

The Seedling

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

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MG ACTIVITIES

READY – SET – GO! IT'S LE TOUR TIME AGAIN

Your tickets are sold, your cookies are made (or, shudder! bought) and you know all the plants in the garden you're assigned to. What next? Jane Drake and her Le Tour des Jardins committee have these requests for the afternoon of May 6, the day before the tour:

1. Bring the ticket money to the Carriage House between noon and 3 p.m. (It's best to make out one check to NWLAMG.)
2. If you did not sell all your tickets, bring the leftovers – ticket chairmen will repackage the tickets for sale at the gardens.
3. Bring your two dozen cookies to the Carriage House for our hospitality table at the Andress garden.
4. And plan to have a good time during Le Tour.

GUIDELINES FOR GUIDES

1. Dress code: white blouse, Master Gardener denim shirt or MG t-shirt with denim jeans or navy skirt or pants; khaki pants are also acceptable. No shorts, please. All guides must wear their name tags. Wearing of the MG apron is encouraged.
2. Be at the garden an hour before Le Tour begins if you are on the first shift. For the second shift, please be there half an hour before you are to start your shift in order to make a smooth transition.
3. Arrangements for use of restroom facilities will be made for MG volunteers.
4. It is most important that guides visit with the guests who have paid to see the gardens. Please do not group up and talk to each other. Please encourage guests to visit the Pioneer Heritage Center at LSUS to see the vendors. Be able to explain what a Master Gardener is.
5. Guides should become familiar with the plants in the garden or section of garden where they are so they can identify them for visitors and possibly offer culture suggestions.
6. Smoking by guides is prohibited while they are stationed in the garden. If they must smoke, they must leave the garden.



Mary Wark's kitchen in the garden

7. If a garden guide must have a phone, calls should be taken and placed outside the garden. Phones should be placed on vibrate.
8. Garden guides who will not be able to fulfill their obligations as scheduled should notify the volunteer coordinator, Cookie Duet, 797-4759 or cell, 518-0745, as soon as possible so a replacement can be found. It would be helpful to notify the head garden guide as well. Simply not showing up is not acceptable.
9. There must be no cursing, foul language or inappropriate topics of conversation in the gardens.
10. Please consume water and snacks out of sight of the guests. Water and snacks will be provided for the guides by the head guide for each garden.
11. Each garden guide and head garden guide is expected to purchase a ticket for Le Tour. Children under 12 are permitted to visit the gardens when escorted by an adult. Children 12 or older must have a ticket.
12. Neither guests nor Master Gardeners may take pets into the gardens. If guests do show up at a garden with a pet, ask them to please hold their pets when going through the garden.
13. Ticket takers are to clearly and boldly mark each ticket as the guest enters the garden.
14. Garden guides are asked to park away from the homes so that guests may park closer.
15. At the end of Sunday's session, guides should make sure nothing is left behind (tables, trash, water, ice chests, signs, money, tablecloths).
16. Anyone who needs to change his or her assignment must contact Cookie Duet and get her approval. Failure to do so creates staffing and scheduling problems.
17. If members of the press show up at your garden, they should show the ticket takers their credentials. They may enter without a ticket; however, any guest with them must have a ticket.

PLANT SALE NETS \$11,000

More than a hundred customers were waiting at 8 a.m. on a Saturday in early April when Don Toppett blew a horn and admitted them to the Master Gardener Plant Sale. By 9 a.m. the coleuses had been swept away, the herb table was empty and the Proven Winners hydrangeas were proven popular. Other fast sellers were pink turk's cap, bush morning glory and angel trumpets. Louisiana irises were apparently not as desirable as usual.



Sale director Gary Northen was pleased by the weather, the workers and the outcome. By the Wednesday after the sale, he said our profit was about \$11,000. Leftover plants will be sold at the Pioneer Heritage Center during Le Tour, May 7-8. Veteran customers brought wagons and other wheeled instruments to carry their purchases. Those new to the sale brought pots to the checkout tents, left them and went back for more. (MGs selling raffle tickets and Le Tour tickets were often asked to babysit plants.)

