



## Aransas/San Patricio

December 2009

### The President's Corner



Lonnie Matthew

Gosh, it seems like this year has just flown by. This is my last message to you all. I want to thank all of you that have contributed so much to the Aransas/San Patricio Master Gardener Assn. this year. There are a few that I have to acknowledge by name. Thank you, Marsha Hendrix for your gentle reminders; Ellen and Cyndi and all your helpers for the great plant sales; Mary Ellen (I miss you already),

Suzannah and all the members who pitched in where needed to make the Hidden Garden Tour successful again this year; Elayne has made a world of difference as chair of the Communication committee and all of the newspaper article authors as well as our wonderful website; Sandy Stanley for filling in as chair in my absences and for chairing the "planning" committee; Beth and Susan for keeping up with our money and words; Heather and Janice for shepherding the landscape committee; Ronell for helping make our presence known throughout the community through Outreach; and Ernie and Thea who help keep us grounded. These leaders could not have been successful without the support that the membership provided.

I believe that Ellen is going to be a great President next year and encourage all of you to help her to continue to make this organization all that it can be. There will be challenges with the new building and the changes in the gardens, but if we all work together, we can sail through.

Let's have a great turn out for the intern graduation on the 1<sup>st</sup>. This is a great class and we wholeheartedly welcome them.

**GA Garden Day**  
December 4th  
8:00 - 11:00 am

**Pot Luck Dinner Meeting & MG Class Graduation**  
December 1  
6:00 pm  
**Saltwater Pavilion**  
@ Rockport Beach Park

Brisket Provided  
Bring your favorite Side Dish or Dessert  
Guests Invited!

**Results from Tin Can Raffle will be announced.**  
**November 30th**  
**Last Day to Buy Tickets!**

### Happy Birthday !

John Gravell III, 2<sup>nd</sup>  
Gay Hejtmanick, 8<sup>th</sup>  
Ann Schick, 13<sup>th</sup>  
Linda Collins, 14<sup>th</sup>  
Janelle Jensen, 15<sup>th</sup>  
Barb McSpadden, 16<sup>th</sup>  
Vicki Coble, 24<sup>th</sup>  
Nan Jackson, 26<sup>th</sup>  
Janice Holland, 29<sup>th</sup>  
Ray Ahlers, 30<sup>th</sup>

**2009 Officers**  
**President: Lonnie Matthew**  
**1st VP: Sandy Stanley**  
**2nd VP: Ellen Reisinger**  
**Secretary: Susan Lopez**  
**Treasurer: Beth Wilson**  
\*\*\*\*\*

**Extension Agent:**  
**Amy Freeman**  
**Extension Office Manager:**  
**Ernie Edmundson**  
**Secretary: Thea Edmundson**  
\*\*\*\*

**Website:**  
**www.aspmastergardeners.org**

### Seeking Serious Plant Lovers

Texas Master Gardeners are a team of volunteer horticulture educators who are under the auspices of:



Green Acres is our award winning demonstration garden located at 611 E. Mimosa, Rockport, Texas. The gardens showcase plants and landscape schemes suitable for the Coastal Bend. For help with plant problems, or for class information, please call (361) 790-0103, or email aransas-tx@tam.u.edu

#### Editors

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Ernie Edmundson  
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### December Brown Bag

**Tuesday, December 15 12:00-1:00 pm**

*What is a Master Naturalist?*

By Ray Kirkwood, Master Naturalist

Aransas County Library, 701 E. Mimosa, Rockport

### In Area Newspapers this month watch for...

*The Plants and Flowers of Christmas -*

Jeanna Godfrey

*Become a Master Naturalist - Lonnie Matthew*

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**Our Mission:** *Improving the lives of people, businesses, and communities across Texas and beyond through high-quality, relevant education.*

## From Our Writers

### *The Plants and Flowers of Christmas*

By: Jeanna C. Godfrey, DVM, Master Gardener,  
Aransas/San Patricio Master Gardeners

Many plants are traditionally associated with Christmas. Try to imagine this special holiday without thinking of a colorful poinsettia gracing the occasion. Even the accepted red and green color theme is based on a religious ceremony incorporating plants.

In the 1300s - a time of widespread illiteracy- Adam and Eve's Day was celebrated on December 24<sup>th</sup> each year. Churches often used plays to teach the local populace concepts of religious importance. The "Paradise Play," presented on December 24<sup>th</sup>, was the story of Adam and Eve and their fall from grace in the Garden of Eden. Because there were no apple trees fruiting in the middle of winter, a pine tree with red decorations tied to its branches served as the Tree of Good and Evil. The concept quickly spread among churches and became so popular in Germany, many private citizens adopted the tradition, eventually associating the green of the pine tree and the red of the "apples" with Christmas.



The poinsettia was introduced to the United States by Dr. Joel Poinsett, our first Ambassador to Mexico. A native of our southern neighbor, the plant was revered by Mexicans because the star-

shaped "flowers" resembled the Star of Bethlehem. Actually, the colored leaves often thought of as flowers surround the true flowers, which are the small yellow blossoms in the center.



The tradition of stealing a kiss under the mistletoe dates to pagan times when Norsemen revered the plant as symbolic of their Goddess of Love.

This parasitic plant was

most obvious in the dead of winter when not hidden by the leaves of its host plant. Christians substituted holly for the pagan mistletoe, viewing the berries as symbolic of Christ's blood and the thorny leaves His Crown.



