

# Inside Dirt

Henderson County Master Gardener Newsletter



## Need a Speaker? We have one for you! by Lydia Holley

With the new year starting, many garden clubs, other Master Gardener associations, and numerous organizations need to fill their schedules with speakers that can give presentations on various topics. If you are in charge of scheduling a speaker, you are in luck! HCMGA has several talented speakers that explain various garden-related topics.

Wayne Stafford gives a wonderful butterfly pictorial slideshow presentation. His photos are better than any you can find in a magazine, and they are each labeled. The best part? These butterflies can all be found locally. He has requested daytime appointments only.

Shannon Greene's knowledge of medicinal herbs is vast, and her



presentations are interesting, enlightening and very popular. Her presentations vary from 30 minutes up to three hours long.

If you have always wanted to know how to propagate plants, Barbara Penner will be happy to explain the fundamentals of propagation to your group. Learn how fun it can be to stretch your gardening dollar!

Pollinators are an important subject, and Peter or Janelle Cole's presentations are fun and educational. Why we need pollinators and how to attract bees, butterflies, and other pollinators to your garden are discussed.

(Con't page 9 )



**Upcoming Meetings:**  
Meetings are held at noon  
on the third Wednesday of  
the month at the  
East Texas Arboretum  
1601 Patterson Rd,  
Athens TX

November 16, 2016

December 15, 2016

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# Dedication of the Rick Hirsch Memorial

## Yvonne Sparks HCMG

Henderson County Master Gardeners Dedicate Memorial to Rick Hirsch



The HCMG's dedicated a memorial to Texas AgriLife Extension Agent, Rick Hirsh on October 8 at the East Texas Arboretum. The memorial is a giant boulder placed at the entrance of the Master Gardener DREAM Garden on the grounds of the Arboretum. The Memorial was approved by the HCMGA

membership with the donation of the stone by Roy Clay, owner of Earth and Stone in Malakoff.

A large crowd of family,

friends, community people and Master Gardeners were present. The speakers included Henderson County Commissioner, Ken Geeslin, Texas AgriLife Extension Agent, Kate

Pittack, Master Gardener Cecilia Bowles and Fr. Nolan Lowry, Pastor of St. Edwards Catholic Church. In addition, U.S. Representative Jeb Hensarling's office presented Bronte' Hirsch with an U.S. Flag that had flown over the nation's Capital and State



Representative Stuart Spitzer personally



presented her a Texas Flag that had flown over the State Capital. Following the ceremony, "The Spirit of Aggieland" was played.

A special thanks goes to the Memorial Committee members who are Margaret Dansby, Cecilia Bowles and Janelle Cole.

## 2016 Officers

- President
- VP Program & Administration
- VP Member & Community Education
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Historian

- Lydia Holley
- Yvonne Sparks
- Linda Schafer
- Barbara Penner
- Susan Stokes
- Cherie Tanneberger

## **Bacon Sautéed Brussel Sprouts**

by Janelle Cole HCMG Intern 2016

### INGREDIENTS:

- about 1 1/4 pounds brussels sprouts, trimmed and halved lengthwise (or sliced in a food processor)
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 teaspoon salt, or to taste
- 1 teaspoon pepper, or to taste
- 6 slices of bacon



### Directions :

**Brown bacon in cast iron skillet. Remove to cool.**

**Saute onions in bacon grease & set aside.**

**Add a little olive oil to the skillet, then add the brussel sprouts and cover.**

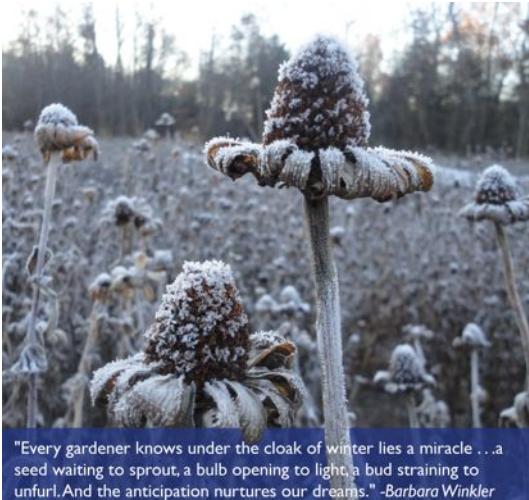
**Drizzle about 1/4 water to the skillet and cover.**

