

Tarrant County Master Gardeners



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Dem Bones

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When Jack Frost stops by for a visit and renders your perennials brown crispy remnants of their former glory or when Old Man Winter drops buckets of the white stuff all over your garden, what is left?

Dem bones. Garden bones, that is.



Garden bones get to shine when the blooms have faded. Garden bones consist of those things in our gardens that give structure and strength, height and depth, bringing interest whether our gardens are a riot of color or there's not a single bloom in sight.

Tarrant County Master Gardeners

Dem Bones



Just as our bodies would be a lifeless pile of skin, so our gardens would look dead without bones!

So just what are these **bones** that I speak of?

They are the permanent structures in our gardens that add interest no matter the season, such as **trees, evergreen shrubs, walkways and paths, ponds, fountains, statuary, arbors, trellises, gazebos, and benches.**



A flagstone pathway leads through an arbor.

Dem Bones



Evergreen shrubs line a flagstone path leading to a pond.



Trees add height and structure.



Possumhaw Holly loaded with berries.

Tarrant County Master Gardeners

Dem Bones

Evergreen trees or large shrubs have good form as well as function. Not only do evergreens anchor a garden design and give it structure, they can serve as a screen from the neighbors, as a wind-break from harsh northern winds, or just as a backdrop for deciduous shrubs and/or perennials. Hollies, laurels, nandinas, and other shrubs with berries also provide food for winter birds.

Just as “the leg bone connected to the knee bone and the knee bone connected to the thigh bone,” so garden bones connect different areas of our gardens, tying them all together. Garden paths, whether made of stone, gravel, mulch or grass, allow the visitor to meander throughout the garden. Well-placed seating invites visitors to sit a spell.



Even the layout of garden beds, whether in long sweeping curves or formal straight lines, constitutes this skeleton of the garden. Good bones give your garden visual appeal even before a single plant has gone in the ground..... as well as after the plants have gone dormant.

Dem Bones



Flagstone paths define the garden beds.



The sweeping lines of garden beds stand out when the blooms have taken a back seat. Ornamental grasses provide winter interest.

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Dem Bones



Shrubs form an evergreen skirt around the house.

When there is no competition from foliage, the beauty of tree bark comes to the forefront, as well. What once went unnoticed in our gardens now captures our attention.



Rough bark of Chinese Pistache



Red twigs of 'Sango Kaku'



Cinnamon bark of 'Natchez'

Dem Bones

Large boulders seem to pop out of the landscape once again when the surrounding plants have gone dormant.



Trellises and other garden ornaments add interest to our gardens whether they are dusted with snow or accompanied by foliage or blooms.



Could your garden use a little backbone?

During this time when our gardens are dormant, look around at those blank spaces that are left behind, and see where you can incorporate some garden bones. It just might breathe a little life into your garden, even in the dead of winter.

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Colorful Plants that Keep on Giving

by Dr. William C. Welch, Professor & Landscape Horticulturist Texas AgriLife Extension Service

Sharecropper January 2011

As winter turns into spring and early summer my garden starts to fill its vacant places with reseeding annuals and perennials that make March, April and May the most extravagantly colorful time of the year. It almost seems like a miracle that it happens so quickly. The moist soils, warmer temperatures and longer days contribute to this show that lasts till really hot weather slows it down.

There is something special about reseeding annuals that like your garden so much that they return each year. Top of that list are petunias. My favorite is 'Laura Bush', a Greg Grant introduction that continues to be a personal favorite. Dr. Dan Lineburger, Professor of Horticulture here at Texas A&M, and his students grew a crop of tissue cultured ones that were offered at the student plant sale this spring. It was interesting to compare them to the ones that reseed from years past. I also have common old fashion petunias and seedlings from some of the 'Wave' series that also come back. They are mostly pinks and purples, but quite a few whites and even some striped ones occur. The fragrance is a major reason to have them. These seedlings are more heat tolerant than most of the hybrids I have tried. They come up around other plants in my pots as well as in the cracks in the pavement!

