

The Seedling

*Newsletter of the Northwest Louisiana Master Gardeners Association
An Affiliate of LSU Ag Center
www.lsuagcenter.com/nwlamg*

Vol. 15 No. 1

January/February 2012

MG ACTIVITIES

PLANT SALE JUST 90 DAYS AWAY

All Plant Sale committees will meet at 1 p.m. Jan. 17 at the Carriage House. Committees established in the fall will form subcommittees in an effort to include everyone in this much anticipated community event. Please join us and help make our sale, coming up on March 31, a huge success.

The best plants are from YOU, and now is the time to begin dividing and potting. We ask that each member send 10 to 15 plants. All plants should be labeled with common or scientific name, color, maturity size and light and water requirements. Forms for listing plants will be e-mailed to members and passed out at our monthly meetings.

Beyond your own gardens, friends or neighbors might have plant divisions that you could ask them to contribute. If you know of a source of plants ready for donation to our worthy sale and need help with digging and potting, call us.

Plans are to hire help in setting up and taking down 60 to 70 tables for the sale. If anyone knows of a group or organization that might want to do this, please contact Becky Wheeler (797-6807 or beckywheeler_2000@yahoo.com) or Ron Calk (687-6527 or rpcalkfam@yahoo.com)

Thanks to you in advance for all your help and generosity. Please call or e-mail if you have questions.

- **Becky Wheeler**

GRANTS GOING TO SEVEN RECIPIENTS

Representatives from two schools and five organizations will attend our January meeting to share the \$20,000 in grants from Master Gardeners: Captain Shreve High School, Centenary College, Common Ground Community, Cypress Area Garden Club, Fuller Center for Housing of Northwest Louisiana, Pink Ribbon Garden and Shreveport Green.

Captain Shreve will use its \$3,700 for the Gator Explorer Butterfly Garden and Outdoor Classroom. Students, with help, will construct the third phase of a learning garden.

Centenary will build a storage shed and fund soil purchases and irrigation for its community garden at the corner of East Rutherford and Oak streets with its \$3,200. Students and area residents will learn and practice organic gardening.

Common Ground Community will improve the community garden at East 68th Street and Southern Avenue with its \$1,500 by buying soil, plants and fruit trees. Produce will go to residents of Cedar Grove.

Cypress Area Garden Club will use its \$2,400 to improve the irrigation at the Hughes House Garden in Benton and to buy trees, shrubs, bulbs and flowers. The garden is open daily and gets about 10,000 visitors a year.

The Fuller Center will get \$5,000 for grading, construction of walls and improvement of irrigation at the Millard Fuller Memorial Park at 1536-1544 Alston St. The Allendale area park is near 43 new homes built by the group.

The Pink Ribbon Garden in Betty Virginia Park is a joint project of the city, Garden Souls Garden Club, Friends of the Pink Ribbon Garden and Shreveport Green. It will use its \$1,500 for plants, soil and mulch to replant an area damaged by the summer drought.

Shreveport Green's \$2,700 will go to a new project, the Community Growing Station, a "cultivator" where plants will be grown from seeds and given to schools, public projects and non-profits of the community. The station will be at Shreveport Green offices, 3625 Southern Ave.

Members of the grants committee are chairman Judy Roemer, Margie Caplis, Penny Durham, Rene Gibson, Mary Catherine Googe, Betty Lawrence, Sandy Lowrey, Lou Osburn and Michele Wiener.

WORLD OF GARDENING

. TEXAN WILL OPEN WOG SERIES IN FEBRUARY

Aubrey King, nursery owner since 1988, will open the 2012 World of Gardening events with a talk at 10 a.m. Wednesday, Feb. 15 at the Barnwell Center. He will tell us what plants will thrive in the wretched weather we have endured in recent months.