**Allow to steam/saute for a few minutes, check to make sure they are tender crisp.**

**Remove from heat - and sprinkle bacon, add salt & pepper and toss.**

**Serve.**





# Save the Date



## Upcoming HCMG Meeting

**November 15, 2016**

“Terrariums”

Mary Wilhite of Blue Moon Gardens

Learn how to make a terrarium,  
what plants work best and how to care for them

**December 15, 2016**

“Christmas Around the World”

December 15, 2016 @ 6:00 pm

Hart-Morris Conservation Center at the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center

5601 CR 4812 (Peninsula Point Road)

Tickets-\$20 per person (BYOB)

Check us out online :

<http://www.facebook.com/HCmastergardener>

or

<http://henderson-co-tx-mg.org>

\* Watch for future around the county! \*



## Fall Propagation

### Barbara Penner HCMG

One thing is sure in Texas; the weather will change...eventually. There are years where a 70 to 80 degree swing between the coldest days and the hottest days can take a toll on your plants. I've found a few plants that are easy to propagate and seem to thrive in the heat and return with beautiful blooms for years.

Have you tried the Althea, also known as Rose of

Sharon or Hibiscus syriacus?

This deciduous shrub needs lots of room but in return will reward you with blooms for months.

Easy to care for with a little water once a week and few pests. Some people train them as a small tree but left alone they will take on a vase shape. Older varieties bare single flowers and some newer varieties bare double blooms. This plant can be propagated by self-sown seeds that drop at its base, some consider them a nuisance. Another option is to take softwood cuttings and use a rooting hormone.



Red is the most common flower color but there are also pink and white varieties. With a spreading upright habit this one needs some room along a fence or as a foundation planting along the house. Delicate blooms appear from May through November in light shade. These are propagated by seed, cuttings or division. There is no need to divide, but if you need to cut them back you can root the cuttings. They will naturally expand a little and grow into a fuller bush.

A tried and true ground cover that attracts hummingbirds and butterflies is Lantana. There are several varieties of different sizes so make sure you know which one you are buying. Purple trailing lantana, Lantana



*montevidensis*, is 12 inches high by 3 - 4 feet wide, and is good as a ground cover. Lantana 'New Gold', Lantana camara, can be 2 feet tall and 3 - 4 feet wide and has been designated a Texas Superstar by Texas A & M AgriLife Extension Service. Lantana horrida is a perennial with yellow and orange flowers that can be 4 - 5 feet tall. Lantana can be propagated by cuttings, so as it grows and you trim it back you can use the cuttings to propagate more plants. Use the tips of the plants where they just start to turn woody.



Turk's Cap, *Malvaviscus arboreus* var. *drummondii*, is a great perennial. Smaller, it performs better if cut back after a freeze but it will return the next spring.

## Children's Garden Report Card : Back to School

by Janelle Cole HCMG Intern 2016

Learning is well underway in the Children's Garden at South Athens Elementary School! The Stokes and the Coles have been hard at work teaching the children and helping them plant in the garden!



Marie and Bill have been hard at work in the kitchen preparing items including homemade squash soup for the children to sample while in the garden!

In the past two months the children

have planted radish, spinach, lettuce, carrot and beet seeds and are already seeing young sprouts peeking out of the soil. Except for the radish, they have already harvested and tasted many radish!

Along with seeds, many vegetable starts were put

in as well to include Pak Choi, Brussel Sprouts, Cabbage and Kale. We are still harvesting peppers each week and the children are enjoying those tastings too!

One favorite activity for the

children who visit the garden, is finding bugs to

get rid of! We use recycled butter containers and encourage the children to pick off the bad bugs and then we feed them to the Cole's chickens. It is a win/win!

The children are learning the process of starting a garden. They learned the first month different

types of gardens, the steps to starting a garden, and what they would

choose to plant in their garden. Then we spent two weeks teaching the plant parts and the different requirements that plants have.

Each week we review the past few weeks and it is so encouraging to see the children remember what they learned and be able to answer questions about all of it! These children might just be the future farmers in East Texas in a

few years!!

Thank you to all the interns and Master Gardeners who have come out to help!

Next up : Pollinators and their importance to our food!



