



March/April  
2016

Inside this issue:

President's Message	3
Nora's Notions	4
Rose Trials in Grapevine	6
Announcements	7-10
Upcoming Events	11

LAST

TCMGA  
NEWSLETTER  
ISSUE!

See inside  
Announcements for more  
info.

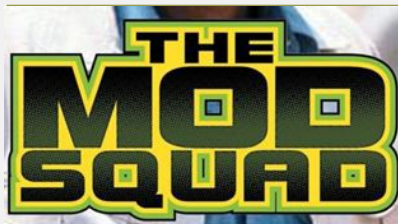
TEXAS A&M  
AGRILIFE  
EXTENSION

If you have an idea or would like  
to contribute to the newsletter,  
please contact Jackie Heidinger

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Tarrant County Master Gardener Association

March / April 2016



## THE MOD SQUAD

An Alternative to MG Intern Training

By Pam Braak, 2009 MG

Steve Chaney came up with the idea to provide horticulture training on Saturdays for teachers so that they could do a better job developing and maintaining school gardens. He heard that the agent in Orange County was offering a "pay-as-you-go program" because students could not afford the whole registration fee. This idea seemed like a good match with Saturday classes for the teachers and the **Mod Squad** concept was born. The name comes from the seven **modules** that make up the program. Each module, costing \$45, is based on the curriculum for regular intern classes. Texas A&M took up the idea and Tom LeRoy, a recently retired county agent, prepared a curriculum which was sent out to all Texas county agents. So far, Tarrant County is the only one doing this type of program.

Steve is very happy with the program but he does have to give up fourteen Saturdays a year to lead the classes. Other speakers, including MGs, present some of the classes, but it's a bit hard to get some of the A&M speakers on a Saturday. Classes take place at the Resource Connection. The program is not advertised but fills up with students who have heard about the program through word of mouth or when they speak to someone on phone duty. So when you are on phone duty, be sure to keep promoting it when you get a call with questions about the MG program. The **Mod Squad** students are generally a bit younger than regular interns and the majority of the class is employed. Originally Steve thought that people would just take only one or two classes in areas of their interest but a majority of the students have made the commitment to complete the entire course and get certified. Of the original 16 in the **Mod Squad 2** group, nine members graduated in January 2016 and were certified. One member is finishing up the program with **Mod Squad 3**.

**Mod Squad 3** began with twenty-one members and now fifteen students have finished Modules 1 through 6 and they are now working on Module 7 which is "Becoming a MG". Next they will have until October 31<sup>st</sup> to get their 72 hours with all the same requirements as a regular intern. The advisors work with the projects to offer Saturday work days, but of course it's challenging for people working full time to get the hours. **Mod Squad 3** will graduate in January 2017 along with the 2016 interns.

(Continued on page 2)

# Mod Squad —cont'd

## Mod Squad 3's schedule:

14 Saturdays \*\* 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.

April – December 2015 Modules 1 – 6 (12 Saturdays)

January – February 2016 Module 7 – (2 Saturdays)  
“*Becoming a MG*”

February – October 2016 Getting hours

January 2017 Graduation

The **Mod Squad** consists of the same sort of participants as you would find in any MG intern class. Some have more gardening experience than others, but all want to learn and many will eventually volunteer for the organization. Graduates from the **Mod Squad** have taken on a couple of the big jobs in our organization: Donna Bufton, “Secretary” and Bobbie Smith, “TCMGA Website”.

### Interviews with Mod Squad 3

*Penni:*

Home schooler – “Fueling her passion for gardening” “Liked the Earth Kind concepts”

*Lucille:*

Employed full time – “Volunteer time is challenging, but I’ve learned a lot, learned how much I don’t know”.

*Colleen:*

Employed full time – “I thoroughly enjoyed class, the monetary commitment pushed me to finish”... “We love Sue & Rocky”

*Ron:*

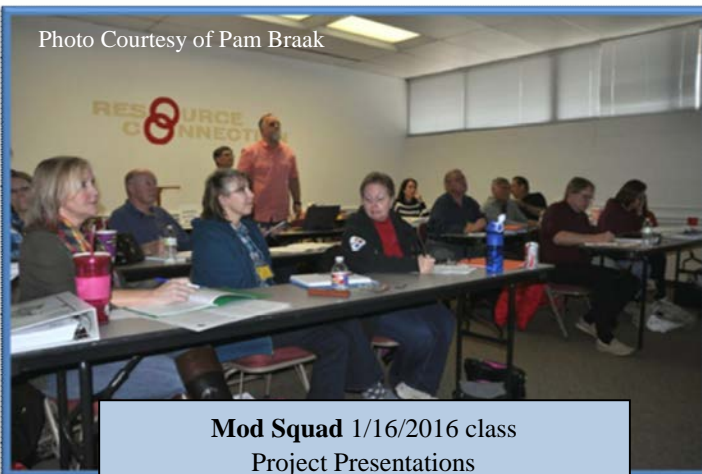
Employed Full time – “The wife made me do it, we wanted to do something together and do better in our home garden.”