King took over his father's nursery in Tenaha, Texas, and says he frequently has customers driving from Shreveport. He raises most of his plants from seeds and cuttings.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Once again I ask myself the same question I do every year at this time. Where did this year go? Seems the older I get, the faster the years fly by. Oh to be a child again, when it seemed like the days just wouldn't go fast enough while I waited for that jolly fat man in a red suit to bring me lots of wonderful surprises under the tree. I thought Christmas would never arrive!

So much for wishing. This year did fly by, but it was a great year of wonderful accomplishments for the Northwest Louisiana Master Gardeners. I don't recall ever working with a group of more friendly, dedicated folks than our 189-strong volunteer organization.

As I look back on 2011, I can't help feeling a sense of pride in the tremendous work you all did in volunteering to make our community a better place to live.

Just off the top of my head, I can name all sorts of events that bettered our community. Please let me brag on you a bit.

- We have more active members than ever before – approximately 185. Of that number there are only 19 men. (Guess we're outnumbered, guys.)
- We now have a lifetime status for Master Gardeners who have over 10 years of active service in good standing. There are 10 lifetime members as of this year and from looking at our records, I think we'll have another good group coming up next year. What an honor! Thank you, lifetime members.
- We have donated funds to the 4H clubs of Caddo and Bossier parishes to help send deserving children to 4H camps.
- Our Grants Committee was able to award \$20,000 in grants in 2011 to non-profit organizations to advance horticulture education or to beautify surrounding communities. The committee has finished work on this year's grants and has chosen seven very deserving recipients to receive portions of another \$20,000. The names of the groups selected will be announced soon.
- Our bulb sale was a huge success this year, raising more money than ever before.
- The 2012 Le Tour is well under way, and the committee has already chosen six fabulous gardens for our May 5-6 event.
- The plant sale is well into the planning stage, and I know it's going to be one of the best we've ever had.
- At our December awards luncheon, over 22 Master Gardeners received awards for volunteer hours, ranging from 102 hours up to 361.

Wow! I could keep on going, but I think you get the picture. We are a great organization that is having a very positive impact on our community. Whether it's answering a phone to help someone with a gardening question or producing a cookbook full of yummy recipes, WE ARE DOING IT.

I've purposely left out names of the individuals who, to quote a southern comedian, "get er done" simply because I'd forget someone and the list would be so long that this short President's Message would take up the whole Seedling. What a great group of folks you are! It's an honor to be associated with you. Happy New Year!

- **Don Toppett**

GREEN THINGS

LEARN ABOUT PRUNING AT THE ROSE CENTER

Pruning will be the subject of the American Rose Center's first Green Thumb Educational Series event on Jan. 14. The presentation is free to the public.

First speaker, at 9 a.m., will be Allen Owings, LSU AgCenter horticulture professor, who will talk on "Basic Tree, Shrub and Ground Cover Pruning Concepts." He will also address the problem of "Pruning Crape Myrtles – Do Not Murder and Ways to Un-Murder." Former Shreveporter Baxter Williams (Byrd High School class of 1957) of Houston will speak on "Pruning Your Roses the Modern Way" at 11 a.m.

Participants will go outside at 10 a.m. for more instruction and a demonstration.

- **Lou Osburn**

OUT AND ABOUT

SIX MGs GO TO WEST VIRGINIA CONFERENCE

Scarecrows, music, food, tours, quilts, vendors and auctions crowded our days at the 2011 International Master Gardener Conference in Charleston, W.V., and those were only the frills. Three keynote speakers and 38 breakout sessions were the main attractions.

Six from northwest Louisiana attended the October meeting: Lil Appel, Sara Burroughs, Donna Camp, Mary Catherine Googe, Molly Rankin and Evelyn Thomas. Rene Schmit, our state coordinator, and three from Lafayette were also there. Nearly a thousand Master Gardeners registered, from 43 states, Canada and South Korea.

