

The Compost Bin

April 2012

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

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**Our Water Supply, Now
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Photo: Liath Appleton

April Meeting Speaker — Becky Motal

OUR WATER SUPPLY, NOW AND IN THE FUTURE

- Becky Motal

An essential of life, water is near and dear to every gardener's heart. The continuing drought will affect the types of plants we are willing to sustain in our gardens.

Becky is the first female general manager in LCRA's history. Well qualified, she began working for LCRA in 1972 with a BA in math from the University of Texas. She left to pursue a law degree and worked as an environmental attorney before returning to LCRA in 1987 as manager of Economic and Financial Planning. In 2007, she was promoted to executive manager of External Affairs, where she coordinated LCRA's activities with state and federal regulatory agencies. In that position, Becky had oversight over local governmental affairs, public affairs, customer service and corporate events. She became general manager in 2011. She is also on the board of the Texas Public Power Association.

LCRA plays a variety of roles in Central Texas: delivering electricity, managing the water supply and environment of the lower Colorado River basin, developing water and wastewater utilities, providing public recreation areas, and supporting community and economic development.

There will be a plant exchange following the program. The theme for this Spring's plant exchange is "Edibles and Drought Resistant Plants". Don't forget to label your plants, and please, no muddy messes. Do plan to take home any of your plants or items that don't find a home. And be sure to bring those extra seeds, cuttings, garden magazines and pots that you'd like to share with other

Master Gardeners.

Master Gardener Meeting information:
 Wednesday, April 4, 2012 starting at 7 pm.
 Zilker Botanical Garden

Hello Master Gardeners: A Message From Your President

Ah, Spring! While you can look at the calendar and confirm that spring has finally arrived, I prefer to look at the spectacle around me and various important events to confirm that it's spring. All of the plants that took winter refuge on the window sills in my home are back outside enjoying the brighter light and nourishing rains. The Anacacho orchid trees are in full bloom, and little bees are hovering around the flowers. The wildflowers are bursting forth with a bounty of bluebonnets, golden eye phloxes, and purple cranesbill geraniums.

The pomegranate next to where I park my car is full of buds starting to open. Last week as I stopped to admire the orange buds, I noticed a considerable amount of twitching of the branches, and bird calls. As I looked closer, there was a family of Carolina Wrens bouncing around the branches. It was obvious the baby birds had just fledged, because their feathers were still immature with small wild feathers sticking out around their backs and heads. The baby birds were hesitant to move from one branch to another, but their parents kept urging them to do so. One had landed on top of the car, and a parent was really scolding that baby. You could just hear the parent saying, "Get off that car! When it's time to go for a trip, I'll let you know. Now, just jump back on the branch!" Of course, my presence wasn't helping matters.

There are so many events to mark the arrival of spring. But for gardeners, nothing outshines the Zilker Garden Festival as a rite of spring's arrival. As it's going on this weekend, we have a plethora of Master Gardeners volunteering around the park. Besides the plant sales booth, we have the plant clinic booth, and new for this year, a firewise landscaping booth. In each, Master Gardeners are sharing advice, wisdom, and the benefits of their experience and training. Yesterday, one shopper told me she loves Master Gardeners and hopes she can join our ranks some day when she has more time to commit to the organization. It's on her bucket list!

We can't forget the many Master Gardeners who are donating time

to man Austin Area Garden Council tasks. From driving carts, to taking tickets, members are helping ensure the success of the garden festival. And our own Joe Posern will provide a presentation on firewise landscaping under the tent for AAGC. Way to go, Joe! Many thanks to all the Master Gardeners who are giving valuable spring planting time to help educate the people of Central Texas.

Of course, we can't forget the upcoming East Austin Garden Festival scheduled for April 14th. It's such a fun event to work - and you get volunteer hours, too. If you haven't signed up to work a booth, please do so soon. Manda Rash and her team have done a great job planning this year's fair!

And, as a final reminder of spring's events, don't forget the plant exchange after our program on Wednesday evening! The theme is edibles and drought resistant plants. It's going to be a good meeting; the topic is "Our Water Supply, Now and in the Future." Becky Motal, General Manager of LCRA, is the speaker. From the meeting announcement: "LCRA is wholesale water supplier to Austin and many surrounding communities. This is an opportunity to learn of the prognosis for both drinking water, and water for our plants, throughout our growing seasons." As gardeners, there aren't many topics more important to us than adequate water - whether it's from rain or the tap, we want to make sure there's an adequate supply.

