



ECHO

Extension's Community Horticultural Outreach

November—December 2006

Howdy Master Gardeners,

In this special season of thanksgiving, among the folks at the top of my list to thank are the Collin County Master Gardeners. I am so very thankful to be associated with such an outstanding group of talented people. You give of yourselves for the betterment of Collin County and Texas Cooperative Extension, and I really appreciate that. You're a pleasure to work alongside. Not only do I learn a bunch from you all, but I get to have fun at the same time.

Our group continues to deliver effective educational programming throughout the county. We also continue to broaden our horizons and achieve new successes as well. One of our latest ventures that I am excited about is our involvement with the Educational Community Gardens now located at TAMU-Dallas Research and Extension Center. CCMGA has been involved in the formation of this community garden, and we are making plans for future educational programming on that site. There will be lots of opportunities for vegetable gardening, display beds, children's activities and Speaker Bureau talks.

You will be happy to know that Paxton helped install this year's fall garden. He looked on in wild wonder and jealousy as I turned the soil and amended it with compost and expanded shale. He was making noise and cheering the whole time. Even though he cannot talk yet, there was a lot of communication happening. I think we both look forward to him getting his hands dirty with me.

I hope you have a blast this holiday season with friends and family. I wish you a happy Thanksgiving and a merry Christmas!

Landry Lockett, CEA-Horticulture,
Texas Cooperative Extension



Educational programs of Texas Cooperative Extension are open to all individuals without regard to race, color, sex, disability, religion, age or national origin. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas cooperating.

In this issue:

<i>Message from Landry Lockett, CEA-Horticulture</i>	<i>Page 1</i>
<i>A Gardener's Sense of Place</i>	<i>Page 2</i>
<i>American Rose Society – Earth Kind Workshop</i>	<i>Page 3</i>
<i>A Final 2006 Speaker's Bureau Report</i>	<i>Page 4</i>
<i>Holidays and Herbs</i>	<i>Page 5</i>
<i>Rooting Kids in Nature</i>	<i>Page 7</i>
<i>Plant in the Spotlight: Low Country Salt Marsh</i>	<i>Page 8</i>
<i>CEMAP Project Update</i>	<i>Page 9</i>
<i>Pioneer Place Senior Home</i>	<i>Page 9</i>
<i>Wintertime Birds</i>	<i>Page 10</i>
<i>Tapis de Fleurs de Bruxelles</i>	<i>Page 11</i>
<i>Garden Checklist for November/December</i>	<i>Page 12</i>
<i>Seniors Dig Gardening</i>	<i>Page 13</i>
<i>Advisory Team for the Arts of Collin County</i>	<i>Page 13</i>
<i>Volunteer Opportunities</i>	<i>Page 14</i>
<i>This and That</i>	<i>Page 14</i>
<i>Special Thanks...</i>	<i>Page 14</i>

A Gardener's Sense of Place

By Nancy Furth

"The land was ours before we were the land's," says Robert Frost's poem. "Only in the act of submission is the sense of place realized and a sustainable relationship between people and earth established."



"Place is not only a geographical term: it can be anchored in a state of mind, or a sense of values. Its manifestation can be geographical, or physical, or sociological. It can be tangible -- visual and tactile -- or intangible, rooted in nostalgia, or the imagination."

"A sense of place results gradually and unconsciously from inhabiting a landscape over time, becoming familiar with its physical properties, accruing history within its confines."

"Places that lack a 'sense of place' are sometimes referred to as 'placeless' or 'inauthentic.' Placeless landscapes are those that have no special relationship to the places in which they are located—they could be anywhere. Roadside strip shopping malls, gas/petrol stations and convenience stores, fast food chains, and chain department stores are often cited as examples of placeless landscape elements. Even some historic sites or districts that have been heavily commercialized (commodified) for [tourism](#) and new housing estates are sometimes defined as having lost their sense of place."

The definitions and descriptions above are but a few that can be found when googling the term '*sense of place*' on the world-wide web. In preparation for the October 10 class presentation, I ran across the phrase '*sense of place*' several times. It is a critical ingredient when creating a successful landscape design. As I viewed the landscape surrounding Scottsdale, Arizona, last week, a '*sense of place*' was noticeably reflected in the plants that are so characteristic of the dry Southwest. They were perfect for there, but not for here. It got me thinking about the words not only as they relate to gardening and geographical location, but also about life in general. There are times over the course of one's life when a sense of place is comfortably present and times when it is glaringly missing. I like to think that these "placeless" times are times of struggle and growth leading to greater self-awareness.

