

The *Compost Bin*

September 2011

A Publication of the Travis County Master Gardeners – A volunteer program of Texas AgriLife Extension



Roses:

'Belinda's Dream' (top) & 'Old Blush' (bottom)



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and More!

Mike Shoup
of
The Antique Rose Emporium
on
Old Roses and
Companion Perennials

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September Meeting Speaker — Mike Shoup

Old Garden Roses and Companion Perennials

"Old garden roses are the ultimate garden plants!" proclaims Mike Shoup of The Antique Rose Emporium. "Old garden roses deserve this prominence because of their fragrance, history, garden virtues, color and nostalgia!" At the September MG meeting Mike will talk about rose culture and garden use with an emphasis on organic applications. Learn about which plants are the best companions to roses in different garden settings. Mike will show why perennials are often used as the plants of choice to grow with the roses.

G. Michael (Mike) Shoup has always had an interest in plants. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree in Biology from Trinity University and his Master's degree in Horticulture from Texas A & M University. In 1976, a year after graduation he started Containerized Plants, Inc. which grew and sold woody plants and hardy, old-fashioned perennials, Texas natives and most importantly, neglected old garden roses.

In 1984 he opened The Antique Rose Emporium which specialized in the re-introduction and distribution of these historic roses. This venture developed into creating display garden/retail centers in historic Independence and San Antonio, Texas. These unique retail centers consist of theme

gardens showing the versatility of antique roses in garden settings. His work has been recognized in the *Smithsonian* and *National Geographic* magazines and in many trade journals as well. His hope is that the beauty seen in these gardens will create a resurgence in the preservation of these rare and beautiful roses.

Mike is a past president of the board of directors of the Heritage Rose Foundation, an organization dedicated to the preservation of old garden roses. He has also written many articles and supplied numerous photographs for trade magazines and national periodicals on the subject of using old garden roses in today's gardens. He has written two books, *Roses in the Southern Garden*, published in 2000 and *Landscaping with Antique Roses*, co-authored with Liz Drutt and published in 1991.

The Guide to Antique Roses authored by Mike Shoup will be for sale after the meeting. The cost is \$15.00, checks or cash only.

Master Gardener Meeting information:
Wednesday, September 7th, 2011 starting at 7:00 pm.
Zilker Botanical Garden

Hello Master Gardeners: A Message From Your President

This summer has been one for the history books — we have all suffered from the heat and the lack of rain! I don't believe anyone will be sad to see this summer fade away . . . and, if we could wish it, never to return!

Here's hoping for a swift bring on the "bers" wish! September, October, November and December — with sweater weather that is cool and crisp, open windows, pumpkins, football, outdoor activities, blooming salvias, asters, and chrysanthemums. The bronze, purple, red and yellow colors mixed with the cool air — just asking you to step outside and enjoy! Who doesn't love the taste of fall's crisp, tart apples served at outdoor picnics? Just the thought of being able to enjoy the outdoors is something to celebrate with family and friends. And, dare I hope for . . . rain showers!

Certainly this horrid summer has taught us some cruel lessons. First, pampered plants are the first to wilt and die when hot and hotter weather arrives. Native and adapted plants can usually handle the weather thrown at them and, sometimes, even thrive. Our latest book, "Creating a Drought-Resistant Garden in Central Texas," is certainly a well received and welcome addition to gardening bookshelves in the area. Water is something we should **never** take for granted!

While looking around my sad little garden/yard, I am happy to say my dearly beloved roses have passed through this heat and are still with me! Two thumbs up for my 'Martha Gonzales' roses that bore the full sun of each day and never even hiccupped. A true rose winner!

Other winners in my own garden are the old crape myrtle, yaupon holly, pomegranate, American beautyberry, flowering senna, copper canyon daisy, esperanza, lantana, various herbs, and salvias (sages). These are my own superstars and I am sure you have come to the same conclusion with more great plants from your own garden. But, I have to say, if a little rain would fall, I think both the plants and myself would be doing a hollering, laughing, fall on the ground celebration.

Water (or the lack thereof) has certainly taken on new meaning as towns and communities struggle with depleting supplies. We all must continue to come up with new thoughts on how to conserve this precious resource. We all must strive to save more water.

My last thought for today is to give a **huge thank you** to our area fire departments who have battled grass fires all summer. My nearby fire department is getting home baked cookies with a heartfelt note of gratitude for a hard job well done. These men and women are awesome warriors!

Happy Fall Gardening!

Carolyn Williams



Above: 'Penelope' Hybrid Musk Rose (1924)
Photo courtesy of The Antique Rose Emporium

In The Vegetable Garden

by Patty Leander

As I headed out for an early morning walk last month I heard the weatherman say that the current temperature was 80 degrees and the high was going to be 104. Well, I'm looking forward to those fall days when the low is 55 degrees and a 24 degree increase will raise the temperature to a lovely 79 degrees outside. There is hope! September in the vegetable garden is a month of transition, from hot and dry to less hot and hopefully a little less dry. Even though daytime temperatures remain hot, our nighttime temperatures will gradually decrease, which is important for plant growth and pollination. The shift in temperatures and the increase in rain chances contribute to what many consider to be the best season in the vegetable garden.