Northen declared he is not a candidate for directing the plant sale next year. "It is not a job for someone who is working 40 hours a week," he said.

Northen gives last instructions before the sale

OUR CLASS OF 2011

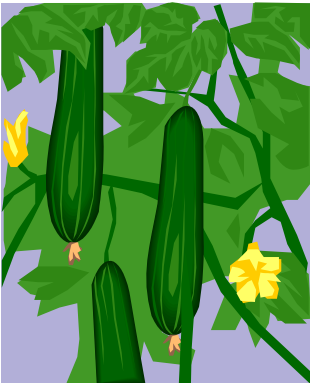
New Master Gardeners are Dottie Arceneaux, Carol Barr, Ronald Calk, Dianne Campbell, Lowell Crockett, Priscilla Daigle, Stacy Eppers, Barbara Gramling, Madeline Haynie, Melissa Marcotte, Nora McClure, Dottie Murray, Bridget Nicholson, Linda Scott, Luther Sharbono, Janis Showman, Melissa Simon, Francis Thigpen, Karen Toppett and Julia Washburn, all of Shreveport; Denis Gomery, Gilliam; Zina Guinn, Elm Grove; Linda Harris, Stonewall, Heath Mathes, Mooringsport; Barbara Thompson, Gloster; Rhonda MacIsaac and Dannette Moench, Bossier City. Marcotte will represent the class on the Master Gardener board of directors.

GREEN THINGS

THERE'S MORE TO CUCUMBERS THAN YOU THINK

Most of us think of cucumbers as green, seed-filled slices on a salad. Long, green cucumbers are by far the most popular for home gardens, but there are hundreds of cucumber varieties, including round, yellow ones, skinny English ones and exotic, ridged Armenian cucumbers. Most Americans have never tasted a crunchy cucumber, fresh from the garden and beautiful without a coat of wax to shine it up.

Cucumbers (*Cucumis sativus*) are in the same family as squash and melons. A popular way to categorize cucumbers is as either slicers or picklers. Pickling cucumbers can be eaten fresh, but they also hold their texture well in processing. Size of the plant varies with variety. Vining cucumbers can easily cover four to six feet of ground. Bush varieties don't travel as far, but they can spread out four feet in every direction. Most begin producing within 48 to 70 days from seed. Cucumbers are best harvested slightly immature. Mature cucumbers yellow and start to decline and become bitter. Seeded varieties will develop more of the seed pulp, the longer you leave them on the vine. Check your seed package or label for the recommended harvesting size for your variety. Since cucumber vines are scratchy and unpleasant to touch, cucumbers are usually cut from the vine. You can twist the stem and snap the cucumbers off the vines, but pulling them off can bring the whole vine with you.



Fruits can vary from an inch or two long to over a foot. There are even round cucumbers. The outer skin is usually green or yellow and can be tender or tough. Most varieties are sprinkled with spines, which wipe off easily. Parthenocarpic varieties are seedless. Some varieties are Marketmore, one of the most prolific, easy growing varieties; Lemon, a round, pale yellow heirloom; Armenian, thin-skinned and crunchy; English, thin skinned and mild tasting; Bush Champion, Spacemaster, Bushmaster – anything with "bush" in its name is great for growing in containers.

Cucumbers like a slightly acidic to neutral soil pH of about 5.5 to 7.0. They are easily direct-seeded in the garden. You can find cucumber seedlings, but they transplant best when still young. They are heat lovers. Plant both seeds and plants after all danger of frost. Allow the soil to warm and dry out some. If you are starting seeds indoors, seed them about three or four weeks before you plan to transplant. Sowing in peat or paper pots will lessen transplant shock. Plant seeds about half an inch deep. You can plant cucumbers in long rows, "hills" or clusters of 3-4 seeds sown within inches of each other.

