



Henderson County Master Gardener

"THE INSIDE DIRT"



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

For Henderson County Master Gardeners, there are two important events taking place this month.

The first, **March 12**, is the deadline for our entries for the Texas Master Gardener Association's Search for Excellence Awards Program. This year we entered in four categories for our work in 2013. Those entries were for: Outstanding Master Gardener Association; Outstanding Master Gardener Individual (Cherie Tanneberger); Project (South Athens Elementary School Children's Garden); and Education Program (Jean Brewton's presentation on "Year Around Color from Flowering Bulbs"). Winners will be announced at the state convention in September. Whether or not our entries win in any given category, the efforts of the group and the individuals involved have been of great value to the citizens of Henderson County.

The second event of importance this month is our 14th Annual Spring Conference on **March 27**. This year the conference will be at the Cain Center in Athens, Tx. The speaker for the event is Dr. Steve George from the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. His topic will be "From Roses, To Vegetables, To Shade Trees: Creating A Truly, Earth-Kind[®] Landscape". A native of Oklahoma, Steve George obtained a Bachelor of Science in Zoology and a Master of Science in Horticulture from Oklahoma State University. He then received a Ph.D. in Plant Pathology from North Carolina State University. Since 1988, Dr. George has served as a Landscape Horticulture

Specialist for the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, and is headquartered at the Texas A&M Research and Extension Center in north Dallas. Dr. George has created and serves as National Coordinator of the Earth-Kind[®] Environmental Rose Program. Tickets are \$20 each and include dinner, a silent auction, a raffle, a limited Earth-Kind[®] rose sale, and Dr. George's presentation. His topic is particularly relevant because of the area's recent drought. Gardeners using the Earth-Kind[®] principles can create easy-care landscapes that conserve water, reduce fertilizer and pesticide use, and reduce the level of landscape waste entering our landfills. We look forward to seeing many of you at the event. For ticket information, call the Ag Office at (903) 675-6130.

Plant of the Month Daffodil (Narcissus)



USDA Hardiness Zones: 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9
Sun exposure: Full Sun, Part Sun
Soil type: Loamy
Soil pH: Slightly Acidic to Neutral
Flower color: Orange, Yellow, White
Bloom time: Spring

When sunny daffodils begin to bloom, it is a sure sign that spring has arrived or is very near. To enjoy these beauties, plant bulbs in the fall and they will bloom in late winter or early spring. Here, plant daffodils no deeper than 1½ times their own depth. Many gardening guides indicate that bulbs should be planted 5" to 6" deep, but those recommendations are for gardeners in the north. Planting daffodils too deeply here will cause the bulbs to rot.

Daffodils are hardy and easy perennials to grow in most areas in North America, except Southern Florida. Their attractive flowers usually bear showy yellow or white flowers with six petals and a trumpet-shape central corona. Daffodils are suitable for planting between shrubs or in a border, or for forcing blooms indoors. They also look wonderful in a woodland garden and in large groves.



After they bloom in the spring, allow the plants to grow until they die off. They need time after blooming to store energy in the bulbs for next year. Foliage may be cut six weeks after the bulb blooms. Once daffodils have passed the six weeks period, add bone meal to the soil for next year's blooms.



Their flowers are excellent for cutting. When cut, daffodils should be kept alone in a vase, as their stems secrete a fluid that promotes the wilting of other flowers. If you must combine them, soak them by themselves for as long as possible, then rinse them and add them to the arrangement last.

A Word About Foliage **by Lydia Holley**

Spring is almost upon us, and long-awaited blooms will soon grace us with their presence. And along with the blooms, comes color. But before you succumb to spring fever, I'm going to ask you to think about the foliage in your garden.



Years ago, I read an article about plant foliage, and that one article has changed my life. I love blooms, but I know that foliage is an important - maybe even the most important - part of having a beautiful garden. Do you have a variety of foliage in your garden? Take some time to really look at the plants in your garden, and the way in which you have mixed and combined various foliages.



Foliage can be long, short, fat, thin, soft, spiky, small or large. It can be bright green, dark green, or variegated. It can be a different color than green. To have a beautiful garden, you will need a variety. Try pairing a plant with long, narrow foliage with a plant that has small, round leaves. Or a plant with fat, thick leaves with a plant that has thin ones. Play around with different foliage combinations. It is fun, and so rewarding when you find a new combination to include in your garden.



