

THE FORT BEND GARDENER



HORTICULTURE IN FORT BEND COUNTY

FALL 2015

TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION

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Contributions from:



FORT BEND COUNTY
Master Gardeners

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T E X A S

Master
Naturalist 

Contributing Editor

Barbara Buckley
Media Director
Fort Bend County Master Gardeners

Richmond City Hall Park Transformed Into an Earth-Kind Demonstration Garden

By Peggy d'Hemecourt, Fort Bend Master Gardener, Earth-Kind Specialist

On a hot day in mid-July the finishing touch was added to a gem of a park adjacent to Richmond City Hall. "It's here!" was the news that spread among Fort Bend County Master Gardeners and members of Keep Richmond Beautiful. The subject of all the excitement was the interpretative sign that had been perfectly "planted" by park department staff in the Richmond City Hall Park Earth-Kind Demonstration Garden on Morton Street.

A journey that began during the summer of 2014 with a collaboration between the City of Richmond, Keep Richmond Beautiful, Fort Bend County Texas A&M AgriLife Extension and the Fort Bend County Master Gardeners to beautify a small but significant park in an educational way had reached a milestone with the addition of a sign that explains how to apply Earth-Kind landscaping techniques.

Earth-Kind landscaping, developed by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, uses research-proven techniques to create a horticultural system based on real-world effectiveness and environmental responsibility. Earth-Kind landscaping encourages water conservation, energy conservation, reduction of fertilizer and pesticide use, and reduction of yard waste entering landfills.

Prior to the master gardeners getting involved in the landscaping project, the City of Richmond had taken a significant step to conserve water in response to a mandate to reduce reliance on groundwater. A rainwater catchment system had been installed on the City Hall building in 2011. Rainwater collected from the roof is captured for later use in irrigating the garden. The master gardeners converted the existing irrigation system which used spray heads to one utilizing drip irrigation, and have audited it for proper operation, further improving the efficiency of the system.

Visitors to Richmond City Hall Park can now not only enjoy the beauty of the garden, but also take away some practical advice to apply to their own home gardening projects. While the highly efficient irrigation methods that are being utilized may not be readily apparent to the casual visitor, one of the Earth-Kind principles that park visitors will appreciate is how attractive a garden can be when it is planted with native and well-adapted plants that thrive in our climate without the need for lots of supplemental irrigation, pesticides, and fertilizers. Park plantings include Red Yucca, Autumn Sage, Dwarf Barbados Cherry, Prostrate Abelia, Rock Rose, Hameln Dwarf Fountain Grass, and more.

Richmond Mayor Evalyn Moore said "Congratulations to the Keep Richmond Beautiful and Fort Bend County Master Gardener volunteers who succeeded in beautifying City Hall Park in a meaningful way for the enjoyment of all who visit. The new interpretative signage adds an important educational component".

Earth-Kind landscaping principles are easy to adopt in any landscape. Learn more by visiting Richmond City Hall Park and take the Earth-Kind Challenge by visiting <http://earth-kind.tamu.edu>.

Winter Citrus Care

By Deborah Birge

Fort Bend Master Gardener, Citrus Specialist

We may still be slogging through high temperatures and relentless humidity but it is time to begin thinking of winterizing our citrus trees. But, before we do that let's take a look at how our trees are affected by the cold.

Lemons, limes and citrons are cold hardy to the high 20's. All oranges, mandarin, grapefruit, tangerines and tangelos are hardy to the mid-20's, with kumquats and satsumas the most cold hardy, withstanding temperatures in the low 20's. However, timing and duration are everything.

A satsuma will sustain freeze damage if the temperatures dip for several hours to 18 degrees in December. However, that same satsuma could withstand the same temperatures for the same duration if it froze in February. Why? Because the tree had time to harden off and go dormant. So, even though you may have a tree that will handle 15 degrees, as some of the new Arctic varieties claim, if the very cold weather is too soon in the season, you would do well to protect your tree. Additionally, the cold hardiness of a tree will be tested when wind and rain are involved with the freezing temperatures. Both make the situation more dire for the citrus grower. That said, what steps can we take to help insure the survival of our citrus?

