

THE COMPOST BIN

A publication of the Travis County Master Gardeners

OCTOBER 2009

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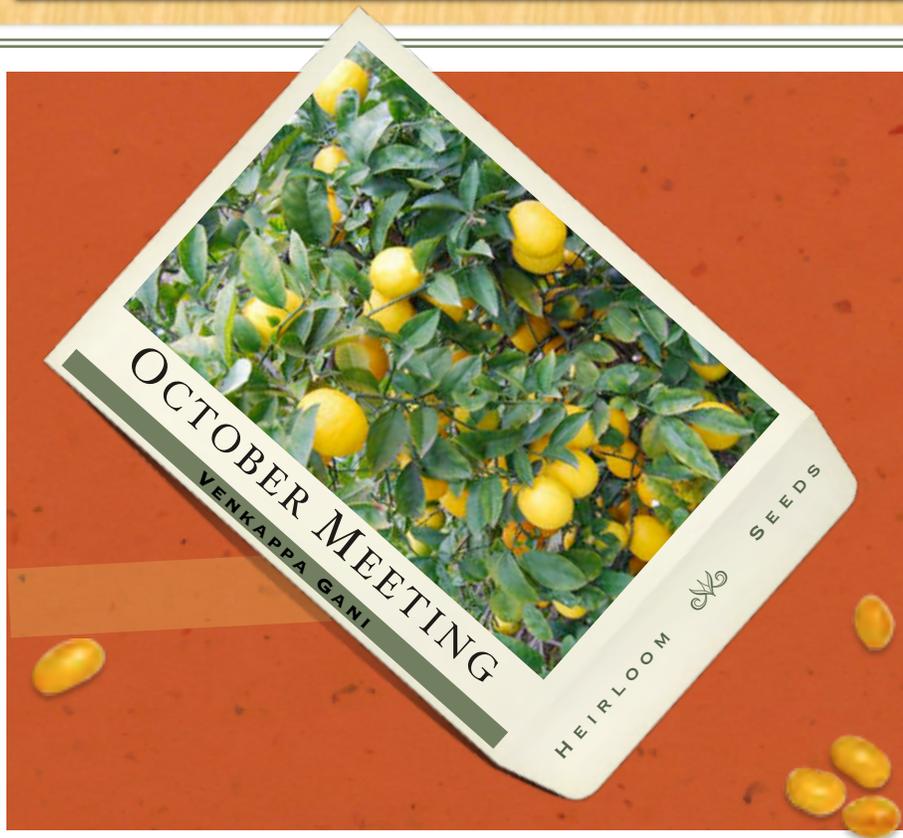
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CAN YOU GROW CITRUS IN AUSTIN?

This question is being repeatedly asked by people who have moved to Austin from many parts of the country.

To answer this question TCMGA conducted a citrus test project in the year 2003. Volunteers prepared a test bed behind the TCMGA green house. There, a group of volunteers planted various kinds of citrus plants.

To learn more about growing citrus in Austin, the citrus health benefits and the Citrus Project test data, do not miss this presentation.

About the Speaker:

Venkappa Gani has turned his gardening hobby into a sustainable living space in his backyard. The Gani family grows edibles, vegetables, fruit trees and herbs. Much of which is irrigated by a rainwater harvesting system which he built himself and pumped using power which comes from solar cells that were carefully placed upon the roof.

Other achievements by Venkappa Gani include:

Building the rain water harvesting system at Zilker Botanical Garden Center with help of TCMGA members in 2005. He was awarded Texas

State Master Gardener of the Year in 2005. His garden has received the Green Garden award from the City of Austin in 2004. Gani's garden was featured on KLRU on The Central Texas Gardener program in 2004, TCMGA garden tour in 2008 and KXAN NBC in 2009. He is member of TCMGA, Life member of The Garden Club of Austin (TGCA) and past president of Austin Organic Garden Club (AOGC).

Please join me in welcoming Venkappa Gani "Gani" as our speaker for our monthly meeting on October 7th at seven PM when he will answer that age old question, "Can you grow citrus in Austin?"