**Mod Squad Advisors**  
Rocky Deutscher & Sue Kelley

Photo Courtesy of Pam Braak

Photo Courtesy of Pam Braak



**Mod Squad 1/16/2016 class**  
Project Presentations



**Mod Squad 2 graduation**



Photos Courtesy of Sue Kelley



**Marilyn Satterfield,  
TCMGA President**

## President's Message

What an unusual winter we are having. I am really enjoying the warmer temperatures, even though it's probably not the best for our plants. But, they will adapt and continue to make the best of it, with our help.

We have some really exciting conferences coming up that you will not want to miss.

First is the State Conference in McKinney, May 17-19, 2016, hosted by the Collin County Master Gardeners. The conference will be held in the old show barn-yep, dirt floors and all. So be sure to wear suitable footwear. You will definitely want to tour the international award winning gardens at Myers Park to see Earth-Kind principles at work. Collin County has worked hard and long to plan an exciting conference for us, so let's give them our support by having a record attendance from Tarrant County.

Then in November, Tarrant County Master Gardeners will be hosting the Southern Regional Master Gardener Conference in Arlington, November 2-5, 2016. Plans are still in the works but are looking to be very interesting. The conference website and registration should be available March, 2016.

Plans have been finalized for the 2017 Master Gardener State Conference Cruise. Yes, a 4-night, 5-day cruise to Cozumel. Imagine, a ship full of Master Gardeners, learning and having fun together. Connecting with old friends and meeting new ones. The prices are very affordable, ranging from \$551 to almost \$800, depending on stateroom selected. Friends and family are encouraged to be a part of this exciting cruise. The Texas Master Gardener website will have all the details. So, register and make your plans early to assure you don't miss out on all the fun.

Until next time,

**Marilyn Satterfield  
TCMGA President**







## Nora's Notions

### Gardening Usurped (Rats in the Attic) by Nora Coalson, 2014 MG

Just when mild January weather beckoned me outside for work on an outdoor to-do list which included cutting back my still-blooming lantana, a trip back indoors brought me up short. An unpleasant odor emanated from an overhead vent in the master bedroom. OK, how bad could this be? Something dead in the attic. Call someone to get it out, pay the worth-every-penny price, and move on.

Yep. Did all that. The dead thing turned out to be a rat. Now I'm not rat phobic. An early pre-career job involved working with them in a medical research lab. Those mild mannered caged creatures, however, did not make tunnels in attic insulation, chew wires, and die in inconvenient spots in my home. I liked them caged just fine. Free roaming in my attic – not so much.

The sympathetic fellow who removed the first offender, patched up one obvious source of ingress, and tossed coyote urine-soaked cotton balls in my attic, suggested traps. I hoped the problem was an isolated one and we would not need them. You probably already know that this is not a problem for which the ostrich approach works well. That very night I heard a loud and persistent scratching sound coming from the attic, followed by the scampering sounds of little clawed feet.

As luck would have it, I had MG telephone duty the next morning. This was mid-January and unlikely to be busy, so I anticipated researching the rat problem on aggie-horticulture, following whatever directions were given, and solving the problem pronto. Would you be surprised to learn that there are critters called ROOF RATS? Not only are they twinkle-toed high wire walkers (think power lines, fence tops, vines on walls), they can also squeeze into an area no larger than one half inch in diameter. Heck - the buggers could walk in under my front door if that is the case.

Turns out that it is no easy task to get rid of rats in the attic. Those who have dealt with the problem are happy to relate their horror stories. One poor fellow described several weeks' worth of do-it-yourself rat removal efforts followed by a professional exterminator's plan which included tenting the entire house and pumping it full of toxic fumes, which then necessitated a week-long stay in a hotel. I began to have visions of our retirement account being drained not by Wall Street downturns but by exterminator bills and attic repair.