*Firstly, take a long look at your tree. Does it look healthy or stressed? If stressed, look for the reason. Too much water, too little light, and too little feeding can result in stress. If the stress is too much water, begin to taper off on watering. Ideally, citrus should not be watered in winter unless it is containerized or there is a drought situation. If the stress is too little light, consider trimming overhanging trees in the Spring or moving the tree. If the stress is nutritional, give the tree a very light feeding. No more than about one fourth of the recommended feeding. Late summer is still feeding time for leaf miners and the Asian Citrus Psyllid. A late flush of new leaves is like laying a buffet for these pests.

*Look for pests. Most typically, you will find scale, mealybugs, or aphids and ants. Scale and mealybugs can be dislodged with a strong spurt of water or an insecticidal soap. Aphids and ants work together so must be dealt with together. If you don't eradicate the ants, the aphids will return.

*Prepare the tree floor. Bare soil will absorb and then release more heat than soil covered by grass or mulch. If you have either, remove it from under the

tree outward to the dripline or outermost limbs of the tree. Do be careful of the shallow feeder roots when working around the base of the tree. Work carefully so not to damage these important roots. If the tree is grafted and is less than four years old, a proven method of graft protection is to mound soil, not mulch or compost, around the trunk of the tree up past the graft and lower limbs. This mound should be installed in late November and removed in March. A light application of a copper based fungicide to the trunk before installing the mound will help protect the trunk. After removal, be sure to wash the trunk clean of all remaining soil.

*Gather your freeze protection materials. Nothing worse than hunting for equipment when a freeze is coming. A good arsenal might include micro-cloth or tarps for covering, Christmas lights or a shop light for raising the temperature, while some even use grills and propane heaters. There is a new tool for the arsenal called anti-transpirant spray. This is a polymer spray that helps the leaves from losing moisture. Some find it effective for freeze protection and drought protection. However, the cost is very high so one would need to weight the cost against the gain.

Now that we are prepared for the freeze, what to do when one is eminent? Remember that we now have bare ground under the tree. Water that well. Moist ground will absorb the heat of the sun and retain it longer. Cover and add lights as desired. Remember to not put plastic directly on the tree. This will cause more burn than if you use a cloth material next to the leaf, then plastic, if desired. If you do use plastic, remove it as soon as the freeze lifts or the ice begins to melt. Cloth can stay for an indefinite time.

A common question is whether to harvest exiting fruit when a freeze is predicted. It's helpful to remember that most predicted freezes do not occur. So, plan to leave the fruit on the tree, only harvesting the following day IF the fruit has frozen.

In our next article we will discuss After Freeze Damage Care. Let's hope this will not be needed by any of us. Enjoy the winter!

"My garden is my most beautiful masterpiece"

— Claude Monet

Bagworms in the fall

by Mike Merchant Posted on Insects in the City Blog on September 17, 2015



The brown, spindle shaped bags in this image are the cases of bagworms, a caterpillar that can be a pest in dozens of different trees.

You've been watching your arborvitae all summer and noticing brown, spindle-shaped sacs hanging from the branches. Someone points out to you that these are bagworms, a case-making caterpillar that feeds on leaves and can be highly damaging, especially to evergreen trees and shrubs like arborvitae and cedar.

Now it's late September, what do you do?

Before I answer that question, it's worth pointing out that bagworms are interesting insects with a decidedly non-traditional life cycle. Bagworms are not really worms, but caterpillars, the immature stages of a nondescript moth. They are called bagworms because, shortly after they are born, they begin spinning a silken case or sac around themselves, using silk from glands associated with their mouth. The case is added to continually as the caterpillar grows. The caterpillar feeds on the host plant by sticking its head and legs out of the top of the bag and chewing on nearby leaves. Its legs grasp the branch of the host plant, and pro-

pel the caterpillar like a kid cruising the monkey-bars.

Bagworms have one generation each year in Texas (some species possibly two). Once the larvae are fully grown they stop feeding. Males pupate and emerge as adults, usually a little before the female. Adult male moths exit the bag through the bottom, and fly off in search of a mate. Females also pupate, but the adult female that emerges is eyeless, wingless and legless. She remains in her bag, emitting a pheromone to alert males to her presence. Male moths locate the female bags and mate. Once mated the female gestates her eggs and dies, leaving a bag full of eggs that will hatch the following spring.

