

Denton County Master Gardener Association



THE ROOT

Grow With Us

TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION

Buds From The Board

BY PAT MOYER, PRESIDENT

Happy Spring to all DCMGA Interns and Veterans,

As you probably know, we, DCMGA, had a spectacular experience at the Texas Master Gardener State Conference last month. This was my first time at the state conference, and I must say I have a great deal of appreciation for the amount of time and effort that goes into making an event of this complexity.

The conference focused on the 40th Anniversary of the Master Gardener program in Texas. It emphasized an appreciation for our “roots” as well as the challenges for today and in the future. This can serve as a prologue for our own DCMGA 30th anniversary next year.

One of the keynote speakers was David Gibby, who originated the nationwide Master Gardener program in Washington state in 1972. It was interesting to hear how he dealt with starting a program that had little to no

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Buds from the Board (Cont.)

management interest until he and a group of dedicated volunteers were able to demonstrate popular interest in gardening activities. I believe that we share some of those same issues today that we can hopefully resolve in a similar manner.

One of the highlights of the conference was the Awards Banquet on Thursday evening. We (DCMGA) were honored with a total of six awards!

Four second place awards for:

- Outstanding Individual – Raeline Nobles
- Research – Sandy Jacobs Fruit and Nut Grove – David Byrd, PM
- Educational Program – Texas Our Heritage Outdoor Classroom – Janet Gershenfeld, PM
- Youth JMG Program – Junior Master Gardener Camp – Susan Kilpatrick, PM

Two first place awards for:

- Project – Class Planning and Administration – Raeline Nobles, PM
- Outstanding Association, Extra Large Association

We can all take a great deal of pride in our success. These results are the product of a great deal of effort by the PMs noted above. To be sure, the PMs didn't do this alone. A small group of writers/interpreters,

including Barbara Brown, Kathi Fast, and Bernadette Gilbert, had the challenging task of translating the project materials and data onto the forms and in the format required to be judged by the TMG. So please congratulate these folks as well as the PMs and teams. Now, on to next year!!



County Extension Agent

Janet Laminack & President Pat Moyer display one of six DCMGA awards presented at the TMGA state conference.



Sandy Jacobs Fruit & Nut Tree Grove and Vineyard Project

BY KATHY RAINEY

Developed with Denton County leaders to create a demonstration grove of fruits and nuts at the Sandy Jacobs Government Center in Carrollton, a key purpose of this project is to educate the community on home fruit production through hands-on classes at the grove. Fruits and nuts grown in the grove include 11 pecans, 4 peaches, 4 pears, 4 plums, 3 figs, 4 persimmons, 4 jujubes, 6 pomegranates, 2 fifty-foot rows of grapes (both table and wine), and 30 feet of blackberries. No chemical pesticides or herbicides are used in the grove.

Volunteers primarily include Master Gardeners and youth performing community service.

Adults in the community are also welcome to volunteer but must pass a background check in order to work when youth are present.

Volunteers learn correct methods of tree planting and various strategies for pruning and training plants to ensure maximum fruit production. They also learn which varieties grow best and why some aren't as successful.

The grove attracts volunteers interested in planting and maintaining fruit trees at home as well as those who just enjoy working outdoors. Last year, thanks to the work of the volunteers, over 90% of the plants survived and continue to thrive. Perhaps the most important fruit of the project is the immeasurable personal growth of the youth working in the grove and the enrichment of the adult volunteers who work with them.

If you don't have time to volunteer but are interested in visiting, tours of the grove are also available. Guests learn why some plants

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Photo courtesy of David Byrd

Jujubes

are date-like fruits with an apple-like taste.

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are doing well, why others are having issues, when fruit will appear, and what size the plants will be at maturity.

Michael Cook, the Texas A&M North Texas Viticulturist, has been an integral part of the project (both the grove and grapes) and often gives Advanced Training classes on planting and pruning grapes.

A workday is scheduled for May 5th from 9 to 11:30 am; the key task will be removing grass and weeds. During the summer, volunteer work schedules will be on weekdays.