If you don't delay — and if we get a good soaking — there is still time to plant quick-growing crops like bush beans, summer squash and cucumbers. Check seed packets for varieties that reach maturity in 55-60 days, which means a possible harvest for the Thanksgiving table. However if your space is limited it is best to concentrate on cool-season vegetables and herbs that will thrive even beyond that first frost that usually makes its appearance in late November. Broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts and cabbage transplants can go in this month, as well as herbs like cilantro, parsley, thyme, dill and oregano. Be sure to acclimate transplants to your garden sun exposure and provide shade protection the first couple of

weeks so they do not suffer from transplant shock. Fertilize every 2-3 weeks with a water-soluble fertilizer and in the absence of rain try to water at least 1-1 ½" per week. Be warned that stress caused by wilting, lack of moisture or insect damage early on will slow the growth of broccoli and cauliflower and cause small, misshapen heads.



Be on the lookout out for caterpillars munching away on your cruciferous crops as they can do serious damage in only a few days. Carefully check the underside of the leaves for the small, pale green worms and remove them by hand or dust them with Bt. If your garden space allows, try to stagger your plantings by a week or even a few days so that they do not all mature at the same time. The same advice goes for succession plantings of carrots, beets, kohlrabi and radishes. Contact the Master Gardener help desk (512-854-9600) or consult the vegetable garden planting calendar (found at <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/travis/>) for more specific planting dates. Remember that it is best to direct seed root crops like carrots, beets and radishes as they do not transplant very well. Be sure to moisten the soil well before planting any seeds.

Left Top: When planting tiny carrot seed, mix it with sand and shake it out of a spice shaker.

Left Bottom: A decimated broccoli plant with cabbage worm damage.

Right: Herbs in the fall garden.

Photos by Bruce Leander.

In The Vegetable Garden

Continued...

Purchase or order pea seeds early in the month so you will have them when planting time arrives in mid to late September. Sugar snap peas, snow peas and garden peas are easy to grow in the fall as long as seeds are planted by late September so that pods are produced before any hard frost arrives. Most pea varieties grow to about 3 feet tall and will do best if trained on a short fence, tomato cage or trellis. 'Super Sugar Snap' is a vining edible podded pea that grows to 5-7 feet and will require a strong support to grow on. Edible podded peas can be eaten at any stage of development; the entire pod is edible when the peas inside are small and immature, or the peas can be allowed to develop fully and then they can be shelled and eaten. The immature pods can be served with dip, added to stir fries or sliced and added to salads. Peas that are allowed to mature can be prepared like any garden pea, by simmering in a small pot of water just until tender.



Be sure to try some of the unique Asian vegetables, such as bok choy, Chinese cabbage or tatsoi in your fall garden. They perform well in our fall and winter weather and will add a nutritious component to your winter meals. Check out the Kitazawa seed catalog (www.kitazawaseeds.com) for an amazing selection and interesting varieties to try.



Clockwise (left to right): Red and green pac choi.

Sugar snap peas.

The beautiful blossoms of 'Dwarf Grey Sugar' snow pea.

A delicious pea pod.

Bok choy.

Photos by Bruce Leander.

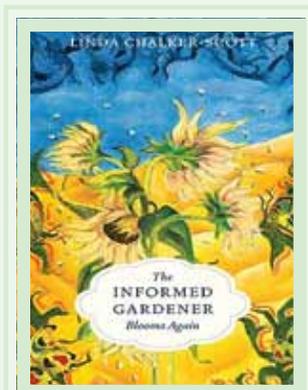


New Books For Texas Gardeners

Reviewed by Anne Van Nest

The Informed Gardener: Blooms Again

By Lina Chalker-Scott



The Informed Gardener Blooms Again picks up where Chalker-Scott's first book, *The Informed Gardener* left off, using scientific literature to debunk a new set of common gardening myths. Once again, Linda Chalker-Scott investigates the science behind each myth, reminding us that urban and suburban landscapes are ecosystems requiring their own particular set of management practices.

The Informed Gardener Blooms Again provides answers to questions such as:

- Does using drought-tolerant plants reduce water consumption?
- Is it more effective to spray fertilizers on the leaves of trees and shrubs than to apply it to the soil?
- Will cedar wood chips kill landscape plants?
- Should I use ladybugs in my garden as a form of pest control?
- Does aerobically brewed compost tea suppress disease?