Jerry Naiser
Vice president Programs



The President's Message

By Manda Rash, President

Isn't it amazing how quickly things can change? Just last month I was lamenting that it was too hot for any activity except for getting from one air-conditioned place to another. But now, it's an entirely new day! The temperatures have fallen into and stayed in the 80s and 90s. And the rain...what a miracle! I had almost 5 ½ inches. I'm sure my trees, shrubs and flowers were all singing as that rain was falling. My attitude has greatly improved, and I feel like I can live in Central Texas at least through one more summer. By mid-July, I was seriously considering moving.

Not only has the weather changed but a few things will be changing for the Master Gardeners in 2010 especially for our training class. I want to share with you some of that information.

When our 2009 class concludes in November, they will become the last class to meet at Zilker Botanical Garden. Budget constraints and other issues have forced the administration to look for means to raise operating funds for the garden. One of the ways they can do that is to rent out the conference room for events and meetings. If we had decided to continue to hold our classes at Zilker, we would be asked to pay for that space. We simply cannot do that.

So we are on the hunt for a new meeting space for our 2010 class.

As we are planning to reduce the class size to 30, the new meeting space needs to accommodate about 40 people. That way we'll have room for the students and the volunteers. The next most important element is that the space be available to us for no charge. If you have any suggestions for places, please let me or Daphne Richards know. We'll be contacting a variety of venues over the next few months.

Another likely change to class will be the addition of mandatory speaker training for all of our students beginning with the 2010 class. A committee has been formed to develop this training. This has grown out of a need to insure that our speakers are consistent in the way they represent TCMGA and especially AgriLife Extension. Many other associations currently have speaker training programs and they feel like it is an important aspect of their Master Gardener training. I believe it will be a great asset to our program and our members as well.

Once developed it will be offered to TCMGA members. I for one am looking forward to an opportunity for training. I have much to learn about public speaking!

In closing, I want to remind you about the plant swap that will be held following the October meeting. Bring your extra plants, seeds, gardening magazines, etc. and join in the fun. You know the drill... window shopping only until the meeting is over!



Plant Portrait - Frangipani

By Anne Van Nest

Frangipani, a wildly tropical plant, in name and exotic looking foliage and flower, is a contrast of sorts. The foliage pre-bloom is coarse and the stems lanky, but once the plant opens even one flower – all that changes and the plant becomes a tropical blooming beauty. With exquisite flowers having a richness and depth of color that few flowers can achieve, Frangipani adds “icing to the cake” with an enticing citrusy, cocoa butter/cinnamon fragrance to the garden as well.

The plant is known as Plumeria, named in honor of the seventeenth century French botanist, Charles Plumier who travelled to the Antilles and Central America recording many

plants and animals. At the age of 16 he joined the religious order of the Minims in France and devoted himself to mathematics and physics. After being sent to Rome, Plumier began to study botany and once he returned to France, he began work exploring the coasts of Provence and Languedoc. At the age of 43 he went on his first botanical expedition to the French Antilles. It was a success and he was appointed royal botanist. During his three botany expeditions he was the first to identify and describe the beautiful Fuchsia. The genus name in his honor was originally spelled Plumiera (and some still use this spelling).

The common name, frangipani comes from a sixteenth-century Italian nobleman, the Marquis Frangipani who invented a method of perfuming gloves that came to be known as Frangipani gloves.

When the Plumeria flower was discovered, the scent reminded people of the fragrance Frangipani used to scent gloves and so the name began to be associated with the plant too. Another theory for the frangipani name is that the white Plumeria sap resembles the French product frangipancier, a type of coagulated milk.

Plumeria is just a small genus of 8 species originally native to the tropical and subtropical regions of the Americas. The plant was frequently transported by Spanish Catholic priests as they travelled to new areas. Each species has different leaf shapes and growth habits. Many species have naturalized in southern and southeast Asia.