Aggie-horticulture gave me more information than I ever wanted to know about how to identify what type of critter had taken up residence in my attic. Since I already knew from the dead critter removed that it was a rat, I skated over

the information about shapes of critter poop and went straight for the HOW-DO-I-KILL-THEM info. Neither was I particularly interested in identifying whether my attic rat was of the Norway Rat (*Rattus norvegicus*) or the Roof Rat (*Rattus rattus*) species. Should you really want to know, be advised that the Norway Rat has a blunt muzzle and is described as large and robust, where the Roof Rat has a pointed muzzle and is sleek and graceful. I had no intention of such close examination and doubted that I would describe anything in this species as graceful.



Our first attempt at killing the attic rat was to use the recommended spring trap. They're cheap. Work great in cartoons. How could we miss? We baited them with aggie-h advised peanut butter, crunchy because it's my husband's favorite. (No analogy here; I was just feeling magnanimous.) We also put rat bait boxes around the house and cautioned our outdoor cats to stay away from them. Three days of these efforts resulted in much cursing, near amputation of several fingers, and NO DEAD RATS. No way to tell if the bait boxes were effective, but the traps were not. The clever little buggers could rob the trap of bait and not spring it. I was ready to consider my husband's suggestion to starve our outdoor cats and lock them in the attic. They were definitely not earning their keep outside.

At a second visit by our friendly exterminator, the man told us to forget the peanut butter. Turns out (according to him, not aggie-horticulture) that rats prefer different foods at different times of the year. Winter diet preferences require something with more fat. "Use fried chicken skin instead," he said. My husband was all over that one and volunteered immediately to run to KFC. I headed for Home Depot where I found a new and improved reusable mouse trap guaranteed to kill them. At \$17.95, it was priced as the Rolls Royce of rat killing devices. So what if it was made in New Zealand. How different could our rats be? I bought one. While the exterminator closed off quite a few more potential roof-top in-and-out points for critters, my husband and I rebaited the traps. I proudly placed my Rolls Royce, feeling hopeful.

The next morning my husband greeted me with a cup of coffee and patted the seat beside him. "We need to talk." He wasn't smiling. Uh oh. His story: Turning on the kitchen light that morning, he had been startled by the sight of our rat running

*(Continued on page 5)*

# Nora's Notions

along the kitchen countertop behind the coffee pot. So, he reckoned that our sealing up the attic holes had been so effective that Mr. *Rattus rattus*, as we had taken to calling him, had moved his operations downstairs.

An hour and a half later, after having tossed that first proffered cup out and Cloroxed every conceivable surface in the kitchen, including the coffee pot (inside & out), I sat down to enjoy my first cup of coffee. Grossed out and really pissed, I reread all the advice from TAMU. In a nutshell here it is:

- The obvious – don't buy a mouse trap (small) to catch a rat (large). Not everyone carries the larger spring traps.
- Don't put the traps closer together than 3 feet. Apparently rats learn that spring traps can kill and will avoid them if they see cousin Pete get trapped.
- Don't use rodenticides (poison) in your attic – if you can possibly avoid it. (Trust me when I say that you will probably ignore this advice if your rat problem persists for more than a week.)
- Don't believe anyone who tells you that rat bait (poison) makes them thirsty, so they will go outside to die. More likely they will fall dead between your walls creating a stench you will have to live with for a week or more.
- Forget sound producing repellent devices. There is no supportive data that they work.
- Do not use glue boards for rats. They're OK for mice, if you don't mind picking them up with a still-alive wriggly mouse attached and then have to figure out how to humanely kill it.
- Do NOT trap and release rats or mice. They are considered pests in every sense of the word. I'm thinking even Albert Schweitzer would have killed them.
- Do hire someone to seal up all possible entry points on your roof using low expansion/expanding foam and brass or stainless steel wool. Since this requires much roof scrambling, it's simply not do-it-yourself work.

As for the end of the story, we capitulated to fears of rats gnawing on us in our sleep and bought more poisoned bait, which we then placed under every sink, in every bathtub, and in the attic. I bought the pest control expanding spray foam and squirted it in every under-the-sink opening I could find and around all of our outdoor faucets. And because fear short circuits reason, I purchased those supposedly ineffective sound-emitting rodent repellent thingies, plugged three of them into our bedroom and bathroom sockets, and then barricaded our bedroom door from possible invasion by tucking a towel under the closed door. For three nights we got little sleep and prepared ourselves to search for a dead rat.

Never before have I delighted at the smell of decay. I'd taken to covering the coffee pot with plastic bags duct-taped to the countertop. It made for a torturous start to the day, but one free of images of rats crawling on my exposed brewing machine. Fresh coffee in hand, I bent down to toss a spoon in the dishwasher, and that's when I got it – just a whiff of something dead. On hands and knees I peered under the dishwasher. The smell was definitely stronger, but I couldn't see *Rattus rattus*. I just smiled, took my coffee into the living room to enjoy with the morning paper and waited for hubby to wake up.