Contact Master Gardener and program manager David Byrd at dlbyrdipad@gmail.com for additional information.

<https://dcmga.com>

Meet Liz & Pat Moyer

DCMGA President (and First Lady)

BY GAY CAMPBELL

Q: How did two engineers get into gardening?

A: We both just enjoy seeing nature take its course and plants grow. Both of our grandfathers were farmers, and prior to our marriage 38 years ago, we each had our own vegetable gardens. Gardening of some type has always been a constant for us.

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Q: Did you devise your own landscape plan or did it evolve over time?

A: Our landscape “plan” has been and continues to be an evolution. We started with many of the traditional elements: Burford hollies, Crepe myrtles, Indian hawthorns, and a lot of annuals. Over time and with more knowledge, all of those are gone in favor of as many perennial natives as we can find places for.

Initially, we did invest in a couple of quality trees, which are still with us: Shumard Red oaks and Live Oaks. We’re most proud of those choices, despite the fact that at least one of them could have benefited by being better located. Our beds have remained pretty constant, but the contents have changed as twigs became big trees, which turned sunny spots into shade beds, and as our commitment to using natives has increased.

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Q: Pat, I know you are our tree specialist, but what other areas of gardening pique your interest?

A: Despite a less than consistent yield, I have always had an interest in vegetable gardening, including tomatoes (Black Krim is my favorite), onions, broccoli, and green beans. I’ve also got a few fruit trees (peaches, fig, and jujube) as well blackberries, which I share with the birds and



other wildlife. We do manage to freeze a few quarts of blackberries every year.

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Q: Liz, I know you love native plants. When and how did you and Pat get involved with Native Plant Society of Texas (NPSOT)?

A: I've been a NPSOT member almost since its inception, and I've been really excited to help other people see native plants as important assets even in a conventional suburban landscape. I currently serve as the membership chair for the Trinity Forks Chapter, which meets in Denton. Pat joined shortly after we married in 1980 and is now very active, currently coordinating the chapter's Native Plant Landscape Certification program.

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Q: What do you both love most about gardening together?

We love daily visits to the garden to see what's happening — babies growing up, colonies spreading, blooms opening. It's a priceless view into Mother Nature's plan.

Plant of the Month – Crinum Lily

BY LEE ANN YATES

Crinum lilies are truly classic, summer-flowering, sun-loving southern ladies! While not technically lilies (they are part of the Amaryllis family), crinum lily cultivars have thrived for hundreds of years at abandoned home sites where other bulbs long ago gave up the ghost. They are extremely adaptable, tough, low-maintenance bulbs, making them perfect for either a rain garden or a drought-tolerant one. Architecturally impressive enough to stand on their own, crinums will also gracefully blend into multi-floral garden schemes. In your landscape, remember to give crinums plenty of room – some growers advise thinking of them as shrubs in size, habit, and amount of time needed to mature.

Most of the time when a plant's label says full sun, we all know that doesn't mean full *Texas* sun. In the case of crinums, though, the more sun, the happier these ladies are. Plant them where you'll want them to live long-term in your landscape. Spring or fall planting is appropriate for crinums. Plant in a hole about 6 inches deeper than the bulb, and backfill

those 6 inches with soil. Bury the bulbs up to their necks, to an obvious line between the white bulb and green stem, leaving the stem above the soil surface. Water in very well, and mulch to retain moisture and offer protection from winter freezes.

As fall approaches and crinums end their bloom time, keep the leaves attached. As with many other bulbs, this practice helps return energy to the bulb for the winter, giving a boost it will need to start up again next spring. You don't need to worry about removing the old leaves until spring cleanup unless there's a freeze. The leaves will turn mushy after freezing, which can lead to bulb rot, so, if they do go mushy, remove them as quickly as you can.

Established crinums can be very difficult to transplant. Really old bulbs can weigh more than 20 pounds! And bulbs that have been in place for several years snug themselves deeply in the soil – several feet sometimes. Fortunately, most bulbs for sale weigh *only* 1 to 2 pounds – remarkable for a baby plant.

