

Tarrant County Master Gardeners



TEXAS A & M AGRILIFE EXTENSION SERVICE

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Southwest Sub-courthouse: What's Up

By Dawn Hancock

Dionne Phillips-Bagsby Southwest Sub-Courthouse, located at 6539 Granbury Road, is a .25 acre demonstration garden. It was designed to show the beauty, resilience and water conserving properties of Texas native plants, with the aspiration that homeowners would incorporate similar plants in their landscape. The garden, established in 1995, with material support of Commissioner Phillips-Bagsby, relied on the volunteer efforts of the North Central Texas Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas for design, appropriate native Texas plant selection, and planting.

Over the years, the garden has evolved. Some plants were replaced with nectar and pollen bearing plants to support native pollinators and to serve as a way station for migrating monarch butterflies. In 2014, the garden was dedicated as an official National Wildlife Federation Monarch Waystation. Commissioner Roy Brooks, Jr. named the waystation Jennifer's Butterfly-Inn to honor his wife Dr. Jennifer Brooks.

The garden became an environmental project for Tarrant County Master Gardeners in 2000, when Master Gardener Gailon Hardin approached Horticultural Agent Dotty Woodson with the project. Today, the garden is maintained by volunteers from Tarrant County Master Gardeners and Tarrant County Master Naturalists. Gailon, who has many years of experience and advanced training in propagation, supplies many of the plants for the garden. This year it will be by winecups and lantana.

Continued on next page.



Left: Commissioner Roy Brooks with wife Dr. Jennifer Brooks at the Dedication of the Monarch Way Station.

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Southwest Sub-courthouse: What's Up continued

Each spring this large garden needs many willing hands to remove annual weeds that have found a lovely home in the garden over winter. There is a wonderful reward to those who join the fun. Besides bragging rights for hard work, any wayward native plant is yours to take home. This spring xexmenia, Lindheimer's muhly, and desert willow must make way for lantana, yarrow and winecup. Gailon and I hope to see you in the garden. Our scheduled times are the second Saturday and the last Wednesday of each month. Spring is special. We try to get into the garden as many Saturdays as possible. Times to volunteer are determined by weather and the season.

Contact Gailon ghardin1@gmail.com or Dawn dawnhancock@hotmail.com to be added to the volunteer list.

A Master Gardener Transfer Story

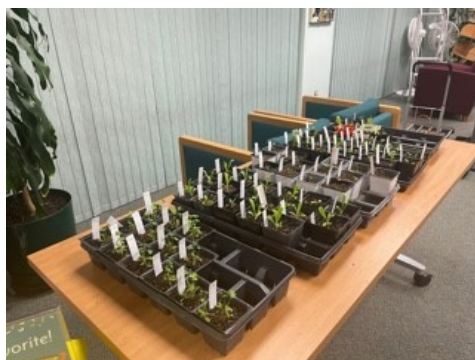
By Terry Anseman

Moving to Fort Worth has been a journey of ups and downs. The major down was COVID, but the most positive is connecting with Tarrant County Master Gardeners. I "discovered" TCMGA when I placed an order with their online plant sale. As a plant enthusiast, I am obsessed with any "Plant Sale". I learned early on that MG plant sales offer unusual "pass-alongs and natives" not to be found in nurseries.

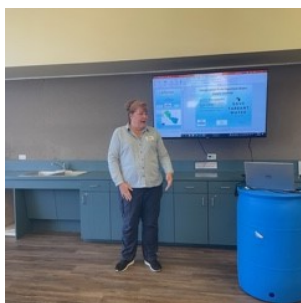
Needless to say, I have enjoyed every TCMG plant sale since then. As a member of Master Gardeners in Louisiana since 1998, I was hoping to meet fellow plant lovers. TCMG has fulfilled that and so much more. TCMGA members have been welcoming, thus making the transition much easier than anticipated. From Dick's encouragement to join your group to ET's tour of the Extension Service office to Michelle's assistance with hands on "phone duty" to Gay's introduction to the Union Gospel Mission gardens, I have met many members offering assistance and friendship.