The round, tubular flowers of the petunias are contrasted with spikes of blue, white and pink larkspur that also reseed prolifically. They come up in such large numbers that thinning is necessary for them to develop properly. Their spikes contrast so nicely with the petunias and the masses of perennial yarrow (*Achillea millifolium*). *This magenta colored one was a gift many years ago from the late Mattie Rosprim, a generous College Station gardener who loved to share. Seedlings of flowering tobacco (Nicotiana sylvestris) reach 3-4' tall and are usually white although lavender and purple ones are also there. Flowering tobacco is usually an annual for me but occasionally they live for two years. It doesn't really matter since they, too, are very prolific in my garden. Other Greg Grant's introductions are Salvia 'Henry Duelberg' and the white form 'Augusta Duelberg' which are also perennials that reseed for me. They are very vigorous and have 12-16" spikes of blue-purple (Henry) or white (Augusta) from spring till frost. Cutting these salvias back every couple of months is necessary to keep them neat.*

Oxeye daisy (Chrysanthemum leucanthemum) is yet another perennial that reseeds well for me. The pure white petals and yellow centers contrast so nicely with the spikes of the salvias and larkspur. I just made a pass in the 'upper' border across the back of my house cutting back faded blooms of snapdragons, oxeye daisies, Byzantine gladiolus and roses. My three types of garden mums ('Country Girl' is the only one that has a 'real' name), are growing so vigorously that I cut them back from a foot or so tall to 4 or 5 inches. I may need to do that again before late summer to keep them in bounds. It is a good time to divide them or start cuttings from their tips. The border looks much neater after the 'grooming'.

Colorful Plants that Keep on Giving



Mixture of Byzantine gladiolus, snapdragons, red cabbage, dianthus and other spring flowers.



Flowering Tobacco.



Oxeye daisy.



Henry Duelberg



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Cut Flower Gardening

By Dr. William C. Welch, Landscape Horticulturist

Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas

Care and handling of cut plant materials, floral preservatives, and special treatments is provided by Jim Johnson, AAF, AIFD, TMF, Director of the Benz School of Floral Design at Texas A & M University, and Kimberly Williams, SAIFD.

Sharecropper February 2007

Garden flowers are more popular than ever for decorating homes. They are particularly fitting in re-stored homes where the correct flowers for the period of the home can be provided. Garden flowers are not likely to look out of place, as sometimes do exotic blossoms from afar. Not to be overlooked is the economy of having one's own source for cut flowers.

There are several advantages to creating a cutting garden. Where flowers are used in large volume in the home, their removal from borders and other landscaped areas may detract from the intended effect. By providing a special cut flower garden, the gardener can anticipate and plan for these needs without disturbing or diminishing landscape plantings.

The well-planned cutting garden also offers another very practical advantage: annuals and perennials may be conveniently and efficiently grown in rows where they are easily gathered and maintained.

Cutting gardens need not be unattractive, but it is sensible to plan to locate them in an area where they are not a focal point when not at their peak.

Old-time gardeners often included cut flowers in the vegetable garden where they could tend them easily.

Annuals such as marigolds, zinnias, poppies, sweet peas, bells of Ireland, celosia, nasturtium, globe amaranth, and larkspur were frequently found in vegetable and cutting gardens of our ancestors. Shasta daisies, goldenrod, phlox, and chrysanthemums were especially popular perennials.

Also popular for cutting are certain shrubs such as forsythia, flowering quince, weigela, and mock orange. Foliage from trees, shrubs, and vines such as magnolia, aspidistra, elaeagnus, English ivy, and ferns is useful in floral designs, and is often found in home landscapes.

The formula for floral preservatives is simple. It consists of three prime ingredients:

*Sugar (dextrose, not table sugar). It provides a carbohydrate energy source so flowers can carry on the process of respiration. This helps buds to develop into flowers.

*Biocide controls the growth of bacteria. Without it, the addition of sugar to lukewarm water would increase bacteria which would plug the stems and shorten the life of the cut flower.