# HCMG Association New Emeritus Designation: Nina Ellis

by Sharon Barrett HCMG

Nina Ellis is a beloved and revered member of the Henderson County Master Gardener Association. Already a knowledgeable gardener with over seventy years of gardening experience when she enrolled in the Master Gardener training course, Nina wanted to learn more. And, she wanted to share her knowledge and love of gardening. She has been an invaluable contributor to her class, to the organization, to the community and beyond.

Nina was certified as a Master Gardener in 2004 and served as secretary of the Henderson County Master Gardener Association in 2006 and 2007 and as chairperson for the annual plant sale from 2006 until 2012. She became a popular speaker at area events and a regular contributor to the Inside Dirt, the association newsletter, as well as a consultant to the East Texas Arboretum for their Native Plant Garden. Other service has included participation in the development and implementation of the HCMGA DREAM Garden; founding membership and service in the Anderson County Master Gardener Association; and many years of membership in the Native Plant Society.

Nina's specialty is native plants. She completed classes at the Lady Bird Johnson Center, where she is a charter member, to further her knowledge of native plants and bring the information back to HCMGA. She also has volunteered regularly to assist well known horticulturist, Greg Grant, at the Piney Woods Native Plant Center in Nacogdoches, TX. Greg describes Nina as "a DEAR friend,

helper, mentor, student, and sweetheart".

In recognition of her service, Nina was named Henderson County Master Gardener Volunteer of the Year in 2011 and received a 3<sup>rd</sup> place 2011 individual Master Gardener Award from the Texas Master Gardener Association.

Nina is charismatic in her love for gardening and for life. As a spokesperson and recruiter for HCMGA, she attracted many new members, nurtured their confidence and inspired them to expand their participation and knowledge. She has helped a young HCMGA grow and mature into a strong organization. Nina is known as a valuable source of horticultural information for HCMGA members, the CEA and for the public. She has been a role model. A common statement among Henderson County Master Gardeners is "Nina is what we all want to be when we grow up." She is a Master Gardener in every sense of the word; passionate about learning

ever  
more  
about



## An Unexpected Opportunity

by Bob Ericson, HCMG

This year I took advantage of something that many people have talked about but seldom actually do. The utility company was having

trees and brush trimmed along the power lines and I asked one of the men that if they wanted to get rid of some of the shredded wood and brush, I would be pleased to have it dumped in my

dumped in my

yard. The smile on his face told me that they would be pleased to do just that. So I along with a couple of my neighbors now have fairly large piles of fresh mulch to work with.

In my case, I got two loads and the pile is about ten feet wide, twenty feet long, by five feet tall. I estimate that it is about ten cubic yards: ten glorious yards of mulch for free! Then I went to look at my treasure and discovered several interesting things.

First, the trimmings include a wide variety of things including branches from a variety of trees, leaves, brush, and vines. If it grows up toward the power lines, it came down and was chopped up. Second, the machine appears to have been a combination chopper/shredder with fairly coarse blades. There were many small chips but also bigger pieces along stringy material such as vines that escaped the chopping blades. In short, the material is quite a bit coarser than what you might get from regular commercial mulch.



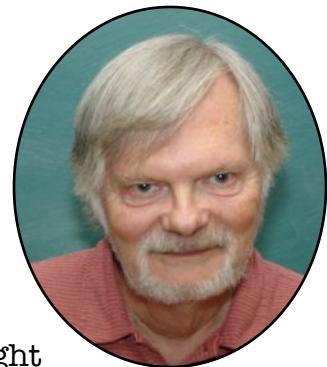
This is not a bad thing because like all mulch, it will compost over time wherever you use it. But it does make you think about how you might want to use this coarse material. In my case, my primary intention was to use the mulch to cover the walkways between the raised beds I had built. These walkways are important but difficult to keep mowed and free of weeds.

I scalped the existing weeds down to ground level and covered the area with scrap cardboard before covering the walk with the mulch. This is when the significance of some of the larger pieces became apparent. Longer twigs, vines, and large pieces made it difficult to spread and left things poking up where I intended to walk and work.

After the first two loads, I decided to screen the material and remove pieces that were longer than 6-8" and bigger chunks



that might not compost consistently with the other material. This took a few extra minutes but made the mulching of the walkways much easier. As for the larger pieces, they will not go to waste as they can still be put in the compost



bin or used in a more out of the way place.