The Informed Gardener: Blooms Again

By Linda Chalker-Scott

University of Washington Press

Copyright 2010

Softcover, 241 pages, \$18.95

What's in the book:

The Myth of Folklore Gardening

The Myth of Companion Plantings

The Myth of Biodynamic Agriculture

The Myth of Foliar Feeding

The Myth of Night Light

The Myth of Red Leaves

The Myth of Designer Trees

The Myth of Uniform Plant Performance

The Myth of Wilting Leaves

The Myth of Winter Watering

The Myth of Cloroxed Clippers

The Myth of Protective Preservatives

The Myth of Root Snorkels

The Myth of Vehicular Vibration

The Myth of Xeriscaping

The Myth of Extraordinary Epsom Salts

The Myth of Gypsum Magic

The Myth of Permanent Peatlands

The Myth of Wondrous Water Crystals

The Myth of Fish-Friendly Soil Amendments

The Myth of Allelopathic Wood Chips

The Myth of Nitrogen-Nabbing Wood Chips

The Myth of Pathogenic Wood Chips

The Myth of Rubberized Landscapes

The Myth of Phytotoxic Yard Waste

The Myth of Antitranspirants

The Myth of Bubbly Compost Tea

The Myth of Curative Kelp

The Myth of the Magic Bullet

The Myth of Milk and Roses

The Myth of Weed-Killing Gluten

New Books for Texas Gardeners

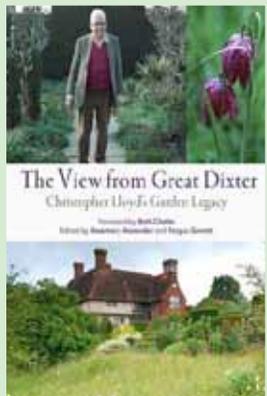
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Every year Chalker-Scott receives hundreds of e-mails from around the world on these and related topics. Her advice, based on more than twenty years of experience in the field of plant physiology, has helped home gardeners, landscape architects, and nursery and landscape professionals to develop scientifically based sustainable landscaping practices.

About the myth of Xeriscaping, "Use of drought-tolerant plants reduces residential water consumption."

The bottom line... Linda writes, "Any newly installed tree or shrub, drought tolerant or otherwise, requires adequate irrigation to establish a sufficient root system. Established, drought-tolerant trees and shrubs can survive with less water than less tolerant landscape plants. If water is available, many drought-tolerant species use more water than less tolerant landscape plants. A drought-tolerant, water-conserving landscape is not going to grow as quickly or vigorously as the same landscape under increased irrigation."

Linda Chalker-Scott is an urban horticulturist and associate professor at Puyallup Research and Extension Center, Washington State University. She is the author of *The Informed Gardener*, winner of the Best Book Prize from the Garden Writers Association. She is the editor and co-author of *Sustainable Landscapes and Gardens*, the Washington State editor of *MasterGardener* magazine, and author of the online column "Horticultural Myths." She has a new blog at www.gardenprofessors.com.



The View from Great Dixter; Christopher Lloyd's Garden Legacy

Fergus Garrett, long faithful Great Dixter gardener, writes in the Preface, "This book is centered around one incredible man and his way of life. Christopher Lloyd was born and lived most of his life at Great Dixter. He was an extraordinary character, a kind, generous, intelligent man who loved people but at the same time didn't suffer fools gladly. His garden has remained a place of pilgrimage for adventurous gardeners throughout the world and his spirit and style lives on here and in his writing. He was undoubtedly one of the greatest garden writers and gardeners of all time and his influence is immense. His words in print remain his legacy and his influence is immense. His words in print remain his legacy and his influence burns bright in all of us he breathed life into. He changed our lives and long may his memory last."

Rosemary Alexander writes in the Preface, "It is often said that Christopher Lloyd collected people, and after his death many of us in his 'collection' recalled the happy occasions and fruitful friendships we all enjoyed at Great Dixter as a way of coming to terms with our loss. As so many of us had such amazing memories of plant advice, practical jokes, delicious dinners, snatches of conversations including his famous (feared) 'put downs' we decided, at one of our regular Dixter Development Committee meetings, to gather them together in a book."

Great Dixter was, and continues to be, rather like some vast extended family, with everyone drawn together by mutual interests and a love for the place. Many of today's great gardeners who worked or spent time at Dixter describe how the lessons they

*The View from Great Dixter;
Christopher Lloyd's Garden
Legacy*

*A compilation, edited by Fergus
Garrett and Rosemary Alexander*

Timber Press

Copyright 2010

Hardcover, 207 pages, \$27.95

New Books For Texas Gardeners

Continued...

learned there continue to influence their work today.

Expansive herbaceous borders, orchid-filled meadows enveloped by old stone, precision-carved topiary, and an air of gentle eccentricity make Great Dixter the quintessential English country garden. Yet the impact of Christopher Lloyd's unique creation extends way beyond the gardening world and affects all who pass through it in a very particular way.