*Acidifier lowers the pH of the water and improves the water uptake.

*Commercial floral preservatives may be purchased in liquid or powder form at retail florists.

Cut Flower Gardening

Annuals consist of Baby's Breath, Bluebell, Candytuft, Cornflower, French Hollyhock, Hyacinth Bean, Larkspur, Marigold, Pansy, Pinks, Snapdragon, Sunflower and Zinnia.

Perennials consist of Amaryllis, Aster, Vine, Butterfly Weed, Calla Lily, Canna, Chrysanthemum, Columbine, Coral Vine, Coreopsis, Ferns, Garden Asparagus, Gardens Pinks and Carnations, Gerbera Daisy, Gingers, Gladiolus, Hyacinth, Iris, Leatherleaf Fern, Liatris, Gayfeather, Lily, Mexican Marigold Mint, Narcissus, Daffodils, Obedient Plant, Ornamental Onions, Oxeye Daisy, Penstemon, Purple Coneflower, Purple Loosestrife, Red Hot Poker, roses of all types, Salvia, Shasta Daisy, Society Garlic, Spider Lily, Stoke's Aster, Summer Phlox, Sunflower, and Yarrow.

Lyreleaf Sage, *Salvia lyrata*.

Lamiaceae (Mint Family)

By Josephine Keeney, Member of the North Central Chapter of the Native Plant Society

This lovely plant is evergreen and very adaptable, it can take sun or shade, rich or poor soil and grow like a champ.

The leaves have the purple veins from which the name is derived, but sometimes they are plain, or they can be burgundy. The stems have the typical square ridges of the mint family plants.

The flowers look like those of salvia and they vary in color. Some are purple, some blue and some are white, but not all on the same plant. Each plant can have a different color flower from the other plants.

The spikes of flowers last about six weeks in the spring and after that it becomes a very prolific self seeder, spreading itself with abandon and endearing itself to the gardener, who loves to share. If you don't want it to self-seed, just cut the bloom spikes before the seeds ripen.

It makes a great ground cover that can be left alone or mowed, but why bother when it is so pretty.

I think this plant deserves a special place in every garden and it is obvious that I love this versatile plant.

by Josephine Keeney



Tarrant County Master Gardeners

Think Globally, Buy Locally

*By Laura M. Miller,
CEA Commercial Horticulture, Texas AgriLife Extension
Sharecropper January 2013*

1,500 miles. That's how far the average agricultural product travels before it reaches its final destination. While we all benefit from the wide variety of products our world wide agricultural distribution system provides, we also pay the price in the form of transportation costs and environmental impacts. Buying locally is an environmentally friendly alternative that also provides support to our local economy.

As you sit in traffic on I-35 and look around, you might think that Tarrant County has become so urban that the production of agricultural products just isn't feasible here. And while it is true that local demand far exceeds supply, your neighborhood farmers grow everything from fruits and vegetables for your table to shrubs, trees and bedding plants for your landscape and even hay for your horses.

Because of the high cost of land and other inputs in urban areas, urban agriculture must produce high value crops. Crops that are both high in value and highly perishable make sense in areas where land values are inflated and resources such as water and labor are limited. This favors horticultural crops of all kinds as well as those value-added agricultural products such as free-range poultry, local honey, and handmade cheese.

How can you connect with those local producers and enjoy products that are "thousands of miles fresher?" There are a number of ways!

Buy Direct from the Farm

Some Tarrant County farmers will sell their products directly to the public by operating on farm stands or by opening up their fields for consumer harvesting. Harvesting your own produce not only gives you access to the freshest products, it offers a chance to learn more about the crop and get a little exercise as a bonus.

In Keller on Keller Hicks Road, Homestead Farms sells goat dairy products, grass fed beef and seasonal vegetables. Around the corner and down Pearson Lane, Pipes Plant Farm's retail store, the Flower Ranch, will provide you with flats of locally grown bedding plants.