To each, happy gardening and fun volunteering!

- Jackie

In The Vegetable Garden

by Patty Leander

Not sure where I first heard the following comment, but I remember Skip Richter saying it several years ago, so I'll attribute it to him: "Weeds are just compost waiting to happen".



a patch of weeds, ready for weeding

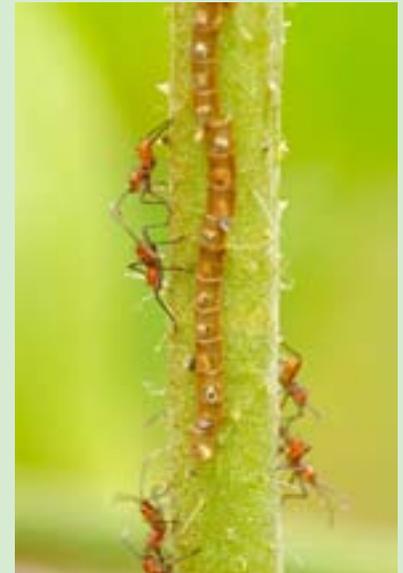
Photo: Bruce Leander

It's a message worth repeating as the much appreciated spring rains have brought our gardens to life again, along with tons of weeds. But every weed I pull or hoe is a source of organic matter for my garden, so I throw them in the row to dry out and decompose, or dump them into the compost bin where they provide nitrogen to the pile - as well as a source of easily digestible food for the microbes. Weeds are especially easy to remove after a rain, and it's important to remove them before they flower. Many weed varieties are capable of producing thousands of seeds - thus the saying "One year of seed equals seven years of weeds". So, even if I don't always have the time to pull them up from their roots, I at least try to cut them off at ground level before they set seed in order to diminish the number of annual weeds next year.

If you haven't planted tomatoes yet, do it soon. Water in new transplants with a half-strength fertilizer solution, give them a sturdy cage for support, and wrap the cage with row cover to protect from wind and insects. Hopefully we will not be surprised by a late-season freeze, but if we are, cages wrapped in row cover and tied at the top should offer sufficient protection. Later in the month, as the plants grow and the days and nights begin to warm up you can remove the row cover altogether or roll it down to expose the tomatoes to full sun. To keep plants growing strong, spray or feed with a liquid fertilizer every two weeks. Provide 1-1 1/2 inches of water per week, and if possible, use drip irrigation or soaker hoses to keep soil from splashing up on the leaves, as this is sometimes how soil borne diseases get their start. Watch for signs of early blight on tomatoes - yellowing leaves with black spots that start at the base of the plant. Remove infected leaves, mulch the soil and try using an organic

fungicide called Serenade if symptoms worsen.

Watch out for aphids, and wash them off or spray with insecticidal soap to keep their numbers in check. Also be on the lookout for leaf-footed bugs. They are much easier to control when caught at the nymph stage. Or better yet, look for and destroy their egg cases before they hatch.



Aphids attacking a bean pod
Photo: Bruce Leander

In The Vegetable Garden

Continued...



egg case and nymph stage of
leaf-footed bugs
Photo: Bruce Leander

Onions are heavy feeders and will benefit from a sidedressing of nitrogen fertilizer as the bulbs begin to swell. One to two cups of organic fertilizer per 10 feet of a double row is recommended.

If you planted potatoes, hill them up with soil, mulch or hay as they grow so that the developing tubers will not be exposed to sunlight (it causes the skin to turn green). Be sure that corn is thinned to stand at least one foot apart and pull soil around the base of the cornstalks to help stabilize them and keep them from blowing over.

Southern peas, okra, peppers, eggplant and melons like warm weather, and can be planted any time this month. Use transplants for peppers and eggplant since they take a longer time to reach maturity. Once your garden is planted, take the time to mulch around all of your vegetable plants. The mulch will help retain moisture, regulate soil temperature, and over time, it will decompose releasing nutrients into the soil.



tiny potatoes need to develop under a covering of
soil or hay to avoid exposure to sunlight
Photo: Bruce Leander

Squash Bugs

by Wizzy Brown

Squash bugs are true bugs, and have a somewhat flattened body. They are fairly large, about 5/8 of an inch long, and the adults are grayish-brown in color. Adults have fully developed wings while nymphs do not have fully developed wings. When newly hatched, nymphs are light green with black legs and head. Nymphs become light gray as they get older, and eventually turn darker like the adults. Eggs are football-shaped and yellowish to bronze-red in color.

