Our speaker for the month of June was Bobby Thurman. Bobby is the owner of Soils Alive, Inc. located in Benbrook, Texas. Soils Alive is a distributor of earth-friendly products to the horticultural, arboricultural and agricultural industries. These products include soil and foliar supplements, mycorrhizal building products and other natural and Certified Organic Products.

After receiving his B.S. in Horticulture from Texas Tech University some 40 plus years ago, Bobby worked for American Cyanamid selling crop protection chemicals in Lubbock area until they sold to BASF. Bobby later managed vegetable production for Texas Department of Criminal Justices’ 13 farms, growing 40 different crops on 5,000 acres.

Best Regards,
Jerry Naiser
The President’s Message

Today promises to be another record breaking day for heat here in Austin…and it’s only May 20! It leaves me wondering what summer will be like. Of course, I think I know the answer to that question but hope springs eternal! What a difference a year makes. This time last year we were enjoying the rain. Little did we know that it would last all summer long. It seems that will not be the case this year.

I’m also wondering what I will do with my time once it’s really too hot to work outside this summer. I think I’ll take advantage of some air conditioning this year and get my continuing education hours at the same time. There are several educational programs scheduled in June and July and we are working on a few just for our own membership.

You can find out about the state specialists training schedule by going to www.texasmastergardeners.com and clicking on “Specialist”. You have opportunities to take the Junior Master Gardener, Rainwater Harvesting, and Propagation specialists training. The Entomology specialist training will be offered right here in Travis County in September and taught by our very own Wizzie Brown. I know that some of you have already signed up for that training but there are still openings available.

Volunteer to answer the telephone at the Extension Office. The phones will be ringing all summer long. It’s a “cool” way to spend a few hours and educational as well. You can get volunteer and continuing education hours at the same time! You’ll receive 1 hour of continuing education for every 4 hours worked on the phones.

What a great time to start a gardening blog! Organize all those photos you took this spring (or over the last few years) and start writing. Or, organize your photos for a “show and tell” during one of our Master Gardener meetings. You’ll be learning more about this opportunity at our June meeting. It’s a great way for our members to tour a garden…yours or one you visited…without fighting off the mosquitoes and the heat!

And, don’t forget…when you are out working in your garden wear lots of sunscreen and a hat and drink plenty of water! We’re all really good at keeping our plants hydrated and we should do the same for ourselves.

When and if you’re traveling, do so safely. Most of all enjoy your summer!

Manda Rash, President
Gazania are members of the aster family who originally resided in South Africa. They are tough, little plants that bloom with bright, daisy-like blooms and seem to thrive no matter how extreme the sun, wind, poor soil or drought challenges they face. They are “good cheer” plants that bloom even under the harshest conditions.

Botanically, they are known as Gazania rigens (Clumping Gazania or Treasure Flower). The plants are frequently used en mass as a temporary colorful groundcover and do look best when grouped together. Gazania grows very well with portulaca (moss rose) since they both like the same sunny conditions, are similar heights and can tolerate some drought.

Gazania are long bloomers and some have large 4” blooms in bright yellow, orange, red, pink and white (or many combinations of these colors) that flower from well from fall, through winter and into spring. During summer they will often have intermittent blooms before reblooming well in the fall. A tender annual up to zone 8, they can be a perennial in zone 9. Protect during hard freezes.

The plants grow to 6 inches tall (12 inches when in bloom) and 8 inches wide. Many have very attractive silver foliage both front and back (or just the reverse side). I prefer the silver foliage types because they are very attractive even when the blooms are not open.

Gazania are attractive to many types of wildlife including beneficial bees, butterflies and birds (as well as pesky rabbits).

Do not over water the plants or they become susceptible to crown rot (particularly in the winter). Plant them in well-drained, sandy or gravelly soil. Like many silver-leaved plants, they are very drought tolerant and suitable for xeriscape garden and containers.

