



Aransas/San Patricio

March 2010

The President's Corner



Ellen Reisinger

I recently read an article about Helen Keller. What struck me the most was that while she had every reason not to be happy with her life, she was in fact a very optimistic and worldly-wise person. The article contained a few of her notable quotations. One of the quotations that I particularly liked was: "Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much." We see that very thing happening every day in our organization. With each of our individual talents we have banded together this year and set in motion Hidden Garden Tour, Plant Sale, Brown Bags, Tree Team visits, Landscape, Propagation, Kid's Fest, Earth Kind, working in the office and much more. This is quite a list of accomplishments so far this year and we are only in February. Each of us with our own individual talents is contributing what we can. We should all be proud of this organization and the work that we do. Another great Helen Keller quote is "True happiness is not attained through self-gratification, but through fidelity to a worthy purpose." May we all have health and happiness as we work together during this year.

Ellen



March Brown Bag

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

Plants and Pets: What's Toxic & What's Not

By Jeanna Godfrey, DVM, Master Gardener

Aransas County Library, 701 E. Mimosa, Rockport

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.

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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

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

Spring Plant Sale
March 27th
9:00 am
Please sign-up to help with set-up and/or the sale. Sign-up sheets are at Green Acres. Tell your friends to come shop for the best plants in town.

MG Volunteer Recognition Event & Monthly Meeting
March 2, 6:00 pm

Potluck Dinner
At Senior Center
912 S. Church St.
Rockport
Pork Loin Roast provided.
Bring spring vegetables & desserts.

Happy Birthday !

Patty Bidwell, 4th
Ronell Burke, 22nd

For Information about Tussock Moths and Oak Leaf Rollers go to the Master Gardener Website

From Our Writers

Lemon Eucalyptus

By Suzie Cook, Master Gardener

It is almost an article of faith among experienced gardeners that fast-growing trees should never be planted, because they are weak, subject to disease and insect damage, and short-lived. Fast-growing trees are the kind that shysters sell through the mail to people like Rita L. and Franklin D. of Salina, Kansas, who endorse them on the back page of the Sunday newspaper supplement. No self-respecting gardener would have one in the yard.

But the Aransas/San Patricio Master Gardeners have a fast-growing tree at the Green Acres Demonstration Garden at Texas AgriLife Extension (611 E. Mimosa, Rockport), and it's a beauty. The lemon eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus citriodora*) on the east



side of the building has grown to about 40 feet tall in less than ten years, yet it is healthy, sturdy, free of insects, and as graceful a tree as any landscape designer could sketch. Its long, tapered, evergreen leaves look smooth (but feel rough to the touch) and release a lemon-soap scent when bruised. The

leaves are attached with red stems to slightly weeping branches that are strong enough to support birds looking for shelter, but high enough off the ground to discourage predators looking for lunch.

A lemon eucalyptus is a great choice for gardeners who want to fit a tall tree into a small lot. Unlike a palm tree, a lemon eucalyptus has no sharp edges to poke passersby in the eye while it gains height. In Texas, the lemon eucalyptus is untroubled by pests and doesn't hide any, either. There is no need to shinny up a flagpole to prune a lemon eucalyptus, because it prunes itself. The *Corpus Christi Garden Book* sums up its main attractions for Coastal Bend gardeners: "Tolerates salt spray,

alkaline soil [and] heat."

Another attribute of lemon eucalyptus, something that appeals to the frugal among us, is that it must be planted while it is small, ideally less than a foot tall. So for about \$3.50, you can purchase what will eventually be a big, beautiful tree. For \$35, you can buy a forest, and all ten of those tall, slender, elegant trees will fit in the corner of a small lot.

Look for lemon eucalyptus plants in 4" pots this month and plant them in full sun immediately after purchase. If the tree is left in a pot for too long, it will become root-bound and will never be satisfactory. Add a little root stimulator when you plant the tree, but do not give it other fertilizer or soil enrichment. It needs plenty of water to get a good start (and will adapt quickly to a wet spot in the yard), but it will be drought tolerant once it is established.