Squash bugs attack cucurbits, but prefer squash and pumpkins. They have piercing-sucking mouthparts that they use to puncture leaves and suck out sap. Damage appears as yellowing patches on leaves that turn brown. Their feeding can also lead to wilting. Young plants tend to be more susceptible to damage than more mature plants, but mature plants can be damaged when large populations infest the plant.

Squash bugs overwinter as adults in debris such as leaf litter, under rocks or around buildings. Adults emerge in the spring. They then fly to plants, mate and the females lay eggs. Eggs are laid in clusters, usually on the underside of leaves where the leaf veins form a V-shape. Eggs may sometimes be laid on the stems of the plant.

It is most important to manage squash bugs when plants are most susceptible to their feeding. Early detection is key to a good management program. Scout early and often for egg clusters on stems and the underside of leaves. If eggs are found, either remove the leaf, and dispose of it (double bag it and throw it into the garbage), or squish the eggs.

Nymphs and adults can be hand-picked from the plants and dropped into a bucket of hot, soapy water. Vacuuming the nymphs and adults from the plant is another management option. Traps, such as boards or newspapers, can be placed near susceptible

plants overnight, and then collected in the morning to destroy the

insects. Clean up debris in the garden to reduce areas where squash bugs may hide.



Photos: Extension Entomology, Department of Entomology, Texas A&M University

Rainwater Harvesting

by Rosemary Vaughn

This article is a history of my romance with rainwater harvesting. I acquired my first city-sponsored rain barrel in the 1990s. I installed it and had it inspected as required. I was fortunate since I had already installed rain gutters. Since I acquired the barrel during a time of abundant water, I used it only when I thought about it, because as you know, the only way to use it was with a watering can or bucket since it did not have a tap to which a hose could be attached. This situation persisted until 2008 when water was becoming much more scarce and expensive, and I decided to increase my ability to save water and energy. I purchased 8 additional rain barrels and installed them. During that year I filled buckets and watering cans, and carried them all over the yard every day as I tried my very best to keep to my goal of using rain water as much as possible.

Here are some suggestions for making your rain barrel(s) more useful. When I purchased the additional 8 barrels, I had them fitted with regular metal water spigots; one on the bottom and one near the top. I connected adjacent barrels to each other using the top spigot to route water from the top of one barrel to the next barrel using a washing machine hose. I closed the inlet on the second tank with screened wire to keep mosquitoes out. I also mounted both tanks on concrete blocks to raise them high enough to use buckets or cans. The gutters will need either a cover to cut down on leaves and mosquitoes, or a filter box installed in-line from the gutter.

After years of toting water cans from one place to another, I cannot tell you how tired I was of watering the plants as the rain barrels close to those plants drained. In 2009 I contracted for a 1,400-gallon tank. I wanted additional tank capacity, but that was all I could justify at the time. The 1,400-gallon tank is galvanized metal and has a spigot and a pump. Finally, I no longer had to carry the water (eight pounds per gallon) from place to place. This of course did not help me with using the latent capacity of my nine rain barrels with 55 gallons each. When the real drought hit I used all of my water pretty quickly, and by the summer I was out of rainwater completely. I continued to water on my allowable day(s) since I wanted very much to keep my trees alive.

I added a 300 gallon tank in the fall of 2011, and began to search for a solution to access the water in the auxiliary barrels. If you choose to use the pump system that I will now describe, it will not be necessary to mount the barrels on blocks, which is good since the blocks tend to shift after a heavy rain. I have mounted an external pump with a double-ended washing machine hose on the pump inlet to a regular hand truck. In addition to the pump, I store a heavy duty electrical cord and a 50-foot garden hose on a metal hose hanger that is permanently mounted on the hand truck. This way I can move the entire apparatus to the area in which the water is needed. I use the double-ended washing machine hose to connect the rain barrel bottom spigot and the pump inlet. I use the cord to provide electricity to the pump, and I attach the garden hose to the pump's outlet in order to direct the water to the plants in need. This solution may be more expensive than can be justified if you have a single barrel. Other readers may have more economical solution to the access problem.

