



Aransas/San Patricio

February 2010

The President's Corner

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



Ellen Reisinger

On a rainy day recently I was reading through some old gardening magazines. In a 2003 garden magazine I came across an article titled "Master Gardeners: Who are they? What do they do? How can you become one?" Even though this article is over 7 years old, it still is very meaningful today. The author began by explaining how the Master Gardener Program first began. The Master Gardener Program began in 1972 when Dr. David Gibby, a Washington State University Cooperative Extension Agent, found himself unable to handle the demand for basic gardening information. The home gardening trend was booming at that time and the public had many questions. Thus, the Master Gardener's original role in 1972 was to help the Extension agent answer plant questions. However, as we all know, the Master Gardener Program has blossomed into many different aspects. At present Master Gardeners wear many different "hats." I was thinking about this the other day after our general meeting. We all have our own individual talents and interests, which contribute greatly to this program. It is wonderful to see how the Master Gardener Program has grown over the years. It is also very good to remember our humble roots and why this program was formed-to help the Extension Service better serve the public. Ellen

GA Garden Days
 February 5th & 17th
 8:00 - 11:00 am

Saturday Seminar

February 20th
 10:30-12:30 am
 Aransas County
 Library

*Citrus, Palms and
 Fruit Trees for the
 Coastal Bend*

Paul Johnson,
 Staff Forester,
 Texas Forest Service

**Don't miss the
 Rosarian School
 February 5-6
 Information on pg. 4**

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

February Brown Bag

Tuesday, February 16 12:00-1:00 pm

The Wonderful World of Bees

By Terry Carter, Bee Keeper

Aransas County Library, 701 E. Mimosa, Rockport

Happy Birthday !

Beth Wilson, 3rd
 Colleen Foreman 3rd
 Bob Crawford, 10th
 John Gravell, Jr.,
 22nd
 Doree Osmun, 22nd
 Cyndi Kuhn 26th
 Gilbert Tamez 26th
 Anita Garrett-Roe,
 27th
 Lynda Mullen-
 Madrone 28th

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

South Texas Sticker Burs

by Jennifer Thomas, Master Gardener

I'm talking those painful almost purple, super-sharp, make you cry stickers that love this sandy south Texas soil. This particularly painful sticker's scientific name is *Cenchrus echinatus* L. and it is commonly called the mat sandbur. You may also hear it called matted sandbur, burgrass, field or coastal sandbur, southern sandspur, or longspine sandbur, all of which happen to be common names of other species of bur in the same genus. This particular sticker is the sharpest and one of the largest; the others vary in degree of stiffness and shape of "sticker" spine. Most all the stickers prefer sandy soils but will thrive in any poorly maintained setting.



Sticker burs spread in two ways: most annoyingly by seed pod, which is what the sticker is, and then, unsuspectingly, by branching culms, or stems, that can be up to

two and a half feet long. They propagate quite quickly and break off easily when the main hub is pulled. Yes, I said pulled because that is the best way to get rid of them. A little concerted effort, or 'all out war' as some might like to put it, is what it takes to get control of a sticker infested yard or pasture. Sure there are some chemicals that will do the job but let's go at this from an environmentally sensitive 'we can do this ourselves' attitude.

This scientifically classified grass is mostly referred to as a weed and can be eliminated by treating it as such. A general regimen of regular mowing and some basic fertilizing of your lawn should deter stickers, but won't get rid of them completely. Using a bagging mower is optimal as long as you don't add those clippings back into compost. Give this method about two years to yield results.

Lucky for us, sticker burs have fairly shallow roots and pull out quite easily, especially from dry sandy soil. Follow the stalk with stickers to the base plant or hub. Each stalk can have four to twenty burs so I recommend using gloves and aiming at the base of the plant using a twisting motion in one direction. This helps identify where the sprawling branches might be rooting offshoots and ensures none of the roots get left behind. Due to the freeze this winter, new growth will be mostly from seeds, so don't start to look for sticker burs to be developed until early in May. Begin pulling while

the burs are still developing, before they become stiff and sharp or turn purple. Dispose of the weeds by burning or putting in the trash. Rarely will you hear me say not to compost but I don't recommend composting sticker burs.

Another option that is environmentally friendly is using a pre-emergent inhibitor such as corn gluten. Corn gluten inhibits seed germination by drying out a seed as soon as it cracks open to sprout. Not recommended for use in or around areas where you might be trying to germinate seeds such as wildflowers, but it does work great as a weed control for vegetable gardens where small plants are used instead starting from seed. This all natural herbicide contains 10 % nitrogen by weight so it also doubles as fertilizer, yep a natural 'weed and feed' of sorts. Corn gluten comes in powder form and can be found at most feed stores and some hardware stores.