Plumeria



Plumeria is in the Apocynaceae (dogbane) family with oleander and periwinkle. The family contains mainly tall trees found in the tropical rainforests. Plumeria is a deciduous shrub or small tree here in Central Texas, but in tropical regions Plumeria can grow up to 30 feet high and wide. Plumeria, like Oleander, has some poisonous properties, but is not nearly as bad as some of the other family members. The milky sap, found in all plant parts is irritating to the skin, just like many Euphorbias.

The beautiful flowers are admired for their deep and rich coloration and beautiful shading. Mostly Plumeria flowers can be found in combinations of whites, yellow, corals, pinks, and purples from March through October. New curly blooms have been introduced to add a new twist to the pinwheel effect of the blooms as they unfold. Some cultivars have up to 200 blooms in a cluster (others only 50). The flowers are used for making leis in Hawaii.

Flowers are most fragrant at night in order to lure the sphinx moths to come pollinate them. But, interestingly no nectar is contained in the flower. The moths pollinate the flowers as they search from one to the next looking for the non-existent nectar.

Frangipani can be propagated by taking 4 inch to 1 foot cuttings of the thick stems, allow them to dry off for two weeks (like a cactus) and then sticking them into a gallon pot of a mixture containing 2/3 perlite and 1/3 peat or potting soil. Add a coarse draining material (like pea gravel) on the top 1 inch of the pot. Water well, then let the soil dry before watering again. Spring cuttings will take about 90 days to produce a full root ball – when they can be transplanted.

Plumeria seeds are not true to the parent plant, but if you are willing to experiment to find new colors – this is the way. The reds and pinks apparently reveal the greatest variation in color. The few Plumeria seeds produced have a long narrow wing attached to the seed. Insert the seed so that it is under the soil and the wing is sticking above the soil. Keep the potting soil moist and germination should take place in about 21 days.

Grow Plumeria in full sun (or at least 6 hours) for the best blooms. It is one of the most sun and wind tolerant of the tropical plants. Plant it in well drained (particularly during the winter), organic soils. Prune the plant during the active growing season. Try to prune for a pleasing shape but this is not often possible because of the natural way that Plumeria grow. The leaves tend to grow only near the branch tips and few branches are produced. Pests are few, but sometimes scale is a problem and rot when too much moisture is present around the roots.



Plumeria are not very winter hardy – to zone 9. Protect from cold damage when temperatures dip below 40 deg. F. and especially if frost is forecast. Use frost cloth or mulch in ground to ensure that the roots will overwinter in Central Texas. Grow in a pot and move to a protected location. Often the cooler weather will cause the leaves to drop in the fall. If temps drop below 32 deg. F. plant stems turn to mush. Some frangipani growers bury their plants underground to protect them from the winter cold temperatures. The cultivar ‘Texas Sunshine’ is reputed to be one of the most cold tolerant (to 25 deg. F). Other supposedly hardy Plumerias are ‘Celadine’, ‘Aztec Gold’ and ‘Samoan Fluff.’



There are over 300 named varieties of Plumeria.



In The Vegetable Garden

By Patty Leader

I think I heard a collective sigh of relief when those raindrops started to fall in September; not only from my fellow gardeners, but from my thirsty and scorched vegetable plants as well. The much anticipated soaking brought renewed vigor to my okra, peppers, eggplant, purple hulls, sweet potatoes and squash and also brought a window of opportunity to plant some fall crops. If you didn't plant in September, do not dismay, there is still plenty of time for fall season crops.

Now that cooler temperatures have arrived, cauliflower, broccoli, cabbage, artichokes and even rhubarb can go in as transplants. To bring some unexpected color to the table try

one of the lovely, colorful cauliflower varieties such as 'Graffiti', 'Violet Queen', 'Cheddar', 'Panther' or 'Vantage'. These cauliflower varieties grow quite well here, and transplants can often be found at local nurseries. If you can't find transplants, try ordering seeds to grow your own transplants for spring. Johnny's (www.johnnyseeds.com), Territorial Seed (www.territorialseed.com) and Pinetree Garden Seeds (www.superseeds.com) carry small or mini packets of these varieties.