In this intimate collection of written and photographic contributions, Christopher Lloyd's wide circle of family and friends describe what Great Dixter means to them. Food, poetry, music and plants feature large with one guest recounting the delight of eating an exquisitely cooked turbot and another how a bloom of magnolia was analyzed with botanical precision during the course of dinner. Visitors remember the feel of the centuries-old floorboards underfoot, the thrill of waking early to peer out on topiary enshrouded in fog, and many describe how, in one way or another, Great Dixter changed their lives.

This valuable record encapsulates what makes time spent at Great Dixter in particular, and to some extent time spent in all gardens, so irreplaceable. It adds an important layer to our understanding of Christopher Lloyd's achievements and spurs us on to new heights in our own gardening endeavors.

"Life at Dixter with Christopher, or as much as I have savoured it from time to time, is like a very long and intricately worded sentence; a synthesis of perpetual entertainment, fine cuisine, opulent plenitudes of Scotch and Champagne and the ratchety barks of ardently pampered dachshunds, all wrapped within an historical house and polymorphic garden." Dan Hinkley, author of *The Explorer's Garden*

Author Rosemary Alexander has devoted her life to garden design — running a garden design business as well as the English Gardening School. She believes that as people realize the therapeutic nature of gardening, garden design will become even more popular. Fergus Garrett joined Great Dixter as Head Gardener in 1992 and worked closely with Christopher Lloyd as gardener and friend during an important time in the garden's development. Now he combines his full-time, hands-on gardening role at Dixter with lecturing, writing articles, serving on Royal Horticultural Society committees and, as Chief Executive of the Great Dixter Charitable Trust, moving the garden forward in ever more exciting directions.

Monet's Passion: Ideas, Inspiration & Insights from the Painter's Garden

By Elizabeth Murray

From Chapter One, The Garden Monet Created

"This is where Claude Monet lives, in this never-ending feast for the eyes. It is just the environment one would have imagined for this extraordinary poet of tender light and veiled shapes, for this man who has touched the intangible, expressed the inexpressible, and whose spell over our dreams is the dream that nature so mysteriously enfolds, the dream that so mysteriously permeates the divine light." Octave Mirbeau "Claude Monet, L'art dans les deux mondes," March 7, 1891

Claude Monet created his finest work of art as a living study in light and color, an everchanging canvas that used his most beloved flowers as his paints. Each plant that grew in this magnificent painter's paradise was thoughtfully placed, just as in an exquisite flower arrangement prepared for a painter's still life. In turn, the gardens that

Monet's Passion

By Elizabeth Murray

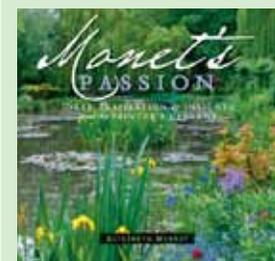
Pomegranate Communications

Copyright 2010

Hardcover, 127 pages, \$35.00

New Books For Texas Gardeners

Continued...



Monet worked on for over forty years became the inspiration for his paintings for the second half of his life.

The gardens at Giverny consist of the Clos Normand garden, featuring nearly three acres of flowers, with its Grande Allée (the flower tunnel with great arches of rambling roses above the broad walk carpeted with creeping, round-leafed nasturtiums), and the two-acre water lily garden with the arching green bridge woven with wisteria. We know these subjects well from Monet's paintings — brilliant Impressionist depictions of nature's moments of full bloom, glorious color, and light preserved on canvas through the hand of the great master.

At the time Monet started painting, most painters began their practice with still lifes in the studio — bowls of fruit or bouquets of flowers — and, when they could afford it, with a model. Landscape painters often sketched various views from nature and then created the finished composition in their studios under controlled conditions.

The plein air Impressionists painted out of doors — directly from nature — and dedicated themselves to capturing the impression of a fleeting moment. They carried their paints (made possible by the recent availability of oil paints in tubes), canvases, and easels through the meadows and orchards and along streams until they came upon an inspirational view. Finding a pleasing composition, perhaps a certain group of trees backlit with the rising sun, they set about painting it as quickly as possible in short, sure strokes of pure color. Monet expanded this concept by composing with nature as he designed, planted, and cultivated his gardens.



Monet designed this gracefully arched wooden bridge — a prominent feature of the water garden — to span a narrow part of his pond. The 18-foot structure was inspired by one of his Japanese woodblock prints.

In 1911, following the devastation of major storms and flooding, he repaired and enlarged his water garden, adding the iron arbor. He planted the white Chinese wisteria on the lower handrails and the long lavender Japanese wisteria on the arbor; when in bloom, they create a canopy of lace. The reflections of the bridge are magnificent in the pond below.

Lovers of plants, gardens, design, architecture, fine art, Impressionism and Claude Monet, the master himself will be enthralled by this book written by an artist and gardener who has immersed herself in the glory of Giverny to such an extent that it has almost become a second home.

Almost better than setting foot in Giverny in person, this book, with its lavish photography and interesting layover drawings, shows the garden that inspired the artist during the last forty years of his life.

