

August 2018

Volume 10, Issue 3



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Meetings are the second Thursday of each month, 6pm in the Extension Office Auditorium

Upcoming Meeting Dates:

August 9 - Tyler Fitzgerald, Chambers County AG Agent

September 13 — Judy and Melissa Starr, Butterfly Gardening

October 11 — TBD



Official Newsletter of the Jefferson County Master Gardeners

Agent's Two Cents *David Oates, Horticulture Agent*

Summer gardening here in South East Texas can be a difficult challenge for even the most skilled and experienced gardener. The last couple of months have been a whirlwind of crazy weather with extremes in all aspects. We started this season off with abundant rainfall (ok-maybe too much in some cases) with everyone seeing rainfall just about every day of the week. Mother nature has now thrown a curveball in the forecast with sizzling temperatures inching towards the century mark just about every day of the week. The combination of the heat and humidity combined make working outside almost unbearable on certain days. Throw in a multitude of issues facing gardening enthusiasts; such as fungal diseases and pressure, insects, and overly aggressive weeds and you would have our typical summer weather here in SE Texas. What a challenge!

Despite all the negativities of gardening and outdoor activities, we still pursue the perfect lawn or bountiful garden. We all want to have those bragging rights despite all the odds that may be stacked against us.

Thanks to all the individuals who have worked tirelessly to improve the test garden this growing season. The efforts of maintaining the beds with additional mulch and continued weeding efforts have not gone unnoticed. We have had several folks complement the garden and the variety of plants that is displayed in it. I hope that everyone takes pride in this test garden. All the hard work and dedication is a great reflection on the Master Gardener organization. Looking forward to a great fall season with the Master Gardeners.

Water Smarter This Summer

By Eileen Slater, JCMG

“We have not inherited the land from our fathers, we have borrowed it from our children.” Dennis J. Hall, Office of Land Use.

Landscape water uses 25% of all water used in a Texas city. The percent of water used in the landscape grows from 25% in most months to 58-60% in the summer months of July, August and September. With only 3% of water of the world’s water supply being fresh water, we must be concerned with using water wisely. All of us must reduce the amount of drinking water used in the landscape and the garden.

Improve your soil with organic matter to increase the plants ability to store water. Add mulch to conserve water and to reduce moisture evaporation from the soil surface of plants in containers, beds and landscape plantings.

Select native plants adapted to your areas soil and climate. They have lower irrigation requirements and fewer pest problems. Some of AgriLife’s Top 100 Native Plants named for Harris and adjacent counties include: Live Oak Tree, American Fringe Tree, Texas Lantana, Purple Coneflower and Turk’s Cap.

Lawns use the most water. Water once a week or when you see the grass wilting and leaves discoloring. Water lawns with 1 inch of water. One inch of water can be measured by placing a tuna can on your lawn as you water. When the inside of the can has 1 inch of water, that section of lawn is done. Overwatering

in the morning or late evening during hot summer months. Select the best turfgrass for your use. Cut grass about 4 inches tall in the



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summer or no more than 1/3 of the grass length. Tall grass holds moisture better and encourages deeper roots. A square or rectangular lawn area uses an irrigation system more efficiently. Check irrigation system performance to make sure that water is not running into

the street. Consider removing large lawn areas from your landscape with decks, patios or landscape plantings. Odd shaped areas of grass are better served with drought tolerant groundcover for better irrigation efficiency.

Large trees use up to 250 gallons of water a day. A built-in supply of water occurs in the tree’s root system from natural rainwater. When drought conditions occur, irrigate trees. Lay a slow running hose on the ground around the tree drip line until each area is saturated with 8-10 inches of water. This may take several hours. Remember, the drip line is the tip of the branches and straight down to the ground.

Lastly, weeds compete against plants for water in your lawn, landscape plantings and vegetable garden. Remove weeds from these areas. Watch for insect, pest and plant diseases. Fewer pests make plants more water efficient.

“We never know the worth of water til the well is dry.” Thomas Fuller

Black-Eyed Peas

By Tim Schreck, JCMG

I had some fresh black-eyed peas last week and I will agree with most that the fresher the pea the better they taste. In researching this article, I was surprised to find that black-eyed peas are not really peas but beans. They are both legumes and fix nitrogen from the soil but the black-eyed pea is closer to the mung bean than to the common pea. In browsing around the Internet, I found that the pea seems to be one of the oldest vegetables humans used. Fossilized peas were found in Thailand dated to 10,000 B.C. Dried peas keep almost indefinitely so were stored for harsh winters, long trips on foot and while on the sea. Peas were one of the vegetables brought over with the colonists for those same reasons. Peas are a cool weather crop and the plants can withstand freezing temperatures. A hard freeze will drop the blooms, though. Peas are a difficult vegetable to grow in Texas because of our varied soil types, temperature fluctuations in the spring, and spring rainfall amounts. You usually have better luck planting peas as a fall crop.