Once both male and female bagworms enter this last phase of life, feeding is over and so is any chance for effective control with insecticides. Bagworm bags are made of tightly woven silk and bits of leaves from their food plant. For this reason, the caterpillars, pupae and eggs inside are well protected from insecticides. Only when actively feeding are bagworms vulnerable to insecticide sprays.

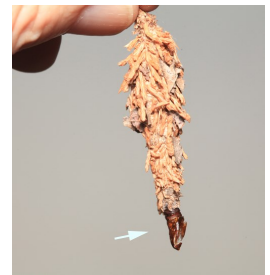
So it's late summer. Is it too late to spray for bagworms? That's a good question, and will require some close observation on your part. If you have a bagworm-infested tree, pull off as many bags as you can for a quick inspection. Do you see red-brown pupal skins sticking out from the bottoms of many of the cases? If so, this is an indication that pupation and mating by at least some of the bagworms has begun. Are the cases easy to pull off the tree, or are they tightly bound with thick silk? Cases with thick bands of silk attaching them to the branch are an indication that the caterpillar has started the process of pupation, mating or egg laying. Open up some cases with a pointed knife or scissors. Do you find caterpillars still in the cases? If so, a spray may be worthwhile. If most cases are empty, or have only pupal skins or eggs inside, you've missed your chance this year to treat.

If you've missed your chance to spray this summer, that's OK. Your bagworms will do no further damage this year. You have two options: wait until next spring to treat, or consider handpicking bags from trees during the winter or early spring.

Because female bagworms do not have wings, and there is only one generation a year, bagworm infestations are usually slow to spread. This means that on smaller trees, or trees that are deciduous (making the bags easy to spot), handpicking can sometimes eliminate or greatly reduce an infestation. Trees picked clean of bags are unlikely to become re-infested the following year.

Your other treatment option is to wait until spring when bagworms hatch (usually May to early June) to treat the tree. A relatively easy way to know the best time to treat emerging bagworms is to remove a number of bags from a tree and place outdoors in a screened jar in a shady spot. When the eggs hatch and young caterpillars are seen inside the jar, chances are that eggs are also hatching on your trees. Sprays such as *Bacillus thuringiensis*, spinosad and any of the pyrethroid insecticides are effective on bagworms, especially early in the season. Late season infestations, when bagworm caterpillars are larger and more difficult to kill, are best treated with pyrethroid sprays.

-For more information on bagworms, including photos of many of the life stages, see the excellent publication by the University of Florida.



A now-empty case of a male bagworm is marked by the pupal "skin" left dangling from the bottom of the sac. The presence of these empty cases signals the end of a generation of bagworm feeding.

A Mum By Any Other Name is Still a MUM

By Norma Beustring, Fort Bend County Master Gardener

We call this flower by so many names. And in the fall it is recognized as the signal of cooler weather but do we really know its history? Legend tells us that China was the original birthplace of mums over 3500 years ago. By tradition this “golden daisy of the Orient” was possessed only by royalty. Even today when the Japanese say “kiku” or chrysanthemum they are likely to be referring to the imperial crest of their Emperor. Emperors were known to sit on thrones of chrysanthemums! Legend has it that in Egypt Tutankhamen was buried with floral collars of chrysanthemum. It is the national flower of Japan and there is even a holiday in Japan, “Festival of Happiness” every year to celebrate this flower.



[Imperial Standard of the Emperor of Japan](#)

Chrysanthemums belong to the Asteraceae or daisy family. It is one of the largest groups in the botanical world. It is considered one of the more advanced groups because of its complex flower structure. Other members of this group include Asters, Cornflowers and Zinnias. The name is derived from Greek words chryos meaning gold and the word anthemion meaning flower.

The petals of the chrysanthemum are called florets. Florets are small flowers that create a dense cluster on the flower head. There are two types of florets: disk florets and ray florets. Chrysanthemum blooms are divided into ten different bloom forms. The bloom forms are defined by the way in which the ray and disk florets are arranged.