As gardeners, I believe that we have a real head-start creating a '*sense of place*' out of our surroundings, no matter where we find ourselves. Working the soil, finding plants that grow well, and selecting the colors, forms and textures that not only please our senses but blend with our region, all help us acquire a deeper relationship and connection with the natural world around us. It is an effort that takes time and patience. As gardeners, we possess an extraordinary measure of faith always hoping our continued attempts (and failures) at grounding and connecting with our geographical environment improve with each garden we create. This has been a year of tribulation for us as gardeners, and yet, at the close of the growing season we are again witnessing the beautiful and bountiful finale that comes at this time every year.

I hope everyone who has contributed to Collin County Master Gardener activities this year feels a greater '*sense of place*' and connection to our organization. We have accomplished so much and our leadership should be congratulated for setting such a great example. For those of you who are slated to become certified, and for those of you who will be starting your intern year, remember: "A sense of place results gradually and unconsciously..." just have faith! 🌸

American Rose Society – Earth Kind™ Rose Workshop

by Nancy King

On October 14, I attended the American Rose Society Convention at the Intercontinental Hotel in Addison. The American Rose Society (ARS), as you might think, is dedicated to the “enjoyment, enhancement, and promotion of the rose.” In the past, the focus has been on beautiful, even perfect roses such as hybrid tea, roses that are difficult to cultivate. Members enter their prize roses in various competitions, such as the ones held in conjunction with the convention.



Belinda's Dream

This ARS convention featured something new: an all-day Earth Kind Workshop. This workshop would be an excellent opportunity to find out the latest in Earth Kind news and see how traditional rose growers react to Earth Kind roses. It turned out to be popular. Seventy-five attended, far more than expected.

Dr. Steve George moderated the workshop and also gave a major presentation that included the basics of the Earth Kind program. As you know, the Earth Kind Rose project was developed by Dr. George, and just about every Collin County Master Gardener has heard him speak about Earth Kind program. Other speakers included Gaye Hammond (American Rose Society), Dr. William Johnson (Galveston County Cooperative Extension), Baron Ablon (Soil Building Systems), Steve Chaney (Tarrant County Cooperative Extension), Mark Chamblee (Chamblee’s Rose Nursery), and Mike Shoup (Antique Rose Emporium). Lunch was a 2-hour trip to the Addison Earth Kind Rose Gardens and included a substantial, 2-foot Earth Kind rose for each participant, as well as an Earth Kind manual.

Rather than summarizing each presentation, I’ll just go over some of the new things I’ve learned and approaches I found most useful.

First of all, it’s interesting to see how the Earth Kind program is expanding. The Texas Rose Brigade now comprises 30 recommended roses. We received a handout on the Southern Rose Brigade, and trials are starting all over the US to establish an American Rose Brigade. It looks like the program could eventually go international. In fact, I saw ARS members from British Columbia and New Zealand at these sessions.

One of the appeals of Earth Kind roses for the ARS is that they grow well without much expenditure of time and effort, because they don’t have to be fertilized, sprayed, deadheaded, or pruned. This aspect of Earth Kind roses can be used attract new members who want to succeed with their first rose-growing efforts. First-time rose gardeners usually aren’t willing to put in much time caring for their rose plants. If they have success with their first roses, some of these first-time growers will go on to tackle more challenging roses, the ARS believes. Declining American Rose Society membership has been a problem for some time, and Earth Kind roses offer new hope.

Speaking about the difficulties people have in growing roses, Gayle Hammond mentioned her own investigations and discussions with growers, shippers and sellers of roses. Most roses are now grown in California or Arizona, although early East Texas had once been a major supplier. She learned that most commercial roses are so stressed and in such a bad condition when they reach the gardener that the roses don’t have a good chance of surviving. It doesn’t matter what good care they receive from the gardener, and the damage may not be apparent until the second or third year of growth.

Various speakers stressed the importance of the Earth Kind roses being own-root roses, not grafted. Also, the Buck roses, which have been added to the Rose Brigade, offer a wider variety of colors than previously available. Mark Chamblee discussed each of the Texas Rose Brigade roses during his presentation, including the Buck roses.