Colorful Cauliflower

Do make room in your vegetable garden or landscape for Swiss chard, spinach, collards and kale, which are easily grown from seed or transplants. They grow through the winter with minimum care, the young leaves are great for salads or sautés, larger leaves are good stewed or in soups and most nutrition experts agree that kale is a vegetable superstar, even beating out broccoli and spinach when it comes to nutrient density. Most of these crops can be planted intensively but remember that closer spacing means that size at harvest may be a little smaller than normal.

Root crops such as radishes, carrots, beets and turnips lend themselves well to intensive or square foot gardening, though it is best to give about 3-4" between plants to allow for root and leaf development.

Lettuce can be planted every few weeks from now through February, and will benefit from a little row cover protection if the temperature is going to drop into the 20's. Seed can be broadcast over a small area directly in the garden, or transplants can be put in for individual plants. Lettuce seeds are tiny and



they need light to germinate, so after broadcasting over the soil, I cover them with a fine layer of screened compost or potting soil and keep the planting area moist until they germinate.

Because our cool season crops are smaller and more orderly than our warm season plants they are easier to grow in pots – but do use 3-5 gallon pots (or bigger) so the roots have room to grow and the soil will retain moisture for a longer time.

If you have not grown vegetables before, now is a great time to take advantage of fall's cooler temperatures, increased precipitation and best of all - fewer insects. Once you experience the satisfaction and pride of growing your own tasty, nutritious, home-grown vegetables, you may find yourself looking for additional gardening space in spring!

Here's to a bountiful harvest!



The Greenhouse Bench

By Anne Van Nest, Marian Stasney and Molly Clark

Thanks to Becky Waak and Marian Stasney for supervising the September greenhouse workday and moving it to a Friday morning in early September. A super team tackled a big challenge of the mother plant table (more appropriately labeled a jungle). Many of the mother plants had grown too long unattended on their two tables in the back of the greenhouse, so they were untangled, pruned back, repotted, potted up and divided. Thanks to the great team who helped tame the mother plant table.

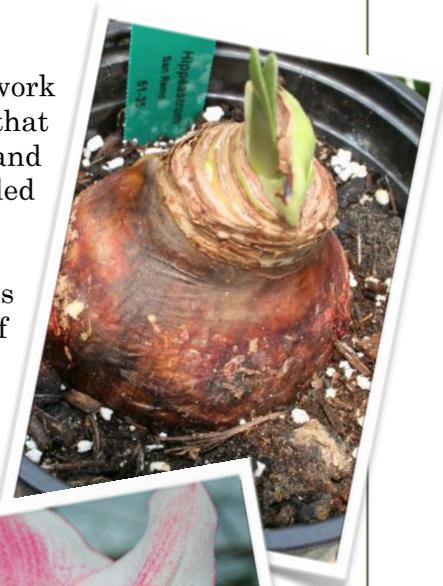
The latest rains, at long last added significantly to the rain collection at the greenhouse. Each of the four tanks now holds 1800 gallons (about $\frac{3}{4}$ full). Hopefully some more rain will top them up full.

More cleaning up and propagating will be on tap for the next greenhouse work day on Saturday October 10th from 9 am to noon. October is also the month that the new Master Gardener students arrive for their greenhouse orientation and everyone is eager for their arrival. Three orientation dates have been scheduled for our newest students to visit the greenhouse.



Thanks to Brent and Becky's Bulbs for an amaryllis donation to the Master Gardeners, five varieties of bulbs have been blooming in the greenhouse for over a month. Here are some pictures of the blooms.

See you in the Greenhouse!



What's Bugging You? Fire Ants

By Wizzie Brown, Travis County Extension Entomologist

The second week of September was Fire Ant Awareness Week. It is to promote baiting for fire ants (Fig. 1) in the fall to reduce the number of mounds (Fig. 2) seen in the spring.