There is disagreement among growers about whether eucalyptus trees should be staked. In general, gardeners in the Coastal Bend stake trees and large shrubs for at least the first full growing season, because the wind here can be brutal. As long as you start the eucalyptus from a very small plant and do not encourage top growth with fertilizer, you should be able to skip staking the tree. If disaster strikes, and your adolescent tree falls over in the wind, it probably can be brought upright and staked with no long-term ill effects. Lazy gardeners get the best results by planting the eucalyptus in a tight spot, where it will happily grow up between its competitors and never need staking.



Lemon eucalyptus will be short-lived only in the event of a severe freeze. It is hardy to 24 - 28 degrees, but even after a serious cold spell, it is wise to wait before declaring a lemon eucalyptus dead and digging it up. Unlike most other trees, eucalyptus trees can re-grow from the roots when the top growth, including the main trunk, has been killed. Rita L. and Franklin D. of Salina, Kansas can't grow a lemon eucalyptus, but the lucky gardeners in the Coastal Bend can.

From Our Writers continued

Spring Lawn Fertilization

Todd L. Cutting, Master Gardener

There is only one reason to fertilize your turfgrass: to make it grow thick and luxuriant and greener than your neighbors. A thick, luxuriant lawn keeps weeds to a minimum, requires less water and maintenance and creates an attractive presentation for your home. You'll feel proud every time you drive up to your door.

This fantastic, green, living carpet can be yours, without degrading the environment, by following a few simple steps.

1. Get a soil test. Pick up a soil test kit from Green Acres. It consists of a soil sample bag, instructions, and the submission form. It will cost from \$10 to \$20 depending on which analysis you select. I suggest No. 2 which is routine plus micro nutrients for \$15.00. It takes a week to ten days to get the results. The post office has a nice size box to mail your sample to Texas A & M.
2. While waiting for your soil test results, get a tape measure and measure your turf areas and total them so you can determine how many 1,000 square feet you will be fertilizing. Keep track of the size of each area so you can put the right amount of fertilizer for each area in the spreader. Green Acres has a fact sheet on measuring your yard. You could also spray now with a broad-leaved weed herbicide containing 2,4-D to kill any winter annuals or perennial weeds in your turf. Don't use broadleaf weed herbicide under live oaks, especially if you have lots of little suckers.
3. With your soil test results in hand, and your area in 1,000 square feet to be fertilized, go to a store selling fertilizer and purchase what you need. Always look for slow-release nitrogen as it leaches less, and provides fertility longer into the season. The higher the water-insoluble nitrogen (WIN), the better, but it will be more expensive.
4. Don't be tempted to buy 'weed and feed' products, especially if you have lots of trees and other landscape plantings. These products contain a broad-leaf weed killer which can injure your desired plants. You took care of broadleaved weeds back in No.2.
5. Apply the fertilizer after the second mowing of the new grass growth. Don't count the times you only cut off weed growth, broadleaved or grasses. We are talking about your St. Augustine or Bermuda grass. This would also be the time to apply a pre-emergent herbicide or weed preventer to keep sticker burs and other warm season annual weeds out of your lawn.
6. Regardless of whether you use a drop spreader or a broadcast spreader, divide your fertilizer in half for each distinct area you measured. Spread one half going north and south and the other going east and west or perpendicular to the first spreading. This will help prevent streaking.
7. If you have palm trees, stay 50 feet away with nitrogen fertilizer. Use a slow-release potassium fertilizer within the 50ft area. Virtually all Aransas County palm trees exhibit potassium deficiency. This is intensified by increased nitrogen in the soil.

From a nutritional point of view, following the above seven steps will give you the lawn you desire without an adverse effect on the general environment. You still must perform the other turf management practices of proper mowing and watering.

Why is it so important to fertilize properly? Every drop of water that falls on Aransas/San Patricio Counties is either evaporated, used by plants, or ends up in the bays by surface or underground movement. Fertilizing lawns is considered a potential source of non-point source pollution as opposed to a sewage or industrial plant which is a point source of pollution. There is a lot of concern lately about the amount of nitrogen entering the bays from the sewer plant. The city is looking at a large expenditure of money to reduce the nitrogen from this source. This is an easy finger pointing exercise because it is easy to measure and easy to fix, expensive, but easy. On the other hand, if you fertilize your lawn incorrectly, it is hard to measure and hard to determine that you did it and not your neighbor.

More is not better when it comes to applying fertilizer to turfgrass. Only the right amount can be utilized by the grass. The remainder enters the coastal water system.