At this point in time, all of the barrels and tanks are full, and I wish I had more capacity. I am rethinking the plants for my front plot, and may make some changes to the plants that require even less water; possibly old garden roses and prickly pear cactus.

Propagation Techniques for the Spring

by Becky Waak

I still remember how powerful I felt after the Master Gardening class session on propagation. I was so thrilled to think I could multiply the plants in my garden, my friend's garden, my mother's garden.... Every plant, flower, and shrub was a potential target. Several years later I had the opportunity to become a propagation specialist. I hope you too will take advantage of this wonderful training opportunity.

You may have lost some plants in your garden this last year. I know I did. I thought it would be helpful to remind you of some basic techniques you can use to replace the plants in your garden without costing an arm and a leg. Many of the plants I've listed here are usually planted in multiples, so propagating them is cost efficient. Maybe you always wanted rows of boxwoods for a more formal look. Sometimes we want to duplicate a shrub to balance our design. Maybe you want to share your plants at the plant swap. Whatever the reason, I thought it would be helpful to remind you of the basic techniques of propagation called stem cuttings, with examples of plants you can propagate this spring.

Matching propagation methods with examples of plants: Stem Cuttings

The use of stem cuttings is the most commonly used method to propagate woody ornamental plants. Stem cuttings of many favorite shrubs are quite easy to root. If you recall your class, there are four basic cuttings:

Herbaceous cuttings are made from non-woody, herbaceous plants such as coleus, chrysanthemums, geraniums and most annuals. A 3-5 inch piece of stem is cut from the parent plant. The leaves on the lower one-third to one-half of the stem are removed. A high percentage of the cuttings root, and they do so quickly. If you purchase a large plant this spring, a few snips and you will have a dozen plants in a month or so.

Softwood cuttings are prepared from soft, succulent, new growth

of woody plants, just as it begins to harden (mature). Shoots are suitable for making softwood cuttings when they can be snapped easily when bent, and when they still have a gradation of leaf size. For most woody plants, this stage occurs in early spring here in Central Texas. The soft shoots are quite tender, and extra care must be taken to keep them from drying out.

Semi-hardwood cuttings are usually prepared from partially mature wood of the current season's growth, just after a flush of growth. This type of cutting normally is made from late spring through mid summer. The wood is reasonably firm and the leaves of mature size. The thing to remember here in Central Texas is that plants become stressed early in the summer and will not be as easily propagated.

Hardwood cuttings are taken from dormant, mature stems in the fall and winter. Plants generally are fully dormant with no obvious signs of active growth. The wood is firm and does not bend easily. Hardwood cuttings are used most often for deciduous shrubs, but can be used for many evergreens. (I'll follow up with some creative ideas for propagating hardwood cuttings later in the year.)

If you want to take some cuttings now, the following are a few plants that reliably respond to softwood and semi-hardwood cutting techniques: althea, rose, gardenia, boxwood, jasmine, holly, yaupon, privet, yew, azalea, clematis, crabapple, crape myrtle, forsythia, hibiscus, hydrangea, ivy, mock orange, spirea, sumac, & viburnum. Also, many of the salvias, sages, and hardy perennials can be reproduced now. Many of these plants will also respond by waiting until later in the year and using the hardwood cutting technique.

Basic Tips for Rooting Stem Cuttings

Cuttings should generally consist of the current or past season's growth (take more than you think you will need). Avoid material with flower buds if possible. Remove any flowers and flower buds

Propagation Techniques for the Spring

Continued...

when preparing cuttings so the cutting's energy can be used to produce new roots rather than flowers. Each stem cutting should have a minimum of 3-4 nodes. Trim back leaves to avoid excess transpiration.

Take cuttings from healthy, disease-free plants, preferably from the upper part of the plant. Avoid taking cuttings from plants that show symptoms of mineral nutrient deficiency. Conversely, plants that have been fertilized heavily, particularly with nitrogen, may not root well. The stock plant should not be under moisture stress. In general, cuttings taken from young plants root in higher percentages than cuttings taken from older, more mature plants. Cuttings from lateral shoots often root better than cuttings from terminal shoots.

Early morning is the best time to take cuttings, because the plant is fully turgid. It is important to keep the cuttings cool and moist until they are stuck. An ice chest or dark plastic bag with wet paper towels may be used to store cuttings. If there will be a delay in sticking cuttings, store them in a plastic bag in a refrigerator.