Here are some tips for fall baiting:

- Make sure your bait is fresh
 - Fire ants pick up bait as food; if bait is rancid, they will not pick it up
 - Fresh bait should have a corn-like or nutty smell
 - Apply bait when ants are foraging
 - On hot days, fire ants forage for food in the evening when it's cooler
 - If you're unsure if fire ants are foraging, place bait beside a mound and check back after 15 minutes to see the bait is being picked up
 - Broadcasting baits can save time by not having to locate each mound in your yard
 - Broadcasting helps get smaller mounds that may not be visible
 - Baits applied at lower rates (1-2 pounds per acre) should be applied using a hand held spreader set on the lowest setting*
 - Baits applied at rates higher than 1-2 pounds per acre may be applied using a push or drop spreader calibrated according to label instructions*
- *Read label instructions for proper application equipment
- Do not water in baits
 - If baits get wet, they become unattractive to fire ants
 - Apply baits when rain is not expected for at least 24 hours
 - Turn off sprinkler systems
 - Apply baits after dew has burned off the grass
 - Organize a community wide fire ant management program
 - Having neighbors bait for fire ants at the same time can help push re-invasion boundaries further out
 - Studies show community management can reduce the number of fire ants within the community, reduce the amount of money spent on fire ant management & reduce the amount of chemical placed into the environment



Fig 1. Red imported fire ants.



Fig 2. Red imported fire ant mound.

Potpourri

By Liz Caskey

ROAD TRIP!

By Frankie Hart and Liz Caskey

Since it's been too hot to nursery shop, we thought we'd update some prior "Roadtrip" articles.

Bonnie's Greenhouse in Waco has a new owner and a new web site: <http://bonniesgreenhouse.com>. One of the nursery's long time employees recently bought Bonnie's and the nursery fortunately still maintains its high quality. This one is definitely worth the trip.

Podcasts: I'm enjoying some newly-found garden podcasts, including Ken Druse's, Real Dirt. Ken Druse is the popular writer of garden books, including "the Natural Habitat Garden." This show features many guests and also questions from callers. Mr. Druse also had a web site and blog located at: <http://kendruse.com/>

Another newly discovered podcast is Green Days Gardening Panel. This podcast features a panel of garden experts, including the West Coast Editor of Organic Gardening Magazine. The podcast generally has a theme each week, such as "Preparing and Protecting the Soil." The show also takes questions and emails from callers.

We mentioned Felder Rushing's podcast and web site-FelderRushing.net. Check out new items on his web site, including his green arbor (under "Green Roof Entry Arbor") a unique way to harvest rainwater and plant a green roof at the same time. The pictures of bottle trees from around the world (under "Hundreds of Bottle Trees") are also worth viewing.

Unfortunately, several of the garden centers that we have reviewed have closed, including Glasco's in Brenham and Garden Spirits in Salado. This is one of the reasons we write the road trip articles-not only is it fun to visit quality nurseries, but it's important to support them.



HINTS FROM WOLF'S GARDEN

By Becky Waak

Nominations for the 2010 Board of Directors

According to ARTICLE VI of the Standing Rules, the nominations for the 2010 Board of Directors were submitted by the nominating committee to the Executive Committee and were approved on September 17, 2009. This list of nominees will be submitted to the general membership through the Compost Bin, email, and at the October 7th general membership meeting. At the October 7th general membership meeting, additional nominations will be accepted. At the November 4th general membership meeting, the officers will be elected by ballot by a simple majority of members in good standing and in attendance. If you would like to place a name into nomination, please be certain the person being nominated has agreed to serve.

Thanks to all who have volunteered to serve. If you would like to contact me regarding a nomination to a position prior to the meeting, my email is Becky-Waak@austin.rr.com.