Dr. James McAfee, A & M associate professor and extension turf-grass specialist from Dallas explains; "A dense stand of healthy grass provides the best weed control. Because most weeds are "opportunists" that invade weakened lawns, the fight against weeds starts with good management. All cultural practices such as mowing, fertilizing and watering should be done in a manner and time that will favor the grass rather than the weeds. Height of mowing influences competition against weeds such as crabgrass - the higher the cut, the lower the infestation. Frequent light sprinkling encourages shallow-rooted weeds and seed germination. Less frequent "deep-soak" watering that maintains a dry surface layer provides the grass with a competitive advantage."



A good action plan for this year, following the benefit of a freeze, would be to start in February with a natural pre-emergent treatment of corn gluten. This should last for four to six weeks depending on rain. It should be wetted after application to ensure proper activation but repeated rain will cause the need for reapplication sooner rather than later. Start to look for "stickers" around May and pull them out whenever you see them.

Another application of pre-emergent would be good in late summer when most stickers have started to fall. Continue this process through two seasons and the reward will be noticeable but results are cumulative so stay at it. Remember to have your soil tested before any

From Our Writers continued

Continued from page 2
major fertilizing program (why waste money on one fertilizer only to find out later you should have used

something different) and always follow the directions on the label for application.

Meet Our New County Extension Agent

Cold Injury to Plants

By Virginia (Ginger) Easton Smith, County Extension Agent, Agriculture

Guess what just blew in on a cold wind? Me; your new Aransas County Extension Agent for Agriculture and Natural Resources. I came from Hawaii, so you can be sure I didn't bring the recent frigid weather!

To let you know a little about me; I lived in Hawaii for 29 years; for the past 17 years I was the tree crops Extension Agent in the Kona area of the Big Island of Hawaii working primarily with tree crops (such as coffee, avocado and macadamia nut) growers. I also wrote a newspaper column on agriculture and horticulture for 16 years. Previous to that, I worked in the landscape industry for several years. I earned my Bachelor and Master of Science degrees in Horticulture from the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

Although I was born in Gallup, New Mexico, I spent most of my growing up years in central Illinois. I look forward to making my home here and to meeting you. Please feel free to call me by my nickname, Ginger, although I'm always happy to answer to Virginia as well.

Hopefully the "arctic blast" won't be back for a while, but as it moved through it injured some plants and probably even killed some. Cold temperatures can damage the entire plant, or parts such as leaves, buds, flowers, trunks, stems or roots.

Some damage is obvious-leaves or stems turned black or brown-but other damage will be internal and may not even cause problems for several months. Most any damage weakens plants and can provide an entry point to pathogens that might not normally bother the plant.

There may be damage to the water moving system inside the trunk of trees, limiting the water that can be moved up the trunk to the leaves. Although many broadleaf trees can regenerate conducting tissue, palms cannot. The problem may not be visible until the first hot day after a freeze when the fronds all wilt

severely.

Palm leaf buds deep in the plant may have been damaged by the frigid weather, but the signs won't show up until the bud develops and emerges brown, partially brown or deformed. Fortunately, the leaves will often grow out of the injury.

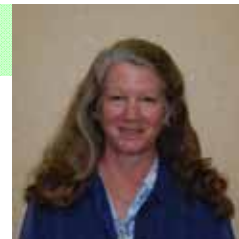
Injury to roots, which have little ability to develop cold tolerance and are particularly susceptible if the plant is growing in a pot, also often won't show up until a very warm day when the reduced root system just can't provide enough water to the plant.

Plants such as Firebush, *Hamelia patens*, may die back to the soil during a freeze but have roots that are cold hardy. Others that are root hardy include jatropha, dwarf oleander, Pride of Barbados, and some philodendrons.

So, what to do with cold injured plants? There's no need to rush out and prune off the damaged plant tissue. As a matter of fact, don't do severe pruning until warmer weather stimulates some regrowth so you can be sure you are not cutting off live wood that just appears dead at this point. Dead leaves can be removed right away if desired, and light pruning can be done. Tips of branches may be damaged while older wood remains uninjured.

Water plants lightly to warm up the roots and to provide some water to plants that may have had their root systems reduced in size. Do not water heavily or frequently, as plants will not be able to utilize a lot of water at this time, and soggy soil will increase damage to roots.

A healthy plant is always the best defense against any challenge, be it weather extremes, insect attack or disease infestation. It will be more resistant to damage, and recover from it more easily. Try to keep your plants supplied with adequate, but not excessive, water and nutrients; and prune as needed. Don't fertilize too late in the year as it can promote a flush and a young flush is more likely to be damaged by cold.