One of the biggest challenges has been adapting to the difference in climates – Louisiana to Texas. In Louisiana the average relative humidity is 65-78%, while here it ranges from 48-85%. Also from "gumbo mud" to red clay – has been interesting. All the bulbs I transported from LA to TX appear to have survived, but my perennials have suffered from lack of water. I rarely watered my garden in LA, while here it is a daily chore. Another major difference is this Texas sun, I am fairly sure Fort Worth is no closer to the sun than Layette, but the intensity of the sun appears to be magnified exponentially. Overall the transition from 73 years in Louisiana to 1 ½ year here has been positive and I want to thank all of the TCMGs for their warm welcome to the Lone Star State.

Master Gardeners Around and About



Above: Teresa Day-Fickle gave a presentation on edible landscaping for the Watauga Public Library on March 10. TRWD commissioned herb plants that were grown by Master Gardeners and given to the participants.



On March 12 Wanda Stutsman gave a presentation on Rainwater Harvesting, and led a workshop on building rain barrels. This was held at Haltom City Recreation Center and sponsored by TRWD.



Claire Alford and Theresa Thomas did a RWH and Rain Barrel Build at the Bedford Public Library. There were 24 people in attendance.

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Attracting Birds

Sharecropper June 2008

Birds add an auditory dimension to the garden. It is not uncommon that gardeners and bird lovers are often the same people. Some things you need to attract birds are food, water, shelter, and places for rearing their young.

FOOD

If you have pest insects in your landscape that is a plus. Birds also want fruit, berries, and nuts. The eating habits of birds are not all the same. The high-energy mainstays of any bird feeding program are a source of grains and seeds. Also necessary is grit. Birds have no teeth and rely on fine particles of grit in the gizzards to grind up hard seeds. Commercial grit or coarse sand can be used.

- Suet is the tastiest, least expensive, and most readily available source of animal fats for birds. It is popular with nearly all birds in winter, especially when mixed with seeds and tidbits. Suet begins to melt at about 70 degrees F and quickly turns rancid and should only be used in winter.
- Wild birdseed bought at the pet center usually will meet the needs providing it includes sunflower seeds. If you buy the cheapest birdseed in the store, you will just get filler and the birds will leave it. Avoid birdseed that contains Milo and wheat. These foods are a waste of money.
- If the birdseed is millet, this will attract doves and sparrows, but not songbirds.
- Black oil sunflower (versus gray-striped sunflower) seeds is perhaps the most universal food for birds - cardinals, doves, finches, jays, and sparrows all love it.

FEEDERS

Bird feeders are okay at ground level if you do not have feline predators in the neighborhood. Birds like a "staging" tree near the bird feeders. They land in the tree, check for safety, and then fly down to the feeder. The tree should not have any hiding spots near the ground where cats can hide and wait. Otherwise, you need to raise the feeder on a pole. Squirrels can shimmy up anything that is climbable to get into the bird feed. A feeder hanging in a tree is no problem for squirrels.

Try feeders placed at different levels and hung in different ways. You will discover which is the most attractive to the birds and most used. Seeds that fall to the ground beneath the feeder soon create a miniature forest of unwanted vegetation. Apply a pre-emergent herbicide to that area. It will not affect the birds and will control the seed growth as it starts to emerge. Birds depend on you for feed and water during the winter more than in the summer when food is more plentiful.

Attracting Birds continued

WATER

A reliable source of fresh water is an essential ingredient in attracting birds. You may not have a pond in the landscape, but one or two birdbaths are a treasure to your feathered friends. Birdbaths should be hosed off and refilled often in all seasons and checked daily during hot weather. Never add chemicals to control algae, insects or to prevent freezing.