If a more consistent mulch is desired for a display garden, it might be desirable to sift the material through a screen with  $\frac{1}{2}$ " holes or larger. I have a screen with  $\frac{1}{4}$ " holes and that was too small.  $\frac{1}{2}$ " holes would give you a lot of the wood chips and little of the larger chunks and strips.

I always heard that tree services had no problem dropping off a load of trimmings but had never actually tried it. The fact is that dumping the chips off near where they are working saves them a lot of time and money by not having to drive ten or twenty miles to the landfill or their home base to dump the load. When the opportunity presents itself, take advantage of the opportunity. Your garden will benefit from free mulch and eventually

compost.



## Speakers

(con't from page 1)

by Lydia Holley

Want to grow what your grandmother grew in her garden? If you are interested in heirloom plants, Jeanne Brown can inform your group what heirlooms are, why you should be growing them, and how to grow them in your own garden.

Bob Erickson has two 'how-to' presentations. Choose from raised vegetable beds, an increasingly popular way of growing vegetables; or composting. You will not believe how much fun composting can be!

I give presentations on the history of growing roses; winter landscaping; and native plant environments, which explains how native plants boost the populations of insects, birds and other wildlife, a subject that is worth every gardener's time and attention.

Some Master Gardeners have full schedules and only speak on special occasions. These include Jean Brewton with her award-winning presentation on bulbs; Judy Haldeman and Cherie Tanneberger on improving indoor air quality with plants; and Bill and Marie Hancock with their vermicomposting demonstration.

We are constantly adding to the topics and speakers available. It is best to contact us as early as possible to schedule someone for your event. Email us at [hendersoncmga@gmail.com](mailto:hendersoncmga@gmail.com) to request a speaker for your organization. We just may have the perfect speaker for you!

# Much Ado About Mulch

Cecelia Bowles, HCMG

I don't know about you, but it seems to me the word mulch has gotten a lot of PR in the last number of years. You didn't used to hear much about "mulch". Now everyone is touting mulch - and opining about what the "right" mulch is. When you say "mulch", most people think of shredded wood or bark, but actually mulch can be organic or inorganic - it's anything you put on as a "topdressing" for soil.



A 2-4 inch layer of mulch provides many benefits to your plantings, be they a garden, or landscape beds. It will help keep soil moist, reducing the need for watering. It will keep the soil

temperature cool (except for black plastic). It will decrease soil erosion and soil compacting, and can help prevent weed growth. Mulch can also add to the artistic design of your landscape, depending on what you choose to use for mulch.

**Organic Mulch :** Examples of organic mulch include bark - shredded or chipped, compost, composted manure, grass clippings, newspaper, shredded leaves, straw, nut hulls, ground corn cobs, or even sea shells. The benefit of organic mulch is it helps improve the soil's fertility as it decomposes. This leads to the disadvantage - it has to be replaced or replenished every one to two years. Another advantage to organic mulch is it is economical & may even be free for the asking. (As in bags of grass clippings or leaves set out on the curb). It is best if you shred the leaves first so they don't mat down, especially when wet (grass can do this too). The lighter bark mulches (from soft woods like pine) may blow off in heavy winds or rains, so use the heavy bark mulches if you are choosing bark, to prevent this problem. Know the source of your organic



mulch as it may harbor insect pests or weed seeds and you may be pulling or spot spraying weeds that sprout from organic mulch. Newspaper in layers 4 - 6 pages thick is a popular mulch and acts to smother existing grass and to jump start a new garden bed, as we learned at the 2015 Master gardener spring conference from our speaker, Skip Richter.

**Inorganic Mulch:** These include all of the many rock products - from decomposed granite to cobblestone. Recycled materials like glass and rubber (tires) as well as black plastic sheets fall into this category. Inorganic mulches are highly stable and should be considered a permanent part of your landscape. These are many choices of colors, textures and sizes to choose from to enhance your landscape design. Don't think they are completely maintenance free, though, because those pesky weeds can grow up in rock and will need to be pulled or spot sprayed just as in organic mulches. Gravel and stone work well as mulches in areas that require good drainage, where high winds are an issue, or even if considering a lower risk of fires or termites.