Some older varieties have flowers that close up during rainy, cloudy or dark days - opening only when sunny. Apparently, this is a defense mechanism from their South African days. They close up their flowers to protect the pollen from moisture. Low temperatures or poor light trigger the flowers to close. Since gardeners really want to see these beautiful blooms as much as
possible, plant breeders have been working diligently to select plants that stay open longer during cooler, duller weather. To do this, plant breeders visited gazania trials in the middle of the night and discovered the Daybreak series, which were the first to stay open longer.

Deadhead regularly to encourage more blooms (if you are not waiting to collect the seed or have them reseed). Allow the seed heads to dry on the plant and remove them when almost dry (when the white, fluffy tail starts to fall off). Store the seed head in a closed paper bag to finish drying. Remember that hybrids probably will not come true to the parent. Gazania will often reseed in the garden.

Cultivars:


Series:

Chansonette, Daybreak, Dynastar, Kiss, Ministar, and Talent.

‘Daybreak Red Stripe’ (pictured)

Anne Marie Van Nest
In The Vegetable Garden

It's been a busy spring, and I'm taking a little time off for awhile. And you can too, if your garden is planted, mulched and growing strong. Aside from okra, Southern peas and maybe watermelon, there's not much planting to be done in June. Most of my garden activities this month will involve harvesting, eating and sharing. I will definitely spend more time in the kitchen than I will in the garden, and that's okay with me!

The squash, bean, cucumber and tomato harvest has begun and I am loving it. We rarely eat these vegetables out of season, so we've been waiting since last November to have these delicious and fresh-from-the-garden vegetables at the dinner table again. I can count on cucumbers to produce almost all summer, and I usually plant several varieties so I hope I will have them for the next few months.

The squash vine borer has been spotted flying around the garden but I've been inspecting the squash almost daily and have been removing the eggs as soon as she lays them, so now we have squash coming out of our ears. But that's okay. We eat, freeze and give away, and just about the time we get tired out it, one or two of those borers will sneak in and damage the plants beyond repair. And that's my cue to pull the plants and let the soil rest for the next month or so. But the squash harvest is fast, easy and fun while it lasts. Seed is cheap and there will always be another opportunity in the fall.

Here's to a bountiful harvest,
Patty Leander
The May greenhouse workday was a busy one with lots of catch-up activities, including a big (in size) task of putting the shade cloth on. Now the sun’s rays are reduced by half and the plants have a little protection.

There’s good news to report that we have 1,500 gallons of collected rainwater in each of the four storage tanks at the greenhouse. This is well over half of the total capacity we can collect. The greenhouse will start irrigating with alternating rain and city water.

With a sigh of relief, it was great news that the greenhouse sustained no damage from the storm that hit central Austin in the 2nd week of May. In part, thanks to having the shade cloth to deflect the hail and wind. Although the damage hit very near with a large branch breaking off not 10 feet from the greenhouse door and landed right on top of some potted Aspidistra and fall asters that we had placed next to our soil storage area.

The best news was a successful greenhouse BBQ picnic on May 18th. Thanks to everyone who contributed chairs, folding tables, ice, serving containers, ice tea, decorations and wonderful food! The greenhouse looked extra festive with bold table cloths, decorative place mats and chili pepper garland hanging from the rafters. It was a great occasion to sit, relax, munch on empanadas, sample the many ice tea brews and catch up with master gardener friends and their spouses. Then the food was served! The menu included BBQ brisket, chili, salads and desserts. And by special request, three types of deviled eggs! It was a great event that included three guests: hard-working Zilker Botanical Gardens staff that were on their fourth day of storm clean up. Thanks to everyone that attended.

Anne Van Nest, Marian Stasney and Molly Clark
**Firewise Landscaping, Compost and Mulch**

Early this year the city of Austin announced that it has set a goal to drastically reduce the amount of garbage heading to the landfills to zero-waste by 2040. Possible ways to achieve the goal include increasing composting, recycling and creating new incentives to reduce waste disposal. Master gardeners may play a major role in helping the public learn the secrets, rules and cautions of composting.

