



Aransas/San Patricio

September 2010

The President's Corner



Back in June my President's Message was about the Planning Committee. As you all know, the Planning Committee (previously called the Strategic Planning Committee) meets yearly to review the current Aransas/San Patricio Master Gardeners Bylaws and Policies and Procedures as well as to address any long range planning issues. Meetings have been open to all members who wish to attend.

I would like to acknowledge everyone on the Planning Committee for all their hard work and diligence. This year the Planning Committee has been meeting regularly since March. This is a dedicated team and they have worked very hard to revise the Bylaws and Policies and Procedures. This year there is a major overhaul and you will see many changes. The Planning Committee expects to conclude their work next month. Upon completion, the revised Bylaws and Policies and Procedures will be sent to the Board of Directors for their approval. After Board approval, the Bylaws and Policies and Procedures will then be sent out to the general membership. General membership voting will be at the November Meeting, so there will be time for members to thoroughly review the documents before voting. Please take time to go over the revised Bylaws and Policies and Procedures. We welcome all your opinions and comments. Thank you, Ellen

GA Garden Days
September 10th & 24th
7:30 - 9:30 am

Special Evening
Spruce-Up for
HummerBird
Celebration
September 13th
5:00-6:00pm

2010 Officers
President: Ellen Reisinger
1st VP: Gay Hejtmancik
2nd VP: Loretta Brandt
Secretary: Frances Frizzell
Treasurer: Beth Wilson

Extension Agent:
Virginia Easton Smith
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@tamu.edu

Editors

Marsha Hendrix
marsha.hendrix@the.state.tx.us

Ernie Edmundson
aransas-tx@tamu.edu

Herbs for South Texas Seminar

Saturday, September 11, 10:30 am–12:30 pm

Selecting, growing & cooking with herbs through the year.

By Linda T. Collins, Master Gardener

Aransas County Library, 701 E. Mimosa, Rockport

September Brown Bag

Tuesday, September 21 12:00-1:00 pm

**Earth-Kind Landscapes:
Conserving Water, Saving Money**

By Marilee Bell, Master Gardener

Aransas County Library, 701 E. Mimosa, Rockport

General Meeting
Tuesday,
September 7
6:00-8:00 pm
Senior Center
912 S. Church
Potluck
'DELI' night

The Food Committee will be providing a meat and cheese tray, a variety of breads, condiments and iced tea. Please bring some delicious sides like salads and desserts that you would see at a great deli! See you there!

Happy Birthday !

Mark Bermea 7th
Sandy Stanley, 10th
Rose Finley, 17th
Anneliese Dahle, 18th
Mary Ware, 26th

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

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

From Our Writers

How to Grow Texas Bluebonnets

By Anita Garrett-Roe, Master Gardener

Wouldn't it be great if we could do something that would help our environment, reduce our mowing and watering, and at the same time create tons of enjoyment for ourselves and our neighbors? We can achieve all of that by planting some bluebonnets in a patch in our very own yards. We can dedicate several square feet of blue bonnets in one sunny area of our yards or we could tuck them into existing flowerbeds.

Bluebonnets attract insects, which attract beautiful birds, and thus help the environment. A lot of habitat has been lost and we can create habitats in our own yard that will help nature and conservation of species.

Take a look at your yard and see if there is a small area you can dedicate to a stand of bluebonnets, for starters. Going au natural will save you from some lawn mowing as well as saving on your water bill. Once Texas Bluebonnets are established, it is very likely that you will see them coming up in the same spot year after year.

We actually have five species of *Lupinus*, known as the Texas Bluebonnet, all of which are considered the official state flower. The most common species is *Lupinus texensis*, seen in the Coastal Bend; it prefers darker, clay soils. Other species which are prominent are *L. subcarnosus*, sometimes called the Sand Bluebonnet; and *L. havardii*, a tall species seen in West Texas.

Since they grow so abundantly alongside the roads and highways of Texas, it seems like they should be pretty easy to grow, but it can actually take several years of waiting to get a good stand of them. This is why people often believe growing bluebonnets is difficult.