New Books For Texas Gardeners

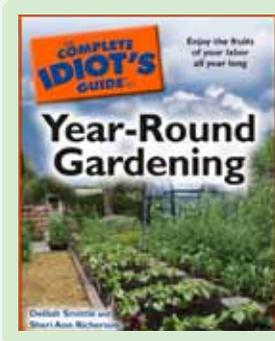
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A professional gardener and artist, Elizabeth Murray helped to restore the Giverny gardens in the 1980s and has since enjoyed privileged access to the site, which she visits annually to capture Monet's passion at its most radiant and riotous. In this redesigned, updated edition, Murray discusses the development and history of Monet's Giverny estate and brings new insight to Monet's approach to gardening and design. Emphasizing his keen understanding of color balance and his genius for maximizing the effects of light, Murray explores the color combinations and techniques with which Monet experimented in both painting and gardening — each pursuit informing the other. Murray's lush photographs chronicle the present-day gardens, and a section titled "Bringing Giverny Home" provides detailed Giverny-based garden plans that can be executed anywhere. Full-color illustrations of the gardens, a list of the plants originally used by Monet, and a plant cultivation section round out this immensely helpful guide to creating year-round beauty in one's own backyard.

Elizabeth Murray received her bachelor's degrees in fine art, environmental education, and botany from Sonoma State University. She is the author of numerous gardening and art books, including *Painterly Photography: Awakening the Artist Within* and *Cultivating Sacred Space: Gardening for the Soul*. Her photography is housed in several museum and private collections, including the de Young Museum of San Francisco and the New Orleans Museum of Art. Murray resides in Monterey, California, where she designs gardens as healing spaces and teaches creativity classes using photography, painting, and flowers.

The Complete Idiot's Guide to Year-Round Gardening

By Selilah Smittle and Sheri Ann Richerson



Every season is a growing season. You're no idiot, of course. Your garden is your passion, but like all good things it comes to an end. All too soon you go from bountiful harvest to cleaning out the garden beds and longing for planting time again.

It doesn't have to be that way. Delilah Smittle and Sheri Ann Richerson have filled *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Year-Round Gardening* with affordable tips and techniques to use to get your garden growing early and keep it producing year-round. Although this book was written for a national audience, some tips are still valuable for Texas gardeners.

Whether it's onions in the summer, lettuce in the winter, or orchids any time, *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Year-Round Gardening* covers every step of the process of both outdoor and indoor gardening. From seeds, soil, compost, equipment, and fertilizers to all types of covers and greenhouses, and even gardening and harvesting in root cellars during winter, this guide is a must-have for any dedicated gardener.

Includes information on...

The right soil for every season.

Composting and fertilizing year-round.

Seed-saving methods for flowers and vegetables.

The Complete Idiot's Guide to Year-Round Gardening

By Selilah Smittle and Sheri Ann Richerson

Alpha

Copyright 2010

Softcover, 317 pages, \$19.95

New Books For Texas Gardeners

Continued...

Indoor and outdoor seed starting.

Maintaining outdoor covered gardens.

Year-round greenhouse techniques for growing ornamentals and produce.

The best plants for heated and unheated greenhouses.

Delilah Smittle is an editor and writer specializing in gardening and hobbies. She has edited and written articles for *Flower and Garden*, *Fine Gardening*, *Organic Gardening*, and other magazines.

Sheri Ann Richerson has over 20 years experience in newspaper, magazine and creative writing. She wrote on a regular basis for Garden Solutions Magazine. She has also written for a wide variety of magazines including *Florida Gardening*, *Growing Edge*, *ChicagoLand Gardening*, *The Herbalist*, *Pool & Spa Living*, *Pondkeeper*, *Hort Recources*, *Miss Kitty's Journal*, *Biker Alley*, *Lawn & Garden Retailer*, *Home Cooking Magazine*, *Bird Talk*, *Ferrets*, *DogGone Newsletter*, *Imprints*, *Ft. Myers Magazine* and *Plants Magazine* to name just a few. She has also worked as the editor of a local paper, *The Courier*. She was the BellaOnline Water Gardens Editor, Bulbs Editor, Spa Editor plus Landscaping Editor as well as a contributing writer for Suite101.



Left: 'Marie Pavie' Polyantha Rose
(1888)

