

Tarrant County Master Gardeners



TEXAS A & M AGRILIFE EXTENSION SERVICE

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Staying at Home

I've been in a quandary about what to focus on for our Newsletter in this time like none of us have experienced. No projects are working, everything is on hold, in limbo, and what are us gardeners to do? I have been inspired by a Facebook Group titled "What do you see from your window? #Stayathome." People from all over the world are posting photos of what they see from their window in this time of isolation. Sometimes it's just a photo with their location, and sometimes people write a paragraph about what they're going through. I thought that if some of you are interested we could do the same thing through the Newsletter. So, I'm going to start with my own experience, and I hope that other Master Gardeners will email me pictures and commentary on what is going on in their lives. Our next Newsletter will be dedicated to hearing from all of you.

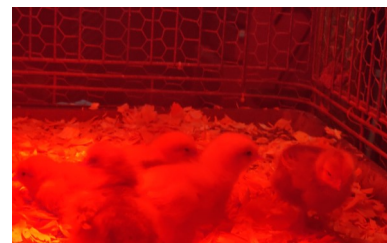
Both of my places of employment are shut down for who knows how long. Fortunately my husband has a job where he is able to work from home. Every day I've muttered a "thank heavens I have my garden and it's Springtime." I have pulled weeds like never before. I have my veggie garden going strong. We have a new batch of baby chicks growing in the garage. My husband and I are going on walks every day. I'm practicing my yoga and missing all of my yoga students. It appears by the look of my trees that I'll have lots of peaches and plums this year, so I'll be making preserves. And cooking. Experimenting with all sorts of new things in the kitchen! We're trying our hand at smoking salmon. (I'll let you know how that turns out!) I'm on my last library book, and will be learning how to download books onto my tablet. We've been visiting with our neighbors from a safe distance across the fence. I've had delightful conference calls with friends, and skyping with family members.

How are you all keeping a healthy mental frame of mind? Please email me pictures and details about how you are coping.

Much love,

Lorie Grandclair-Diaz

lgrandclair@gmail.com



Above from left to right: What I see from my living room window. Poppies blooming. The seed is from Union Gospel Mission. Baby chicks!

Tarrant County Master Gardeners

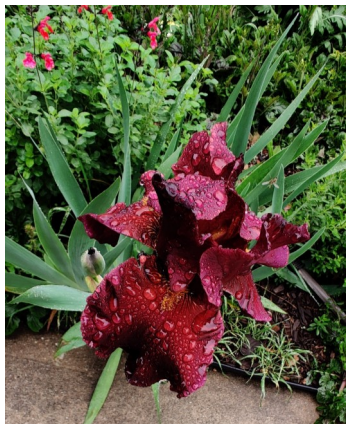
Staying at Home continued



My new keyhole garden.



Baby peaches.



Above, I believe that this is an iris from Thistle Hill that I bought at our plant sale many years ago.



Above is the view from my dining room.

The two photos below are what our President Theresa Thomas sees outside her front door.



The President's Message



Dear members, my main concern and prayer for all of you is that you “Stay Safe - Stay Home.” If you need to be out and about, follow CDC guidelines protecting yourself, your family and people around you. I have not heard of a Tarrant County Master Gardener that has contracted the virus at this time. Please let me know if you know of a member that is ill. We do have several fellow MGs that are dealing with other types of health issues, please stop, take a minute and remember them. Give them a call or email.

Steve has cancelled all Telephone Duty till May 4, 2020. And everyone should have gotten Steve's Eblast this morning. Thank you, Steve, for your encouragement. We appreciate you.

The Plant Sale committee is still working out details for possible online sale. More information to come.

I do want to thank all of you that have attended our monthly meetings of the year. A nice group of members each month. You all continue to support TCMGA buying logo items, plants, fertilizer, raffle, etc. Thank you. Our Ways and Means Committee have done a great job.

The 2020 Handbooks are available, and you will be able to get one as time goes by. Steve Purdy and Valerie Stowe and his team have put together a great one. A big thank you for the time and work it takes to make this available to our members. Be sure and thank them when you get to see them again.