There is a little secret to get a good showing the first year they are planted, and Certified Master Gardeners who volunteer at the AgriLife Extension office are happy to answer questions about how to do it, but to save you the time of making that phone call,



L. havardii

read on below.

When bluebonnets are seeded they don't all germinate in the first year. In fact, usually the first year or two the germination rate is quite low. This is why some people think they are hard to grow. Nature does this to insure that there will be enough plants that survive, no matter what happens, such as if there were to be a prairie fire or a long drought. If all the seeds germinated at the same time, the whole crop could be wiped out in a natural disaster.

The tricky thing about bluebonnets is that their seeds have very hard shells which delays the germination by a year or more. When the seeds are in the ground, the subtle movement and friction from soil will lightly wear down the shell coating and eventually, if water is available, let in moisture so the seed can germinate.

Help nature along by scarifying (breaking the seed coat) the seeds yourself before sowing them. Once scarified, most seeds will germinate quickly. To scarify the seeds, nick them with a knife or lightly sand them with sandpaper. Another very simple technique is to freeze the seeds overnight, then pour boiling water over them, and leave them to soak in this water for several hours at room temperature.

You can also put them in a jar with a few jagged small rocks inside and shake them up. Scarification and then planting the seeds is a fun project to do with your children. All winter long, they will be anticipating seeing their bluebonnets come up in the spring.

Scarified seeds need to have water throughout the winter and early spring dry spells so they don't die. Scarification will increase the number of seeds that germinate, but there is no guarantee that this will result in healthy self-seeding stand of bluebonnets, so you have to keep your fingers crossed! This is why most farmers are religious. They pray for a good crop! Self seeding is what your bluebonnets will do after the blooms are gone, thus planting more seeds in the ground for future years.



L. subcarnosus



Lupinus texensis

From Our Writers Continued

Continued from page 2

October and November are good times to plant Texas Bluebonnets, however, early October is best. They are annuals that go to seed, and have to have new seeds germinating every year, in order to have a bluebonnet plant. They seem like perennials which come up on their own from the same plant year after year, but they are not.

Choose a sunny, well drained area; south and west facing slopes encourage early spring blooming. If your patch is now weedy, mow it down to 6-8 inches high, then rake up the thatch to expose the soil so the seeds can make contact with the bare soil. For bare ground, lightly till up the soil, easy to do by hand, so that the seeds can easily take hold in the soil as they germinate.



To get an even distribution if you hand broadcast the seeds, mix them with some sand. After sprinkling them onto the land, walk over the area to insure that they make good contact with the soil.

Bluebonnets need water to germinate but they do not like soaking wet soil, so go easy on the watering. If fall or winter rainfall is low, a light sprinkling of water with long spaces of time between watering is a good idea. If you add a patch of bluebonnets to



your yard and go natural, you could disconnect any water sprinkling system that goes to that area of your yard, thus saving on your water bill.

Don't mow your patch until the bluebonnets have formed mature seedpods, about 6-8 weeks after flowering. The seedpods turn brown or yellow and appear dry. These pods will empty out their seeds, thus creating more bluebonnets for the following year, on into the future, depending on the germinations occurring.

Now you know the secret of raising bluebonnets. You can find out about how to have success with other plants, shrubs and trees by asking a Certified Master Gardener.

Upcoming Activities

HummerBird Celebration

Volunteer at the Butterfly Tent on Friday, Saturday, & Sunday September 17,18, 19. Rockport/Fulton High School.



Earn Continuing Education Hours by attending any of the approved programs: Milkweeds for Monarchs, Wildscaping, Lasagna Gardening, Butterflies of the Coastal Bend, Where Are All the Hummingbirds?

Earth-Kind Landscaping Class

Tuesdays, Oct 5-Nov 16, 6:00-9:00 pm
Registration Thursday, September 30
\$75 and \$20 each additional family member



Enrollment limited.

AgriLife Ext Office, 611 E. Mimosa, Rockport

From Our Extension Agent



Congratulations to Judy Goodner and Chris Kelly on their certification as Master Gardeners! Chris has recertified and Judy certified for the first time.