As good as mulch is, there's always this problem of "too much of a good thing". When added year after year, organic mulch can actually harm plants by creating a layer that doesn't decompose and doesn't allow root growth. The soil becomes so matted that nutrients and water can't penetrate to the roots. Piling up mulch around trees or any woody plant is also a bad idea because it can cause rot in the trunk and create a home for insects that attack the trees.



# Dress Up your Home for the Holidays

## Lydia Holley , HCMG

Don't let cold weather keep you from enjoying your garden. Bring your garden inside with simple but beautiful floral arrangements.



Plumes of grass combined with yarrow, dried sunflowers, or coneflower (*Echinacea*) seed heads can be an easy but dramatic arrangement in autumn. When winter arrives, look for holly bushes for their evergreen leaves and showy berries. Sticks of the

deciduous possumhaw holly (*Ilex decidua*) can be placed in a vase, rising above a sea of fresh greenery. Add some miniature lights, and you will have a cheerful, elegant, and budget-friendly arrangement.

Rosemary stays evergreen, and lends a nice aroma to your arrangements.

Boxwood is another evergreen staple, and the small leaves will look lovely in colorful arrangements of camellia blooms.

Depending upon the type of camellia, you may have blooms in fall, winter, or early spring, and blooms from the garden during this time will impress your guests and bring you much joy.

You can force forsythia to bloom by bringing in budding branches. You may also want to try forcing blooms on the stems of dogwood, redbud, flowering quince, plum, and crabapple. Bulbs such as

amaryllis, paperwhites and muscari can bloom indoors in a pot, reminding you on a cold winter's day that spring will soon arrive. Also give forcing tulips, hyacinths, crocus and daffodils (*Narcissus*) a try.



Occasionally add candles, pine cones, ribbon, garland, small ornaments, or other decorations to your arrangements for a festive change to your displays.

To arrange floral material, you can employ the "thriller, filler, spiller" recipe which calls for one dramatic "thriller" surrounded by an abundance of "filler" material, with a "spiller" of hanging ivy or other flexible material softening the sides of your arrangement. Of course, sometimes an arrangement of just one type of plant material is all that is necessary for a simple, more modern look.



Dress up your home for the holidays, or for every day. Not only will floral arrangements bring you enjoyment indoors, you will also enjoy the time spent outdoors looking for material to arrange.



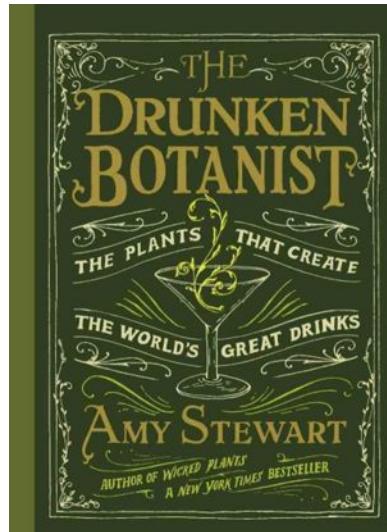
## Intriguing Books by Amy Stewart

If a book by the title "Wicked Plants" does not pique your interest, you might not be that into books! Amy Stewart is the author of a plethora of enticing garden books including Drunken Botanist, Wicked Bugs and of course Wicked Plants. In March the Henderson County Master Gardeners have scheduled Amy to come speak during their annual Spring Conference.

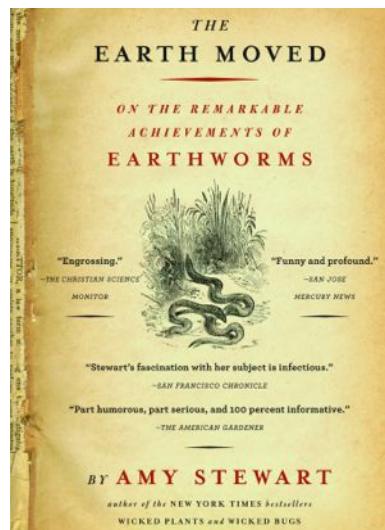
If you want to get your hands on any of Amy's garden books, you are in luck!! We are offering the books for sale through the HCMG organization!

Here is a run down of her Garden Books:

**Drunken Botanist** - We use plants for many things, one of which is to make alcohol. From barley, agave, sugarcane, and corn to the more unusually fermentations of herbs, flowers, trees, fruit and even fungi, you will enjoy this fun and informational read.