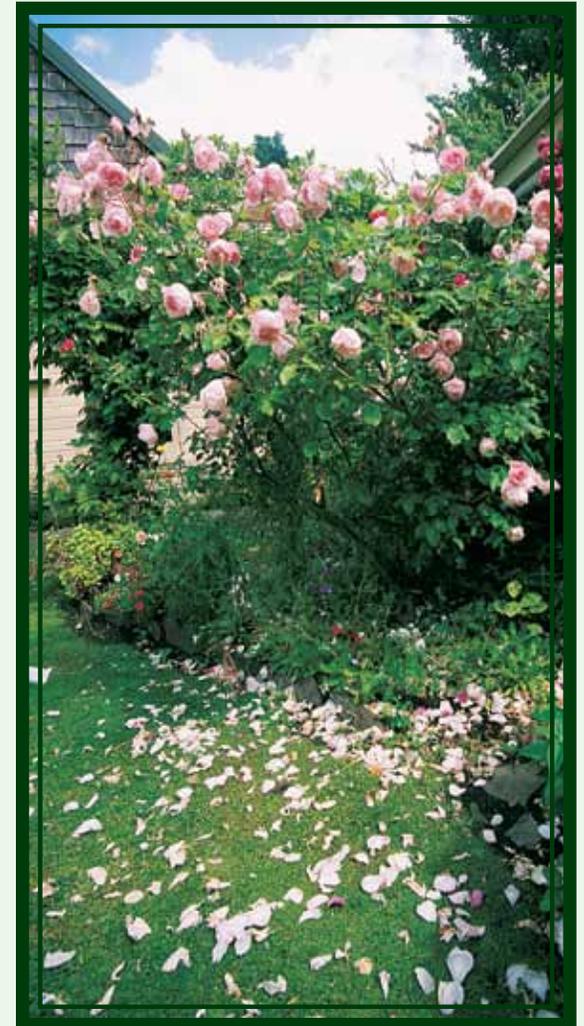
Photo courtesy of The Antique Rose
Emporium

Old Roses



Top Left: 'Marchesa Boccella'
Hybrid Perpetual Rose (1842)
Bottom Left: 'Belinda's Dream'
Earthkind Rose (1992)
Right: 'Duchesse de Brabant'
Tea Rose (1857)

Photos courtesy of The Antique
Rose Emporium



Plant Drought Survival

by Bob Beyer

While we are hibernating in our air conditioned, climate-controlled home environment when daily temperatures exceed 100 degrees F. and one of our worst droughts is in progress, can we have a little sympathy for our outdoor plants who don't have such luxury? As gardener's our biggest concern right now is for our plants — especially when the forces of nature are being so cruel. We all love our plants and want to do all that we can to care for them, especially during these trying times. So, is there anything that we can do to battle this drought and heat? First, identify what is challenging plants so we can react accordingly. A plant's greatest stresses during drought and heat are light intensity and excessive transpiration.

Between June 1st and July 31st, around the summer equinox, the longer daylight periods provide more intense light than most plants are accustomed to having during the rest of the year — causing some foliage to wither, die, or turn paler in color. Plants affected this way may need some temporary protection — container plants moved to a shadier area or perhaps a sun screen netting placed overhead to reduce the amount of direct sunlight hitting them. Remember that full sun in central Texas is much more intense than full sun in more northern regions of the country. Also the light-colored limestone soils in Hill Country reflect light on plants adding to its intensity.

The movement of moisture up from the ground by a plant and transpired into the air is accelerated by low humidity, high temperatures and wind. Plants may show foliar wilting during the worst heat of the day but may recover during the cooler periods between dusk and dawn. But once soil moisture runs out, plants may have a real problem. Transpiration also provides cooling for the plant as water is drawn through their system. This process is also a vital part of growth, photosynthesis and plant turgidity. So a little help is more than likely needed for many of your plants.

Most plants will need supplemental water during drought unless they have built-in water conserving adaptations, such as with cacti, succulents, and many desert shrubs that have minimize foliage size, pubescent foliage, waxy outer layers or specialized cells for water retention to reduce transpiration and combat prolonged heat and

drought. Many desert plants put themselves into dormancy during summer as well as during winter. These plants need to be kept dry — so excessive watering can be damaging to them while in a dormant state.

Knowing your individual plants, where they are native to and the conditions they are adaptable for is essential to caring for them properly during tough times. Placement of plants together with similar care needs makes it easier to maintain them all well. At the same time, gardeners must minimize our use of water during restriction periods. So here are some tips on conserving water use:

1. Water less frequently but deeply and thoroughly. Hand water around the drip line of the plant to concentrate water where the feeder roots are located. Water once, then again after the first watering has had a chance to soften the soil and penetrate. The deeper the watering, the deeper the roots will grow — down to places where water retention is the greatest — at depth. Sometimes it helps to use a stick to poke a few holes around the plant before watering which will allow water to penetrate deeper.

2. Water before 9 a.m. or after 6 p.m. to minimize evaporation. Surface sprinklers are not effective due to the amount of water that evaporates during their use. Soaker hoses work well, but hand watering gives you an opportunity to observe the general health of your plants to make sure your watering plan is effective. It is possible to kill a plant by overwatering it in summer as too much water will choke out soil air space needed for good root growth and oxygen uptake.

3. Don't prune or fertilize, during stressful periods. The last thing you want to do is encourage the plant to produce new growth when it is struggling just to survive. Wilting and cessation of growth are survival mechanisms and natural ways for plants to reduce stress during drought and heat. Take a break from your gardening tasks during the summer heat just like your plants do.

Plant Drought Survival

Continued...