In Roanoke on Old Denton Road, you can pick your own apples (and in years when we don't have a late freeze, peaches) at Henrietta Creek Orchard. Travel down to Dalworthington Gardens and on Bowen Road just 7 miles southwest of the Rangers-Cowboys sports complex, you can pick strawberries, blackberries, and vegetables at Gnismar Farms.

Visit a Community Farmers' Market

At community Farmers' Markets, you can purchase food from farmers. Other businesses that are sometimes called farmers markets simply sell produce purchased from a variety of sources. The North Central Texas Farmers Market Association market in Fort Worth, the Cowtown Farmers Market in the Camp Bowie Traffic Circle, offers products grown within a 150 miles of the market location along with a fun shopping adventure. At this market, you'll find seasonal vegetables and fruits as well as hand-made soaps, coffee, and ready-to-eat foods—including tamales. For a listing of Texas certified farmers' markets including operating hours and contact information, visit <http://gotexan.org>.

Think Globally, Buy Locally

Ask for Locally Grown Products

Local, regional and national grocery discount, and home supply stores can and do sell locally grown produce, plants and other products. Seek them out when you shop. Meet the managers of the stores that you patronize and ask for more local options. Write letters encouraging company buyers to purchase locally grown products. Retailers like to please their customers, so take the time to let them know what you would like to see on their shelves. The way you spend your money affects what is available. We are blessed to live in a time when we have access to a wide range of high-quality agricultural products. We are also fortunate to live in an area where entrepreneurs still get up each day and produce something of value that they can share with all of us. From asparagus to zucchini, we can grow it here. Enjoy the benefits of buying locally and you'll be contributing to our local economy, conserving energy and ultimately investing in the future of our piece of the planet.

The following was submitted by Eleanor Tuck.

Valuable is the work you do

Outstanding is how you always come through

Loyal, sincere and full of good cheer

Untiring in your efforts throughout the year

Notable are the contributions you make

Trustworthy in every project you take

Eager to reach your every goal

Effective in the way you fulfill your role

Ready with a smile like a shining star

Special and wonderful--that's what you are--Star



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Mexican Plum, Bigtree Plum, Inch Plum

Prunus mexicana

Information from Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

The Mexican plum is a 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

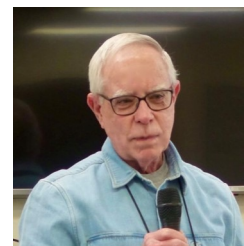
Propagation Material: Softwood Cuttings

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

President's Message



Well, unfortunately not much has changed. We are still in the midst of the Pandemic and now new strains of the virus have emerged. Hopefully the vaccine will protect us from the new strains and sometime soon we will see a decrease in the number of cases, hospitalizations, and deaths. So we must continue to wear our masks and practice social distancing. The new intern class is done by Zoom as are all our meetings. We as Master Gardeners are not going to stop learning, getting out in the garden, and meeting virtually with our wonderful Master Gardener friends.

Our fertilizer, pre-emergent and caladium sales are ongoing now, so please place your orders soon. Debra Rosenthal with the help of Kelley Perry and her husband are working on a way to do online sales. Hopefully this will be available soon.

Our next Master Gardener meeting is on February 4th and I hope to see everyone there, virtually of course. The presentation will be on "Edible Landscaping". Get out and enjoy the sunshine when you can and please stay safe.

Dick Pafford



My email is:
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A note from the Editor, Lorie Grandclair-Diaz.

As always, I would like to thank my friend Theresa Thomas for providing me with information for the Newsletter every month.

I would truly love to include bits and pieces from our members regarding what's happening in their own homes and gardens.

The lovely amaryllis in the photo left is in my dining room right now and was a gift from Nancy Taylor and Wanda Stutsman.

And speaking of Wanda...

This is a "When you see something growing in your garden and you don't remember planting it" kind of day. I know it isn't a weed. SURPRISE COMING SOON!!!!!!!!!!

Wanda Stutsman