### The Earth Moved : On



that reaches 10ft long.

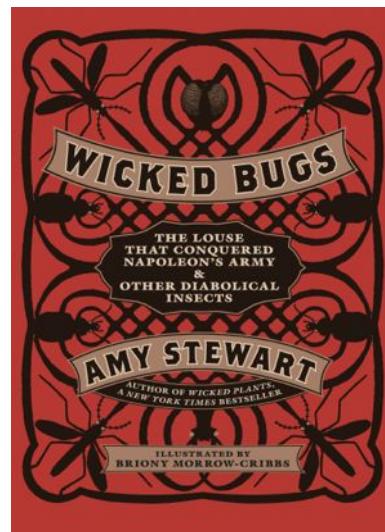
**Flower Confidential** - Takes you all over the world exploring how florists flowers come to us in such a perfect state. Learn about the field workers, hybridizers, geneticists and others are working to bring

**the Remarkable Achievements of Earthworms** - Do you know what's in your soil? The earthworm is working there, plighting the land, aerating the soil, and leaving their castings for fertilizer. Learn about their value as well as the different types of earthworms, from the red wigglers known by most vermicomposters to the giant Australian worm

the perfect flower to a florist near you.

### From the Ground Up : The Story of a First Garden -

Do you remember your first garden? Read about Amy's journey of putting in her first garden, from humorous stories to joyous delights. Mistakes are made, and tips and collations are told. Going through four seasons, Amy emerges as an enthusiastic gardener with a luxuriant garden.



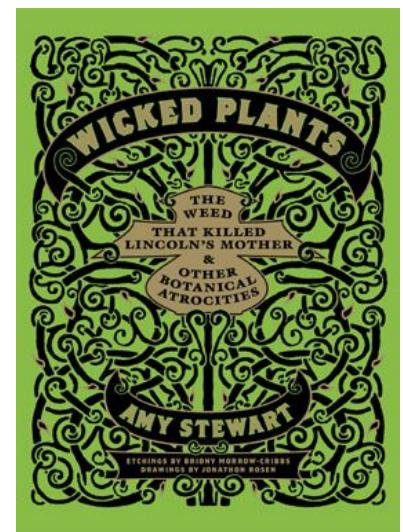
### Wicked Bugs - The Louse that Conquered Napoleon's Army and other Diabolical Insects

This book talks about all those insects that wreak havoc on us humans. Hornets, flies, millipedes, beetles, scorpions, spiders, and other bugs are

highlighted for the ways they have hurt us and how some have changed history. Warning : One reviewer stated that this would not be a good book for young children.

### Wicked Plants : The Weed that Killed Lincoln's Mother and other Botanical Atrocities

- Paralysis, strangulation or sudden death are just a few of the defenses of certain plants. Learn about history, medicine, science and legend in this book that will make you look at your plants with care and caution.



If you are interested in getting a copy of one of the above mentioned books you can visit our website or send an email to :

[hendersoncmga@gmail.com](mailto:hendersoncmga@gmail.com) or call Sharla at (903) 675-6130. Available for Pick-up ONLY.

## What should you be doing NOW in East Texas?

### November

- \* Think about freeze protection for your plants
- \* Ideal time (Nov - Feb) to transplant trees and shrubs.
- \* Add some winter hardy color to your flower beds : pansies, snapdragons, calendula, ornamental kale/cabbage, and pinks or dianthus.
- \* Continue mowing until the grass goes dormant. Consider doing another soil test to check the level of acidity in your lawn & treat accordingly.
- \* It's time to plant those bulbs you are storing in the fridge, or get some from the local nursery/store.
- \* Keep an eye on the compost pile, keep adding to it, and turn often.



### December

- \* Still time to plant pansies & winter blooms, or bulbs.
- \* Pay attention to water needs and water the garden/lawn accordingly if we have a dry spell.
- \* Start planning your spring garden
- \* Browse catalogs for new plants, seeds, or other items you want to introduce into your landscape
- \* Check the vegetable garden, remove dead leaves and such, keep an eye on winter vegetables as the temperatures dip.
- \* Now is a perfect time to put out birdseed if you want to add some birds to your garden!