4. Don't plant or transplant during stressful periods. Plants can take up to a year to establish themselves and adapt to a new environment, but once established, they will usually hold their own. Spring and fall are the best times to plant and transplant (depending on the plant). Drought-tolerant plants will not survive until good root systems are established so extra watering and care during the first year of a plant's life is necessary.



5. Perhaps the best solution of all is to plant native, drought resistant and adaptive plants to the greatest extent possible in your ornamental gardens. Good plant choices — the ounce of prevention beats a pound of cure approach — reduces stress on the gardener as well as the plants having to endure it. Do your homework and research the best plant selections for the environment where they will live. Remember your yard has micro-environments which can affect plant choices. The trick is to find the right plant for the right spot. By careful selection of plants, you will not only reduce your stress and that of the plant, but save money by not having to replace plants that don't make it. Help abounds in Austin through many organizations, publications, and individuals such as the Master Gardeners, the City of Austin's Grow Green program, the Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center, just to name a few. It always helps to get second opinions to see if the sources you consult are in agreement.

6. When push comes to shove, use scarce water resources to help your shrubs and young trees survive instead of trying to maintain or save your lawn. If we could learn one lesson during this drought, it is the need to begin planning to reduce lawn area and reconstruct our yards to be more xeriphytic. After the heat of summer, fall is a great time to begin that reconstruction so you will be prepared for next year, as the predictions are for a continuation of this weather and drought pattern.

Even the most drought-tolerant plants may need a little hands-on help during our prolonged drought and severe heat, while we need to conserve valuable water resources at the same time. Some effective ways for gardeners to recycle and save water include keeping a bucket near the sink or any water source and fill it while waiting for the hot water to emerge and then after it cools use it to water some plants, and/or draw water from your rain barrels (you do have one or more I hope) for use on potted plants. Try to minimize water that will go down the drain or down a storm sewer and redirect it to help your landscape. Only water in accordance with your local water restrictions.

Hand water as much as possible. I even wash my car on the lawn so run off water benefits the lawn!

Often the best approach is to do just enough to keep our plants alive, even though they may not aesthetically look good, knowing that during better times, they will recover and once again thrive — and oh yes, **keep praying for rain!**

Used with permission from the Gardening In Central Texas blog www.centraltexasgardening.wordpress.com

Fire Ants

by Wizzie Brown

In 1998, the second full week of September was signed into law as Fire Ant Awareness Week. People of central Texas are most likely very aware of fire ants, but the purpose of Fire Ant Awareness Week is to educate people about fire ant biology and management.

Red imported fire ants live in large colonies and build large dome-shaped mounds that can contain over 200,000 ants (Figure 1). Fire ant mounds are typically built in open, sunny areas such as lawns, pastures and gardens, but can often also be found next to tree trunks, sidewalks and structural foundations. When weather becomes hot and dry, fire ants will tunnel deep into the soil to find cooler temperatures and water. It seems as if the ants disappear, but after heavy rain mounds will pop up in various locations.



Fire ants are known to protect their mound in a very aggressive manner. When a mound is disturbed, workers rush out in large numbers, climb quickly up the invading object and begin to bite and sting. Once a worker has a good grip on your skin with its mandibles, it will continue to sting you, twisting its body in a circular pattern. For most people, a small fluid-filled blister will form by the following day (Figure 2).

Figure 1. Red imported fire ant mound (Left).
Figure 2. Blister from the sting of a red imported fire ant (Right).



If the blister is broken open, this often happens from scratching, it can become infected and lead to more serious problems. Some people have more serious reactions to fire ant stings that may result in redness, swelling or even trouble breathing.

There are numerous ways that people try to manage fire ants; some methods kill the fire ants while others cause them to move to a different location. Some methods to cause fire ants to relocate their mound include continually disturbing a mound by kicking it, digging up the mound, mowing over the mound with a lawnmower or “home remedies” such as grits, sugar, citrus peels or other items on top of the mound (Figure 3).

Naturally derived products to treat individual fire ant mounds include active ingredients such as d-limonene (citrus oil extract), cedar oil and pyrethrins with or without diatomaceous earth (silicon dioxide). Synthetic mound treatments include active ingredients such as cyfluthrin, lambda-cyhalothrin, permethrin, carbaryl and acephate. Baits (covered below) can also be used as individual mound treatments.

Fire Ants

Continued...

Individual mound treatments are used to treat one mound at a time. To assure that the proper amount of chemical is utilized, read and follow all label instructions. Make sure to water in the pesticide if the label instructs to do so. Failure to water in chemicals when recommended by the label does an inadequate job of killing the ants.



