

Tarrant County Master Gardeners



TEXAS A & M AGRILIFE EXTENSION SERVICE

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Durham Intermediate received The Ultimate Gift

By Sian Rees

On the weekend of November 10th Durham Intermediate was fortunate enough to receive The Ultimate Gift from the Young Men's Service League of Southlake/Westlake. The Ultimate Gift is an annual service project conducted by every YMSL group across the United States and is fully funded by gift card donations from each member of the group. With the cooperation of Carroll ISD and TCMGA and several months of careful planning we were able to partake in this wonderful project.

The gift/project we received last month was the construction of two fully irrigated keyhole gardens situated on a garden bed of decomposed granite and stepping stones. For those wanting to know, a keyhole garden is basically a small scale intensive raised bed growing system that is fed through a central composting system which is made in the design of a basket to allow water and nutrients to access the soil where the plants are growing. Originally utilized in Africa the practice has been adopted in the US and keyhole gardens are now seen in abundance.

When this group originally approached us in the summer we already had this project on our wish list so it was easy for us to supply all the plans, measurements and materials list. A keyhole garden can be made of a variety of materials like fiberglass, wood, straw and stones but we decided to use stack stones for the outside and stainless wire mesh for the inside bin. The school district was kind enough to modify the existing garden irrigation free of charge so that two dribblers would rise up into the center of the mesh bins. Our irrigation system currently runs twice a week so moving forward the keyhole gardens will get watered automatically.

On the actual weekend of this service project we had six 2 hour shifts where 10-20 young men, all high school age came with gloves and tools to work the project. We were fortunate to have many Master Gardeners on hand to advise and direct so while the keyholes were being built we were also receiving plenty of supervised cleanup throughout the rest of the garden. The young men, with many mothers helping, removed approximately 300 square feet of sod, then layered down cushion sand, landscape fabric and then more cushion sand. There



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Durham Intermediate continued

was an abundance of mud encrusted shoes and boots during that stage! Approximately 120 stack stones were used to build each keyhole and circular mesh baskets were installed in the centers. Decomposed granite, concrete edging and step stones were added and then the gardens were filled with compost material and soil. Cabbage and kale were planted and the compost bins filled with brown and green scraps.

In the end we calculated we received 286 hours of volunteer service from the fine group of young men and their moms. They also moved boulders, removed stumps, pruned trees, dug weeds and even repainted our little yellow shed. It was inspiring to watch these future leaders in action and as our vision turned into process and then into reality, our hearts were filled with gratitude.

And this project has not quite yet finished! YMSL is building us a wooden sign for the front of the garden that will be mounted on two concrete anchored posts and they have also committed to come back to our garden in mid February to do garden cleanup again. Come visit us at Durham Intermediate to see the results for yourself.

Durham Intermediate is located at 801 Shady Oaks Drive in Southlake and is managed by Master Gardeners Siân Rees and Henry Cole. Our workdays are every Thursday from 9-11am except the first Thursday of the month.

The Young Men's Service League is a non-profit organization that initiates and encourages young men and their mothers to pursue philanthropic involvement in their community and provides an opportunity to enhance mother/son relationships.

For more information on this organization visit www.ymslnational.org.



Above: a group photo of the volunteers



Sian Rees and Henry Cole

From the President's Corner

Two years ago this month I stood here as your newly-elected President. I was fully aware of my own limitations, the importance of the position and the duty of following in the footsteps of wonderful Presidents who had served before me. It was a bit like deer in the headlights, eager to serve, but a lot to learn. There were members on the executive board who were in their second term and they guided me as I learned more about the inter workings of our board. I reached out to Past Presidents for advice, ideas and guidance. My confidence that this board would measure up to the high standards of our association came from the support of our officers, the committees and above all from you, the membership.

Now I come to the end of the road. The friendly cooperation and warm friendships of all of you have minimized any difficulties. The path was a pleasant one and the two years, for me were memorable, happy and fun. You volunteered promptly and were supportive when I called upon you for service. The years were rewarding with enriching experiences. They have brought me many new and wonderful friendships which are now among my most cherished possessions. My heartfelt thanks to all of you as I step back into the ranks to serve under one whose record of accomplishments ensure us that under the leadership of Theresa Thomas, our Association will move forward to greater achievements.

The spirit of Christmas is in the air. Christmas never fails to bring to mind the words "Peace on earth and good will towards men." So as we exchange good wishes and entertain visions of the coming year and changes it might bring, let's dedicate ourselves to do whatever is in our power for the realization of "peace on earth and good will towards men." Of the 365 days in a year, none is so heart warming as Christmas. We exchange cards, calls or emails to wish those near and dear "Happy Holidays." May those who are fighting for "peace on earth" safely return home to their families. However you celebrate this time of the year, may your home be filled with laughter and beautiful memories. Where ever our families may be, the same stars are shining down on all of us reminding us no matter where we are, we are still connected.