Virtually all vegetation is combustible. Organic mulches, leaf litter and compost are all vegetation at various stages of decomposition so they are all “fuel for a fire”. Moisture is needed for mulch to have a cooling effect on the plants’ roots which reduces stress on the plants in the summer heat.

As gardeners, some (or most) of us have maintained compost piles or bins of various sizes and shapes in varieties of containers or piles. Cautions are important. Help the public learn and heed the how-to's of composting. Some rules or cautions are:

1. **Keep the compost well-moistened.** This helps the microbes decompose the vegetative matter more quickly but also helps prevent the compost from self-igniting.

2. **Isolate the compost** well away from homes and other valuable structures and trees including the neighbors’ home and property.

3. **Turn and aerate frequently** to speed up the breakdown of vegetation which will reduce its quantity and help reduce soil pathogens because of the heat generated.

4. **Limit the size of the compost piles or bins** to what you have time, energy and space available to turn, aerate and water frequently enough.
   
   • The danger of deep mulches and compost piles is that they can ignite inside and burn and smolder from out of sight for a long time before the fires are discovered.
   
   • The heat from the microbial breakdown of vegetation plus the extremely hot summer days of Central Texas can cause the compost or mulch temperature to soar and can produce a fire before it is discovered. An extreme example of a giant compost fire occurred recently near Mustang Ridge. The pile was described as the size of a football field and two stories high. It would have been impossible to adequately turn and water. It had large tree branches, etc., that had not been shredded. It took what seemed like months for the fire to burn itself out and a lot of water and fire fighters hours of work to reduce to hazard of the one-time giant compost pile.

5. Remember that the soil and compost/mulch are full of organisms, some are pathogens and hazardous to one’s health. Wear gloves when working with the compost and wear a mask if it is windy or dusty. Endangering your health defeats the purpose of growing healthy foods. Hand washing is a good practice too.

The risk of wildfires is high in many parts of Texas. The landscape surrounding a home or structure can become “fuel for a wildfire”. Evaluate and assess your own home and property. “Vegetation that is overgrown, continuous, and close to a home may improve wildlife habitat or conserve energy, but it also
increases the home’s vulnerability to wildfire.” Your goal is to improve the survivability of your home in the event of a wildfire nearby.

A new website on Firewise landscaping in out of Bastrop, TX. Check out http://www.firecap.org. FireCAP, Inc. is a citizens’ organization that seeks to reduce wildfire risks in the Urban/Wildland interface in Texas. The webpage lists four or five PDF Fact Sheets you can ‘click on’ and receive new information such as: “A Guide to Firewise Shrubs” and “Reducing Wildfire Risk While Achieving Other Landscaping Goals.” Pictures and drawings are helpful to illustrate what is being described. Happy reading and happy composting.

Jane Bramlett
Firewise Landscape Specialist

**Free Seminar: What is Wrong with this Plant?**

Saturday, July 12, 10 AM - Noon
Zilker Botanical Garden, 2220 Barton Springs Rd.

“What is Wrong with this Plant?”

The biggest challenge for gardeners is correctly diagnosing plant problems and prescribing effective, safe solutions. The purpose of this seminar is to help the gardener understand the causes of plant problems; the process for diagnosing plant problems; and general management techniques and strategies to employ to help plants overcome problems. The first step is to understand who or what is the culprit: insect, disease or environmental factor.

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.

This FREE seminar is sponsored by the Travis County Master Gardener Association in partnership with the Travis County AgriLife Extension. For more information call 512-854-9600 and ask for the Master Gardeners desk. http://www.tcmastergardeners.org

**Free Seminar: Using Water Wisely**

Saturday, September 6, 10 AM - Noon
West Rural Community Center, 8656 Hwy. 71 W., Building A

Rain, free but at times a scarce commodity! This free seminar concentrates on capturing rainwater and landscaping with plants requiring little water.

Confine rainwater and save it for your own use! Gain the knowledge necessary to build a rainwater harvesting system. All the basics are covered to build a non potable water harvesting system.