My husband greeted the news with a grin and responded, "We'll have to pull the dishwasher to get him out. I've done this before. No sweat." The thought of a dead rat made me agreeable, so I put on scuzzy clothes, gathered up rubber gloves, donned a mask and prepared to assist the project lead. All went well until we started pulling the washer out, it got hung up on something, and water started pouring out onto the floor. Water mopped and hot water turned off to stop the leak, I noticed a kick plate screwed to the bottom of the washer. With that removed, sure enough, there lay a dead rat. Nearby was one of the blocks of bait he had dragged under the dishwasher with him.

Since we had been living with a dishwasher which had a broken latch and one which was now forever tainted by a dead rat found underneath, my husband sent me to search for a new one. This was a gift horse if ever I saw one. Three days later a new stainless steel dishwasher was installed. Thank you Mr. *Rattus rattus*.



# ROSE TRIALS IN GRAPEVINE TO FIND ROSE ROSETTE RESISTANT ROSES

By Pam Braak, 2009 MG



Have you noticed that the Fort Worth Botanic Gardens' Rose Garden has no roses? They gave up replacing roses afflicted with Rose Rosette Disease (RRD) and planted other things. Rose Rosette Disease is an epidemic in North Texas. It is a puzzling and disastrous disease which seems to have hit this area the hardest. Thousands of roses have been removed all over Tarrant County including 5,400 roses in Southlake medians and parks, costing the city up to \$500,000. The disease is spread by a microscopic, wingless mite probably carried by the wind. There is no treatment and infected roses must be dug up and destroyed.

In 2005 the Grapevine Garden Club participated in a two year Earthkind Rose Trial to field test 24 cultivars of antique roses. The roses thrived for nearly 10 years with almost no care but in late 2014 RRD was identified on all the roses except one variety. All the rose bushes were dug up and destroyed in January 2015. The City Horticulturalist offered the spot to Laura

Miller, County Extension Agent at Texas A&M AgriLife Extension for a new rose trial. The proposal was accepted and the City of Grapevine purchased and planted 68 roses made up of 16 varieties of shrub roses and one climbing rose. The selection was based on a list provided by Texas A & M University Horticulture professor Dr. David Byrne of possible RRD cultivars. The roses were planted 10 feet apart in 4 blocks in different patterns. A group of TCMGA and Grapevine Garden Club volunteers is handling the monthly data collection which includes observation of appearance, number of blooms, insects on stems, leaves and blooms, soil structure, environmental conditions and of course diseases. Infected roses are left in place during the trial which is difficult for participants to do. One rose, a Wedding Bells, has been infected so far. The data is entered monthly in a format specified by Texas A & M. We are hoping to help find RRD resistant cultivars so that good choices of roses will be available for our area as well as for Dr. Byrne's breeding program.

Data collection is the first Tuesday of every month at Dove Loop & Shadybrook, Grapevine. There is no address for the garden so for your GPS use Cross Timbers Winery, 805 Main Street which is next door. Contact Pam Braak if you would like to participate.



The data collection crew works in all weather including on a cold January day.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS



# March/April 2016

### March

3/3 Linda Campbell, Debbie Boyle  
 3/4 Robert Lundin  
 3/5 Charlotte Krystinik, Jody Morris  
 3/7 Linda Mitchell, Mary Ann Rojas  
 3/8 Linda Manning  
 3/9 Linda Osburn, Julie Taber  
 3/10 Kay Lewis, Susan Miller  
 3/11 Stephen Purdy, Sherry White  
 3/12 Emily Ward  
 3/13 Pat Oliver, Claudia Teague,  
 Diana Vincenti  
 3/18 Pat DeBusk, Jay De Zeeuw  
 3/19 Nancy Price  
 3/21 Randy Barkley  
 3/22 Sandy Dhabolt-Hertzler  
 3/26 Sharon Nice  
 3/29 Susan Stanek  
 3/30 Dawn Hancock,  
 Bernice Ramsbottom (Over 80)  
 3/31 Kim Freeman, Jo Poppelreiter