Back to our black-eyed peas, the bean I mean. They are really of the cowpea family and have been around almost as long as the pea, originating in Africa around 7000 B.C. They quickly migrated through the Middle East to Asia where

they became a staple in many dishes. Introduced to America in the 17th century, most of the cultivation took place in the southern states. Being a bean, they are very hardy, drought resistant, and almost pest free. Large fields of peas are a great source of nectar for honey bees. In our area, purple hull peas are one the best varieties to grow



I was raised in Missouri so eating black-eyed peas and cabbage was not a thing. It took me many years before I got into the “habit” of having the New Year’s Day meal of peas, cabbage/greens, pork, and cornbread. Black-eyed peas are very nutritious, packed with folate, calcium, iron, manganese, and fiber. They are

an essential part of any vegetarian diet.

It is interesting to see how black-eyed peas are prepared across the globe. In America, ‘Hoppin John’ is a dish of peas, rice, and pork. Texas caviar is a dish of peas marinated in vinaigrette with chopped garlic. It is served cold. I have never had it, but it sounds interesting. In South America, the bean is ground and mixed with egg and spices then fried for a delicious breakfast meal. In Europe, they are cooked with vegetables, oil, and lemon or mixed with fish such as cod or tuna. In Asia, they are mixed in curry dishes many different ways. They even have a dessert of peas, sticky rice and coconut milk. Black-eyed peas are a very flexible and versatile vegetable worth getting to know better.

Ferns

By Micah Leigh, JCMG

As I write this, I have just spent the last several hours cleaning out a flower bed, unloading and spreading 10 bags of cedar mulch, and repotting 7 large Boston ferns. It is 85 degrees outside and I couldn't be happier! I grew up in New Mexico where it was hard to grow dirt. I tried to garden, I really did. I hung Boston ferns over my bathtub and kept water in the tub at all times to have enough humidity. The first time I traveled through this neck of the woods and saw ferns growing wild in the ditch, I knew I was home. (I am one of those transplants that proudly says "I wasn't born in Texas, so I got here as fast as I could.")

So back to the ferns. I love ferns, Boston, Macho, Kimberly Queen, foxtail, maidenhair, asparagus, you name it. I lost all of my Boston ferns to the freeze last winter. They were several years old and hung down almost to the deck. I finally got over my grief and replaced them last week. The first thing I do is bump them up. If you are familiar with ferns, you know that they will quickly break the bottom out of a plastic pot. For that reason, I immediately put mine in a wire basket with a coco-fiber mat. The fern can grow right through the wire. These baskets will not be as deep as the plastic pot from the store. The fern will need to be trimmed in order to nestle down into the basket. I pull the fern out of the plastic pot and with my Hori knife which is one of my favorite garden tools, I make a clean cut taking off about 4 inches at the bottom, or whatever I need to bring it

even with the top of the wire basket. Then I put it in the middle of the coco-fiber and fill in the sides with good potting soil. Remember to always thoroughly saturate the potting soil before using it in any container. It is very difficult to moisten potting soil after the plant is in place.

My ferns hang in a semi-shade area and are watered everyday by a mister on a timer. For now, the soil I bought will feed them, but later I will use a foliar spray fertilizer. During the repotting process, fronds can break off and get damaged. Don't despair. These tropical beauties will recover quickly and you won't even notice they were disturbed. Barring any freezes, I should be able to enjoy these ferns for years!



Poison Ivy

By Ann Bares, JCMG

Gardening can be a learning experience, good exercise, or a beautification project. At times, it can be all this and more. Making excuses for neglecting the work that I wanted to do, but not doing it, grew easier as the days grew hotter and the beds more overgrown. Then, the winds came, blowing hard and long, trimming some limbs, but on the last day, taking down a tallow tree in the back corner of our yard that shaded a bed of blue plumbago and crushing a spreading rock rose.

The tree was too big to move, so my "crew" manned the chain saw and began removal, starting with the huge vines that wrapped it ground to top. As the mound of debris grew, I volunteered as the "loader", gathering armloads of smaller limbs and the vines that had been cut from the trunk so it could be made manageable and moved to the street in the big cart. It was two days before it was all cleaned up, and I woke in the night, my right arm itching, burning and wet. Washing it with soap and water and applying some generic cream helped a little until morning when I called for help. The diagnosis was poison ivy!

What?

Poison Ivy? I hadn't seen any small, green, three-leaved plants in the trash! Isn't that how it looks? I've dug many of those little plants up, careful not to touch or burn. Through 20 years of gardening I have never had any problem, so how did I get it now? Researching my Ortho vine book, I learned how little I knew about this common vine. First, beauty is often only skin deep, no pun intended. Beautiful red fall color, with white berries sends many to the hospital with skin



reactions and endangers the lungs of those who inhale the smoke while burning the vines. Remove the seedlings when small, wearing disposable gloves and discard them with the seedlings in the trash, but do not burn! The

dangerous oils slowly break down and become harmless. Spray foliage of young plants to kill them in summer. Check your trees for vines that wrap or cling to the trunks and cut them off at ground level. Paint the cut at ground level with an herbicide and leave the vine for several months before removing it to allow the harmful oils to dissipate. It can later be removed, but do not burn.