Not ready for a full blown rainwater harvesting system? Think small. A demonstration will show how to make a simple, inexpensive rain barrel collection system.

Lower your water usage by utilizing native and adapted landscape plants that look great and need a minimal amount of water to thrive. This method of gardening is called xeriscaping. If desired, a green, lush looking landscape can be achieved.
Bring samples of diseased, bug eaten, sick plants to the Plant Clinic. Experts will diagnose the problem and offer possible remedies.

This free seminar is presented by the Travis Country Master Gardeners Association, a volunteer arm of the Texas A&M and Travis County AgriLife Extension Service. Seminar is free. No reservations taken. For more information call 512-854-9600 and ask for the Master Gardeners desk. http://www.tcmastergardeners.org

Free Seminar: Vegetables for Cooler Times

Wednesday, September 17, 7-9 PM
Zilker Botanical Garden, 2220 Barton Springs Rd.

The free seasonal seminar, Vegetables for Cooler Times, covers multiple topics pertinent to fall gardening activities. The Travis County Master Gardeners Association, a volunteer arm of the Travis County AgriLife Extension Service, presents the fact filled, educational experience.

In spite of the heat, it is time to be in the vegetable garden. “Fall Vegetable Gardening” by Patty Leander will include the basics of vegetable gardening with the emphasis on plants and varieties that flourish in the fall and winter months

Leaves, leaves everywhere! Don’t rake, bag and send it to the landfill. Learn how to convert leaves and other material into plant food. It is called compost. Plants adore it. Learn how to make this magic act happen.

Thought only Yankees could grow rhubarb? Wrong! With a little thinking outside the box, you can grow rhubarb, and strawberries too, right in your own backyard. Learn how these two favorites can be successfully in Central Texas.

A Plant Clinic will be held during the entire seminar. Bring your diseased/bug eaten plant, roots and all, in a plastic bag. Gain knowledge from expert Master Gardeners on action you can take to remedy the situation.

Seminar is free. No reservations taken. For more information call 512-854-9600 and ask for the Master Gardeners desk. Or check web site http://www.tcmastergardeners.org

Free Seminar: Plant Photography

Wednesday, October 22, 7-9 PM
Zilker Botanical Garden, 2220 Barton Springs Rd.

Plant Photography class will be taught by Sam Myers, a photo expert. The class will concentrate on developing the ability to take photos with impact. There will be an overview of cameras, film and digital. Discussion will include how lighting, focal length and aperture interact in composing photographs. Guidelines of composition will be covered along with “posing” plants.

Prerequisite: study the owner's manual on your camera. Not necessary to bring a camera but may be helpful.
The class is sponsored by the Travis County Master Gardener Association in partnership with the AgriLife Extension, Travis County. For more information call 512-854-9600 and ask for the Master Gardener’s desk. http://www.tcmastergardeners.org

**FREE SEMINAR: PREPARING FOR WINTER AND SPRING**

Saturday, November 15, 10 AM · Noon
Sunset Valley City Hall, 3206 Jones Rd., Sunset Valley, TX 78745

“Preparing for Winter and Spring” is the theme of this free seminar. Learn how to put the equivalent of a winter coat on plants. Discover bulbs that thrive in Central Texas and will bloom in the winter and/or spring.

Gain an overview of what needs to be done to prepare your landscaping for the stresses of winter. “Preparing for Winter” will give you confidence and the knowledge necessary for plant survival during the few winter months.

Bulb expert Danny Fowler, owner of Texas Tulips, will present many bulb varieties which excel in Central Texas. Learn about native and adapted bulbs. Bulbs will be available for purchase.

Educate yourself on the necessary planting steps to increase bulbs success. Learn when to fertilize, mulch, and divide for more productive, healthier plants.