The rooting medium should be sterile, low in fertility, and well-drained to provide sufficient aeration. It should also retain enough moisture so that watering does not have to be done too frequently. Materials commonly used are coarse sand, a mixture of one part peat and one part perlite, or part peat and one part sand. At the MG greenhouse we use sunshine mix and compost.

A greenhouse is not necessary for successful propagation; however, maintaining high humidity around the cutting is critical. If rooting only a few cuttings, you can use a flower pot. Cover the pot with a bottomless plastic jug or place the pot into a clear plastic bag (don't let the plastic touch the plant). Cuttings also can be placed in plastic trays covered with clear plastic stretched over a wire frame (I've had success with the plastic containers used for baked chicken). Trays must have holes in the bottoms for drainage. I like to keep a tray under the pot to catch the overflow of water and to keep the humidity high. I've also used a plastic tub with a lid that is filled with sand and sunshine mix. I place dozens of rose cuttings into the container as I trim the plants. Be sure to label!

Treating cuttings with root-promoting compounds can be helpful in

stimulating rooting of some plants that might otherwise be difficult to root. Prevent possible contamination of the entire supply of rooting hormone by putting some in a separate container before treating cuttings.

Are you ready to propagate?

I hope this is a helpful review of your class on propagation. We would love to help you practice by participating in the work days at the greenhouse. It's a great environment for learning about the propagation and the care of plants. Hope to see you there. Happy propagating!

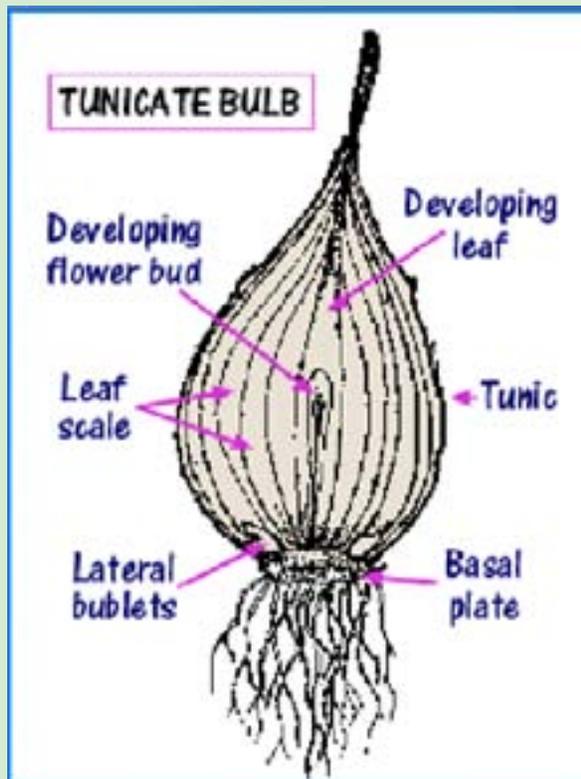
Bulb Chipping – A Productive, Easy and Rewarding Way to Propagate Gorgeous Plants

by Susan Wozniak

Bulb chipping is a propagation technique commonly used to reproduce bulbous plants. Plants produced by this method have thrived despite the extreme historic drought and heat conditions in Texas. Bulbs that lend themselves to chipping are called "Turnicate" Bulbs which include Amaryllis, Crinum, Onion, Tulip, Narcissis, and Galanths.

Materials needed:

1. A Turnicate Bulb;
2. A container filled with Pearlite;
3. Dusting Sulfur (optional); and
4. A sharp knife.



First, using a sharp knife, trim off any remaining foliage and dangling roots from the bulb. Then cut the bulb in half lengthwise from tip to root (longitudinally).

It is important to make sure that each piece has an equal portion of the basal plate. The basal plate is made up of stem tissue. This is the point at which roots and new buds develop. The new buds are located on the basal plate between the leaf scales. For this technique to be successful, each chip must contain a portion of the basal plate.

Bulb Chipping

Continued...



Cut the bulb into 8-16 slices (chips) (depending on the size of the bulb). This resembles cutting the bulb into "orange" slices. To prevent rotting, it's optional to dust the cut surfaces with sulfur or agricultural lime.

Throw out any slices that don't contain a part of the basal plate.

Bulb Chipping

Continued...

Insert slices into the Perlite deeply enough to cover the basal plate and add water to moisten. Keep the container in a cool low-light environment.