PLANTS THAT ATTRACT

Using native and well adapted plants attract a variety of wildlife. Plant flowers, shrubs, and trees that bear fruit and berries. Most of the hollies have berries in the fall. If you plant tomatoes birds will have a feast. Plant a variety of shrubs that bear fruit at different times during the late summer and fall. Pyracantha (*Pyracantha coccinea*) berries are generally eaten by only the local birds during the middle of winter when all other tastier fruits have disappeared.

- Trees: Holly 'Nellie R. Stevens', American Holly, and Dogwood.
- Shrubs: Pyracantha, Holly ('Nellie R. Stevens,' or Burford),
- Cherry laurel, and Viburnum.
- Perennials and annuals: Salvia (*Salvia farinacea*, *Salvia leucantha*, *Salvia greggii*), Sunflower, and Zinnia.
- Vines: Boston ivy, Trumpet vine, and Virginia creeper. With these plants in your garden, you will surely attract a large variety of birds that bring you many hours of bird-watching joy.

—by

A Note From the Editor

Thanks as always to Theresa Thomas for contributing to the Newsletter. And I am pleased as punch that my eblast entreaty has met with success for additional “helpers”. Shout out to Dawn Hancock, Nancy OMalley and Terry Anseman to agreeing to chip in.

HOWEVER, I must awkwardly confess that someone else emailed me earlier in the year and agreed to contribute, but I didn’t move it to my Newsletter file, and now I can’t find it! Please, if you are that person reach out to me again.

And, check out this link suggested by Sandy Schierling and read about the world’s largest bee.

<https://undark.org/2022/03/25/the-parable-of-the-worlds-largest-bee/>

Thanks! Lorie Grandclair-Diaz

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Botanic Garden Tram Ambassadors

By Nancy OMalley

Ever since the Botanic Garden was closed to public traffic, visitors have been walking the almost 2-mile loop through the gardens. While the pedestrian route is a delight for able-bodied adults and children with energy to burn, some visitors can't comfortably make the trip. Since I have been favoring a swollen knee lately, I have new empathy that this lovely and relaxing journey just might be too taxing for some of the Garden's visitors, such as the elderly, anyone with a walking challenge, and tired, fussy children. There is so much to see along the way, but the hour-long walk can be especially tough in the summer heat. That's when a tram driver can save the day. "Would you like a ride?" we ask groups resting beside the road, and they scramble into the tram with relief.

I took the training for tram driver/ambassador in January with Trina Gibbs, another master gardener in the 2019 intern class. Since we waited four months to sign up for our first drive, we approached the tram with some trepidation. "Do you remember how to start it?" "How do we work this walkie talkie?" "Which pedal is the accelerator? No, that's the brake." We asked for a refresher course from the main office, took a test drive so we didn't scare anyone, and then picked up our first group of riders to head up the drive toward the Japanese Garden.

We pointed out the highlights along the way: the Texas Native Boardwalk, the Rose Garden, the Tinsley Rock Spring Garden, the Japanese Garden, Trial Garden and Backyard Vegetable Garden. This day we dropped a wedding party and their photographer off at the stunning tulip beds, and pointed out the Rock Springs Café to many visitors. We answered questions about things to do in Fort Worth and felt like real ambassadors. Promoting the features of this garden and our city is easy, and tram driving is fun.

We had one hiccup though: no one told us how to change a flat tire. In fact, I don't really WANT to know how to change a flat tire. Unfortunately, we broke down right outside the Japanese Garden, far from the Main entrance, with no working walkie-talkie, but we soon were rescued by the garden staff. We hopped into a smaller vehicle and off we went again to help garden visitors on their way.



Left: Trina Gibbs with the tram and the flat tire.