Bait-formulated insecticides are another method to manage fire ants. Many fire ant baits consist of defatted corn grit coated with soybean oil, which is the ingredient attractive to fire ants. The active ingredient (what kills the pest) is dissolved in the soybean oil. Worker ants collect bait and take it back to the colony to share with other ants. The bait is spread to other ants throughout the colony, including the queen. Some baits cause the queen to die while other baits make her unable to produce viable eggs, both which will lead to death of the colony. It usually takes a longer time to see results when using baits compared to individual mound treatments (dusts, drenches, granulars), but baiting may provide around 90% suppression for 6-18 months. Very little chemical is placed into the environment when using baits. Most baits are broadcast at a rate of 1-1 ½ pounds per acre and the majority of what you see is corn grit. When there are more than five fire ant mounds in a yard, broadcast baiting should be considered.

Community-wide fire ant management programs can be a beneficial way to overcome the constant battle between homeowners and fire ants. With help from Texas AgriLife Extension Service, homeowner associations can form a community-wide program that can be successful in reducing fire ant populations within neighborhoods.

Since most fire ant control methods are executed by individual landowners, there is often rapid reinfestation from nearby, untreated areas. With the organization of a community-wide program, reinfestation boundaries can be pushed further away, resulting in longer periods of time between reinvasion and treatment.

Figure 3. (Above) An individual fire ant mound treated with baking soda.

Coming Events

Fall Transplanting and Dividing Perennials

**Saturday, September 10, 2011,
10 a.m. - 12 p.m.**

Zilker Botanical Garden

2220 Barton Springs Road,
Austin, Texas 78746

Fall is the best time to transplant and divide your garden perennials. Learn how to share your extra plants with others and re-locate perennials that may have overgrown their current place in the landscape. Get a jump on spring blooms by giving them a chance to develop a strong root system. Join Master Gardener Velia Sanchez-Ruiz in proper planning and execution of these essential garden tasks.

This seminar is free and open to the public. It is presented by the Travis County Master Gardeners, a volunteer arm of the Texas AgriLife Extension Service in Travis County. For more information see www.tcmastergardeners.org or call the Master Gardener Help Desk at (512) 854-9600.

Home Fruit Production: Conventional Choices and Sustainable Options

**Saturday, September 17, 2011,
10 a.m. - 3 p.m.**

Austin Community College, South Campus
1820 West Stasney Dr., Room 1130
Austin, Texas

This seminar for home fruit growers will cover the basics of fruit production, site selection and preparation and cover the specific needs of fruit crops. In addition it will review the importance of choosing varieties and optimizing tree health and productivity. Much of the focus will be on understanding how fruit crops respond to our ever-changing weather conditions in the Texas Hill Country. Presented by Jim Kamas, Asst. Professor & Extension Specialist for Texas AgriLife Extension on how to enhance the sustainable production of conventional crops such as peaches and pears as well as exploring work on newly emerging fruit choices that can be grown with minimal inputs.

Questions? Contact Rosalie Russell, gisathccs@aol.com. TCMGA members earn 4 hours CEU. Space limited to 50 people. Still openings! Registration closes Sept. 15. Registration and \$25 fee paid on line at: <https://agrifiregister.tamu.edu>. Keyword Search: Fruit.

Veggie Pests

**Friday, September 23, 2011,
10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.**

Travis County Extension Office

1600-B Smith Road,
Austin, Texas 78721

Join Wizzie Brown, Texas AgriLife Extension Service Extension Program Specialist -IPM for a class on veggie pests.

This seminar is free and open to Master Gardeners. It is presented by the Texas AgriLife Extension Service in Travis County. For more information call Travis County Texas AgriLife Extension Service at (512) 854-9600.

Coming Events

Continued

All About Spiders

**Friday, October 7, 2011,
10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.**

Travis County Extension Office

1600-B Smith Road,
Austin, Texas 78721

Join Wizzie Brown, Texas AgriLife Extension Service Extension Program Specialist -IPM for a class on spiders.

This seminar is free and open to Master Gardeners. It is presented by the Texas AgriLife Extension Service in Travis County. For more information call Travis County Texas AgriLife Extension Service at (512) 854-9600.

**Central Texas Trees and
Oak Wilt (FAQ)**

**Saturday, October 22, 2011,
2:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.**

Old Quarry Oaks Public Library

7051 Village Center Drive,
Austin, Texas 78731

Join us to learn all about how to do right by your trees. Learn what varieties to select for your Central Texas landscape and gain a higher level of success by choosing those that enjoy our native soils and tough climate. Learn how to care for and prune your tree for long-term health and during times of stress such as construction or drought. Master Gardener Jerry Naiser will share his expertise on all things trees!

This seminar is free and open to the public. It is presented by the Travis County Master Gardeners, a volunteer arm of the Texas AgriLife Extension Service in Travis County. For more information see www.tcmastergardeners.org or call the Master Gardener Help Desk at (512) 854-9600.

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This issue of the Compost Bin has been published thanks to the contributions of the following Travis County Master Gardeners and Wizzie Brown — Texas AgriLife Extension:

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Visit the websites: www.tcmastergardeners.org and
<http://travis-tx.tamu.edu>



The End...

Time for a rain dance!