Dampen the Perlite every couple of weeks but be careful not to over water during this time which will cause the bulb chips to rot.



Some consider the propagation of bulbs as an "act of faith" since so much of what takes place cannot be seen at first. A few weeks later, the plants will look dead. Don't be discouraged by the appearance of the bulb chips. Resist the temptation to throw the project out. It is appropriate though, to remove any chips that show signs of rot. As long as there is still any green showing, the bulb chips should be kept.

Eventually, the first signs of life will emerge as a small leaf coming from the mostly brown tissue. The small leaf is the beginning of a newly developing bulb. At the same time that the leaf begins to develop, roots will also develop. Once the chip has grown several strong leaves and possibly a swollen bulb, the newly-formed plants can be transplanted into a potting media such as peat and Perlite.

Pot the individual chips in a well-draining soil mix with the basal plate (roots) downward, leaving the tops, known as "scales", exposed. The scales will rot away as the new bulbs develop.



Bulb Chipping

Continued...

Once the plants become well established, they can be separated and planted in a larger container, or moved directly into the garden.



Photos Courtesy of Thomas LeRoy

What Makes a Good Plant Nursery?

by Bob Beyer

Spring is here and the urge to revitalize your garden is overwhelming. Let's go get some new plants! Well, from where? There are many nurseries from which to select for purchasing your plant needs. Some are top notch and some shouldn't even be in the business. So how is the average gardener and plant consumer to know the difference? Here are some criteria for rating and choosing a Central Texas nursery with which to do business.

Does the nursery stock a WIDE VARIETY of plants that are ideal or suitable for our area?

This criterion is a big plus in rating any nursery. In Austin where water-wise gardening is actively promoted and a free 52 page Grow Green book is available to help gardeners make good plant choices, a good nursery should stock or regularly carry a wide variety of these native and adaptive plants as choice and availability need to go hand in hand.

Does the nursery try to market plants not meant to be grown for our area?

Conversely, if a nursery is selling plants suited for other areas of the country or climate zones, this is a red flag that this nursery is simply marketing plants based on appeal to the unwary and impulsive buyer, and may have little knowledge of what grows best in Central Texas.

Does the nursery recognize & use botanical names for the plants they sell?

There is only one correct and universally recognized name for each plant and to make sure you are getting the real thing, correct botanical names are a must in addition to the popular common names. Cultivar, hybrid, and variety names allow the buyer to research and get information about plants they buy or want. Your

sales slip should ideally contain the botanical name along with the more commonly recognized name.

Is the sales staff trained and knowledgeable about the plants they sell?

A sure clue as to the competency of nursery staff is to request a plant by its botanical name and see the reaction – either HUH? or they find that plant quickly.

If they don't know, they have the resources to research it on the spot – internet access, reference books, etc. A well trained and knowledgeable staff can tell you all you need to know in order to grow that plant well, or can give you information to use as a basis for choosing it.

Are plants labeled well and correctly?

Do the plants include proper and correct identification, and in some cases, information about the plant, and how to grow it? Are prices clearly noted? Nothing is more frustrating than to find a plant you like and have no idea, nor does the staff, of what it is – e.g. labeled "cactus", "house plant", "tropical plant" or "succulent" – Duh!

Are the plants kept in healthy condition?

Does the nursery order or propagate fresh stock regularly and sell their stock within one year? Last year's stock is a risky buy. Are the plants trimmed back to maintain good shape and health, are they in appropriate sized containers relative to size? When you pull a pot bound plant out of a container, are the roots white or brown (alive or dead), and appearing healthy. Are sickly plants removed from stock? Are plants watered frequently to maintain good health? A nursery sign I once saw said "Spring is Here. We are so excited we wet our plants". That is good!

What Makes a Good Plant Nursery

Continued...

Will the nursery try to find and acquire plants you want that are not in stock?

No nursery can carry everything you want or seek, but a good nursery will take requests, know their wholesale sources, and attempt to acquire plants you need or want. Other nurseries will merely say they don't have it or don't sell it and not go beyond that level of help. Keeping a customer happy by helping to get the specific plants being sought is a big plus in the customer service category.

Does the establishment focus on plants and related gardening products?