Nominations for the 2010 Board of Directors

President	Carolyn Williams
VP Programs	Rosalie Russell
VP Education	Vicki Blachman
	Bonnie Martin
VP Volunteer Coordinator – Projects	Cheryl McGrath
VP Volunteer Coordinator	Sherrill Nilson
Trainees	Pat Mokry
Secretary	Susan Jung
Treasurer	Marty Berdan
Publications Director	Janice Morgan
Compost Bin	Anne Van Nest
Web	Paula Middleton
Membership Director	Janet Newton
Greenhouse Mgrs	Dorothy Akin
	Chris Giaraffa
	Vicki Olson
AAGC Rep	Joe Posern
State Council Rep	Tommie Clayton
State Council Rep	Jo Kautz (not up for election)



RECIPE FROM THE GARDEN: PUMPKIN STEW

Serves 8 to 10

1 10 to 12-pound pumpkin
2 16-ounce cans kidney, black, or pinto beans
1 bell pepper, cut into inch-thick slices
1 onion, peeled and roughly chopped
4 medium potatoes, cubed
3 carrots, peeled and cubed
2 garlic cloves, peeled and diced
2 celery sticks, sliced
1 15-ounce can diced tomatoes
2 1/2 cups water or vegetable stock
salt and pepper to taste
vegetable oil (for coating)

Carve a hole in the top of the pumpkin and remove the seeds. Clean out the stringy insides. Scoop out 2 cups of pumpkin and cube. Then set the pumpkin aside.

In a large pot, simmer the cubed pumpkin chunks, beans, bell pepper, onion, potatoes, carrots, garlic, celery, tomatoes, and vegetable stock or water for 35 to 45 minutes. Stir occasionally and season to your taste.

Place the pumpkin in a shallow pan and place the stew inside the pumpkin. Brush the outside of the pumpkin with a very light coating of vegetable oil.

Bake the pumpkin and stew at 350°F for 2 hours, or until the pumpkin is tender. Serve out of the carved pumpkin while hot.



INSIDE AUSTIN GARDENS - GARDENING FOR WILDLIFE - A TOUR OF SELECT GARDENS

By Loretta Fischer, 2009 Tour Chairperson

We are in the final weeks before our Master Gardeners garden tour taking place on Saturday October 24th Rain or Shine from 9am-4pm. Manda Rash is working on the volunteer schedule. If you would like to help out, please contact her now (mandarash@austin.rr.com.) You will have a great time.

This year we chose the theme of gardening to attract wildlife. All six of our gardens on this tour are National Wildlife Federation Certified Wildlife Habitats. This means these garden spaces provide food, water, cover, and places to raise young and use sustainable gardening practices. These gardens attract butterflies and hummingbirds and frogs and toads and a variety of beautiful songbirds. Some have a pond with fish. Did you know that Austin is the nation's largest National Wildlife Federation certified community habitat? We have over 900 spaces certified in this city.

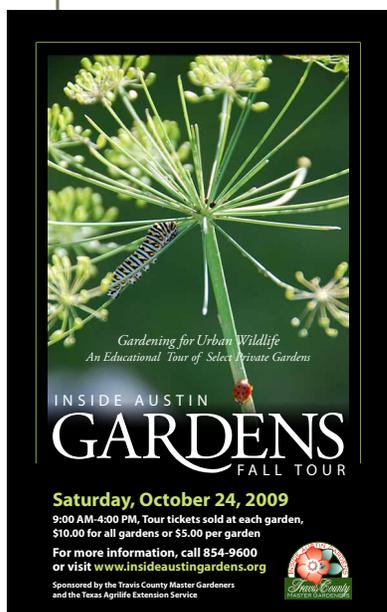
This has been a tough year for gardeners with hardly any rain and over 60 days of triple digits. Think about how hard it has been for all the creatures in our garden with no water and lack of food, not to mention how the heat affects them. So it is even more important for us to help out. This garden tour will show how easy it is to create a beautiful space for wildlife to thrive. We have over a dozen different educational talks or demonstrations scheduled throughout this tour. These sessions are given by Master Gardeners and local experts. These talks and our Master Gardeners strolling the gardens ready to answer questions and give out valuable information are one of the main reasons our tour is so well attended.