Two Wonderful Trouble-Free Fall Blooming Bulbs

By Jeanie Browning
Sharecropper 2013



ShRhodophila bifida, the Oxblood Lily, is also known as the Schoolhouse Lily. It was often planted around early pioneer schoolhouses and blooms about the time school starts in early September. This perennial bulb is a very reliable fall bloomer. It can be planted almost any time of the year. The strappy green foliage thrives in the cool weather and may or may not die back in the summer. This tough little bulb is originally native to Argentina and is believed to have been brought to Texas by early German settlers in the Hill Country of Texas. It requires sun or bright shade. Plant this little beauty at a depth of about twice the height of the bulb. It has a very long neck; some of which may be above soil level. It's not native but loves this part of Texas and is proud to be here!



Lycoris radiata, also called the Red Spider Lily, can be planted from late spring through early fall. This perennial bulb is dormant during the hottest part of the summer, but with late summer rain or irrigation it blooms in the fall. The bulb suddenly sends up a beautiful red flower first; later the foliage appears. This winter foliage does well under deciduous trees as well as sunny areas, as long as it gets about a half day of winter sun. The foliage disappears once warm weather arrives, usually by early May. Plant the bulb at a depth of about twice its height for best results. You will love this Southern heirloom bulb that grows very well in our area.

Both of these bulbs are members of the amaryllis family which are avoided by critters.

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A Conversation Between the Creator and St. Francis

Submitted by Eleanor Tuck

"Frank, you know all about gardens and nature. What in the world is going on down there in the Midwest? What happened to the dandelions, violets, thistle and stuff I started eons ago? I had a perfect, no maintenance garden plan. Those plants grow in any type of soil, withstand drought and multiply with abandon. The nectar from the long-lasting blossoms attracted butterflies, honey bees and flocks of songbirds. I expected to see a vast garden of colors by now. But all I see are these green rectangles."

"It's the tribes that settled there, Lord. The Suburbanites. They started calling your flowers weeds' and went to great extent to kill them and replace them with grass."

"Grass? But it's so boring. It's not colorful. It doesn't attract butterflies, birds and bees, only grubs and sod worms. It's temperamental with temperatures. Do these Suburbanites really want all that grass growing there?"

"Apparently so, Lord. They go to great pains to grow it and keep it green. They begin each spring by fertilizing grass and poisoning any other plant that crops up in the lawn."

"The spring rains and cool weather probably make grass grow really fast. That must make the Suburbanites happy."

"Apparently not, Lord. As soon as it grows a little, they cut it, sometimes twice a week."

"They cut it? Do they then bale it like hay?"

"Not exactly, Lord. Most of them rake it up and put it in bags."

"They bag it? Why? Is it a cash crop? Do they sell it?"

"No, sir. Just the opposite. They pay to throw it away."

"Now let me get this straight. They fertilize grass so it will grow. And when it does grow, they cut it off and pay to throw it away?"

"Yes, sir."

"These Suburbanites must be relieved in the summer when we cut back on the rain and turn up the heat. That surely slows the growth and saves them a lot of work."

"You aren't going believe this Lord. When the grass stops growing so fast, they drag out hoses and pay more money to water it so they can continue to mow it and pay to get rid of it."

A Conversation Between the Creator and St. Francis

"What nonsense! At least they kept some of the trees. That was a sheer stroke of genius, if I do say so myself. The trees grow leaves in the spring to provide beauty and shade in the summer. In the autumn they fall to the ground and form a natural blanket to keep moisture in the soil and protect the trees and bushes. Plus, as they rot, the leaves form compost to enhance the soil. It's a natural circle of life."

"You better sit down, Lord. The Suburbanites have drawn a new circle. As soon as the leaves fall, they rake them into great piles and have them hauled away."

"No! What do they do to protect the shrub and tree roots in the winter and keep the soil moist and loose?"

"After throwing away your leaves, they go out and buy something they call mulch. They haul it home and spread it around in place of the leaves."

"And where do they get this mulch?"

"They cut down trees and grind them up."

"Enough! I don't want to think about this anymore! Saint Catherine, you're in charge of the arts. What movie have you scheduled for us tonight?"

"Dumb and Dumber, Lord. It's a real stupid movie about..."

"Never mind I think I just heard the whole story."