(Continued on page 4)

(Earth Kind Workshop, continued from page 3)

When asked about his favorite, he was unwilling to commit, but mentioned Knock Out as the best seller. One thing to note: we have to be careful with our rose selections in Texas because Earth Kind roses, like many other plants, tend to grow larger here than specified in their descriptions.

Another thread that ran through the talks was the great number of places where you can see prize ARS collections and also Earth Kind trial gardens. Until this convention, I didn't realize the extent that the town of Addison is involved with the Earth Kind Rose program. It's the first town to completely embrace the Earth Kind system of gardening and has several large collections of Earth Kind roses. I've been admiring the roses just to the west of the traffic circle on Quorum (north of Beltline) for some time, not knowing that they were Earth Kind roses.

Baron Ablon of Soil Building Systems spoke on what to look for in a handful of compost to verify that it's finished and suitable for this area. The compost should be dark in color, have a pleasant earthy smell, contain a variety of particle sizes, and leave a black film residue on your hand. Soil Building Systems is a Dallas company whose signature product is a mixture of compost and expanded shale, perfect for Earth Kind roses.

Mike Shoup talked about Roses in the Landscape (and brought along copies of his book, *Roses in the Southern Garden*). The Antique Rose Emporium has display gardens where Earth Kind and other roses have been planted as part of a larger garden area. Roses are combined with annuals and perennials to make a beautiful garden filled with various colors and textures. When the roses aren't blooming, some of the other flowering plants catch your eye.

The ARS Earth Kind Workshop was a huge success – I listened to comments throughout the day – Dr. George and the other speakers have many new converts to Earth Kind, who will go back to their local American Rose Society chapters to spread the word. For me, it was an interesting day well spent.

A Final 2006 Speaker's Bureau Report By Dorothy Ingram

The Speakers Bureau plugged in over 80 power point presentations. We tuned in some 20 speakers and 15 assistants. We served over 30 organizations plus 2 commercial entities. We purchased 2 Dell laptop computers for our own CCMGA use. We MUST have covered at least a million automobile miles.

We have, as of November 1, 18 programs already scheduled for 2007 (some with speakers committed). Four of those dates are "double" presentations for 2 new organizations (needing 2 speakers for each) and we have added the Plano Garden Club, the McKinney Newcomer's Garden Club, the Fleur deLis Garden Club of Sachse and the City of Frisco Parks & Recreation Department.

Strange stuff from the Speakers Bureau Coordinator: Before planting seeds, test the soil temperature with a naked part of your body. If it's warm enough for you, it's warm enough for the seeds. Weeding burns about 200 calories in 30 minutes - about the same as operating a snow blower, if you recall what that is. Do not plant a herb twice in the same spot. Replace a "cool" with a "hot" such as in mint with curry. These goodies come to us through our Speaker's Bureau audience. Learn and Laugh.

Holidays & Herbs

By Mary Nell Jackson

"God gave us memories so that we might have roses in December."

-J.M. Barrie



Celebrating the seasons of Thanksgiving, Christmas, Hanukkah, or other holidays of our choice or heritage allows gardeners to utilize our harvest during annual traditions and joyous occasions. Herbs have been associated with these celebrations for thousands of years. Many of these traditions originated with harvest time and festivals such as the Winter Solstice. Herbs are used in many ways; decorations, culinary, and symbolism. While many culinary herbs today appear to be garnishes, their original intent was for digestion and healing.

Herbs and flowers served other purposes in ancient times. Each one was assigned a meaning, and as far back as the sixteenth century, their symbolism was honored and carefully recorded into Floral Dictionaries.

Our Thanksgiving turkey with a dressing made of herbs is a classic example of using herbs both for flavoring and purpose. Sage is one herb that is both aromatic and used as a digestive aid. It was discovered during the middle ages in England that sage was useful in the digestion of very fatty meats. Poultry seasoning usually contains: thyme, rosemary, oregano, marjoram, and some even contain ginger which is also a digestive aid. Sage also is known for immortality and domestic happiness.

Many herbs are associated with Christmas. Thyme was used as a manger herb to signify courage and strength. Santolina is the herb of fair linen symbolizing swaddling cloth. The use of horehound offered a wish for good health, and we know this herb to be in our present day cough drops. Pennyroyal with its pleasant aroma is thought to bloom at midnight on Christmas Eve; it repels insects and was considered a manger herb. Christmas herbs include leaves of costmary to add spice to holiday ale [also known as "wassail"] in Europe.