All this would not be possible without the brave people that got their arms twisted to allow the public into their private gardens. They are all Travis County Master Gardeners. No one knew we would have no rain and such endless heat and then the water restrictions. So many have probably hand watered for hours each day. They will be rewarded on tour day when so many people are complimenting and congratulating them on their hard work.

We are excited about raising awareness of our urban wildlife and this tour will showcase how using natural gardening practices can create beautiful gardens that are healthier for us, our children, our pets and the little critters that wander into these spaces.

Join us by volunteering for the tour, helping to educate the public and having fun too. And don't forget...if you volunteer you will have an opportunity to see all of the gardens on Friday, October 23 when the gardens on tour are open to Travis County Master Gardeners only!

For more detailed tour information go to www.insideaustingardens.org



BECOME A COCORAHHS MEMBER

Rainfall is vital to agriculture, yet too much rain can be detrimental to agriculture and the livelihood of farmers. In order for meteorologists at the National Weather Service to better forecast and document rainfall and flooding, there is a need for volunteers in a program called Community Collaborative Rain, Hail and Snow Network (CoCoRaHS). CoCoRaHS is a program which involves nearly all 50 states and encourages the general public to report rainfall, hail, and snow. Anyone can be a volunteer for this project; all you need is a rain gauge and an enthusiasm for weather!

There is no cost to join CoCoRaHS. Simply go to the CoCoRaHS website and follow the instructions on how to become a member. If you don't have an official four inch rain gauge, you can purchase one through the CoCoRaHS website. Observers are encouraged to log onto the website daily and submit their report even if rain did not occur. In addition to rainfall, hail reports are also very important to the Austin/San Antonio National Weather Service. Your hail reports can be submitted to the CoCoRaHS website. Not only the reports you submit will help save lives, but will also help research scientists, hydrologists, emergency managers, engineers, and more. For more information regarding CoCoRaHS, please feel free to visit the website at www.cocorahs.org. If you have any other questions contact your regional coordinators, Mark Lenz or Steve Smart, at 830-606-3600. Join CoCoRaHS today—because every drop counts!



Out & About

PUBLIC SEMINARS

Friday, October 30, 9 AM – 11 AM

Demonstration Garden at Travis County AgriLife Extension Office, 1600 “B” Smith Rd, Austin, 78721

This free event discusses bulb varieties that excel in the Austin area. Discover bulb requirements and planting methods to enhance your success. Learn by doing as this is hands-on session.

Friday, November 13, 9 AM – 11 AM

Demonstration Garden at Travis County AgriLife Extension Office, 1600 “B” Smith Rd, Austin, 78721

Yes, you can plant winter vegetables now! Learn how to plant seeds, which seeds need soaking, and proper transplanting methods. Planting using the 4 x 4 method and straight rows will be discussed. You can participate in this hands-on session.



Closing The Garden Gate

Gardening for wildlife is a passion of mine. It's one of the main reasons I garden. I love to watch all the critters in my yard. So when I learned that the theme for this year's garden tour was gardening to attract wildlife I was thrilled. What is especially exciting is that all the yards are National Wildlife Federation Certified Backyard Habitats.

Gardening for wildlife creates landscapes that are beautiful and practical which save labor, money and resources. All that is needed to make a wildlife habitat is to provide food, water, shelter and a place to raise young. And also use sustainable gardening practices.

With urban sprawl in Austin at an all time high, native habitats are being destroyed at an alarming rate. Habitat loss and the use of invasive non-native plants are the greatest threats to our native wildlife. We can make a significant difference simply by restoring habitats in our own yards. The use of native plants will reduce water waste and even in August you will have color in the garden.

Planting native plants, reducing chemical use and building healthy soil are just some of the things you can do to help wildlife. With a yard designed for wildlife you can help restore much needed habitat and find your garden to be entertaining and rewarding.

I'm sure we can learn a great deal on how to create a great looking habitat on this year's garden tour.

Garden/Wildlife Trivia

You may already know that a cat is a feline and a dog is a canine, but what about these other animals? This wildlife trivia activity will put your animal knowledge to the test.