Disk florets are in the center of the bloom head and contain both male and female parts. This is the reproductive part of the flower that generate seeds.

Ray florets are on the perimeter of the flower and only contain female organs. These are the flashy or showy parts of a flower. Because of their ornate colorful petals they are successful in attracting pollinators. The ray florets are white, yellow or red. In recent years, many horticultural specimens have been bred to bear many rows of ray florets in wide variety colors. As a result, we have a wide array of colors to choose from during the Fall season.



Chrysanthemum not only adorn our tables and homes but have many culinary values. The leaves are steamed or boiled and served as greens. The petals are boiled and used to create teas, added to thicken soups or just to enhance the aroma.



Of course in Texas, the Mum also has an imperial beginning. Yes, you guessed it! What would a Texas High School Homecoming be without a sea of color and bling being worn by young ladies in a football stadium. The mum is the focal point of the corsage but what is added will blow your mind. What began as a simple mum with a variety of ribbons is a far cry from what you will see today. The mum is adored by masses of ribbons, charms, bows, cow bells, bells, stuffed animals and even LED lights.

Even though the High School Homecoming Mum has been adopted by other states, Texas still brags that our Mums are bigger and better!

FBMG Spotlight: Texas Native Garden

By Robin Winfree
Garden Leadership Team, Director

The Fort Bend County Master Gardeners maintain 15 diverse demonstration gardens. These gardens are provided to teach the public how they can use plants in landscapes in their own gardens. One of these gardens is the Texas Native Garden.

Texas Natives are plants that have survived and thrived in various areas of Texas for centuries. These plants have grown under the harsh conditions of the Texas climate: inconsistent rainfall, high and low temperatures and intense sunshine. Given the need to conserve water in the landscape, these plants are easy to grow and maintain while needing less water and less fertilizer than non-natives while still providing a beautiful landscape year round. Because these plants are native to our state, they have few or no insect and disease problems which helps to eliminate the use of pesticides and herbicides. In addition, landscaping with natives provides food and shelter for many beneficial insects and birds.

Our Texas Native Garden offers a wide variety of specimens on display. A few that you may be interested in trying in your landscape are Texas Lantana and Red Turk's Cap.

Texas Lantana (*Lantana horrida*) – has yellow to orange flowers that is attractive to butterflies. Very drought tolerant as well as salt tolerant. Prefers well draining soil. Deer resistant. Full to part sun. Spreading shrub 3-6 ft. Blooms all summer long.

Red Turk's Cap (*Malvaviscus arboreus var. Drummondii*) –also known as Drummond wax-mallow. This spreading 2-3 ft tall shrub prefers shade to part shade. The small bright red flower resembles a Turkish turban hence the name Turk's cap. Very useful for shady spots.

Visit our demonstration gardens to see these plants in the Texas Native Garden.

Seasonal Garden Checklist: November/December

By Dr. William Welch,
Professor & Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service
Landscape Horticulturist

- When the November weather begins to settle, it is time to select and plant annuals such as pansies, violas and ornamental cabbages and kale.
- Check nursery or garden centers for started plants of snapdragons, pinks, poppies, and calendulas in south and east Texas, they will usually provide a riot of spring color if planted now.
- Plant bulbs in well prepared beds so the base of the bulb is at a depth that is three times the diameter of the bulb. In sandy soil, set slightly deeper and in clay soils less deeply.
- Don't get in a hurry to prune woody plants. Late December through February is usually the best time to prune them.
- Place orders for seeds this month so you will have them available when you are ready to plant.
- If you have saved seeds of your favorite plants, allow them to become air dry, then place them in an airtight container and store in the refrigerator. Be sure to label each packet carefully. Remember, seed from hybrid plants will seldom resemble the parent plant.
- November through February is a good time to plant trees and shrubs.
- Reduce the fertilization of indoor plants from late October to mid-March. An exception would be plants in an atrium or a well lighted window.
- Prepare beds and individual holes for rose planting in January and February. Use composted manure, pine bark, and similar materials mixed with existing soil.
- Take advantage of good weather to prepare garden beds for spring planting. Work in any needed organic matter, and have beds ready to plant when needed.

