expert guidance on possible solutions to restoring the plant’s health.

For more information call 512-854-9600 and ask for the Master Gardeners desk.
http://www.tcmastergardener.org/html/events.html
The caterpillars are here! I’m not too excited about those green ones that hang by threads from your trees and end up all over you when you work in the yard or walk down the street. Although they are timed by Mother Nature for the migratory birds to chow on during their exhaustive travels and the nesting birds to have an easy snack. Just her form of Southern hospitality.

I am, however, excited about the caterpillars that make you ooh and aah at the wonder of nature. A couple of weeks ago I had a Monarch stop by and lay a couple of eggs on my Butterfly Weed and now I have two baby Monarch caterpillars. They are so cute! They will get quite large but so far are still about an inch long. I also have a couple of Fritillary chrysalis hanging from the siding of my house. I saw the caterpillars crawling around one day, the next day they were in their “J” form and the next day were chrysalis. It is so fun to watch this transformation take place in my garden.

My Butterfly Weed and Passion Vine are being devoured and I’m happy to provide a much needed meal to those hungry caterpillars in their metamorphosis into beautiful butterflies. I hope you too are enjoying these sights in your garden!

(The attached picture is a Tiger Swallowtail by Ramona Urbanek. According to local butterfly expert, Joe Lapp, it is also probably a female. This is actually a rare sight in this area. Most of the females here are dark-phase; instead of that yellow, they have chocolate brown. Tiger Swallowtails violate the males-are-showier rule, or at least the light-phase females do. The males have very little of that shiny blue above, if they have any at all, having black there instead.)

A Little Garden Trivia…

About 80 percent of the world’s rose species come from Asia.

Rebecca Matthews
Editor

In closing…

We delight in the beauty of the butterfly, but rarely admit the changes it has gone through to achieve that beauty. —Maya Angelou
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