Another way to propagate crinums is to plant the little bulbils that often form at the base of the flower heads after the flowers fade. The weight of the bulbils gradually forces the stem to fall to the ground, still attached to the plant. After a week or two of resting on damp soil, the bulbils will put out a leaf, then a root, and will continue to grow into an entirely new plant.

Crinum lilies come in many varieties, all with thick, lush, strap-like foliage and flowers ranging from pure white to dark pink to lovely stripes. If you choose to add one or more of these graceful southern charmers to your landscape, you won't be disappointed.



Photo courtesy of Sharrie Ely

Pollinator-Friendly Gardens

BY KATHRYN WELLS

People enjoy hosting pollinators like butterflies in their home gardens, but, beyond appreciating their beauty and grace, there's other significant value in providing a proper habitat for them. According to the United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service, three-fourths of the world's flowering plants and approximately 35% of the world's food crops depend on pollinators to produce fruits, grains, and vegetables. That means about one in every three bites of food that we eat is a direct result of pollination from bats, bees, birds, butterflies, and other small insects like ants, beetles, flies, moths, and wasps.

Pollinators require three things: food, water, and shelter. Pollinator-friendly gardening practices include maintaining a wide variety of native plants, as indigenous and heirloom varieties generate more pollen and nectar than modern hybrids. An ideal environment also provides host plants for egg laying and caterpillar noshing. Other practices include ensuring windbreaks and overwintering sanctuaries, furnishing a shallow damp area, and reducing or eliminating chemical usage by employing Integrated Pest Management.

While most gardeners usually have some varieties of nectar-producing plants in their landscape for adult pollinators, not all have the host plants to support eggs and caterpillars. Since host plants are not as well known as their flashy friends, here's a partial list of appropriate ones for our eco-region.

Pollinator host plants

Monarch butterfly host plants for our north central Texas eco-region include Antelope Horn Milkweed (*Asclepias asperula*), Green Antelope Horn Milkweed (*Asclepias viridis*), Zizotes Milkweed (*Asclepias oenotheroides*), Butterfly Weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*), Swamp Milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*), Whorled Milkweed (*Asclepias verticillata*), and Slim Milkweed (*Asclepias linaria*). Pussytoes (*Antennaria Gaertn.*) will host American Painted Lady caterpillars, and Twoleaf Sennas (*Senna roemeriana*, *S. lindheimeri*) will host Sulphurs. The hungry caterpillars will decimate their hosts, so you may want to position them behind other more presentable plants.

While not indigenous to the north central Texas eco-region, other Texas natives that may be successfully grown as host plants in our area include Passionflower (*Passiflora foetida*) for Variegated and Gulf Fritillary caterpillars and Pipevine (*Aristolochia erecta*) for Pipevine Swallowtails.



Photo courtesy of Kathryn Wells

Sphinx Moths

are commonly called "hummingbird moths," as the large pollinators hover like helicopters to nectar.

Pollinator-Friendly Gardens (Cont.)

Trees also serve as caterpillar hosts. Larger landscapes may include Elms (*Ulmus* spp.) for Questionmarks and Commas, Oaks (*Quercus* spp.) for Hairstreaks, Redbuds (*Cercis canadensis*) for Elfins, and Hackberrys (*Celtis occidentalis*) for Snouts.

Additional resources

A diversity of nectar-producing plants to nourish the adults will complete the pollinator-friendly landscape. It's a good practice to choose natives with varying bloom times to ensure that there's always something of value for a hungry visitor. Monarch Watch offers a thorough list of butterfly host plants and nectar plants for all the Texas eco-regions:

<https://www.monarchwatch.org/garden/plant-list-tx-monarchwatch.pdf>.

As well, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department provides comprehensive resource management information for all insect pollinators, including our beneficial native bees:

https://tpwd.texas.gov/publications/pwdpubs/media/pwd_bk_w7000_1813.pdf.

To see pollinator-preferred plants established in home landscapes, join us on May 12th from 9 am to 4 pm for our annual Garden Tour featuring five distinctly unique private resident gardens.

Details are available at www.dcmga.com.



