



THROUGH THE GRAPEVINE

Volume 9, Issue 3

July 2008

Concho Valley Master Gardeners



At the May MG business meeting, it was voted to send the CVMG newsletter in electronic format to help save on postage. Beginning with this July newsletter, MG members will receive it via email, unless you call the Extension office and request the newsletter be sent via U.S. Postal Service.

President's Message

By Ferd Koehn

Master Gardeners: Many of you will be receiving this newsletter by email. At the May meeting, the decision was made to send out the newsletter electronically to save on postage. In the past the Extension office had covered the cost for all Master Gardener mail. To help lower their postage expense, the newsletter will be sent via email. Only those who do not have an email address will receive the newsletter via US Post Office.

Great news, the Concho Valley Master Gardeners were the successful bidders on the greenhouse at the former State Correction Facility in Bronte. By the time you get this newsletter the "tear down party" will be complete. We will be taking

the greenhouse apart on Tuesday, July 8th. It will be moved in pieces to the 4H building. So you missed out on the "tear down party"! Well there will be a "rebuild party" in the future, so you still have time to get in on the action. The greenhouse comes complete with vents, fans to circulate air, work tables and plenty of room. We have included some pictures of the greenhouse before tear-down to give you an idea what a great project this will provide for our organization.

Always remember, there are plenty of projects going on, so if you need volunteer hours, contact D'Aun Butler, Robie Long or myself, one of us can connect you with a project leader. Better yet, attend our bi-monthly meetings and sign up to work one then.

Ever wonder when it's going to rain? I grew up in the Texas Panhandle, 60 miles north of Pampa in a small town, Perryton. My granddad farmed about 10 miles



west of Perryton. I spent a lot of time on the farm with my granddad, drove a tractor in the summers a lot doing field work. My granddad was good at predicting rain. He would say "it won't rain until the wind stops blowing and the wind won't stop blowing until it rains". Who needs the weather channel!?!

See you in a weed patch somewhere.....

Ferd



Growing Gourds

by Doreen Grimes



A number of years ago when I lived in Boulder, Colorado, I decided I wanted to grow gourds. We had large vegetable and flower gardens, but, since we had lots of space, I thought gourds would be fun too. I learned a lot that season. But, overall, my gourd project was a success.

First, gourds need at least 6 hours of sun a day. They like fertile soil and lots of water, especially when starting them. Slightly acidic soil helps.

Of course, gourds come in many different sizes and shapes. In fact, that's what makes them so much fun. But they need lots of space. If you are growing large gourds, they need to be planted 4 feet apart. The smaller gourds such as bottle, dipper, birdhouse and ornamentals, need a fence or trellis.

I learned that the seeds need to be soaked overnight or even longer, and the seeds can be clipped on the edges next to the point. These steps are necessary in order to speed germination. Germination is generally about 60 to 80%. Germination is slow, taking anywhere from 1 to 6 weeks. Once you get the plants started, growth is surprisingly fast.

There are some potential problems during the growing season. They can be

attacked by squash bugs, cucumber beetles, squash vine borers, cut worms, and even aphids. From sprouting to maturity takes about 100 days. One good point for us: they like especially hot weather! We have plenty of that in West Texas!!

Planting some companion plants with the gourds sometimes helps in avoiding plant diseases. Some plants suggested by Betty Kent, president of the Texas Gourd Society, are radishes, catnip, broccoli, tansy, dill, and marigolds.



Wait until the stems and tendrils are brown before harvesting. The gourd will become lighter weight, indicating that the pulp is drying and its water evaporating. Avoid taking the gourd too early because it will shrivel and rot. Just remember that you can't leave the gourd on the vine too long, but you can cut it too soon. Store cut gourds in a dry and airy place. It usually takes between 1 and 6 months to complete dry, depending on the size and thickness of the gourd. The seeds will rattle when they are dry enough to craft.

Craft gourds only after careful preparation. First, wash off the mold that has formed on the outer skin. For easier removal, soak the gourd in water for several hours. Use a metal scrubber and

lots of elbow grease to remove this mold. After removal, let the gourd dry.

The outside should now be ready to paint, wood burn, or whatever art form you choose. Leather dye colors gourds nicely.

Cleaning out the seeds and pulp is a chore because of the odor. Often it is toxic. Betty Kent recommends wearing a mask when cutting and working with the pulp. Several different saws will work well for cutting. A spoon or scraper will aid in cleaning out the inside. You will need to get every

bit of pulp. Make it smooth. Sanding is recommended.

After all these steps you can use your originality and imagination to create all kinds of wonderful things. Gourds can be treated like wood, in that they can be cut, painted, stained, chiseled, wood burned, glued and made into many different shapes and forms. Betty states she often says that the gourds tell her what to do.

Information taken from a lecture given by Betty Kent to the Landscape Design Study Course, Sept. 20-22, 2004.



The Concho Valley Master Gardeners have a new Master Gardener class starting in September. The first class session will coincide with our usual business meeting on September 9 at 5:30. All other classes will be on Thursdays 5:30 to 8:30 pm beginning September 11 through November 13. We have volunteer opportunities in conjunction with the class.

What: Greeter at the Master Gardener Classes

When: Thursday evening from 5:10 pm until after break. (Starts -5:30 pm)

Possible dates include: Sept 9 (Tuesday), Sept 11, Sept 18, Sept 25
Oct 2, Oct 9, Oct 16, Oct 23, Oct 30
November 6 or November 13.

Where: Tom Green 4-H Building on Hwy 67 North

How many: 2 greeters are needed each week. Others may assist.

Job description: 1. Make sure door of the building is unlocked; 2. Make sure table and chairs have been set up appropriately for class. 3. Greet and introduce speaker. Other tasks that may arise. To sign up please email (cmason@angelo.edu) or phone Carolyn Mason (325-224-3206) with first and second choice of dates. Include your contact information.

What: Providers of snacks at the Master Gardener Classes

When: One Thursday evening (Starts-5:30 pm; some participants may not have the opportunity to eat prior to class.)

Possible dates include: Sept 9 (Tuesday), Sept 11, Sept 18, Sept 25,
Oct 2, Oct 9, Oct 16, Oct 23, Oct 30,
November 6 or November 13.

Where: Tom Green 4-H Building on Hwy 67 North

How many: 3-4 providers are needed each week. Others may assist.

Job description: Provide finger foods that are flavorful and easy to eat. We will need savory (Ex: cheese, crackers, raw veggies & dip, finger sandwiches) as well as sweet snacks (cookies, cakes, etc.). Arrangements may be made to pick up food items. To sign up please email (cmason@angelo.edu) or phone Carolyn Mason (325-224-3206).

Health Tips: Lyme Disease By Sheree Delgado



Lyme disease is an inflammatory vector-borne illness caused by transmission of a micro-organism from an infected host to a person. The host being a tick infected by the bacteria *B. burgdorferi*. The bacteria are transmitted to the tick when it bites infected mice or deer. The disease was first observed in 1975 when arthritis type symptoms were seen in a group of children in the town of Lyme, Connecticut. There are about 20,000 cases reported to CDC in the USA, a 25-fold rise since 1980's when it became a reportable disease. Infections in the north-east and upper mid-west are caused by infected deer mice and infections seen along the Pacific coast are caused by infected Western black-legged tick. There is lower risk of infections in other geographic locations. A bite from an infected tick does not mean a person will be infected with Lyme disease, however, risk increases the longer the tick remains attached to the person. The tick must be in contact for at least 36-48 hrs before the disease can be transmitted. More than 72 hrs of attachment carries a higher potential of infection. Peak



times are May thru September.

Ticks that cause Lyme disease have a lifespan of 2 years with 3 life stages - larvae, nymphs & adults. Nymphs carry a higher risk of infection because they are very small (pinhead size) and are more active in spring & early summer. Adult ticks can still transmit Lyme disease in the fall, but they are bigger to see & are less likely to attach to humans. Attachment can be to any part of the body; the most common areas being the scalp, groin, axilla areas, and back of knees. Initial infection resembles flu-like symptoms -fever, muscle pain, lethargy, headache, but characteristic sign is the "bull's eye" rash that occurs most often in persons with an infected bite. The rash is flat or may have a slightly raised red area at the site of the tick bite and can expand up to 20" over time, it will have a clear center with reddened or purplish blue edges that is round or triangular in shape, hence the bull's eye. The rash is seen 3-32 days after being infected. The disease can be confirmed with blood test that checks for antibodies for Lyme disease called ELISA test. It is easily treated with proper anti-

otics, however left untreated it can lead to more serious and debilitating condition such heart, neurological problems and chronic arthritis. It is important to seek medical care.

Prevention is best. Activities in woody, grassy or brush areas should be limited especially in high risk states. Use bug repellent, long sleeves, long pants that are tucked into socks. Be sure a tick check is done daily especially in the scalp. Safe & immediate removal is essential. Use tweezers, grasp tick as close to the skin and pull straight out. Using chemicals, heat, or squeezing tick's body may cause tick to inject more bacteria into skin. Wash the bite area with antibacterial soap and warm water after removal of the tick. See your doctor if symptoms occur especially the bull's eye rash. Also, checking your pets and treating them for ticks is important.



Source: Growing up with Us. Inc. 2008 vol. 13.no.7 July 2008; RightHealth.com
Have a great and safe summer!

Master Gardener Notes: from John Begnaud

We are awful proud of the Concho Valley Master Gardener Program and all the projects we are involved in and how well the program is managed by you the volunteers. We have talked about expanding our program for quite a while to include a new class and a state of the art greenhouse. Both are coming to reality. With the new class forming and being included in the group we believe it will be a great opportunity for the new horticulture agent to get to know the gardeners who contribute so much to the communities around us.

The greenhouse is mostly down and moved to a pile behind the 4-H building, thanks to a wrecking crew of hard working mg's and agent Steve Sturtz. We have discussed setting it up and are waiting for a decision on our new agent before we begin. Our chosen timing is to begin clearing and setting the foundation posts sometime in September. This 24x48 foot greenhouse should be very helpful in growing and storing our plants for the spring sale which should recoup the cost of the greenhouse!

Educational opportunities such as connecting a rainwater harvesting system, greenhouse construction, propagation, and new class CEU's are just around the corner. Thanks for everyone continuing to do volunteer work and holding the group together until new leadership arrives.



Top Mistakes Made by Yardeners:

By Sandy Rogers



The Texas Master Gardener Conference this year was a huge success and was enjoyed by all who attended, including the nine Master Gardeners from our group. The following was presented by Dr. Doug Welsh of Texas A&M University. He said most people are "yardeners", which is his term for those who simply have a yard to manage, and his topic was: **The Top 10 Mistakes Made by Texas Yardeners:**



1. Over-Watering. We should water only when needed. This includes turf grass, flower beds and vegetable gardens. Some yardeners just water too much or too often, or allow sprinklers to reach outside the plant area. (Concrete and pavement don't require water).

Water is a precious natural resource and at the rate we're going, by the year 2030 Texas will have a 20% water deficit.

2. Over-Fertilizing. Many of us just buy a bag of fertilizer and apply it without making sure it has the right combination of nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium to meet our needs at the time. Organic material is always beneficial. Home composting is a great way to enrich our soil by using what we might otherwise have thrown away.

3. Misusing Pesticides. Care should be taken when applying pesticides. Always read labels and follow directions carefully. There are many non-chemical



pesticides available today, and these are recommended for use when possible. Pesticides can be harmful if applied incorrectly. Dr. Welsh recommended reading a book entitled, "The \$64 Tomato".

4. Improperly Identifying Plant Problems. Plant problems can be caused by insects, disease or environmental factors. The most obvious culprit is insect damage. If we rule that out, the next focus is infectious disease. Finally, 65-75% of plant problems are caused by environmental problems (soil, water, weather conditions, etc.).



5. Using Plants that are Unproductive or Poorly Adapted to Our Area. This is obvious, and we learn quickly which plants will thrive in our area, which will just live, and which cannot tolerate our conditions. There is plenty of information available regarding this topic.

6. Planting the Right Plant in the Wrong Place. A certain plant may look beautiful next to the front door today, but that same plant may block entrance to our houses later. It's best to learn how a particular plant will develop before planting it. Getting it right the first time is always easier than moving plants later.

7. Failing to Prepare Soil Before Planting. Commercial materials can be added to soil, but compost, manures and other organic amendments are usually more effective and economical. Just be aware that our soil may not be

perfect, but it can be amended easily.

8. Failing to Use Mulch. Mulch is essential to good plant life. Plants with as little as 1" of mulch will require 25% less water. At least 3" of mulch is recommended for our part of Texas. Mulch keeps the soil moisture in longer and deters weeds.

9. Planting at the Wrong Time. Most people know that planting in the hot summer is not recommended, for obvious reasons, but it can work if plants get extra care and shade while getting established. The best time to plant, of course, is during the spring and fall months.

10. Failing to Think Long-term. We should always look 5-10 years down the road before planting trees or shrubs that will become large. It's a mistake to plant most trees and large plants too close to

homes or buildings. Before planting the first time, we should think about how the landscape will look in a few years. This could save time, labor and money later on.



Dr. Welsh was one of the editors of our Master Gardener Handbook, and detailed information on these subjects, and anything else regarding horticulture, is in the handbook.

PICTURES OF INTEREST FOR THE CONCHO VALLEY MASTER GARDENERS



◀◀ Kay Thompson receiving the 1st Place award on behalf of the CVMG newsletter in their division at the annual Texas Master Gardener Convention held in Conroe in April.

Kay Thompson presenting ▶▶ Doreen Grimes, editor of the CVMG—"Through the Grapevine" newsletter the award from the Texas MG Association. Doreen was also presented a certificate & a Knock-out Rose.





**2nd Annual Brown Bag & Blues
Lunch with the Lilies
The San Angelo Pond Society &
The San Angelo Blues Society**

Invite you to bring a **lunch & blanket** and enjoy a guided tour
of the **International WaterLily Collection** with Ken Landon
and
a concert by **Blues artists** Terry Mills & Mark Stevenson.

Why: To raise awareness for the preservation of this unique
tourist attraction.

Where: Civic League Park at the International WaterLily Col-
lection located on S. Park between Harris & Beauregard.

When: Wednesday July 30th 2008 - Noon-1pm

Please come help us raise awareness in San Angelo of this world recognized collection.

Donations will be accepted



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Volunteer Opportunities

4-H Building Greenhouse—Building has been acquired, torn down, and ready for re-assembly in the near future. If interested in lending a hand to re-build, contact D'Aun Bulter, Robie Long or Ferd Koehn. Watch your e-mail for announcement times and dates.

New MG Class-Registration for new applicants is currently underway. Deadline for return and payment is Monday, July 28th. Cost is \$85 per applicant. Classes begin Sept. 9th and run thru Nov. 13th—every Thursday. Call the Extension office or Debbie Vinson for more info.

Host-Greeters for MG classes-Volunteers are needed for each night of the classes. Current MGs are asked to help each night to act as host &/or greeters for the evening & assist in setting up, help guest speakers attending, etc.. Contact Carolyn Mason to volunteer for a night.

Snack—Food Providers: Cooks and volunteers are needed to help provide snacks and refreshments each evening for the new class training during the course of the scheduled class-times. You do not have to be present or attend to volunteer. If you will let the office know, your food and snacks can be picked up and delivered

to the 4-H Building which is the site of the classes. Contact Carolyn Mason or D'Aun Butler to volunteer for this important event.

Wall School Garden—Volunteers are still needed to help provide watering and maintaining of the gardens until kids return to school in late August. If you care to work at the Gardens, contact Kay Thompson for times and dates.

CVMG Committee is currently working on a fundraiser project to provide information to the public. If you need more information, or want to volunteer, contact Debbie Vinson or Loretta Burgess for more info.

Rainwater Capture System—CVMGs and 4-H will be working in conjunction with each other to prepare a system for use, demonstrations, and project developments for the 4Hers and general public. Grant monies have been approved for December 2008, so project work will begin in the very near future. Contact Kay Thompson for more information

CONCHO VALLEY MASTER GARDENERS

Doreen Grimes, Editor



Tom Green County Extension Office
Concho Valley Master Gardeners
113 W. Beauregard
San Angelo, Tx 76903
Phone: 325-659-6528
Fax: 325-659-6467
E-mail: tom-green-tx@tam.u.edu



Please keep the Extension office informed of ANY changes in your mailing address and especially your e-mail address. If you change or obtain a new electronic mail address, the office would appreciate notification so that we can keep an up-to-date list for notification mailings. To save on postage and printing costs, we will be sending a lot more communications electronically thru the computer. Please watch your e-mail for messages.



Thank You Note:
I would like to take this opportunity to say a special "Thank You" to the CVMGs for their lovely Certificate of Appreciation which you gave to me for work with the newsletter. Your thoughtfulness in this gesture makes my job so much easier. I want to also thank all those that have contributed in articles, interviews and other notations to the newsletter each quarter for without your input, it would not be newsworthy. Your thoughtfulness is greatly appreciated. If you have any questions, or have any suggestions for improvement, please feel free to let us know. We are all working on this together.

Janice Alexander, TGC Office