Around the State

**South Central District
Consulting Rosarian School/Seminar
Hosted by the Corpus Christi Rose Society
February 5 - 6**

The Rose Society is hosting a Consulting Rosarian School/Seminar on Feb 5 & 6. \$35 for this day-long seminar and lunch will be served. For any MG it's 4 hours of CE time if they stay for the entire day. Location: Garden Senior Center, 5325 Greely Street, Corpus Christi, TX. Contact chairperson Jan Shannon, 361-241-7141 for more information.

**2010 Winter Lecture Series
at Botanical Gardens & Nature Center**

The South Texas Botanical Gardens & Nature Center offers its fourth WINTER LECTURE SERIES for Texas winter visitors and area residents. Guest speakers will present unique perspectives on regional environmental, agricultural and horticultural topics from 10 to 11:30 a.m., **Wednesdays, in January and February**, in the Visitors Center, 8545 S. Staples. Lecture Topics are:

Feb. 3 Ethnobotany—Historic Uses of Texas Plants Sibyl Deacon, Master Naturalist

Feb. 10 Orchid Fever—Catch It!

Sam Jones, STBGNC Orchid Curator

Feb. 17 Herbs: Flower Pot to Cook Pot

Carol Krank, Master Gardener Herb Team

Feb. 24 Turtle Watch—the Kemp's Ridley Story

Cynthia Rubio, Padre Island National Seashore

**Growing Iris in the Texas Coastal Bend Seminar
at Botanical Gardens & Nature Center
February 6**

Local iris and amaryllis specialist and Master Gardener John Gilbreath will lecture on which iris can be grown in the Corpus Christi area and how to plant and care for them, from 10 am to noon, in the Visitors Center. The class will include a tour of the new Amaryllis Garden, which Gilbreath designed and planted. Seminar fee is \$7 per person, \$3.50 for members, and includes Gardens & Nature Center admission. For reservations, call 361.852.2100.

**Getting Ready for the Martin Invasion Seminar
at Botanical Gardens & Nature Center
February 13**

Purple Martin expert Louise Chambers and carpenter friend John Barrow will explain what's needed to bring these fascinating mosquito-repelling communal bird families to your yard, what type of house to build, at what height, surroundings (etc). The big migration usually happens in March and April, and your Martin house can be ready for tenants! Model Martin houses have been built at the Botanical Gardens. Seminar is from 10 to noon. Fee is \$7, \$3.50 for members, including general admission. For more information and reservations, call 361.852.2100.

**Freeze Damage Seminar
at Botanical Gardens & Nature Center
February 20**

Nature Center staff will answer Coastal Bend residents' toughest what-do-I-do-now questions in the 'Freeze Damage—Prune or Replant' seminar, from 10 am to noon, in the Visitors Center, 8545 S. Staples St. The horticulture staff will tell gardeners how and what to prune back now; or to wait; or replace the plant as soon as it's safe because it will take years to re-grow. Seminar fee is \$7, \$3.50 for members, including general admission. For reservations, call 361.852.2100.

**Challenges of Growing in Sand Seminar
at Botanical Gardens & Nature Center
February 27**

This seminar for Island, Flour Bluff, Rockport and other near-Gulf homeowners is scheduled for 10 am to noon, in the Visitors Center.

Retired university horticulture professor Dr. John Fucik shares secrets for successful landscapes in spite of porous sandy soil, constant salt spray and wind. Learn plant selection, soil amendments and watering techniques sure to lighten your labor and heighten landscape aesthetics. Seminar fee is \$7, \$3.50 members, including general admission. For reservations, call 361.852.2100.

February 2010

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	<i>1</i> 4:30pm Odyssey After-School Program	<i>2</i> 9am MG Monthly Meeting	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i> 8-11 am Green Acres Garden Day 10:30 am Landscape Committee	<i>6</i>
<i>7</i>	<i>8</i> 4:30pm Odyssey After-School	<i>9</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>14</i>	<i>15</i> County Holiday 4:30pm Odyssey After-School Program	<i>16</i> 12-1pm Brown Bag 1:30pm Board Meeting	<i>17</i> 8-11am Green Acres Garden Day 8:30am Propagation Committee 10am Tree	<i>18</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>20</i> 10:30am Seminar - "Citrus, Palms and Fruit Trees for the Coastal Bend"
<i>21</i>	<i>22</i> 4:30pm Odyssey After-School	<i>23</i> 8:30-4 pm Turf Conference- Del Mar	<i>24</i> 8:30am Propagation Committee	<i>25</i> 10 am Planning Committee	<i>26</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>28</i> <i>February Hours Due</i>						