Bay laurel along with other forms of greenery has been used for decorations since ancient times to help celebrate the Winter Solstice. Bay laurel is associated with Apollo, God of Light, and is a reminder that the long winter will soon melt into spring.

Traditional Christmas and Hanukkah feasts of old included: almonds, barley, broad beans, cucumbers, garlic, leeks, lentils, melons, mustard, onions, pistachios, rye, walnuts, and wheat; many of these were served with herbs for seasoning. Fruits might include fresh or fermented grapes or raisins, figs, dates, olives and pomegranates. Herbs were used in the fermenting process.

We must not forget frankincense and myrrh, two of the gifts offered by the Magi to the Christ Child. Gold was the third one. Frankincense and myrrh gum are both scented plant materials which may be classified as herbs. Frankincense has been used for centuries in religious ceremonies and as a medicinal treatment for both internal and external ailments. It is a resin found in small thorny trees known as *Boswellia thurifera* which grow in Africa, Yemen and countries around the Red Sea. The sap oozes from the trees, forming small white pods which harden upon contact with the air and turn yellow. These pods are burned for their aroma. The oil of frankincense is calming and soothing and deepens breathing. Myrrh was used by the Egyptians and Hebrews for incense, cosmetics, perfumes and medicines. Frankincense and myrrh were once considered rare treasures. Myrrh is a resin and is derived from a shrub Commiphora, which is found in Arabia.

Frankincense and myrrh are becoming available today through dealers in potpourri materials. They are blended with gold yarrow which is used as the gold in the gifts from the three kings. Yarrow is also considered a Christmas herb as it is sometimes called "carpenter's weed" because of its folk-healing powers against cuts. It is associated with Joseph the Carpenter.

(Continued on page 6)

(Holidays and Herbs, continued from page 5)

Rosemary is certainly one of the best known Christmas legends. The tale says that the flowers of rosemary were originally white, but the Virgin Mary laid her blue cloak upon the fragrant branches one day, and the flowers turned blue. Rosemary symbolizes remembrance and is surely chosen to remember the meaning of our winter holidays. Today various varieties of rosemary flowers might be white, blue, pink or mauve.

Other herbs associated with Christmas tradition are lavender, a symbol of purity and virtue. Lavender is said to have received its lovely scent when it served as the drying rack for baby Jesus' swaddling clothes. Rue is a symbol of grace and also banishing evil. Thyme is associated with bravery, and costmary represents everlasting life. Our Lady's Bedstraw was another manger herb. This plant was considered a healing herb for fatigue. Costmary may be one of the herbs used by the Virgin Mary to make a healing ointment.

Holly, spruce, and fir all hold a place in our holiday herb tradition. Holly with its red berries is one of the only colorful plants in the winter. Juniper berries and sage were used to season the roast goose or turkey.

The one last herb to note is magical mistletoe, maybe the most romantic of all Christmas traditions. Yes, it is considered an herb. The mistletoe that is sold in America is *Phoradendron flavescens*, but it is the true mistletoe of Europe that is described in the lore. [*Viscum Album*]

Hanging mistletoe in a doorway or from the ceiling became a sign of goodwill and harmony to all visitors; in England it was considered a 'plant of peace'.

In old England, kissing under the mistletoe was considered a pledge of love and marriage. Without a kiss under the plant at Christmas, one's chance of exchanging vows during the next year was slim. The ritual began when a man kissed a woman under the mistletoe, took a berry off the plant and saved each one as a token of the couple's love. When all the berries were gone on the Twelfth and final night of Christmas, the mistletoe was burned. It was believed that if the mistletoe was **not** burned, the couples who kissed beneath it would never marry. Today, mistletoe remains a symbol of warmth and friendship, happiness and good luck. It is wise to note that all parts of the plant are toxic.

The list is endless with the many holiday celebrations and varied customs around the world.

Today most of these traditions are forgotten or misunderstood. Many of these legends have been passed down through the years and must be taken as legends by the reader; on the other hand much of this lore is still being used today. Don't ignore the wilted restaurant parsley on your next visit; eat it as it is a breath freshener and digestive aid.