Match the animal with the word that describes it.

- | | | | |
|-----|---------|----|-------|
| 1. | apian | A. | bull |
| 2. | avian | B. | bear |
| 3. | bovine | C. | sheep |
| 4. | equine | D. | lion |
| 5. | leonine | E. | ape |
| 6. | lupine | F. | wolf |
| 7. | ovine | G. | horse |
| 8. | simian | H. | cow |
| 9. | taurine | I. | bee |
| 10. | ursine | J. | bird |

For the answers to this quiz, look up the first set of words in the dictionary to see how much you knew. And you thought I was going to give you the answers!

Birds may nap in their nest but they don't sleep there.

A snail can sleep for three years if it needs to do so.

Armadillos, opossums and sloths spend up to 80 percent of their lives asleep.

Ants don't sleep.

A bullfrog never sleeps.

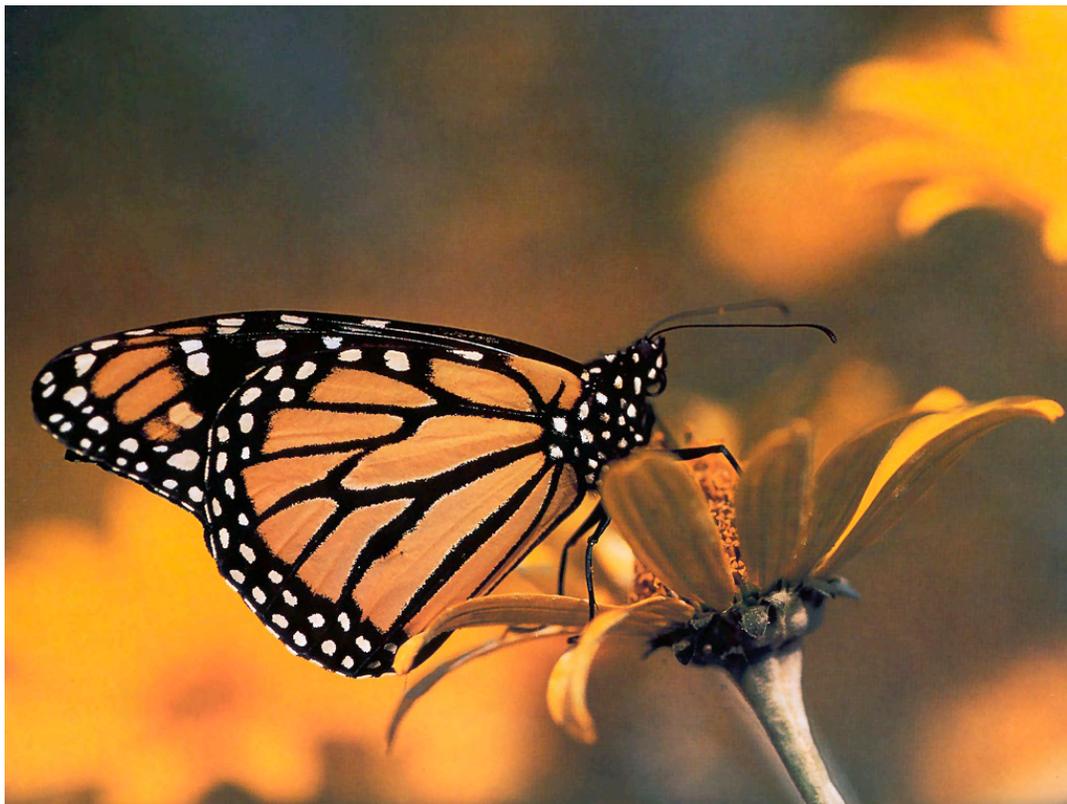
In Closing

Butterflies are graceful, varied and enchanting, small but approachable.

Butterflies lead you to the sunny side of life.

And everyone deserves a little sunshine.

- Jeffrey Glassberg



2009 TCMGA Executive Committee

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VP Volunteer Coordinator Trainees - Sherrill Nilson
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