It's pecan season in Fort Bend County!

by Boone Holladay, CEA – Horticulture Fort Bend County

Move over pumpkin-spiced products! Pecan flavored coffee and beers, pies and pastries, and a huge range of other pecan themed products are about to make it to the shelves. It's pecan season in Fort Bend County and across the State. We've got big news to share with you concerning pecans in the county.

First off, we would like to spend a minute to congratulate local producers for their State award winning pecans! The 2014 Texas State Pecan Show, held in conjunction with the Texas Pecan Growers Association Conference & Trade Show was hosted this year in Frisco, Texas from July 12th through the 15th, 2015. State award winners from Fort Bend County included Pete Pavlovsky (3rd place Cape Fear), Bill Archer (2nd place GraCross and 3rd place Maramec), Reggie Ware (3rd place Shoshoni), Michael Weston (3rd place Podsednik), and Bill Birdwell (3rd place Success). To add clarity, samples from the 2014 county and regional pecan shows were held until the 2015 State pecan conference, thus it is entitled the "2014 State Pecan Show", actually held in 2015.

Second off, we will be moving our 2015 program site away from the Bud O'Shieles Community Center in Rosenberg. The 2015 Fort Bend County & East Region Pecan Shows will be held at the Jones Creek Ranch Park Complex on FM 359 between Pecan Grove and Fulshear. This complex was formerly known as privately owned Gordon Ranch Event Center. It is now a Fort Bend County managed park space and event center and due to the geographic locale of many of our pecan orchards in the county, we think this site will be a great location for a pecan show. Contact our office or view our website for information on and directions to the Jones Creek Park facility.

The 2015 Fort Bend County and East Region Pecan Show will be held on Saturday, December 5th, 2015 from 9:30 to 11:00 am. Judged entries will be out for viewing and we will have an educational program on pecan production across Texas. As well, we will have a large assortment of pecan themed snacks and coffee provided by the Fort Bend County Master Gardeners and Fort Bend Farm Bureau. The event is free of charge, but bring your wallet as we will have pecan-themed gifts and new season local pecans for sale. The event flier is available at <http://fortbend.agrilife.org>.

Though this hasn't been a bumper year for pecans in the county, we hope that you'll enter your pecans in to the show. You may be our next big winner! Please keep in mind these shows are for everyone, large acreage to residential. One recent winner had only one tree! We'll start taking entries on November 16th up until December 1st. For guidelines, rules, and regulations on the show, please visit our website at <http://fortbend.agrilife.org> or call Brandy Rader at (281) 342-3034. See you in December.

No Gulf Coast Citrus Show in Galveston County This Year

Due to several factors, including the fact that local counties Harris, Fort Bend, & Montgomery are all in quarantine for Citrus Greening disease (<http://texascitrusgreening.org>), Galveston County Extension has halted their annual citrus show for 2015. The three county north quarantine zone prohibits the movement of citrus from leaving the zone. Many of the growers that enter their citrus into this show are within the quarantine zone. Extension specialists are working side by side with Texas Department of Agriculture and USDA officials to monitor the potential of this disease. Please navigate the website above, as well as <http://saveourcitrus.org> for more information on how to prevent the spread of citrus pathogens and pests.

The Gulf Coast Show in Galveston County annually averages around 250 citrus entries from multiple counties along the central gulf coast region. This shows that there is a strong interest in citrus production in our region. Though they will not have a "show" this year, they will still offer a great free program on citrus culture and care for the public, presented by Monte Nesbitt, east region fruit specialist with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension. This program will be offered from 6:30 to 8:30 pm on Thursday, November 19th, 2015 at the Galveston County Extension Office. For more information on this program, as well as any other of the fine programs offered in Galveston County, please visit their website at <http://galveston.agrilife.org>.

Master Gardeners Annual Sales

Fort Bend Master Gardeners are busy planning their 2016 sales. The **Fruit and Citrus Tree Sale** is scheduled for Saturday, January 16, 2016, from 9:00 am—1:00 pm or until sold out. The sale will be held at the Fort Bend County Fairground in Barn H.