Cucumbers are mostly water. Give the vines at least an inch of water per week, especially when fruits are present. Don't let them sit in wet soil. Vine crops tend to be heavy feeders, and cucumbers are no exception. Start with a rich soil and side dress with compost once the plants start blooming. Give them another dressing or dose of fertilizer about three weeks later, in mid-season.

- Marie Ianotti, www.about.com

RECYCLE PLASTIC AND FORCE BULBS

Mary Lipsey sent these directions for an easy homemade bulb forcer container:

1. Remove the label from a used plastic water bottle. Cut the bottle in half with a sharp knife or scissors. Invert the top half into the bottom half, and tape the two pieces together.
2. Place a bulb root side down so that the sloped neck of the bottle holds it upright. Fill the bottle with just enough water to cover the bulb's base. To make it more attractive, cover the container with a cylinder of pretty paper.

WORLD OF GARDENING

SOUTH LOUISIANA NURSERY OWNER TO SPEAK

June 1 is the date for our next World of Gardening event – Margie Jenkins, owner of the internationally known Jenkins Farm and Nursery near Amite, La., will speak at 10 a.m. at the Gardens of the American Rose Center on Jefferson Paige Road.

Palms, gingers, daylilies and azaleas are among the plants she and her four children – Margie Ann, Tim, Jeff and Mark – sell. She is a charter member of the Louisiana chapter of the Azalea Society of America. In the early 1980s she crossed *Rhododendron canescens* and *R. pericylmenoides* and now has plants six to eight feet tall, dark pink to lavender pink. She has named one ‘Tchefuncte’ after the stream that runs through her land.

In the last two years Jenkins has been the nurserywoman of the year for numerous plant organizations. She has been in the plant business for 60 years and is known to work harder and faster than any of her employees. If Margie can’t propagate a plant, it can’t be done.

Let’s learn from Margie. Her plant wisdom can be ours too!

- **Lou Osborn, WOG co-chair**

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

“Sweet April showers do bring May flowers.” And what impressive spring flowers we have!

I also continue to be impressed with all that is going on in the Northwest Louisiana Master Gardeners Association. I am sure you have heard how successful the Spring Plant Sale was. Congratulations to Gary Northen, Debby Evans and their committees for a very successful plant sale.

Next on our schedule is Le Tour des Jardins, an event that Jane Drake and her committee have been working on since last summer. Thinking ahead to our fall Bulb Sale, committee head Paul Ferguson is already gathering bulbs. If you have anything that you would like to contribute to the bulb sale, get in touch with him.

We have even more reason to celebrate. Congratulations are also due our 2011 trainee class. We have now added 28 new members to our organization. By all reports, this class has been truly remarkable, and I look forward to working with each of them. The graduation ceremony was April 13 at the Randle T. Moore Center. Thanks to all who brought such great eats. We are blessed with the talents and generosity of so many.

Enjoy your garden in this beautiful spring weather because before we know it the hot days of summer will be upon us.

“When you have only two pennies left in the world, buy a loaf of bread with one and a lily with the other.” Chinese proverb

- **Michele Wiener**

OUT AND ABOUT

8TH ANNUAL DOWN AND DIRTY PLANT SEMINAR

Four excellent speakers appeared at the Sabine Parish Master Gardeners' Down and Dirty Plant Seminar in mid-February. Helen Herzog and I heard these talks:

- Dr. Neil Odenwald, LSU landscape architecture professor emeritus, "Planning Your Home Landscape." If you have never heard Dr. Odenwald, please do yourself a favor and put him on your bucket list! He is the BEST in designing the southern garden, if you like a natural, native plant, wildlife-friendly type of yard.
- Dr. Allen Owings, LSU professor at the Hammond Research Station, "New Plants for Spring." He gave us the latest scoop on the Southern Living Plants for 2011 and other up-to-the-minute news about plants they have been testing at the research station. He welcomes visitors there anytime.
- Michael D. Seal, owner and operator of the "Funny Farm" in Poplarville, Miss, "Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Bromeliads." The most unusual thing I heard was to drape a banana peel over your staghorn fern, and then stand back, it will grow so fast! Tried it and it worked.
- Meld Siebe, president of the Herb Association of Texas and a homeopathic nurse practitioner, "Growing and Using Herbs for Their Flavor-Enhancing and Healing Qualities." Ask me about her "sassy tea." I have not been brave enough to try it, but it is supposed to heal all that ails you.

Master Gardeners served lots of tasty homemade treats at break times, and a delicious lunch was catered by Cypress Bend. A good selection of herbs and bromeliads were available for purchase

Cypress Bend Resort is located in the piney woods of northwest Louisiana on beautiful Toledo Bend Reservoir, exactly 90 miles from Shreveport. For us garden lovers, the landscaping is a treat, and there is even an informative notebook in the lobby identifying all of the plants in the flowerbeds. Our husbands spent the day fishing on Toledo Bend with a guide recommended by the concierge. Golf is also available. Accommodations are either in the lodge overlooking the lake or in condominiums overlooking the golf course. We had a nice dinner in the pub style restaurant Saturday night and a lovely buffet breakfast in the dining room Sunday morning. What a pleasant way to spend a weekend *and* earn hours of education credit!

- **Julie Roper**

ON THE ROAD TO TEXAS AGAIN

More than 50 Master Gardeners and a few guests visited the Dallas Arboretum in late March, braving dark clouds, cold winds and hundreds of schoolchildren. (One thing we learned is that Wednesdays are visiting days for Dallas schools; the five school buses in the parking lot should have been a tip.)

Tulips had been beat down by the previous day's hard rain, but most of the plants were thriving: many Japanese maples, lush azaleas, delicate foxgloves, clematis, agave, euphorbia. Winding paths led us to small ponds, a reflecting pool, two fountains, a stream and a couple of waterfalls. The 66-acre garden backs up to White Rock Lake, so there are many water views.



The gardens were once the estate of Everette DeGolyer, an oilman whose widow, Nell, left it to Southern Methodist University in 1972. SMU sold it to the city, which added 22 acres and built the arboretum. Several rooms of the DeGolyer Spanish colonial revival-style home are open to visitors. Some of Nell's hatboxes from Neiman-Marcus are still in the master suite. Built in 1940, it was the first air-conditioned home in Dallas; but on the day we were there, the blazing fireplaces in the living room, library and master bedroom were the most attractive parts.

Many thanks go to Curtis Williams for organizing our second annual field trip. The Dallas expedition was just as much fun as the one to Fort Worth last year.

- **Sara Burroughs**

Donna Shope, Peggy Bennett, Kay Dixon and Pat Leach take a break.

WORLD'S TALLEST CYPRESS

My husband and I recently went to Casselberry, Fla., just north of Orlando, to spend a week with his mother. So many beautiful flowers were in bloom, but the azaleas were just amazing!

We also went to a small park where they profess to have the World's Tallest Cypress Tree and its "mate." The tree is simply called "The Senator." It is approximately 3,500 years old, diameter is 17 ½ feet, and it is or was 118 feet tall. A hurricane went through and took out the top of the tree, and they had to put a fence around it to keep people from carving into it, but it is still a stately sight.

The "mate," Lady Liberty, is just a baby at over 2,000 years old, diameter of 10 feet and a height of 89 feet. She is a mere 40 feet from The Senator, and both get plenty of attention from schoolchildren and visitors each year. I wish we had been able to see them in their prime as well as get close enough to take pictures for comparison. It is still quite a sight. They are surrounded by the natural plants of Florida and protected as well as they can be from people and nature doing any more damage.

- **Linda Anderson**