Anna Caroline Ball, CEO of Ball Horticultural Co., was my favorite speaker. She sees these trends in gardening:

1. Plants with a purpose (serving health, tourism or the environment)
2. Drama, meaning big plants such as dinosaur kale (“bedding plants are so timid”)
3. Green walls
4. Vertical farming
5. Edible landscapes
6. Product blending (mixing perennials and annuals)

Joe Lamp’l, creator of the TV show “Growing a Greener World,” proved the world is getting greener with examples from all over the country: back yards in Brooklyn, an organic farm near Atlanta, pallet gardening in Massachusetts (plants are on stacked pallets) and vertical gardening on a tenth of an acre near the Los Angeles airport. Remember Graham Kerr, the cooking guru of television fame? He is now a gardening advisor. “Growing a Greener World” is on KLTS at 5 a.m. Sundays.

Rick Darke, landscape designer, defined invasive plants as “native plants that are hyper-adaptive and are from a different place.” (Does that make anyone feel better about kudzu?) Darke favors wildness, chance and accident in the 1.5 acres around his Pennsylvania home, and he refuses gravel, chemicals and concrete. He likes plants that grow on their own; he has a beech tree that grew from a fallen seed. At his place it works.

The best breakout session I attended was one on compost by Barbara Pleasant, who believes “composting is beautiful.”

1. Choose a labor-saving site to save hauling (seven little piles of compost are scattered around her garden).
2. Work with what you have – she composts junk mail.
3. Don’t burn leaves, shred them to reduce bulk and increase leaching. When acids are gone, fungi come and then bacteria.
4. Help decomposers do their job by keeping leaves moist.
5. Don’t use wood ash.

Not the least benefit of her talk was that it saved me from spending \$43 on a “miracle composting sack” a vendor was offering. Check out Pleasant’s website at www.compostgardening.com.

The 2013 International Master Gardener Conference will be a weeklong cruise in early September from Seattle to Alaska. The theme is “Flowers, Fjords and Friends.” Go to uaex.edu/imgc2013/ for information.

- Sara Burroughs



**Googe, Rankin, Burroughs and Thomas at
The Heritage Farm Museum & Village**

Other comments on the conference:

From **Molly Rankin**: I enjoyed the “site” of this conference. With the beautiful fall foliage as a backdrop, the event was a success before we ever heard the first speaker.

Arriving 24 hours in advance of the conference, Sara, Evelyn, Mary Catherine, Fred and I did some sight-seeing, touring the Heritage Farm Museum & Village, described as “A window to our past.. a doorway to our future.” This experience linked us to the early settlers, not only in West Virginia but even our part of the United States. Early settlers were people who carved out homes from trees and blazed trails for travel. They, too, surely took time to appreciate the worth of the native trees, plants and flowers that grew in the area. I’m sure it didn’t take long to figure out what tree’s wood could be hewn into a nice bowl or a bedstead. There was an abundance of medicinal and culinary herbs that were collected and used all year long. We all need to take a step back and be thankful for those who came before us and stood the endurance test and made our life what it is today.

From **Donna Camp**, reporting on John Porter’s talk: Mixing plants to eat and plants for beauty is an old concept. Ancient Persian gardens and medieval monastic gardens contained fruits, vegetables, flowers and medicinal herbs.

Most edible plants require at least six hours of full sun, and most prefer well-drained soil. To extend your harvest, use several cultivars. Among edibles you can grow are spinach, thyme, rhubarb, asparagus, sage, figs, pawpaw, swiss chard, lettuce, kale, basil, dill, chicory and quince. Be sure to have cross-pollinators for plants that require them.

Donna also heard Lee Reich on “My Weedless Garden.” Here’s how he does it:

1. Minimize soil disturbance to keep weeds seeds buried ; don’t use a tiller, as it brings weed seeds to the surface.
2. Designate separate areas for traffic and for plants. It looks better, and you avoid soil compaction.
3. Cover the ground with weed-free organic mulch. Use wood chips on paths; use compost, chips, sawdust and grass clippings in beds.
4. Use drip irrigation to avoid waste and promote feeder roots.