This time out is helping us to get things done around the house and in our gardens that we usually put off. We would like to see pictures of your garden. If you would send them to our newsletter, website, Facebook and Instagram we can put together a showcase of Master Gardeners' gardens.

Sit back, enjoy this time out and be safe.

Theresa



Tarrant County Master Gardeners

Texas Red Bud

Texas Redbud

Cercis canadensis var. texensis

Information: Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

This *Cercis canadensis* variety is a large shrub or small tree, 10-20 ft. in height, differing from the more easterly Eastern redbud (*Cercis canadensis var. canadensis*) in having smaller, more glossy, and usually hairier leaves with wavy edges, more of a tendency to have red seedpods, and a smaller stature. With a natural range extending from the mountains of southern Oklahoma through the limestone spine of central Texas south to northeastern Mexico, it is also more drought-tolerant than Eastern redbud, though less so than the smaller, more western Mexican redbud (*Cercis canadensis var. mexicana*). Like all *Cercis canadensis* varieties, its clusters of flowers appear in early spring before the leaves emerge and continue to bloom as the leaves develop. Leaves are heart shaped to kidney shaped, rounded at the tip, slightly wavy on the edges, and glossy, often with some hairiness on the underside. Flowers rose purple, in small clusters along the branches, appearing before the leaves, in March or early April. Fruit a flat, reddish brown pod up to 4 inches long and pointed at the tip. Deciduous leaves turn gold or red in fall. Seedpods are reddish purple and persist into the winter.

The redbuds of eastern North America have long been popular for their pink-purple early spring flowers that appear on bare wood before the leaves emerge. Texas redbud is the appropriate variety to use if you live on limestone soils from southern Oklahoma through central Texas to northeastern Mexico. It is drought-tolerant within its range, prefers dappled shade but is also found in full sun, and can do well even on relatively thin soils. Its glossy, rounded leaves bring welcome shade and its flowers attract pollinators.

Bloom Information

Bloom Color: White, Pink , Purple

Bloom Time: Mar , Apr

Bloom Notes: Color normally pink or purple, rarely white. White-flowered cultivars have been developed.

Distribution

USA: OK, TX

Native Distribution: Southern Oklahoma south through central Texas to Nuevo Leon in Mexico

Native Habitat: Dry slopes of canyons & foothills below 4500 ft. Edwards Plateau and limestone soils of north central Texas and eastern part of Plains Country.

Growing Conditions

Water Use: Low , Medium

Light Requirement: Sun , Part Shade

Soil Moisture: Dry

Soil pH: Alkaline (pH>7.2)

CaCO₃ Tolerance: Low

Drought Tolerance: Medium , High

Texas Red Bud continued

Cold Tolerant: yes

Heat Tolerant: yes

Soil Description: Well-drained, calcareous, rocky, sandy, loamy, or clay soils, usually limestone-based.

Conditions Comments: Drought- and cold-tolerant within its range. Give dappled shade when young. A selection called Sanderson is said to be the most drought-adapted Texas redbud cultivar.

Benefit

Use Ornamental: Showy, attractive, understory tree or accent tree.

Use Wildlife: The nectar is sought after by butterflies, bees, moths, and insects. The leaves are sometimes browsed by deer. The seeds are eaten by granivorous birds.

Use Food: The flowers are fried in Mexico. The flowers are acid and are sometimes pickled for salads. The nectar is of some value as a source of honey.

Use Medicinal: A fluid extract can be taken from the bark which is an active astringent used in the treatment of dysentery.

Conspicuous Flowers: yes

Interesting Foliage: yes

Attracts: Butterflies

Larval Host: Henrys Elfin butterfly

Nectar Source: yes

Deer Resistant: Moderate

Propagation

Propagation Material: Seeds

Description: Propagate with scarified and stratified seed.

Seed Collection: Harvest pods as soon as they begin to dry to reduce insect damage.

Seed Treatment: Scarification and stratification necessary.

Commercially Avail: yes



Content provided by
Theresa Thomas.