This year as you celebrate the winter season in your own special tradition, take note of the herbs in your decorations or on your harvest table and the symbolism you see around you, and vow to plant more herbs! ❁

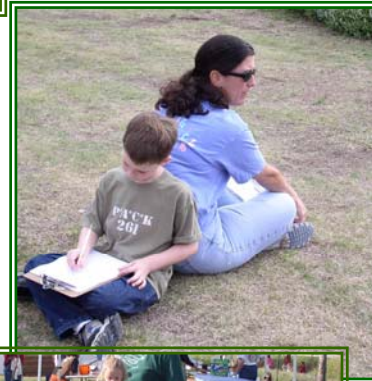


Rooting Kids In Nature

By Nancy Furth



1. Our Scouts in the Garden Fallfest activities were a big success! Kathleen Roberson made Thomas Jefferson's story come alive. She was assisted by Cindy Graham. 2. Erin Hoffer got all the scouts' attention by showing them seeds of every size, including fermenting tomato seeds, while handing out Papitas (roasted squash and pumpkin seeds). 3. Scherle Barth got down to their level filling countless 4-inch pots and explaining how to grow garlic. Marge Bryan and Paula Brehm assisted. 4. Nancy Joslin provided assistance and instruction about the Scientist/Artist activity, and, as you can see by the picture to the right, parents and scout leaders got involved. Carrie Dubberley assisted. Nancy Furth told the story of Anna Botsworth Comstock who was both an artist and scientist.



We are off to a wonderful start sharing our gardening heritage and love of nature with children in Collin County! Thank you for contributing your time ...and thank you to those who supplied the many pots!

Below, Carrie Dubberley did a great job telling the story of Lady Bird's Wildflowers to children and parents at Shades of Green Nursery during their Fall Festival.



We are excited about Extension's community garden plans, our Master Gardener plots, and the use of one as a children's gardening and nature learning center. All of you are welcome to share your ideas with our committee. Please contact Nancy Furth if you would like to get involved with

ROOTING KIDS IN NATURE

PLANT IN THE SPOTLIGHT: LOW COUNTRY SALT MARSH

By Candace Fountoulakis

Hilton Head Island, South Carolina: Looking around at the spreading live oaks draped in 'Spanish moss', saw palmettos and sabal palms, marsh sedge and oyster beds, you knew you were somewhere besides north Texas. Across the intra-coastal waterway between the mainland and Hilton Head, Pinkney Island National Wildlife Refuge boasts thousands of acres of protected salt marsh, the perfect habitat for wading and shore birds, and that other prevalent southern resident, alligators! Wood storks, Great and little blue herons, egrets, ibis and purple gallinules are all found in abundance gathering among the islets and ponds. Bluebirds, warblers, kingfishers and many species of woodpeckers, including the huge pileated (nearly as large as the Ivory-billed, once thought extinct but reportedly rediscovered in Arkansas) compete for your attention with the wild and undisturbed landscapes. The terrain may be flat but there's no shortage of beautiful scenery and unusual plant life to enjoy.



Low Country Live Oak
Photo by Candace Fountoulakis

My tour guide for a two-hour sortie was a resident of the island but native Ohioan who now was a member of the island's Audubon society and specialized in local birding expertise. He was disappointed that more birds were not spotted during our leisurely walk, but I was glad he knew the local flora as well since I enjoy learning about plants from other regions. He schooled me on the differences between the abundant saw palmetto and the sabal (major and minor) palms (the stem of one is squared at the base of the leaflets, the other triangular). I learned about the beautiful sedges (large, grass-like) and salt flats formed in the marshes that are fed with fresh water between high and low tides by large creeks. The names of the creeks tell part of the history of the region, and its connection with famous early settlers of our fledgling nation. Pinkney, for whom the island is named, ran for president twice and was defeated, but was a friend of George Washington and played a large role in South Carolina's state lore.

I had a hard time deciding between my camera lens and the binoculars, there was so much to see and remember. I think a second trip to Hilton Head with a longer lens and more time on foot will satisfy my desire to know the region better. And to get a better shot of the alligator in the pond behind our guest house!

CEMAP Project Update

By Doreen McDonnell

CEMAP (Coordinated Education and Marketing Assistance Program) is a program where industry leaders and Texas A&M University leaders work together to identify superior landscape plants for Texas and work to find the best way to promote these plants in the marketplace. Collin County Master Gardeners are responsible for the general maintenance of the Texas Superstar™ Test Gardens that are part of the Texas A&M and horticulture industry's Coordinated Educational Market Assistance Program (CEMAP). The gardens are located at Texas A&M's Coit Road Research and Extension Center in Dallas.



