



Fall 2017 Issue



“The Gardening Spade”
Gregg County Master Gardener Association
Quarterly Newsletter

Agents Corner...



Well, we have our first newsletter off the ground and running, we will be writing a quarterly newsletter every three months and hope everyone enjoys the information, we hope it proves to be useful! The Gregg County Master Gardener Association is also in full swing with the new Volunteer Management System (VMS) that is all on-line and we hope everyone is now use to this and taking advantage of it's potential.

We will soon be announcing the 2018 Master Gardener class schedule for this next year, as well as some of the major educational programs and activities for 2018 as well. I am looking for 2018 to be a great year and hope all of you feel the same. We are a growing bunch and I only see great times ahead for our association as we move ahead.

Please feel free to contact me anytime about any issues that you feel we need to address and my door is always open. As far as the name of the newsletter **“The Gardening Spade”**, this was off the top of my head and we can call this what ever you guys want to call it.

Presidents Message... Meloney Ferguson, 2017 Gregg County Master Gardener President



I do hope everyone is surviving the heat and humidity now that summer has truly hit. But, what a blessing we have had this summer with all the rain. Master Gardeners have a lot going on even in this heat. Our 2017 interns are very active and excited about completing their required hours. They are volunteering in church gardens, the JR Curtis garden, the MG shade garden, and even getting ready to go into the area schools. What a great group they have turned out to be!

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President's Message Cont.

We have two major events coming up. One is in August and the other in October. Gregg Grant will be with us on Thursday, August 17, 2017, at 6:00 at the AgriLife building. If you are not familiar with Greg, you need to be sure to put this on your calendar. Not only is he an interesting and funny speaker, but also he is very knowledgeable about plants. His seminar will be on the "Edible Landscape" and will be free for all Master Gardeners (which includes interns). The public will be charged \$10 at the door.

The other event is the Fall Plant Sale on Saturday, October 7, 2017, from 9 to 12 at the AgriLife building. This is a major fundraiser for our group, so every one needs to be growing as many plants as possible. Remember for every plant that you bring, you get an hour of volunteer credit. If you need pots for your plants, we have two sizes available you can use. David Hackley is doing a wonderful job of chairing this project for us.

I appreciate all the hard work everyone is doing for Master Gardeners. Each one of you is a great testament to that special group called "gardeners."

Meloney Ferguson

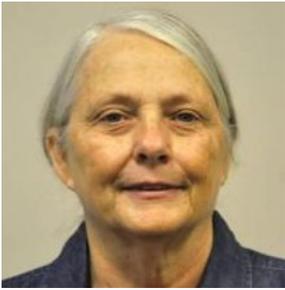
2017 President, Gregg County Master Gardeners



2017 Gregg County Master Gardener Graduating Class...

Marie's Message;

Marie Kerr, J.R. Curtis Garden for the Blind - Volunteer Coordinator

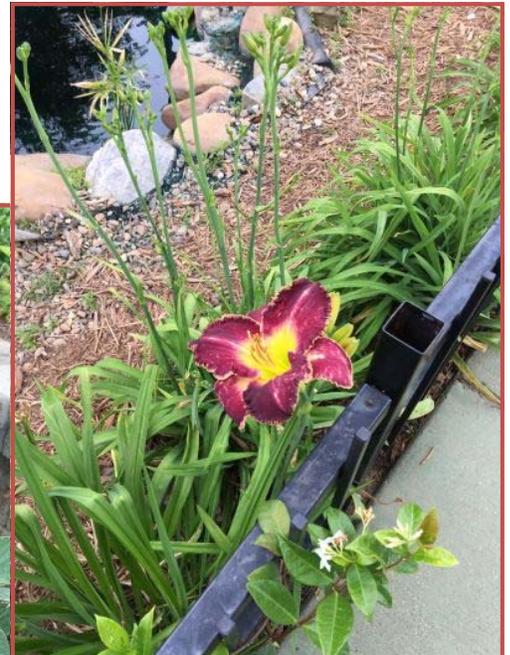


It is critical to every gardening project to have committed volunteers to make the project blossom. Our Master Gardener volunteers contribute their experience, enthusiasm, fresh ideas and extra hands to do just that. It always amazes me to see how much we get done as a group in just a few hours and how much fun we have doing it. This project provides an opportunity to enjoy flower gardening, for the most part in raised beds, with the added plus of enjoying the fellowship and knowledge of other Master Gardeners. Come on out and join the fun! Here is our current work schedule:

August 8, August 29 and September 19. You will notice these are all on Tuesdays and we usually begin around 9:00 AM and are done around noon or sooner. I would like to say Thank you to all that have been part of our successful project.



**J.R. Curtis Garden
Photos**



Useful Information You Might Need...

FERTILIZE PROPERLY

After deciding on the types and amounts of fertilizer to use then decide how to apply it. How fertilizer is applied may make the difference between a super productive garden and an "average" garden. (Cont. next page...)

Fertilizers are applied four ways:

Broadcast before planting. The proper amount of fertilizer is spread evenly over the garden and mixed well with the soil to a depth of 3 to 4 inches before making beds for planting. This method is least likely to cause plant damage and is used by most gardeners.

Band or bed applications. The fertilizer is applied in a strip to the side of the row before planting. This method requires care to prevent plant damage from roots which may come into contact with the fertilizer band.

Starter solution. This is used mainly on transplants such as tomatoes and peppers. Mix 2 tablespoons of garden fertilizer with 1 gallon of water and stir well. Pour 1 cup of the mixture into the hole and let it soak in before transplanting.

Side dressing. The term side dressing simply denotes an application of fertilizer, usually one containing nitrogen only, alongside the rows or in a circle around growing plants. This insures a nitrogen supply as plants grow and develop. Side dressing is particularly beneficial in sandy soils or in seasons of abundant rainfall as nitrogen has a bad habit of being washed or leached out of the root zone.

One heavy fertilizer application in early spring is not enough; it's much better to apply a moderate amount before planting with supplemental side dressings during the growing season.

Side dressing offers three very important advantages. Properly used, it helps prevent delayed fruit set caused by excessive nitrogen too early in the season, it significantly increases yields and it results in healthier, stronger plants with fewer pest problems.

Unless otherwise specified, cup of ammonium sulfate (21-0-0) per 10 feet of row is adequate for most vegetable crops. Information concerning the best time to sidedress specific crops is outlined below:

- *Onions* - when 5 to 6 leaves have formed.
- *Tomatoes and peppers* - when first fruits are small, apply 1 level tablespoon per plant. Repeat every 4 weeks.
- *Squash* - when vines are 1 foot long at a rate of 1 level tablespoon per plant.
- *Herbs* - when about half grown and after first harvest.

Whenever side dressing, avoid getting the fertilizer particles on the plant foliage and always water thoroughly after application.

Upcoming Programs & Activates...

The Edible Landscape—August 17, 2017, 6:00 pm Gregg County Extension Office

The Gregg County Master Gardener Association will be sponsoring another great program for the general public to attend. Greg Grant, County Extension Agent in Smith County and noted author of several books on gardening and landscaping will be our featured speaker for the evening. Gregg will discuss the “Edible Landscape” and how everyone can grow great looking landscapes and incorporate vegetable into them.

The program will be held at the Gregg County Extension office here in Longview and will be held in the Extension Auditorium and starts at 6:00 pm. Please park in the back parking lot behind the Gregg County Services Building and enter through the west-end doors of the building. There is a registration fee of \$10.00 per person, payable at the door that evening. Of course Master Gardeners from Gregg County will be **FREE**. Fee includes all hand out materials, refreshments for the evening! For more information, go to;



Greg Grant

<http://counties.agrilife.org/gregg/files/2017/05/edible-1.pdf>

Upcoming Programs & Activities Continued...