And don't forget color! How about purple foliage? Or gold? How about a plant with purple foliage paired with a gold colored one? How beautiful that would be! If you are designing a white garden, you may want to include some plants with variegated and/or grey foliage so that your garden will

still continue to reflect moonlight, even when there is a pause in white colored blooms.

Remember, too, that a lot of plants have foliage that will turn brilliant colors in autumn, or start out red in the spring. Don't forget to plan for that! You won't want your foliage to clash with those all-important blooms.

Yes, it's a lot to remember. But while you're planning the blooms in your garden, plan the foliage, too. You won't be sorry. It will make your garden even more beautiful, and infinitely more interesting.

Flowering Quince, Announces Spring!! **Wayne Stafford**

Memories are snap shots that, over the years, you always look forward to seeing again. One of these snap shots is in February driving down a country road and spying a Flowering Quince, (*Chaenomeles speciosa*). The beautiful red blooms that appear on new wood before the spring leaves emerge lets you know spring is not far away.



This plant was a favorite "pass along plant" years ago and often mistakenly called, "japonica", because it came from Japan. It sometimes called quince, for the tree-like shrub used for the tart fruit. The "pass along

plants" often had some thorns on the limbs, so it may be best used on the borders. It is an ideal plant for birds to use as a hiding place or to build nests.



The plants like a rich, well drained location, with acid soil. They grow 3' to 6' tall with multiple branches. Dr. William C. Welch in his book, Heirloom Gardening In The South devotes several pages to the various types of quince, and gives extensive historical details about the plant. The plant at the Henderson County Master Gardener, "Texas Cottage Garden", may be the Texas Scarlet variety. It does not have thorns and is a more refined plant. But what it does have is the beautiful, red blooms that we all recognize as Flowering Quince. This is a real red flag that spring is just around the corner.



Planting Tips

VEGETABLES

Last freeze dates guide us as to when it should be safe to plant frost-tender vegetables and annuals. Remember that average last freeze date means that half of the freezes occur after that date. Just be ready to protect frost-sensitive plants in case of a late freeze.

Planting of cool season vegetables (transplant broccoli, cabbage, and collards, and seed carrots, collards, mustard greens, lettuce, radish, turnips, Swiss chard and spinach) should be finished soon, and summer vegetables can begin to be sown and transplanted later in March. Delay planting okra, sweet potatoes, okra and peppers until April since they do not do well in cool soil.

FERTILIZING

Fertilize vegetables with nitrogen fertilizer about a month after growth starts. Fruit and pecan trees should be fertilized this month with nitrogen applied in the area beneath the ends of the branches, never against the trunk. Shrubs and annual flower beds can be fertilized with a complete, balanced fertilizer. Slow-release formulations, though slightly more expensive, will feed your plants over a longer period of time. Often the same type of fertilizer recommended for use on the lawn can be used in the landscape.

Watch out for aphids that rapidly build up on tender new growth. They can be controlled with a sharp stream of water, insecticidal soap or other insecticides (be sure to read the product label to determine whether the infested plants are included on the label).

EXTRAS

Since we are focusing on Earth-Kind® landscaping and all that it involves, perhaps something from EPA would be appropriate to remember.



Master Gardener Earth-Kind® Online Training can be found at:

<http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/earthkind/training>

You can select from any of 12 on-line modules to obtain 1 Continuing Education Unit (CEU) for up to 3 hours CEUs per year.

Recipe Fire Crackers

1 16 oz. Saltines(16 oz) 1 ¼ C Canola Oil
1 pkg. dry ranch dressing 1 Tbls cayenne
1 Tbls crushed red pepper flakes(or to taste)
2 Tbls dill weed
2 or 2 ½ gallon size ziplock bag

Mix oil and dried ingredients well. Place 4 sleeves of crackers in ziplock bag. Pour ½ oil mixture over crackers, turn bag, and pour remaining oil over crackers. Turn bag several times to make sure all crackers are well coated. Turn the bag every hour or so. Leave in bag overnight. Next day, put crackers in an airtight container.

Henderson County Master Gardener Association

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The Henderson County Master Gardener Association is sponsored by the Henderson County office of Texas AgriLife Extension Service which is a part of the Texas A&M University System. Its objectives are to increase knowledge of gardening to its members and the general public, and to provide the community with information on good gardening practices.