CEMAP Coordinator Doreen McDonnell, volunteers Gaye Maris and Linda Bolton show off the new tools with CEMAP Director Dr. Wayne Mackay. Photo by Mary Means.

Our Collin County Master Gardener Association donated tools to the CEMAP Gardens at Texas A&M. After working one morning with a rake that could barely function, a Master Gardener requested the donation of tools from the Executive Board. The request was granted, and the tools were delivered in mid-October. Presentation of the tools to the CEMAP faculty and staff was met with cheerful and profuse thanks. Here is a list of the donated tools: 1 anvil lopper 27-inch, 1 hedge shear 10-inch, 2 leaf rakes, 2 bow rakes, 1 shrub rake, 1 field hoe, 1 hand transplanter trowel. So, at the next CEMAP Gardening session, take a look at the new tools and enjoy using them. I want to thank Mary Means for taking the time to go out to the Garden center to purchase the donated items.

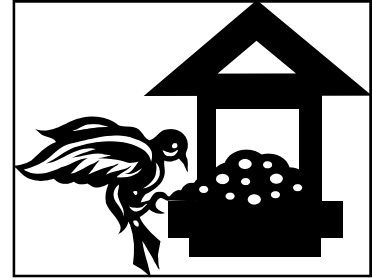
We have been busy at CEMAP gardens putting soil in pots of various sizes for plant trials and potting up transplants. In mid-November, 4-inch pansy plants will be ready for planting into the test gardens. Expect a large planting session and a need for volunteers at that time. We will also be potting up pansies, dianthus, and petunia plants towards the end of the month/beginning of November. If you are in need of hours, they are always in need of volunteers for weeding and tidying up of the gardens.

To date, Collin County Master Gardeners have volunteered 27.5 hours at CEMAP, and we have had a total of 79 people out to volunteer. Everyone's help is greatly appreciated – thank you so much for volunteering your time.

Wintertime Birds

By Mary Means

Have you seen the size of the acorns this year? Red oak acorns have never been so small. They look like shrunken up little nubs that rattle. Live oak acorns are no better. The wild possum haw holly berries are small and dry. If ever there was a fall and winter to provide food for birds and wildlife, it's this one. After a fiery summer with little rain, food in the wild is in short supply. Make a special effort now to supply extra food for birds and wildlife this winter.



Suet cakes in wire racks are a good way to feed birds. Freeze the square cakes, then put them in the wire racks while frozen. That way they are not so messy. Hang them in a tree or on a pole to be enjoyed by woodpeckers, chickadees, titmice, and goldfinches.

Another good way to provide food for birds is with cylinder feeders. Some feeders have tiny slits in them for the food to come out. Fill these with thistle for goldfinches, purple finches, and pine siskins. Other cylinder feeders have larger openings. Fill these with black oil sunflower seeds and they will be visited by chickadees, titmice, and various finches.

There are many other types of bird feeders. Visit a nearby birding store or garden center. Pick something you like and try it. See what comes to your feeder. If you buy a basic bird feeder and fill it with grocery store birdseed, you will likely attract house sparrows and cowbirds. Should this be your result, it might be best to discontinue its use.

One thing to know about house sparrows: they go to bed early and wake up late. This means that, if you put your birdseed out in your feeding spot late in the afternoon, it is less likely that it will all be eaten by house sparrow pests. There is a greater chance that the birdseed will provide a late dinner for native American sparrows such as white crowned sparrows, Harris sparrows, white throated sparrows, juncos and others. When these desirable birds arise early in the morning, they can enjoy a good breakfast before the house sparrows move in. A favorite seed of the native sparrows is white millet. It can be purchased at wildbird stores or sometimes at feed and seed stores. One Master Gardener goes through about 50 pounds of white millet per month during the winter.

There are many ways to feed the birds and wildlife in fall and winter. Natural food supplies are going to be low. Let's help out the birds. Provide food starting now. Happy birding.