Tarrant County Master Gardeners

Take a Deep Breath and Thank a Plant

By Laura Miller, CEA

The Sharecrafter April 2010

Sometime back in elementary school science you probably learned why people and plants belong together. People need to breathe oxygen and then exhale carbon dioxide. Plants take in carbon dioxide, use it to create energy through photosynthesis, and then release oxygen. It's a symbiotic relationship, and one that's especially important to remember in urban areas where people and cars can easily outnumber plants.

Indoors

When we think about air quality, we often think only about the air outside, but the National Safety Council says that the average person in the United States spends about 90% of each day indoors. Indoor air quality can be worse than air quality outdoors, especially in tightly sealed energy efficient buildings. In extreme situations, indoor air pollution develops into Sick Building Syndrome. People who live or work in a "sick" building can have eye, lung and upper respiratory problems.

Plants improve indoor air quality in two ways. As plants open their stomata to allow carbon dioxide in for photosynthesis, water vapor moves out. The relative humidity around a plant typically ranges from 35–55%.

The optimum relative humidity for an indoor environment just happens to be 35-45%. Unlike other sources of indoor air moisture such as cooking and washing, plants are self-regulating. They reduce their transpiration rates when humidity is high and increase transpiration when it's low.

Plants also function as an air cleaner. You may have heard the story of the NASA scientist Dr. B.C.

Wolverton who was looking for ways to purify the air in the old Skylab space station when he decided to try out some common houseplants. His laboratory studies showed that the plants could remove volatile organic compounds (VOCs) from the air. VOCs such as benzene, formaldehyde and trichloroethylene are released by plywood, particleboard, carpeting, paint, cleaning products and other common components of our indoor environment. Dr. Wolverton went on to publish his research findings in a book, *How to Grow Fresh Air: 50 House Plants that Purify Your Home or Office*. It is frequently referred to by everyone from Dr. Oz on the Oprah Winfrey Show (November 2007) to my mother who is always trying to give me her extra spider plants.

Here are some of the plants recommended for removal of specific VOCs:

BENZENE

Source of Toxins:

Detergents, Inks and Dyes, Plastics, Rubber Products, Petroleum Products, Synthetic Fibers, Tobacco

Smoke Plants Associated with the Removal of Benzene:

Spathiphyllum (Peace Lily), Dracaena spp., Gerbera (Gerber Daisy), Hedera spp. (Ivy), Chrysanthemum (mum), Aglaonema (Chinese Evergreen)

FORMALDEHYDE

Source of Toxins:

Carpeting, Cleaners, Foam Insulation, Furniture, Paper Products, Plywood and Particle Board

Plants Associated with the Removal of Formaldehyde:

Ficus spp. (Weeping Fig), Philodendron spp., Chlorophytum (Spider Plant), Sansevieria (Snake Plant), Chamaedorea (Bamboo Palm), Hedera spp. (Ivy), Epipremnum (Golden Pothos)

TRICHLOROETHYLENE

Source of Toxins:

Adhesives, Dry cleaning, Inks and Dyes, Lacquers and Paints, Paper Products, Varnishes

Plants Associated with the Removal of Trichloroethylene:

Dracaena spp.,

Gerbera (Gerber Daisy), Spathiphyllum (Peace Lily), Chrysanthemum (mum)

There is some controversy about whether a 'reasonable' number of houseplants can actually remediate a serious indoor pollution problem. Elimination of pollution sources and increasing ventilation are the most effective ways to improve indoor air quality. Plants do offer an inexpensive and attractive way to capture and remove some toxins. In your personal breathing zone, the 6-8 cubic feet of air that surrounds you as you sit at your computer or sleep in your bed, plants can certainly help you breathe easy.

In The Great Outdoors

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Air pollution results from the combination of many factors, but as anyone who follows summer weather forecasts knows, high temperatures are essential for the creation of ozone. Ozone develops at ground level when emissions from vehicles heat up. This ozone is the primary component of urban smog and the reason the Air Quality Index in Tarrant County sometimes reaches unhealthy levels.

Plants improve outdoor air quality in two ways. The first is by simply reducing air temperatures. Because they are always transpiring, plants provide evaporative cooling.