2017 Fall Gregg County Master Gardener Plant Sale—October 7, 2017, 9:00 am till 12 Noon
Gregg County Extension office

The Gregg County Master Gardener Association will be holding their Annual Fall Plant Sale at the Gregg County Extension office in Longview. Please plan to park in the back parking lot and enter in the west-end door to the Extension Auditorium. Plant sale will feature all kinds of plants that have been grown by our Master Gardener members during the year. **Plan to attend early for best selections!!!** For more information, go to;



<http://counties.agrilife.org/gregg/files/2017/03/plantsale.pdf>

Two Night Landscape Design Course—November 7th and 12th, 2017, 6:00 to 8:00 pm Gregg County Extension office

Gregg County Master Gardener Association will be co-sponsoring a two-night Landscape Design Course that is designed for homeowners who would like to plan and design their own landscape, or for those that just want to give their landscape a “facelift” so to speak. This will be held with the intent for participants to have homework and after the first evening, start to put their ideas on paper and bring to the second session. Registration fee of \$100.00 includes all materials and supplies!



Speakers for the course will be;

Allison Reeves is a graduate of The University of Texas at Austin, with a Masters degree in Landscape Architecture and a Bachelors in Geography. Prior to living in Longview, she worked as a designer for a landscape architecture firm in Dallas, Texas. Allison spent three years on the Design Review Board for a large residential development in Fort Worth, reviewing and providing critical feedback on landscape plans for new homeowners. Additionally, she worked on individual residential projects across north Texas and central Texas. Allison will be speaking on November 7th discussing “Basic Principles of Landscape Design”.

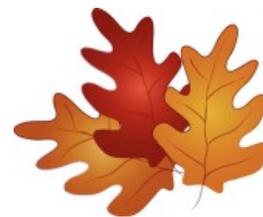


Greg Grant is currently the Extension Agent-Horticulture in Smith County. Was a former lecturer in the School of Horticulture at Stephen F. Austin State University. He is also co-author, with William C. Welch, of the Southern Heirloom Garden (1995, Taylor Publishing, Dallas, Texas) and a regular contributor to Neil Sperry’s Gardens magazine. He has traveled extensively to botanical and public gardens throughout the United States and Europe. Greg will be presenting on November 14th and will be discussing “Plant Materials in the Landscape”. For more information and registration form, go to;

<http://counties.agrilife.org/gregg/files/2017/06/landscape-2.pdf>



Lawn & Garden Checklist For September & October...



September

- Coleus and caladiums require plenty of water this time of year if they are to remain lush and attractive until fall. Fertilize with ammonium sulfate at the rate of 1/3 to 1/2 pound per 100 square feet of bed area, and water thoroughly.
- Rejuvenate heat-stressed geraniums and begonias for the fall season by lightly pruning, fertilizing and watering.
- Don't allow plants with green fruit or berries to suffer from lack of moisture. Hollies will frequently drop their fruit under drought conditions. Some vegetables such as cucumbers or eggplants also become bitter if under watered during peak growing times.
- Remove weak, unproductive growth and old seed heads from crape myrtles and roses to stimulate new growth for fall beauty.
- Prune out dead or diseased wood from trees and shrubs. Hold off on major pruning until mid-winter. Pruning now may stimulate tender new growth prior to frost.
- Sow seeds of snapdragons, pinks, pansies and other winter flowers in flats for planting outside during mid-to-late fall.
- Prepare the beds for spring-flowering bulbs as soon as possible. It's important to cultivate the soil and add generous amounts of organic matter to improve water drainage. Bulbs will rot without proper drainage.
- Continue a disease spray schedule on roses as blackspot and mildew can be extremely damaging in September and October.
- Christmas cactus can be made to flower by supplying 12 hours of uninterrupted darkness and cool nights (55 degrees F) for a month starting in mid-October. Keep plants on the dry side for a month prior to the treatment.
- Plan to plant wildflowers in early September and October. Check supplies now and order seed for planting in open sunny areas. Consider bluebonnet, Indian paintbrush, coneflower, fire-wheel, black-eyed Susan, evening primrose and many others. Soils should be lightly cultivated prior to planting.
- Divide spring flowering perennials such as iris, Shasta daisy, gaillardia, rudbeckias, cannas, daylilies, violets, liriop and ajuga.