Tapis de Fleurs de Bruxelles

Photos by: Deneil LoGiudice
Submitted by Michelle Schwibinger

Every 2 years in Brussels the grand plaza is covered with flowers, a carpet of 800,00 begonias to be exact. The event lasts for only 3 days. This incredible carpet contains 9 huge rotating rosettes of begonias. There is a great article on its history posted at:

http://www.humanflowerproject.com/index.php/weblog/a_new_spin_on_brussels_flower_biennial/



*The glory of gardening:
hands in the dirt,
head in the sun,
heart with nature.
To nurture a garden is
to feed not just on the
body
but the soul.*

-Alfred Austin

Submitted by: Dawn Oldfield

Garden Checklist for November/December

By: Dr. William C. Welch, Professor & Landscape Horticulturist
Texas A&M University, College Station, TX

(The following information was compiled from the 2005 information available at <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/>)

- Place orders for seeds this month so you will have them available when you are ready to plant. By ordering early, you will be more certain of getting the varieties you want. In addition to ordering seeds that you are already familiar with, try a few new kinds each year to broaden your garden contents.
- Don't get in a hurry to prune woody plants. Late December through February is usually the best time to prune them.
- Reduce the fertilization of indoor plants from late October to mid-March. An exception would be plants in an atrium or a well lighted window.
- Drain gasoline from power tools and run the engine until fuel in the carburetor is used up.
- Drain and store garden hoses and watering equipment in a readily accessible location. The lawn and plants may need water during a prolonged dry spell.
- November through February is a good time to plant trees and shrubs. In the Panhandle, planting is often delayed until February or early March.
- Continue to set out cool-season bedding plants, such as pansies, violas, stock, snapdragons, and dianthus.
- Prepare beds and individual holes for rose planting in January and February. Use composted manure, pine bark, and similar materials mixed with existing soil.
- Use good pruning practices when selecting Christmas greenery from landscape plants. Don't destroy the natural form and beauty of the plant.
- Protect your lawn from excessive winter damage by providing irrigation during dry periods.
- Plant spring-flowering bulbs if you haven't already done so. Be sure to refrigerate tulips and hyacinths for 6-8 weeks prior to planting.
- Prolong the life of holiday-season gift plants by providing proper care. Check to see if the pot wrap has plugged up the bottom drainage. Don't over water. Keep out of drafts from heating vents and opening doorways. Fertilizer is seldom needed the first few months.
- Take advantage of good weather to prepare garden beds for spring planting. Work in any needed organic matter, and have beds ready to plant when needed.
- Don't forget tulip and hyacinth bulbs in the refrigerator. They can be planted any time in December if they have received 60 or more days of chilling.
- Want to start cuttings of your favorite Christmas cactus? As soon as it has finished blooming, select a cutting with 4 or 5 joints, break or cut it off, and insert the basal end into a pot of moderately moist soil. Place it on a windowsill or other brightly lit area. The cuttings should be rooted within 3 to 4 weeks.
- Don't spare the pruning shears when transplanting bare-rooted woody plants. Cut the tops back at least one-third to one-half, to compensate for the roots lost when digging the plant.
- Take advantage of bad weather and holiday time to study seed and nursery catalogues as well as good gardening books.
- Berrying plants, such as holly and yaupon, may be pruned now while they can be enjoyed as cut material inside the house.

This article appeared in the September/October 2005 on-line issue of *Horticulture Update*, edited by Dr. Douglas F. Welsh, and produced by Extension Horticulture, Texas Agricultural Extension Service, The Texas A&M University System, College Station, Texas.

Seniors Dig Gardening

By Susan Norton

Residents of the new Pioneer Place Senior home in Plano are busy forming a new garden club. This 65 unit apartment complex, the third Plano Senior Home for elderly and handicapped citizens, is located on Avenue K between Park and 14th Street. Currently, the garden is only a vision of the residents and board members. Weeds, dirt and a small concrete patio is the only development in the backyard for this community of 65 residents. The overall plan is for two more apartment buildings to be constructed in the future on the same lot. This will all wait on HUD funding. Hopefully, the gardens and sidewalks can wind in-between all three buildings forming a relaxing, retreat for residents and their families. The vision is to have donated benches and picnic tables under trees along the concrete paths between the buildings.

The vision is directed by the board member, Dean Stewart who sketched out plots for vegetables and flowers. Residents met in September to sign up for plots and discuss the plans and rules for the garden. Phil Shannon will present Elementary Gardening on November 16th at 10am and Holiday Plants on December 12th at 10am. Meetings are being held to plan starting Horti-therapy for the residents who cannot get out and dig in the garden. Fund-raising and donation soliciting is coordinated by Hazel Edwards and Jodie Rea. The new Pioneer Park Garden Club hopes to get a small shed, some tools and a compost pile for plant debris.