Fruit and Vegetable Show Pictures



**Congratulations to
all the winners!**

Garden Pictures



Thank you to
Dorothy Norris and
Marianne Kirkpatrick
for all of their hard
work organizing the
garden workdays



Dog Days of Summer

By Eileen Slater, JCMG

The ancient Romans called the hottest most humid days from July 3-August 11 the “dog days of summer”. It occurred when the dog star, Sirius, rose closest to the sun and was the Egyptian’s “watch dog” to prepare for the annual flooding of the Nile River. Hence the name, “Dog Days of Summer”.

Gardening-During dog days, your garden and lawn call you to work early in the morning or late afternoon. Keep sunscreen on, cover your head and body, spray for mosquitos and stay hydrated. Fall gardening has already begun. Add compost, excluding chicken manure, to your vegetable garden and beds. Mulching is recommended for all vegetable plants to keep the soil at a lower temperature, make weeding easier, and hold moisture. Transplant the largest tomato plants you can find now. Remember that tomato plants will not set fruit above 92 degrees. A shade cloth may be necessary in the hot afternoon sun. Healthy spring pepper and eggplant can be used for fall production with a side dress of 8-8-8 fertilizer to encourage new growth. Water regularly to prevent stress. Throwing my overgrown ripe cucumbers under my spring cucumber plants produced volunteer cucumber transplants. Planting dates from the Jefferson County AgriLife Spring and Fall Vegetable Planting Guide are: Aug. 1-bush bean, sweet corn, southern peas; Aug. 15-broccoli, cucumber, Irish potatoes (use only small whole potatoes as cut potatoes tend to rot in warm soil). Start seeds of cole crops (broccoli, kale, cauliflower, cabbage) to be used as transplants in early August. A free detailed planting guide with suggested Texas varieties is available from the phone number below.

Bulbs-Order your spring flowering bulbs now for delivery in October. Tulips and hyacinths should be ordered in time to adequately chill 12-16 weeks before planting. Most bulbs are planted in October or November.

Weeds-The best way to control weeds during hot sultry weather is to pull by hand. Weed and feed products should not be used if temperatures are over 85 degrees. Apply herbicides later after the weather is cooler. An organic weed killer was tested by JCMG Dorothy Norris at the JCMG Test Garden. Mix the following ingredients in a plastic container: one gallon of cleaning vinegar, 2 cups of Epsom salts, ¼ cup blue Dawn dishwashing liquid and ¼ cup Orange oil. This mixture was used successfully in the herb bed and other areas. It killed nut grass and other weeds.

Roses-Prune Knock-Out and Drift roses to about 2/3 of their height in August. Once-blooming roses should not be pruned at all.

Lawn-Be on the lookout for chinch bugs in your lawn. Edging, sidewalks and driveways are where you can find them. Treat with insecticide products for lawns.

When you are done with your dog day gardening, enjoy a glass of sweet iced tea in the shade!

Farewell from Peggy

The time has come all my Master Gardener friends, for me to retire. My last day to work will be September 28. Working with all of you wonderful people has been my pleasure for the last 25 years and I will miss all of you. My husband and I are going to travel a bit, spend some time at the Lake, and spend as much time as we can with our grandkids.

I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for making my time here so enjoyable. I have so often spoken to friends and family about “my Master Gardeners”. I have known some of you for many years, and some of you for a few but I want you all to know how thankful I am that I had the opportunity to work with all of you.

So now, a new beginning for me, a new journey, the time everyone calls “retirement”...



The Latest Dirt

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Hotline: 409-835-8742



We're On The Web:

<http://txmg.org/jcmg/>

<http://jefferson.agrilife.org>



MISSION STATEMENT

To encourage and support the horticultural community of Southeast Texas through education and example.

2018 Officers

President—Eileen Slater

Vice President—Jeanene Ebeling

Secretary—Sarah Sloan

Treasurer—Marianne Kirkpatrick

At Large—James Butaud, Joyce Logan, Dorothy Norris

Past President—Tina Gonzales

Announcements

Bee Keeping Seminar
Date to be determined
8:30—4:30
\$25, includes lunch
Extension Office Auditorium

**Golden Triangle Citrus
Show**
November 13 and 14
Extension Office

- ⇒ Garden Workdays
Wednesday and Friday,
9-Noon
- ⇒ Beekeeping Seminar
8-4pm, date to be
determined, Extension
Office
- ⇒ Golden Triangle Citrus
Show November 13 and