There will be a wide variety of trees available including: orange, grapefruit, lemon, lime, apple, peach, pear, fig, as well as blackberries, blueberries, jujubes, goji, olives, loquat, and more. An availability list is linked on <http://fbmg.org>.

A Preview Program will be held on Thursday, January 14, 2016 from 6:30-8:30 pm. at Bud O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Road, Rosenberg. Join us to learn how to plant and care for fruit trees.

Come early, bring a wagon, and enjoy the sale!

The **Vegetable-Herb Plant Sale** is set for Saturday, February 27, 2016, from 9:00 am-12:00 noon. This sale is held in front of the FBMG greenhouse which is behind the Extension Office, 1402 Band Road, Rosenberg, 77471.

A list of vegetable and herbs to be sold will be available soon on <http://fbmg.org>.

A Preview Program will be held on Saturday, February 20, 2016 from 9:00-11:00 am at Bud O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Road, Rosenberg.

Prairie Heritage Festival

by Carol Pawelek,
Coastal Prairie Master Naturalist

Prairie Heritage Festival is a fun, educational and family-oriented outdoor event that promotes an understanding of what our region of Texas looked like before the settlers came. Nature tours, horse-drawn wagon rides, live animals, performers, kids' crafts and exhibits are just some of the offerings for all age levels. The prairie and other ecosystems, featuring animals and plants, can be experienced by participating in hands-on and how-to activities that are entertaining, Kid-centric, engaging, and informative.

This is a time when many migratory birds, butterflies and waterfowl can be viewed at their best in the park. Participants can also learn what they can do to preserve, restore and recreate native habitats.

The festival is a family friendly event with free parking and admission. Join the fun and spend some quality time in the great outdoors. Please call the Extension Office at 281-633-7042 if you need additional information or are interested in becoming an exhibitor.

The Texas Master Naturalist program is sponsored by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. For additional information call 281.633.7033 or email mmcdowell@ag.tamu.edu

Hosted by: Coastal Prairie Chapter –
Texas Master Naturalists

When: Saturday, Nov. 7, 2015; 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

Where: Seabourne Creek Nature Park
3831 Highway 36, Rosenberg, Tx

Who: Open to Public – Free Family Event

Other: Call 281.633.7042 for more info

Mark Your Calendar and Save These Dates

November 7—Prairie Heritage Day

November: 13—Program for Landscape & Irrigation Professionals

December 5 —Fort Bend County Pecan Show

January 14—FBMG Preview Program for Fruit & Citrus Tree Sale

January 16—FBMG Fruit & Citrus Tree Sale

February 20—FBMG Preview Program for Vegetable-Herb Sale

February 27—FBMG Vegetable –Herb Sale



TEXAS A&M
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EXTENSION

Backyard Basics:

Getting the Most from Your Garden

November 14 - Grilling

December 5 — Fruits & Nuts

*For more information and to download
registration forms visit*

<http://fortbend.agrilife.org/backyard-basics/>

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service-Fort Bend County
Boone Holladay, County Extension Agent-Horticulture
1402 Band Road, Suite 100
Rosenberg, Texas 77471

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Boone Holladay

Boone Holladay, CEA-Horticulture
JB.Holladay@Ag.tamu.edu
(281) 342-3034
Fort Bend County Extension
1402 Band Road, Suite 100, Rosen-
berg, TX 77471

Educational programs of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, genetic information or veteran status. Persons with disabilities who plan to attend this meeting and who may need auxiliary aids or services are required to contact Texas AgriLife Extension Service at 281.342.3034 five working days prior to the meeting so appropriate arrangements can be made. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas cooperating.

DATES TO REMEMBER

Saturdays with the Fort Bend Master Gardeners
First Saturday of the month 9:00-11:00 a.m.
Stroll the gardens, no programs unless advertised.

Fort Bend Beekeepers Meeting
Second Tuesday of each month, 7:00 p.m.

Backyard Basics Education Series
February- December 2015

Coastal Prairie Master Naturalist
Programs, First Thursday of the month

For full information on events call (281) 342-3034 or visit

<http://fortbend.agrilife.org>

<http://www.fbmng.org>

<http://txmn.org/coastal/>

<http://fortbendbeekeepers.org/>