Several Christian legends extol the

virtues of certain plants at Christmastime. One involves rosemary, sugarcane and the date palm. According to this legend, the plants argued among themselves as to which had provided the holy family the greatest benefit. The palm said she gave them shelter from the heat and fruit to eat. Sugarcane retorted she provided them sweetness. The rosemary remained silent, feeling she had nothing special to offer the family, not even pretty flowers. As Mary washed the swaddling clothes she looked around for something to hang them on to dry. She asked the palm to bend her head but the tall tree could not bend low enough to reach Mary. Sugarcane tried to hold the wet clothes but her branches were weak and the clothes fell to the ground. Finally, Mary laid the clothes across the rosemary bush, which cradled them gently while they dried. Mary blessed the plant, giving it flowers the color of her robe.



The herb, sage, is also associated with Christmas in Christian lore. According to legend, Mary and Joseph fled Egypt with the baby Jesus to protect him from Herod. On their journey, they ran out of water and Joseph left Mary to get water from a nearby village. While he was gone, Mary heard soldiers approaching and looked for somewhere to hide. She asked a rose bush for shelter, but it refused, which is why roses have



thorns. The clove bush also refused to hide her and grew unpleasant smelling flowers. The sage plant graciously agreed to shelter her, blossoming to provide safe haven as the soldiers passed

by. In gratitude, Joseph and Mary called the plant sacred and it is believed by many cultures to have curative and protective powers.

Frankincense and myrrh, gifts from the Three Wise Men to the baby Jesus, were derived from plants which had great value in Biblical time. In addition to their fragrance, both plants were highly prized for medicinal purposes. Even today, extracts from these plants are used



Continued from page 2

in herbal and Asian medicine to treat a variety of ailments, including arthritis pain and liver disorders.

So this holiday season, take a moment to consider how many of our beloved holiday traditions, foods, and decorations are derived from plants. Look closely at the poinsettia and examine the "true" flowers; steal a kiss from a loved one under the mistletoe; and recall the original Christmas trees as you hang your colorful decorations. Merry Christmas!

2010 Dues and December hours are due on December 15th. Hours earned from Dec, 15-31 are reported on January 31st



Aransas/San Patricio Master Gardeners

Mailing: 301 N. Live Oak
Rockport, TX 78382
Phone: (361) 790-0103
Fax: 361-729-3937

2010 Master Gardener & Intern Membership Registration Form

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ (First) (Middle) (Last)

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State & zip code: \_\_\_\_\_

Physical Address (If different from above): \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell: \_\_\_\_\_ Birthday \_\_\_\_\_

Work Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ FAX: \_\_\_\_\_

When did you take the class? \_\_\_\_\_ Which County \_\_\_\_\_

This information is included in the Aransas/San Patricio Master Gardener Directory.

Membership dues are \$15 and cover January 1 – December 31, 2010.

Dues should be in the Extension office by December 15, 2009.

Please make your check payable to: Aransas/San Patricio Master Gardeners
Mail to: Aransas/San Patricio Master Gardeners, 301 N. Live Oak, Rockport, TX 78382.

Members of the class of 2009 do not pay dues.

## Caring for Holiday Plants

Want to keep your Christmas plants around for a while? Here are some tips:

### **Poinsettia:**

Keep in bright light but not direct sun. Mist if your home is dry. Let soil dry between watering. Poke holes in the foil wrapper or remove it. Keep away from drafts, either cold or warm.

### **Christmas cactus:**

Water thoroughly, and again when the top inch of soil is dry. Give it as much humidity as possible, perhaps with a container of water nearby. Avoid drafts. Keep in a well-lighted location. Want it to bloom again? It is tricky, but doable. In September or October, put the cactus in a room where the temperature stays around 50 degrees. Pick a spot where there is no artificial light at night. Give it indirect but bright light during the day.



### **Amaryllis:**

This showy bloomer is easy to care for. Keep it in a sunny spot all winter, and it's OK to take it outdoors in summer as long as it doesn't get direct sun. It will only have leaves by then. Bring it indoors in fall and reduce watering gradually, stopping by Oct. 1. When the foliage dries, remove it. Allow it to rest. Bring it back to the light, water and fertilize. It may not bloom right at Christmas, but the color is even more welcome a month or so later.

### **Cyclamen:**



Water whenever soil feels dry, but don't get water on the plant. Give as much light as possible; indirect sun is best. As flowers fade, gradually allow plant to dry out for two to three months. You should see new growth around fall. Resume watering and fertilizing. It's OK to put outdoors in summer, but temperature should never go below 50 degrees.

### **Mums:**

Thanksgiving mums are usually forced to bloom and need a rest. Allow mums to go dormant. Some sources say you can put potted mums outside. I know they do fine in the ground but I think I would try the garage for those in pots. When you see new growth in spring, give it lots of sun, water and some fertilizer. Cut back to 1 to 2 inches once in spring and again in late June. That will give you a fuller, sturdier plant with more blooms in fall.

# Around the State

**Kristie Kringle's Garden Shoppe  
Holiday Party  
At Botanical Gardens and Nature Center  
December 5 & 6!**

From hummingbird feeders to armadillo banks and wildlife wood sculpture—*new and unique gifts, tasty refreshments, and SANTA*, await South Texas Botanical Gardens & Nature Center visitors at Kristie Kringle's **Garden Shoppe HOLIDAY PARTY**, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Saturday and Sunday, December 5 and 6, in the Visitors Center, 8545 S. Staples. The event is open to the public. Visitors Center admission is free!

# December 2009

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 1:30 pm MG class 6 pm Potluck & Graduation	2	3	4 8-11am Green Acres Garden Day 10:30 am Landscape Committee	5 11 am TMGA Board Meeting, College Station
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15 12-1 pm Brown Bag  <i>MG Dues &amp; Hours Due</i>	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24 County Holiday	25 County Holiday	26
27	28	29	30	31 No hours due until Jan. 31 (Dec. 15 - Jan. 31)		