### April

4/2 Debby Stevenson, Wanda Stutsman  
 4/3 Mike Warren  
 4/4 Mary Armstrong  
 4/5 Valerie Soens, Valerie Stowe  
 4/6 Emily Beyette  
 4/8 Danielle Carr, Jaime Hart  
 4/12 Melinda Massey  
 4/13 Margaret Anderson  
 4/16 Marilyn Johnson  
 4/21 Doug Montgomery  
 4/23 Larry Matl, Janice Sims  
 4/24 Dorothy Hildebrand, Jan Rasmusson  
 4/25 Linnea Philip, Teresa White  
 4/26 Berry Bock  
 4/27 JoAnn Hahn, Kay Sekio  
 4/29 Rhett Cervantes, *James Nelson (Over 80)*  
 4/30 Morganna Harwood, Leeann Rosenthal,  
 Art Wikoff, Otto Witt

If you don't see your name, please contact LaVonne Nowlin.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

We are volunteering at the Smartscape Plant Sales again this year, so please look over the list and let me know which dates you are available. All of the plant sales are held at a Home Depot Store and are from 8:00 am until 12 noon.

Please respond to Marilyn Satterfield

**April 2**

7100 North Freeway

Ft Worth 76137

**April 16**

2013 Hwy 377

Keller 76248

**April 23**

300 S. Village Center Dr

Southlake 76092

**May 7**

1725 N. US Hwy 287

Mansfield 76063

**May 14**

201 Road to Six Flags

Arlington 76011

## NEW TCMGA PROJECTS!

The Project Committee has approved two short-term projects that will be available to all Master Gardeners for this year only.

1. Cross Timbers Middle School in Colleyville. It is called BUZZ. The program is to provide a healthy habitat for butterflies and bees. It involves expertise in the proper plants with instructions on how and where to plant them, including how to maintain the garden to support butterflies and bees.
2. McDonalds Southeast YMCA to help establish a community garden to teach good nutrition and a planting guide. School children and senior citizens are involved in the project.

If, you are interested in participating in either of these projects please contact Rocky Deutscher.



## LAST SHARECROPPER ISSUE!

It has been a long run and I have been honored to publish the TCMGA newsletter for the past 7 years.

Unfortunately, with my departure, so goes the newsletter, at least until a replacement can be found. This is probably a good thing because digital technology is the future for this medium. You have probably seen BRIT, Neil Sperry, Ft. Worth Botanic Garden etc... transition to the new technology, i.e. emagazines.

So, if and when, a replacement is identified, I recommend they move forward with the new technology and make our organization proud!

The Media Committee will continue meeting this year and will be focused on publishing, research information, producing educational videos and updating the website.

Thank you for all your support.

**Jackie Heidinger**

Spread the word! Larry Wilhelm will be teaching the spring course, hosted at the Fort Worth Botanic Garden

**Thursday, April 14, 6-9 p.m.**

**Friday, April 15, 6-9 p.m.**

**Saturday, April 16, 8:30 a.m. - 5 p.m.**

Ten full scholarships are available to certified teachers with students in Fort Worth!

Already been? Tell a friend!

**City of Fort Worth // Master Composters  
Master Composter Class**





**SATURDAY, APRIL 30 9:00AM – 2:00PM**

## **Annual Plant Sale** ***and Gardening Demonstrations***

**Learn Proven Texas Gardening Techniques  
from Tarrant County Master Gardeners**

Master Gardeners will teach you how to make fabulous container plantings, prep and plan your flowerbeds, how to get your soil tested, selecting the right fertilizer and much more.

**At the Tarrant County  
Resource Connection  
1801 Circle Drive  
(located off Campus Drive and I-20)**

**For More Information:**

**[www.tarrantmg.org](http://www.tarrantmg.org)**



# Upcoming Events

## March

**3**  
(Thursday)

**9 am social**  
**10 am- meeting**

### TCMGA Meeting

After the meeting there will be a Brown Bag CEU on **March on Bees** presented by Sue Short, Ginger, Gage, Sharon Schide and Debbie Key.

**10—12**  
(Thursday—Saturday)

### Master Gardener Vegetable Specialist Training

To register, go to  
[Tarrantmg.org](http://Tarrantmg.org)

## April

**7**  
(Thursday)

**9 am social**  
**10 am- meeting**

### TCMGA Meeting

After the meeting there will be a Brown Bag CEU on **Entomology**  
Brought to you by the TCMGA Entomology Specialists

**17**  
(Saturday)

**8 am— 1 pm**

### Grapevine Garden Club Plant Sale

Perennials, butterfly plants, drought tolerant plants, native & adapted  
400 Ball Street, Grapevine, TX

**21—23**  
(Thursday—Saturday)

### Master Propagation Specialist Training

To register, go to  
[Tarrantmg.org](http://Tarrantmg.org)

**30**  
(Saturday)

### TCMGA Annual Plant Sale and Gardening Demonstrations