Around the State

Keeping Our City Sparkling **Residential Urban Landscaping Seminar** **March 6**

Saturday, March 6 from 9-12, Agri-Life Extension, the City of Corpus Christi, and Del Mar College will present this seminar on Earth-kind landscaping, landscape design, and water quality. Admission is free but pre-registration is preferred. Call 361-826-1650 to register. Location: Del Mar Economic Development Center, 3209 So. Staples Rm. 167.

Texas Wildflowers A-Z Seminar Offered **at Botanical Gardens & Nature Center** **March 6**

For full enjoyment of an upcoming bountiful wildflower season, the South Texas Botanical Gardens & Nature Center offers 'Texas Wildflowers A-Z' seminar, 10 a.m. to noon, Saturday, March 6, in the Visitors Center, 8545 S. Staples St. Master Naturalist Sibyl Deacon shows a colorful pictorial review of Central and South Texas wildflowers--from Aster to Zexmenia.—and best viewing sites during bloom season. Seminar fee is \$7, \$3.50 members, including general admission. For information or reservations, call 361-852-2100.

More than Parsley, Sage, Rosemary & Thyme **Seminar** **at Botanical Gardens & Nature Center** **March 13**

The South Texas Botanical Gardens & Nature Center partners with the Rockport Rose & Herb Study Group for a seminar on culinary, exotic and landscape herbs from 10 a.m. to noon, Saturday, March 13, in the Visitors Center at 8545 S. Staples St. You'll learn the basics of culinary herbs, as well as exotics and landscape herbs which attract butterflies, hummingbirds and wildlife to your yard. Seminar fee is \$7, \$3.50 members, including general admission. For information or reservations, call 361-852-2100.

Restoring Back Yard Ponds Post-freeze Seminar **at Botanical Gardens & Nature Center** **March 20**

The South Texas Botanical Gardens & Nature Center, Aquaria Services and Coastal Bend Water Garden Club offer spring maintenance techniques to help your pond recover this winter's weather extremes from 10 a.m. to noon, Saturday, March 20, beginning in the STBG Visitors Center, 8545 S. Staples St. Denise Housler also will cover new plants available to give your pond a fresh look, and some 'fishy' information. Seminar fee is \$7, \$3.50 members, including general admission.

Wildflower Walk' **at Botanical Gardens & Nature Center** **March 20**

Master Naturalists Sibyl Deacon and Grace Lopez will lead wildflower enthusiasts on a relaxing springtime *Wildflower Walk* beginning at 1:30 p.m., Saturday, March 20, at the South Texas Botanical Gardens & Nature Center, 8545 S. Staples Street. Participants will learn to spot and identify many South and Central Texas wildflowers, during a predicted bountiful wildflower season.

Fee is general admission only--\$6 adults, \$5 seniors, college students, active military; \$3 children 5 through 12. No separate seminar fee will be charged. For reservations call 361-852-2100.

Cottage Gardens, South Texas Style Seminar **at Botanical Gardens & Nature Center** **March 27**

The South Texas Botanical Gardens & Nature Center will offer a seminar on showy cottage gardens for small spaces, from 10 a.m. to noon, Saturday, March 27, in the Visitors Center, 8545 S. Staples Street. Kathy Hubner from Gill Landscape Nursery will teach participants how to make their yards look like the cover of *Better Homes & Gardens*, achieving beautifully-designed cottage gardens in even small available spaces. Seminar fee is \$7, \$3.50 members, including general admission. For reservations, call 361-852-2100.

March 2010

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2 6pm MG Volunteer Recognition Event & Monthly Meeting	3 8:30am Propagation Committee	4	5 8-11am Green Acres Garden Day 9 am Plant Sale Pre-orders 10:30 am Landscape	6
7	8	9	10 8:30am Propagation	11	12	13
14	15 ACISD Spring Break Week	16 12-1pm Brown Bag 1:30pm Board Meeting	17 8-11am Green Acres Garden Day 8:30am Propagation Committee 10am Tree Team Visits	18	19	20
21	22	23	24 8:30am Propagation Committee	25	26	27 9 am –1 pm Spring Plant Sale
28	29	30	31 <i>March Hours Due</i> 8:30am Propagation Committee			