To start a new bed:

1. Flatten or mow vegetation, then fertilize or lime.
2. Cover area with wetted newspaper (no color ink), four sheets thick.
3. Cover paper with two inches of organic materials.
4. Plant immediately (roots will penetrate newspaper).
5. Fertilize if necessary. Soy meal at 2 lb. per 100 sq. ft. is a good source of nitrogen.

From **Evelyn Thomas**: The thing I will remember is the Red, White and Blue Tour of Charleston. Mary Catherine and I were able to take the trolley ride around the downtown area and had no idea where we would be going. When we got on the trolley the man driving asked us if we had a Red, White and Blue card, and it took us a minute to understand that he meant our Medicare card. We did, so we could ride for 35 cents instead of 75s cents. We got to go all around the downtown area seeing the Capitol, the Governor’s Mansion all the other interesting sites in Charleston.

Mary Catherine Googe sent this: Barbara Pleasant said there are several kinds of composting but they all basically do the same thing – reduction!

Stationary composting is “out of sight out of mind” and uses the open method. Not enough moisture is the biggest problem, especially when there is a drought. While turning is optional, according to the speaker, she does suggest “rolling” the compost a couple of feet instead of lifting the whole thing.

Composters can also be purchased at garden centers and online. One example is the “Earth Machine,” but there was no recommendation of one brand over the other.

Pee bails was a new one on me! Here the gardener requests those males so inclined actually “pee” on a bail of hay which then composts – or so the speaker claimed.

Pit composting is simply digging a hole at least 18 inches deep and filling it with compost.



A quilt that Mary Catherine Googe liked

Squash (most varieties), potatoes and peas grow very well right on top of the compost pile, so I want to try this. She also said bulbs can be put in a box at the bottom of the compost pile and they will sprout for forcing blooms.

She suggests buying “night crawlers” for your compost pile as a form of vermicomposting; then release them in your garden in the spring. The addition of five pounds of cheap dog food and/or grass clippings adds extra nitrogen and can be beneficial to the composting process.

IMGC participants got an extra treat from the local Quilt Guild members. Not all were gardeners, but these ladies provided over 50 quilts to decorate the walls of the conference center. They even made and donated a garden-themed quilt to raffle. Master Gardeners were asked to vote on their favorite quilt. Donna Camp and I were attracted to one of the quilts that had photographic blocks of garden sites in West Virginia. Since I quilt too, I was thrilled to see all the beautiful quilts and talk to the quilters who made them.

The gardeners in West Virginia worked very hard to put on a great conference. Wish everyone could have been there!

POTPOURRI

Stacy Eppers, class of 2011, recommends these as “two great books for gardeners”:

Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life by Barbara Kingsolver, Camille Kingsolver and Steven L. Hopp, 2007.

Taking on the challenge of spending a year growing as much of their own food as possible and filling in the blanks with local farmers and ranchers, the Kingsolver family heads home to experience the challenges, the learning and even bonding that occurs when you create your own bounty. Barbara Kingsolver is a bestselling author, and she does not disappoint as she shares her family’s progress. Her husband adds historical and technical explanations from historical perspectives, and her daughter (studying to be a dietician) shares recipes for the food they are growing. Watch the family learn and master growing their own culinary bounty and feel good about ideas to bring your family together over gardening.

The Language of Flowers by Vanessa Diffenbaugh, 2011.

A story of the language of flowers unfolds over the interconnecting lives of some people who use flowers to communicate in every aspect of life. The story is told through Victoria, a girl who is aging out of the foster care system. She finds that her love of flowers, learned from a foster parent of long ago, is her connection to the world. She learns to help others and finally lets herself have relationships. Then she encounters a secret from her past and must decide how to proceed. Diffenbaugh includes the stories of how some of the flowers received their meanings, describes their uses and even supplies a dictionary of flower meanings at the end. You will love the story and how gardening can bring people together. You might also decide to think about your garden selections in a whole new way!

(Ed. note: Shreve Memorial library has both these books.)