Fun, camaraderie, and exercise! Please join in on Monday, Sept. 13 for a special spruce up of Green Acres to get ready for the HummerBird Celebration for just one hour (5 to 6:00 p.m.) in the garden, followed by dinner from 6 to 7:00. (Please sign up so we have a count for the dinner.) I often hear MGs say they don't know certain other MGs—in addition to getting the garden buffed up for extra visitors, it will be a great chance to get to know other Master Gardeners.

The MG intern class is in full swing, thank you to all the people who are helping out with it. Remember to check the MG website for the latest version of the schedule-a few changes have been necessary-and attend the classes you are interested in having a refresher on.

Around the State

SPECIALIST TRAINING

Irrigation Efficiency

October 27, 28, 29

Dallas County Extension

Efficiency training will cover hands-on practices for determining irrigation efficiency, setting controllers, soak and cycle method, minor irrigation repairs, system trouble shooting, catch-can test, converting spray head irrigation to new water conserving heads, converting spray irrigation to drip irrigation and other water conservation practices.

Only 15 participant spots are available for this training. Registration is first come/first served basis at \$200 per person. For more information log on to the Texas Master Gardener website Specialist Training.

<http://texasmastergardeners.com/>

SPECIALIST TRAINING

Tree Steward- Preventing and Responding to Insects, Diseases and Abiotic Disorders of Landscape Trees

September 27-29

The 15 hours of training will cover the biology, health, assessment, selection and care of trees. It takes place in Palestine (the one in Texas!). The \$150 fee includes 2 breakfasts, 1 lunch, 1 dinner & social, snacks and drinks). Registration and payment is due by Sept. 13. Contact the Extension Office for more information and registration forms.

Landscape Design Study Course: Number I, Series XXII September 13-14

Co-sponsored by Texas Garden Clubs, Inc. (Ms. Suzanne Milstead, Chairperson) and Texas AgriLife Extension Service, Texas A&M University, this is the first course in a series of four. Participants may take the four courses in any sequence. The courses will take place at the Christ United Methodist Church, 4201 State Hwy 6, College Station, TX 77845.

The courses are an opportunity for more in-depth training in landscape design than is normally included in the Master Gardener curriculum. Each course is typically approved by local Master Gardener chapters to qualify for 12 hours of continuing education toward maintaining certification for Master Gardeners.

The tentative schedule, registration form and thumbnail description of each of the courses included in this session may be found at <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu> – Southern Garden - landscape design courses.

Cost of the course is \$100; cost of the textbook (good for 4 sessions) \$40. For more information, contact Tammy Landry, tlandry@ag.tamu.edu, 979-845-7342.

September 2010

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 7:30-8:30am Propagation Committee 10-12 Planning Meeting	2	3	4
5	6 <i>County Holiday</i>	7 1:30 pm MG Class- Entomology 6-8pm MG monthly meeting Potluck	8 7:30-8:30am Propagation Committee	9 10am Planning Mtg 2pm Plant Sale Comm.	10 7:30-10 am Green Acres Garden Day 10:30am Landscape Committee	11 10:30 am-12:30 pm Herbs for South Texas Seminar
12	13 5-6pm GA Garden Evening with dinner following	14 1:30pm MG Class-Fruits & Composting	15 7:30-8:30am Propagation Committee 10am Tree Team Visits	16	17 10 am– 5 pm HummerBird Celebration Butterfly Tent	18 10 am– 5 pm HummerBird Celebration Butterfly Tent
19 10 am–3 pm HummerBird Celebration Butterfly Tent	20	21 10 am Board Mtg. 12-1pm Brown Bag 1:30 MG Class- Plant Problems	22 7:30-8:30am Propagation Committee	23	24 7:30-9:00am Green Acres Garden Day	25 9:00-1:00 Fall Plant Sale Green Acres
26	27	28 1:30 pm MG Class- Trees	29	30 Earth-Kind Landscaping Class Registration MG Hours due		