A work day is planned for Saturday, November 4th at 8 a.m. We need some strong backs to help with the tilling before we can build the beds. If you are interested in helping this garden get started, contact Susan Norton, Susan@nortonhub.com (972) 423-5888.

Donations can be sent to Pioneer Park Senior Home, c/o Hazel Edwards, 4204 Merriman, Plano, Texas 75074-3559. Donation receipts and contribution forms are available. Hazele@comcast.net

ANNUAL REPORT

2006

Collin County Master Gardeners Advisory Team for the Arts of Collin County

Following preliminary discussions in the fall of 2005, the Arts of Collin County agreed to work with an advisory team from the Collin County Master Gardener's to assist the landscape architects for the Arts of Collin County Hall.

The request for volunteers was met with overwhelming interest and committee members were enlisted. They are: Carrie Dubberley, Candace Fountoulakis, Jan Madden, Eilene Schroeder and Pat Marquardt.

The committee has now met several times with the design team and toured the property. A suggested plant list was drawn up by the CCMGs for the six major planting areas of the grounds, plus a resource list for plants.

The *Plano Profile* magazine featured the volunteer work of this committee in the October-November 2006 issue.

In addition, the CCMG team offered to provide a demonstration garden prepared, planted and maintained by Master Gardeners. This plan was approved by the design team.

Respectfully submitted,
Pat Marquardt, Contact Person

Volunteer Opportunities:

Pioneer Park Senior Home: A work day is planned for Saturday, November 4th at 8 a.m. We need some strong backs to help with the tilling before we can build the beds. If you can help email Susan Norton at Susan@nortonhub.com

Information Booth: There will be an info booth at Wells Brothers Farm Store, in Plano at 5001 Ave. K near Spring Creek Drive, on November 11. The times are from 9 am to 4 pm. Work morning, afternoon or all day. To volunteer for this opportunity please contact Renee Ferguson at renny-bird@comcast.net.

Help Line: The shifts are from 9 am to 12 pm and 1 pm to 4 pm, Monday through Friday. Contact Sheila Nelson at (972) 548-4232, Monday through Friday.

INFORMATION BOOTHS

By Renee Ferguson

It has been a busy year for information booths. We have been at venues that range from nursery type establishments to city wide events. In the fall the traditional slow-down of outside activities also reflects fewer opportunities to have a booth. There is still one more scheduled information booth to be held at Wells Bros Farm Store on November 11 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. To volunteer, contact Renee Ferguson at renny-bird@comcast.net.

This and That

2006 Intern Class Schedule: November 7 is the last day! It will be a course review, project and committee overview and Telephone answerline practice.

Meetings: November 16, 11:30 a.m. at the Heard Museum in McKinney. Make plans to attend! This will be the Annual Pot-Luck and Seed Exchange.

Save the Date: The CCMG Graduation celebration and dinner will be held on November 30.

Free soil amendments: Horse manure mixed with soil for compost or to put in flower bed is available to anyone interested. Contact Holly Robinson at (972)837-4621. She is in Anna, Texas.

Calendar: The monthly calendars are now available on the CCMGA web site at <http://www.ccmgatx.org/Association/Calendar.htm>

Other events of interest can be found on the Texas Master Gardeners web site at www.texasmastergardeners.org/events/events.html

Special Thanks...

A special word of thanks goes to Rene Mahoney for her efforts in helping clean the storage room in the back of the Extension office. Rene organized this effort and then gave a lot of time and sweat to see it through. Rene does these kinds of behind-the-scenes tasks all the time, and they are greatly appreciated.



Thanks to ECHO Newsletter contributors:

Kathleen Brooks
Renee Ferguson
Candace Fountoulakis
Nancy Furth
Dorothy Ingram
Mary Nell Jackson
Nancy King
Landry Lockett
Deneil LoGiudice
Rene Mahoney
Pat Marquardt
Doreen McDonnell
Mary Means

Susan Norton
Dawn Oldfield
Katherine Ponder
Michelle Schwibinger
Dr. William C. Welch

Send comments and suggestions to: Janice Miller
janicemiller@sbcglobal.net

The submission deadline for the January/February issue of the Echo Newsletter is December 2, 2006. Send submissions to Katherine Ponder at katponder@purelyonline.com

CCMGA
Texas Cooperative Extension Office
825 N. MacDonald Street
Suite 150
McKinney, TX