The seminar is sponsored by The Travis County Master Gardeners, the volunteer arm of Travis County AgriLife Extension Service. For more information call 512-854-9600 and ask for the Master Gardener’s desk. http://www.tcmastergardeners.org
Special Feature: Roadtrip! The Arbor Gate, Tomball, TX

While attending the State Master Gardener Conference in Conroe, we felt this was a must see garden center. The Arbor Gate was written about in the March issue of Southern Living magazine and was one of the featured tours at the State Conference. If you have not visited here, this is a beautiful garden center just northwest of Houston and worth the trip.

The Arbor Gate is a fun place to visit just to wander through the many creative display gardens. You’ll find lots of ideas and lots of bright color and funky garden art here. There are two gift shops nestled in the display areas, so you’re sure to find the perfect gift for someone or a treat for yourself.

Herbs are one of the Arbor Gate specialties and they do have a very extensive selection. We found many varieties of scented geraniums, which are sometimes hard to find. The Arbor Gate also specializes in hard to find native plants, roses (over 100 varieties), perennials, and annuals.

All plants are well labeled and signed, but if you still have questions, the staff here is very knowledgeable and helpful. Even though we visited on a busy day, the staff took the time to answer any and all questions and help locate plants.

The Arbor Gate located at 15635 FM 2920, Tomball, TX 77377, phone (281) 351-8851, www.arborgate.com

Frankie Hart
Well the heat has arrived! I was having a really hard time making myself stay inside due to the wonderful weather we were having until last week. The inside of my home was showing definite signs of neglect. Then all the sudden we hit record highs and I couldn’t wait to stay in and hopefully catch up on some much needed chores and what happens? My A/C breaks!

Living five days in record breaking heat with no A/C has given me a new appreciation for my ancestors and a new fondness for my shady yard. I used to wish for more sun so I could grow all those blooming colorful perennials and annuals that liven up a garden. However, my shade saved me from heat stroke until the repairman could show up. I’m not saying you can’t grow a lot in the shade but the color is not like it is in the sun. I push the envelope a lot with my shade plants because after all who can understand those plant tags anyway? My theory is, plant it and see. They might not be as magnificent as they would be in full sun but I’m surprised at how many so called “sun” plants do okay in dappled shade. There have been a lot of newsletters and even Central Texas Gardener highlighting shade plants lately. My new search is for a Leopard plant. I found one at Emerald Gardens but ended up buying a Knife Acacia instead. It was within budget and I didn’t have one. Of course it’s supposed to go in sun but will have to settle for dappled shade.

Doesn’t look like the heat is going to let up any time soon so hope you all stay in the shade!

Rebecca Matthews

Garden Trivia

Weather Quiz:

1) Which is safest during a tornado?
   a) Inside a car
   b) Under an overpass
   c) In a ditch
   d) Under a tree

2) Which kills more people every year?
   a) Lightning
   b) Floods
   c) Tornadoes
   d) Hurricanes

3) Which type of cloud is highest in the atmosphere?
   a) Cirrus
   b) Altostratus
   c) Cumulus
   d) Nimbostratus

4) Which type of cloud is most likely to produce rain?
   a) Cirrus
   b) Altocumulus
   c) Cirrostratus
   d) Cumulus
5) Which type of cloud produces lightning?
   a) Altostratus
   b) Cumulonimbus
   c) Cirrocumulus
   d) Nimbus

6) Which time of day is the best for tornado development?
   a) 6:00am - 10:00am
   b) 8:00pm - midnight
   c) 3:00pm - 6:00pm
   d) Noon - 4:00pm

7) True or false: Tornadoes do not form in temperatures lower than 50 degrees Fahrenheit.

8) True or false: A tornado that forms over water is called a Waterdevil.

9) True or false: Cold air is heavier than warm air.

10) For golf-ball sized hail, a storms updraft must be:
    a) 70 mph
    b) 20 mph
    c) 50 mph
    d) Does not need an updraft.

Answers: C; B; A; D; B; C; False; False; True; A (copied from angelfire.com)

In Closing

Don't knock the weather; nine-tenths of the people couldn't start a conversation if it didn't change once in a while. ~ Kin Hubbard
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