How many stores have you seen selling plants where the plants are a sidelight or a way to get you to spend more for something when you are shopping for something else? These places are marketing goods to the impulse buyer and not doing the gardener any favors. Let's see, plants at major grocery stores, drug store, variety or home improvement stores, etc don't qualify as a reputable plant nursery nor do the sales staff really know what they are selling

Is the nursery layout user friendly and easy to find desired plants?

It is pretty frustrating to go to a nursery and see plants everywhere but what is located where? Is signage good and customer friendly? Are plants of like or comparative kind located together for comparison? Are pathways and access to plant stock clear and easy to navigate? Can staff easily find a plant for you?

Are plants at the nursery reasonably priced relative to actual size?

Ah, and then there is the bottom line – prices. The cost of buying plants has risen significantly in recent years due to increased transportation costs from grower to retailer so price becomes a

shoppers concern. Are you getting the best deal and your money's worth? A local nursery that propagates much of its stock can sell it for less than the same plant ordered from CA and trucked to market. Plants are priced by container size. I have seen plants in one gallon size containers that were much larger and more mature than the same plants in 3 gallon containers, but the price differential is significant. A good nursery will price and package plants according to size, quality, and actual cost to them with reasonable profit margin, rather than try to prematurely upgrade a plant to a larger container to increase profit margin. It's just part of giving the customer a fair price and value with their purchase.

Now the next time you go shopping for plants at your local nursery, ask yourself all these questions or make a checklist and rate the nurseries you visit. The gardening consumer has a choice. Choose wisely.

Road Trip! - Review of Yucca Do Nursery

by Liz Caskey and Frankie Hart

Yucca Do Nursery

Giddings, TX

<http://www.yuccado.com/>

979-542-8811

Do you love succulents and cacti? Then Yucca Do is a must-visit nursery for you. It is now located near Giddings, Texas, having moved in 2008 from nearby Peckerwood Gardens. We visited last spring, but only after making an appointment to do so. Yucca Do is not a typical retail nursery. The web site has specific instructions for making an appointment to visit and a maximum of 6 people are allowed at one visit.

Yucca Do offers an extensive selection of drought and heat tolerant plants. Although most of the quality plants are priced at a premium, many are unique and not offered locally. There are several greenhouses, all packed with small containers to larger sized plants. Not all are for sale as some are propagation stock or the owner's collection.

We each purchased several plants, all of which survived with no struggle through last summer's extreme heat and drought. *Manfreda undulata* 'Chocolate Chips' was a favorite purchase. We also saw the newly introduced 'Brakelights' red yucca for the first time. This *hesperaloe* has a true red bloom, not the usual coral color. I recently saw this variety at another nursery, but Yucca Do had it a year ago.

Most sales here are made by mail order, and their catalog is available online. However, it is an easy, short drive to Giddings, and well worth a visit.



Coming Events

East Austin Garden Fair

**Saturday, April 14
10am-2pm**

Parque Zaragoza Recreation Center
2608 E. Gonzales Street
Austin TX

Texas AgriLife Extension and the City of Austin are partnering to present the East Austin Garden Fair. This year's theme is "Grow Well - Grow Your Own", offering lots of information on creating your own garden space. Informational and activity booths will be offered for adults and children on various topics such as composting, rainwater harvesting, school gardens, insects and pests, nutrition and exercise to name a few. Information will be available in both English and Spanish. Attendees will be eligible for a free plant.

Cultivate Your Backyard Birds

**Saturday, April 14
10am-12pm**

Hampton Branch Library
5125 Convict Hill Rd. Austin TX 78749

Who is that perched on your birdbath? Jane Tillman, Master Naturalist, Chairperson of the Travis Audubon urban habitat committee and a National Wildlife Federation Habitat Steward Host, will help you get acquainted with common backyard birds and visitors. Basic bird identification will be covered along with ways to make your yard/greenbelt more attractive to these feathered creatures.

This seminar is free and open to the public, but seating is limited, and reservations are required.

Signup at: <http://travis-tx.tamu.edu/horticulture/>
and click on seminar registration.

Empty, reserved seats will become open seating at 9:50 am. This seminar is free and open to the public.

Coming Events

How to Construct Compost Bins

**Thursday, April 19
10am-12pm**

Travis County AgriLife Extension Office
1600-B Smith Road
Austin, TX, 78721

Learn how to build a simple wire enclosure and a three bin compost station. Go away with building plans and the knowledge to complete your project.

TRAVIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION

2012 EXECUTIVE BOARD

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The End...

Time to Get Gardening!