Photo courtesy of Kathryn Wells

In it's larval form,

the Sphinx Moth is commonly known as the Tomato Hornworm and is much detested by the home gardener striving to grow the perfect tomatoes (or peppers, potatoes, and eggplants). To live peaceably, consider providing a few extra veggie plants for these interesting caterpillars. They also feed on *Datura* (poisonous to humans but not to hornworms), which could be planted in another area of the garden to lure the caterpillars away from your food crops.



If you have questions about pollinator-friendly plants or other horticulture-related subjects, please contact our Master Gardener Help Desk at master.gardener@dentoncounty.com or 940.349.2892; it's free of charge, and it's our pleasure to assist you.



BY JANIE FARLER

Q. My new blueberry bush is not happy. This is my second try, and I don't want lose them again. Any advice?

A. Growing blueberries in North Texas is not easy, but it is possible if you understand their requirements.

Blueberries are calcifuges, which simply means they cannot tolerate alkalinity. Most of Denton County has alkaline soil, and many of us also have alkaline and/or salty water. These are disadvantages that we have to work around.

Look for a variety of Rabbiteye (*Vaccinium ashei*). You can try planting them in the ground, but prepare to be disappointed because you can not permanently change soil pH. For best results, grow them in a

large container (like a whiskey barrel) in soilless peat mix made for blueberries, and water with rainwater. Mulch them well with an acidic mulch such as pine bark, and be sure they receive 8-10 hours/day of sunlight. They are not drought tolerant, so do not let them dry out.

It takes about three years for a bush to become hardy, and they remain fairly weak until then. The links below will tell you all you need to succeed. Pay special attention to the advice regarding fertilization in the second article. And when you pick your first plump, delicious fruit, you can rightly call yourself a berry good gardener.

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Blueberries for Texas – <https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/archives/parsons/publications/blueberries/blueberries.html>

Blueberries – https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/fruit-nut/files/2015/04/blueberries_2015.pdf



DCMGA Members

represented our community well at the Texas Master Gardener Association (TMGA) state conference, winning six major awards, including 1st place for Outstanding Extra Large Association. Congratulations to the 280 DCMGA members who contribute every day to the overall success of our association. We appreciate you all!



Garden Tour Preview

BY KATHRYN WELLS

This year's annual Garden Tour (Saturday, May 12th from 9 am to 4 pm) features five unique private home gardens in southern Denton County, offering landscape embellishments from courtyard chickens to matchless minerals. Tickets are \$10 for the complete five-garden tour or \$5 for a single garden entrance. Children 12 years old and under receive complimentary admission. Tickets and additional details are available online at www.dcmga.com.

Here's a sneak peek at our lineup.

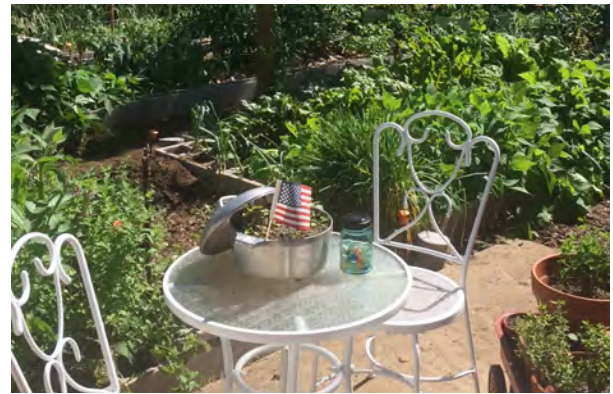
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Nana Jean's Garden Rooms



A garden with many rooms is established on an acre of land at Nana Jean's, where the homeowners' 14 grandchildren love the "Kidz Corner," growing and harvesting their favorite vegetables in the family garden. "The Sanctuary" is Nana Jean's favorite space — a shady passageway retreat featuring ferns, caladiums, begonias, hostas, and coleus. Nana Jean's also serves as the designated location for our tour vendors.