October

- October is a good time to reduce the insect and disease potential in next year's garden. Clean up the garden, removing all annuals that have completed their life cycle. Remove the tops of all herbaceous perennials that have finished flowering or as soon as frost has killed the leaves.
- October through November is also an excellent time to purchase bulbs while you still have a good selection in the garden center.
- Chill tulip and hyacinth bulbs in the refrigerator until mid or late December before planting. The lower part of the refrigerator is best. Do not leave bulbs in airtight plastic bags during refrigerated storage.
- 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.
- Holly plants with a heavy set of fruit often suffer a fertilizer deficiency. An application of complete fertilizer late this month can be helpful and provide a head start next spring.
- Start collecting leaves for the compost pile. Be sure to have extra soil available so that each 6 inch layer of leaves may be covered with several inches of soil. Always wet the layer of leaves thoroughly before adding the soil. Add about one pound of a complete lawn or garden fertilizer to each layer of leaves to provide the necessary nitrogen for decomposition.
- In addition to bulbs, check your nursery or garden center for started plants of snapdragons, pinks, sweet williams, poppies, and calendulas. Planted now in south and east Texas, they will usually provide a riot of spring color; wait until late winter or early spring to plant in north Texas.
- Keep Christmas cactus in a sunny spot where night temperatures can be kept below 65 degrees F. Buds will drop if you allow night temperatures to go above 70 degrees F or if you allow the plant to become excessively dry. They should also be kept in total darkness from 5:00 pm until 8:00 am for about 30 days in October to initiate flower buds.
- 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.
- Prepare beds for planting pansies when they become available at the garden centers. They need a well-drained soil and exposure to at least a half-day of sun. It is best to use started plants, as seeds are difficult to handle.
- If you are planning to save caladium tubers for another year, dig them in late October, and allow to dry in a well ventilated but shady area. After 7 to 10 days remove leaves and dirt, then pack in dry peat moss, vermiculite or similar material for storage. Pack tubers so they do not touch each other. Dust with all-purpose fungicide as you pack. Place container in an area where temperature won't drop below 50 degrees F.

November/December

- Gourds on display for fall decorations will last longer if they are carefully cleaned, waxed and kept in a dry place. Inspect occasionally for signs of mold.
- Prolong the life of holiday-season gift plants by providing proper care. Check to see if the pot wrap has plugged up the bottom drainage. Don't over-water. Keep out of drafts from heating vents and open doorways. Fertilizer is seldom needed the first few months.
- Berrying plants, such as holly and yaupon, may be pruned now while they can be enjoyed as cut material inside the house.
- Place orders for seeds this month so you will have them available when you are ready to plant. By ordering early, you will be more certain of getting the varieties you want.
- Don't get in a hurry to prune woody plants. Late December through February is usually the best time to prune them.
- Drain gasoline from power tools and run the engine until fuel in the carburetor is used up.
- Drain and store garden hoses and watering equipment in a readily accessible location. The lawn and plants may need water during a prolonged dry spell.
- November through February is a good time to plant trees and shrubs.
- Continue to set out cool-season bedding plants, such as pansies, violas, stock, snapdragons, and dianthus.
- Prepare beds and individual holes for rose planting in January and February. Use composted manure, pine bark, and similar materials mixed with existing soil.
- Plant those spring-flowering bulbs if you haven't already done so.
- Want to start cuttings of your favorite Christmas cactus? As soon as it has finished blooming, select a cutting with 4 or 5 joints, break or cut it off, and insert the basal end into a pot of moderately moist soil. Place it on a windowsill or other brightly lit area. The cuttings should be rooted within 3 to 4 weeks.
- Be sure and help to promote the Master Gardener Class that will start in January of next year!



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. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating.