

THE GARDENING SPADE

Gregg County Master Gardener Association Quarterly Newsletter



Message from the President

Things have been quite busy lately, despite being retired, some of which was heavy hearted yet inevitable. My wife and I both lost parents recently, her mom in February and my dad in April. We are thankful they lived long productive lives and glad to have had them as significant parts of our lives. In addition, as if I wasn't feeling older already, I recently attended my 50 – year high school reunion. It was fun reconnecting with friends who shared a part of my younger life, and I had not seen many of them since graduation.

On to the business of Master Gardeners. There have been recent questions and some confusion regarding earning and reporting the required volunteer and continuing education hours for becoming a certified master gardener and subsequently maintaining the certification. I felt it should be addressed here to clarify this issue.

The first requirement is to complete a 50-hour course of instruction in various horticulture topics. The basic curriculum is determined by the Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Service. Upon completion of the 50 hours of course instruction, master gardener interns at this point are required to complete 50 hours of volunteer service within one year of course completion. There are several areas of opportunity in the Gregg County Master Gardeners organization to fulfill this requirement.

As stated in the Texas Master Gardener Volunteer Agreement:

“I understand that I am trained by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service in the field of Horticulture and I am expected to extend research based information to the public on behalf of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension. In exchange for the minimum of 50 hours of Master Gardener Training provided by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, I will:

- **Commit to a minimum of 50 hours of volunteer service** to the horticultural programming efforts in _____ County within one year to become a certified Master Gardener.

- I understand that in order to maintain active status as a Master Gardener Volunteer, I must volunteer _____ (varies by county, but must be a **minimum 12 hours**) hours annually after my intern year and gain _____ (varies by county, but must be a **minimum 6 hours**) continuing education hours annually.

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- Provide a record of this service as directed by the Master Gardener Program Coordinator...”

As you can see the volunteer hours required for certification do not include continuing education hours such as those obtained by attending monthly master gardener meetings where a program is presented. Once you have attained your certification, a minimum of 12 hours of volunteer service, and 6 hours of continuing education are required annually. One hour of credit is earned for each monthly meeting as long as an educational program is presented. Education hours may also be earned by attending other educational offerings associated with the Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Service.

To receive credit for volunteer and education hours, you must report them to the Agrilife Extension Service. This can be done through the VMS system, or if you do not have access to a computer, by completing a form available at the monthly meetings. If you have questions regarding the VMS system, you can email me at puttdball@att.net.

In other news, I am happy to report our annual plant sale program is alive and well. Sylvia Sharp has agreed to chair the Plant Sale Committee this year. Sylvia will provide more information at upcoming meetings. In the meantime, be sure to propagate plants for the sale. We have plenty of 6” and 8” pots available, as well as plant markers. Remember, you receive an hour credit for each plant donated to the sale, up to a maximum 10 hours.

In closing, thank you to all our GCMG members and interns for all you do to make our organization successful. Without your interest and participation, we would not be able to do the things we do to benefit our community.

~ David Hackley

Spot Light on ...

First Baptist Church Community Garden



“One is nearer God's heart in a garden, than anywhere else on earth.” has never been a truer statement than a visit to the First Community Baptist Church, (FBC) Community Garden.

Seeing it today, you'd never know that just ten short years ago the garden was a blank canvas. Where once stood row houses now teems with 33 fruit trees, thornless blackberries, raised beds with tomatoes, okra, cucumbers, beans, onions, asparagus, squash, and an assortment of salad-worthy green leafy veggies.

When Larry and Meloney Ferguson saw a similar garden at a church in Houston where their son was associate pastor, they were inspired to bring one to life in Longview. Since the garden's inception they have overseen the planning, design, construction, planting and harvest. The bounty from the garden provides fresh produce for church members who are no longer able to drive or garden for themselves and excess goes to non-profit organizations. Today the year 'round operation produces over 4,000 pounds of goodness each year. What can't be delivered fresh is canned, preserved or frozen.

Being part of the enterprise “grows” on you. Two young ladies, one 82 and the other 88 have been helping with the garden since '09. In addition to volunteers from the church, fellow MG, Beverly Todd is the Ferguson's garden partner. MG, Harold Collins also contributes, and his daughter, Heather Smith, chose FBC to finish her 50 hrs. of community service to become a certified MG. Several interns from the 2019 class have also found FBC to be a rewarding place to volunteer. There's always something to do. One can even earn titles as MG, Roger Sage has. Roger is known as the flower expert and the garden's “weed warrior”. Even MG, Dan Stephens, a Hugelkultur* practitioner contributes to the success of FBC.



No tools? No problem. All you need to do is show up to the garden at the corner of Cotton and Green Street in Longview with a willing spirit. Work days are Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8:30 – 12:00, weather permitting. If

the weather is sketchy, like it has been on more than one occasion this spring, the Fergusons will call or text to let you know if there's a change in schedule.

When asked what else he would share about the garden, Larry said in no uncertain terms that working with God's earth is very satisfying and healing. He also points out the many biblical references about gardening, from the garden of Eden to the garden at Gethsemane where Jesus prayed after the Last Supper.

Even if you're not ready to roll up your sleeves, you're welcome to stop by the garden to enjoy the flowers and healing herbs. Or sit under the grape arbor to refresh your soul. Sound too good to be true? It's not. God and a healthy application of compost has blessed the First Baptist Church Community Garden. Do yourself a favor and go see for yourself. For more information, call Larry, (903)-297-7777 or Meloney, (903)-452-0806.

**Hugelkultur* - pronounced Hoo-gul-culture, means hill culture or hill mound. Hugelkultur is a German technique where a mound constructed from decaying wood debris and other [compostable](#) plant materials is planted as a [raised bed](#).



☀️ **Summertime and the Livin' Ain't Easy**

In winter and spring we protect our plants from the elements. Now that summer is here, protecting yourself should move to the top of the list.

Truth be told, sunscreen should be worn year round. If you're like me, you don't think of it until the temperature pushes into the 90's on a daily basis. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) says the best protection is to avoid exposure altogether. Since that's unthinkable for gardeners, CDC suggests the following:

- Wear clothes that cover arms and legs
- Wear a wide brim hat and sun glasses
- Use sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) 15 or higher

Like the sun, chiggers and ticks are "out there" year 'round, but less active in cooler months. Chiggers don't carry disease like ticks and mosquitoes do or can. Nonetheless, an encounter can be miserable. The following will help protect you and your loved ones:

- Avoid hiking/walking in damp, humid areas
- Wear light colored clothing with tightly woven fabric. (One blog suggests panty hose as the ultimate tightly woven material. Don't worry guys. Your secret is safe with us!)
- Tuck your shirt into your pants. Tuck your pant legs into socks, then don sneakers or boots. (A new fashion statement!)

-Wear a repellent containing **one** of the following:

- o DEET
- o Picaridin (known as KBR 3023 and icaridin outside the US)
- o IR3535
- o Oil of lemon eucalyptus (OLE)*
- o Para-menthane-diol (PMD)*
- o 2-undecanone

- Spray clothing with permethrin.
DO NOT use permethrin products directly on skin.
- If you are also using sunscreen, apply it first and repellent second.
- DO NOT use products containing OLE or PMD on children under 3 years old.
- After an outing, if exposure to chiggers or ticks is a concern, toss your clothes in the wash and then take a hot shower.

Each time I kill a mosquito, I put it on a chair next to me so that other mosquitoes can see how dangerous I am.

Source: CDC (except for the part about the pantyhose.) 

Summer Gardening 'To Do' List

JUNE

Planting:

- Continue to plant warm season turf grasses (Bermuda, St. Augustine, and Zoysia).
- Replace spring bedding plants with annuals such as begonia, periwinkle, portulaca, purslane, salvia, zinnia, coleus, Mexican heather, gomphrena, and caladiums.

Pruning:

- Prune dead or broken branches of trees and shrubs but avoid major pruning during summer heat.
- Cut back spent flowers to encourage new blooms.
- Prune spent flowers from roses and fertilize as needed.

Plant Care:

- Pay special attention to the water needs of new lawns, trees, and ornamentals as hot dry weather sets in.
- Water in the early morning hours (3 AM to 8 AM) to minimize fungal problems and reduce evaporation.
- Fertilize annual flowers and vegetables with your favorite fertilizer to assure continued vigor.
- Check crape myrtles for aphids throughout the summer.
- Check ornamentals, flowers, and vegetables for spider mites.
- Watch for bagworms on junipers, arborvitae and other conifers, treat as needed.
- Watch for webworms on trees, especially pecans and mulberries, and treat as necessary.
- Apply fungicide as necessary to control black spot and powdery mildew on roses.
- Early June is an ideal time to aerate your lawn.
- Fertilize warm season turf grasses based on soil test recommendation.
- Check for chinch bugs in St. Augustine lawns throughout the summer, and for gray leaf spot fungus in periods of high humidity and temperatures in the 80s and 90s.
- Spot treat fire ant mounds with ant bait or a mound drench.
- Enjoy harvesting vegetables and fruits: potatoes, beans, cucumbers, squash, radishes, tomatoes, blackberries and peaches. 🍅

JULY

Planting:

- Continue to plant warm season turf grasses (Bermuda, St. Augustine, and Zoysia).
- Continue to plant ground covers, and tropical and warm season annuals.
- Plant sweet and hot peppers, okra and tomatoes for fall harvest. in first half of the month.

Pruning:

- Prune out dead or broken branches of trees and shrubs, but avoid major pruning during the heat of summer.
- Cut back spent flowers to encourage new blooms.

Plant Care:

- Pay attention to water needs of lawns, ornamentals, and vegetables, especially new plants with undeveloped root systems and to outdoor potted plants, which can dry out quickly. Water in the early morning hours (3 AM to 8 AM) to minimize fungal problems and evaporation.
- Continue to check crape myrtles for aphids.
- Continue to check ornamentals, flowers, and vegetables for spider mites.
- Inspect broadleaf evergreen shrubs such as euonymus and hollies for scale insects, and treat as necessary.
- Watch for lace bugs on azaleas, pyracantha, cotoneaster, and lantana.
- Fertilize chrysanthemums.
- Mow turf grasses as needed. Maintain Bermuda at 1 to 1 ½ inches and St. Augustine at 2 ½ in full sun and 3 to 3 ½ in semi-shade.
- Continue to check for chinch bugs and gray leaf spot fungus in St. Augustine lawns.
- Check lawn for grub worms by digging in several places. Grub treatments, are recommended if you find more than four grubs per square foot.
- Fertilize hanging baskets and other container plants regularly.
- Continue to harvest vegetables as they ripen.
- To reduce mosquitos, check house gutters and outside containers for standing water. For mosquito larva control, use Bti (Bacillus thuringiensis, israelensis) as a larvicide.

AUGUST

Planting:

- Complete installation of warm season turf grasses by late August to mid-September to ensure they're established before the first fall freeze.
- Plant ground covers and tropical and warm season annuals.
- Plant fall flowering perennials such as asters, Mexican mint marigold, Mexican bush sage (*salvia leucantha*), rain lilies, and garden chrysanthemums.
- Plant fall garden crops: snap beans, lima beans, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, collards, eggplant, kohlrabi, okra, onion, parsley, Irish potatoes, squash, and watermelon.

Pruning:

- Prune out dead or broken branches of trees and shrubs but avoid major pruning until the dormant season.
- Pinch off spent crape myrtle seeds to encourage new blooms and prune basal shoots to keep plant in tree form. This is necessary all-season long.
- Prune bush roses, and fertilize all roses according to soil test recommendation for fall blooming.
- Remove spent flowers of some perennials to encourage new blooms.
- Trim back leggy spring-planted annuals and fertilize if needed to encourage new growth and continued flowering.
- Stop pinching back chrysanthemums and Mexican mint marigold to ensure good bud development for fall blooms.

Plant Care:

- Watch for powdery mildew on cedar elms, crape myrtles and euonymus, and treat with fungicide, if necessary.
- Check pecan trees for aphids, shuck worms, webworms, and foliage diseases.
- Protect ornamental and peach trees from borers by applying a labeled borer preventive to the trunks in late August according to label directions.
- Be on alert for chinch bugs in St. Augustine lawns which will appear near paved surfaces and other hot spots in the yard.
- Watch susceptible ornamental plants for iron deficiency (yellowed leaves with darker green veins), aggravated by the hot dry weather, and treat with chelated iron if needed. Drench plants but avoid contact with hard surfaces that could stain.
- Keep young vegetable plants adequately watered and shaded from mid-day and afternoon sun.



A note from our 2019 Fall Plant Sale Chair...

Hello Everybody,

By the time our next newsletter comes out, the Plant Sale will only be one month away! It's our biggest fundraiser of the year and if we want it to be a success, we need to get started now. In addition to plants to sell, we need to inventory pots, take stock of signage, design a 2019 flyer, etc.. If you'd like to help with any of that, you're welcome to join me around 11am, just before the June Association Meeting. In the meantime, if you have questions about anything related to the sale, please email me at sylviasharp@aol.com.

Thanks in advance,

Sylvia



For Master Gardeners Only

Being new to the area, or to gardening aren't the only reasons to not recognize a plant. According to the Native Plant Society of Texas there are over 3,402 species of vascular plants in East Texas. Now, thanks to technology, even interns can impress people with their ability to identify plants. Not that "ordinary" people can't possess the power of a plant id app but wouldn't it be cool if they were only available to master gardeners? Imagine your neighbor asking what the vine with the trumpet shaped coral-colored flowers was. After careful inspection and a photo, to catalog it of course, (this should take the 90-seconds, or so for the data base on your app to come up with the name) and you could announce authoritatively that, "that, my friend, is a *Chinese Trumpet Creeper*."

Alas, millions of people have discovered the wonder and joy of apps but if you're not one of them, allow me to share some of what I've learned.

The process for all apps is the same. Using your cell phone, simply take a clear picture of the flower or leaf to be identified. An app, like "Picture This", will run through a database to produce the name of the plant at no cost. Some apps will deliver an exact match provided from intel generated by fellow gardeners (citizen scientists) while others will give several choices based on number of petals, color, etc. In addition to those that are free, some operate by subscription and will provide care advice and chat functions. Ones like "SmartPlant" can generate a care calendar for your personal list of plants and send notifications to remind you what you need to do to keep them healthy. GrowIt is like Facebook for gardeners and myGardenAnswers solves plant problems to include some pests and diseases. Finally, iScape lets you plan out an outdoor space, provide a 3D look and create a shopping list of plants to complete the project.

For Master Gardeners Only? One could only hope.

Mark Your Calendars:

- **Farewell Luncheon honoring Randy Reeves** - Friday, Jun 28, 12pm @ Gregg County AgriLife Auditorium
 - **RSVP by Jun 21. to 903-236-2019**
- **July Association Meeting moved to the 3rd Wed due to a scheduling conflict.** Regular schedule (2nd Wed of the month) will resume in August.
- **Get growing for the Fall Plant Sale!** - Saturday, Oct 5



Here we grow again!

Volunteer of the Year



Karen Spurlock named Volunteer of the Year by Maude Cobb Convention & Activity Center for her dedication to keeping the J.R. Curtis Jr. Memorial Garden for the Blind beautiful year round.