Garden Patch



Designed for growing an edible harvest, this home features raised beds for organic produce with drip irrigation provided by a rain catchment system. In lieu of a lawn, native perennials and self-seeding flowers nourish the pollinators. The treed front yard provides a shaded retreat, where expanding ground cover requires minimum attention. Composting bins and a small chipper ensure no garden waste; fall leaves and spent plants are just another harvest at the Garden Patch.

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Hidden Paradise



Garden Tour Preview (Cont.)

Hidden Paradise is the perfect description for this exquisite garden, where delightful details grace every turn. On approach, a very formal and traditional front yard greets you, but, once you step through the gate, you're wrapped in the luxury of a lovely secret retreat. Think peace, quiet, and beauty with an enticing pool at the center of it all. Intimate, but bursting with color, texture, scent, and architecture, this garden is a true treasure.



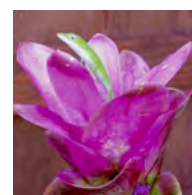
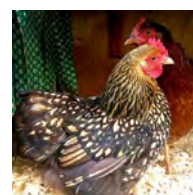
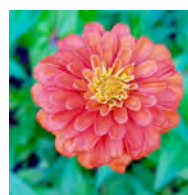
Rocks and Roses



Old garden roses mix with Texas native and adapted plants in this urban cul-de-sac garden, where field-collected minerals add a special touch to the unique design. Meander through the garden rooms, which are designed to engage all five of the senses. Enjoy a quiet moment in one of the covered seating areas, strategically located for viewing the garden vignettes of rare rocks and ravishing roses.



Happy Homestead



This home offers an educational experience within a backyard ecosystem. Learn composting methods, meet organically raised backyard chickens, and appreciate the many natural gardening techniques. See how rain barrels feed vegetable and herb gardens while keeping water usage low. Enjoy the front rain garden, which helps satisfy plants with less irrigation. Walk along the back path to admire the flowers, plants, and thoughtful details that make this a happy homestead.



Photo courtesy of Phyllis Minton

Volunteers

take a break during a recent work day at Hidden Paradise, one of the five featured homes on this year's Garden Tour.

Keep Texas Beautiful Awards DCMGA 2018 State Program

BY KATHRYN WELLS

Keep Texas Beautiful (KTB) selected Denton County Master Gardener Association (DCMGA) as the 2018 State Program of the Year. The official award will be presented during the annual KTB conference at the June 13th awards luncheon in Georgetown.

An affiliate of Keep America Beautiful (KAB), the state awards recognize individuals and organizations who support the KTB mission of inspiring and empowering Texans to keep our communities clean and beautiful.

The organization celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2017, and over the past 51 years, KTB has been committed to making Texas communities better places to live, work, and play, with education as its central core value.

Begun in 1967 in preparation for the 1968 San Antonio HemisFair and the 16 million tourists anticipated to attend, KTB originated as a collaboration of interests from a diverse variety of representatives, including the State Department of Highways and Public Transportation. The founding group, known as the Beautify Texas Council, created a non-profit educational corporation, solely supported by member dues. After the HemisFair, the council continued its efforts, officially becoming KTB in 1985. Today, the organization boasts the largest environmental and community improvement network in the state.

For more information on KTB, visit www.ktb.org.





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Mission Statement

Denton County Master Gardener Association educates and engages county residents in the implementation of research-based horticultural and environmental practices that create sustainable gardens, landscapes, and communities.

Extension EO/EEO Statement

Texas A&M Agrilife Extension provides equal opportunities in its programs and employment to all persons, regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, or gender identity. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating.

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<https://twitter.com/MGsDentonTX>

Pinterest:

<https://www.pinterest.com/dentoncountymas>

Save the Date

- May 9 DCMGA Monthly Meeting
- May 12: DCMGA Garden Tour
- June 16: Vegetable, Flower, Herb, and Fruit Show
- October 13: Fall Garden Festival

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Content

Submission deadline for the June edition of *The Root* is Tuesday, May 15. Submissions may be revised at the discretion of the editor.

Ideas, photos, and articles are welcome and may be submitted to Editor Karen Gibson at karenhoot19@gmail.com or Communications Director Kathryn Wells at kathrynwells333@gmail.com.