Merry Christmas and many hugs,
Judy



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Toni's Tips

Toni's Tips

Toni Moorehead

Sharecropper December 2014

Now that we have had our first hard freeze, it's time to tidy up our perennial gardens a bit. Basically my rule of thumb is, if the plants look bad, I cut them to the ground. If the plants still look good (such as the ornamental grasses) or maybe the plants have some benefit for wildlife (such as seed heads for the birds), I leave them until mid-February. Below are pruning tips on several perennials. We have had some beautiful fall color after the freeze, but now the leaves are falling fast. I like to leave some fallen leaves in the shrub/flower beds for winter protection, but then rake or blow any excess leaves onto the lawn and mulch and bag them with the mower and add them to the compost pile. With the busy-ness of the holidays right around the corner, I hope you take some time to de-stress in your gardens.

Hydrangeas: Do not prune. The only time to prune is immediately after they finish blooming. Pruning now or in the spring will sacrifice next year's bloom.

Turk's Cap: Cut down to about 3 or 4 inches tall after a hard freeze

Purple Coneflower, Black-Eyed Susan, Shasta and Ox-eye Daisy: Prune spent flower stalks to the ground now.

Aster oblongifolius (Fall Aster) – You can cut to ground after a freeze. I leave mine until mid- February for winter texture

Salvia Greggii – just give it a “haircut.” Save heavy pruning for mid-February

Loosestrife and Lantana - cut to ground after freeze.



Content provided by Theresa Thomas

Toni's Tips continued

Chrysanthemums – cut to ground after a hard freeze.

Hardy Hibiscus: After freeze, cut stems to the ground, then mulch.

Salvia farinacea (mealy cup sage), Russian Sage, Salvia guaranitica – cut down to the ground.

Blackfoot Daisy, Calylophus, Pink Skullcap, Dianthus, 4-nerve Daisy: No need to prune.

Salvia leucantha (Mexican Bush Sage) – cut down to the ground, then mulch to protect.

Summer Phlox: After hard freeze, cut to the ground.

Dwarf Mexican Petunia (Katie's Ruellia) - after a freeze, on a dry day, just stomp on them and break the stems off at the ground and remove browned foliage.

Mexican Mint Marigold – Cut to ground after hard freeze and blooms fade.

Ornamental grasses: After a hard freeze, the grasses will turn tan, but just leave them alone until February. The grasses add texture and interest in your garden during the winter.

Powis Castle Artemisia: Wait until February to cut it back.

Columbine -They should start putting on new growth now that the weather is cooler. They will be evergreen through the winter and will bloom in the spring.

Ferns: Holly Ferns and Autumn Ferns are ever- green – don't cut back. Wood Ferns and Japanese Painted Ferns will turn brown after a freeze. Cut them to the ground and mulch.



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Mexican Plum

Mexican Plum, Bigtree Plum, Inch Plum

Prunus mexicana

Information from Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

The Mexican plum is deciduous perennial tree and the leaves turn yellow in the fall. The Mexican plum is native to the North Texas area. Along with red bud, it is one of the first ornamental trees to bloom in the spring. It is a single-trunked, non-suckering tree, 15-35 ft. tall, with fragrant, showy, white flowers displayed before the leaves appear. Blooming from February to April. Mature trunks become satiny, blue-gray with darker, horizontal striations. Leaves up to 5 inches long and 2 inches wide, ovate to narrower with serrate margins; minute glands on the petiole near the base of the blade. Plums turn from yellow to mauve to purple as they ripen from July through September.

Native Habitat:

Dry to moist thin woods, river bottoms & prairies. mostly in northeast and north central Texas.

Growing Conditions

Water Use: Low

Light Requirement: Sun , Part Shade

Soil Moisture: Dry , Moist

Cold Tolerant: yes

Soil Description: Dry to moist, well-drained soils. Sandy, Sandy Loam, Medium Loam, Clay Loam, Clay, Limestone-based

Benefit

Use Ornamental: Attractive, Aromatic, Showy, Fall conspicuous, Accent **tree** or **shrub**

Use Wildlife: Plums attract birds. Nectar-bees, Fruit-birds, Fruit-mammals

Use Food: **Fruit** used for preserves and cooking.

Conspicuous Flowers: yes

Fragrant Flowers: yes

Attracts: Birds , Butterflies

Larval Host: Tiger Swallowtail, Cecropia moths

Nectar Source: yes

Deer Resistant: No

Special Value: Native Bees

Propagation

Propagation Material: Softwood Cuttings

Description: Prunus species may be rooted from dormant hardwood, softwood, semi-hardwood, or root cuttings. Semi-hardwood and softwood cuttings taken in summer root easiest. Seeds of P. mexicana require a period of after-ripening followed by cold stratification.

Seed Collection: Collect **fruit** when it is filled out, firm, and its ripe color. Clean seeds from pulp. Storage viability is maintained at 31-41 degrees. Loses viability rapidly if allowed to dry out after collection and cleaning.

Seed Treatment: For spring sowing, stratify seeds in moist sand for 30-60 days in a greenhouse, then cold stratify

Mexican Plum continued

(36-41 degrees) for 60-90 days. Plant well before high temperatures.

This is my favorite tree.
Theresa Kay Thomas



Content provided by Theresa
Thomas