Large amounts of carbon. If you have the space to do so, plant an oak, pecan, cedar elm, or bald cypress tree. Support community tree planting efforts and let your elected officials know that trees are a great environmental investment. An October 2007 study in Portland (Oregon) found nearly \$27 million in environmental and aesthetic benefits from street and park trees that cost the city and private property owners only \$6.5 million in maintenance costs. That's a return of \$3.80 for each dollar spent.

Trees are carbon sequestration machines, but all plants provide environmental benefit. In *Technical Assessment of the Carbon Sequestration Potential of Managed Turfgrass*.

Trees can do even more to cool the air in urban environments because they shade heat absorbing surfaces such as asphalt.

“Trees are carbon sequestration machines, but all plants provide environmental benefit”

in the United States, Dr. Ranajit Sahu found that managed turfgrass where clippings were left on the ground captured four times more carbon than is produced by the lawnmower that cuts it.

There is lots of talk these days about carbon footprints and carbon sequestration. One definition of a carbon footprint is the total amount of carbon dioxide emitted that can be attributed to the action so far individual. Most of the size of your carbon footprint is determined by the amount of energy you use to get around and maintain a comfortable indoor environment, but everything you consume also contributes to your footprint. The average American person has a 21-ton carbon footprint. The average American shade tree has negative 11-ton carbon footprint.

How do they do it? Photosynthesis requires carbon dioxide so plants are constantly taking it in from the air. They release the oxygen and then store the carbon in organic molecules. Long lived woody tissues can store the most carbon. Large growing shade trees can store or sequester

Plants even help reduce air pollution that has nothing to do with carbon or paint fumes. The National Arbor Day Foundation claims that a continuous row of trees and shrubs that is at least 16 feet wide can cut the ambient noise level by one half. Dr. Helen Russell at Oxford University found that a small hedge surrounding an indoor workspace cut noise by an average of 5 decibels. In addition to removing carbon dioxide and other pollutants, plants can even filter noise pollution.

Tarrant County Master Gardeners

LADYBUG BEETLES

The Sharecropper - 2008

Ladybugs are very beneficial beetles. They can be used for pest control because they eat mainly scale insects. Pest control is anything that reduces the life span of insects or any other small creatures.

CHARACTERISTICS

All species of ladybugs (coleoptera) use their antennae to smell, have six legs, all are red, orange, or yellow and often have black spots. They're about 1/4 inch long and are generally oval shaped. They have a pair of hard shiny wings called elytra. The elytra cover a soft pair of wings, which they use to fly. When a ladybug flies they use their under pair of wings and move the elytra out to the side. A way to tell different ladybug species is by their color and marking. These variations are most likely caused by the habitat and conditions in which they are used to living.

DIET

Aphids, known to be their favorite food, suck the liquids out of leaves. This leaves a shiny substance called "honeydew" which attracts ants and sooty mold. The ladybug is a carnivore and isn't a picky eater because they will eat almost any type of scale insect. Even the larvae eat aphids.

HISTORY

In the 1980's about 88,000 ladybugs were imported from Asia to save the citrus crops of California from the cottony cushion, a scale insect.

HIBERNATION

Ladybugs are cold-blooded so they hibernate in the winter. They will get into buildings through bad foundations, poor insulation, cracks or windows.

Since ladybugs are tree dwelling insects, buildings in heavily wooded areas are most likely to get infested. When inside their winter destination they hibernate until it is warm again. But on warm days they will come out for a little while to enjoy the warmth of the sun. They come out of hibernation when the spring flowers bloom or when it is 59°F.

PROS AND CONS OF LADYBUGS

Ladybugs are very beneficial because of their appetite for aphids. They can be used as biological pest control. Farmers can collect them when hibernating and be used later on for biological pest control. Every species but two are beneficial for farmers. Those two can destroy crops. However Ladybugs can be pests if they gather in large numbers to hibernate, and you don't appreciate their presence.

LIFE CYCLE

Some ladybugs can live up to two to three years. The ladybug has four main stages of life. The first is the egg; the second is the larval stage; the third is the pupal stage; the last stage is the adult.

During the lifetime the body size increases while the exoskeleton doesn't. So, it gets molted, which is like shedding the outer shell. This happens about four times in its lifetime. The fourth time this happens it is called a pupa, and goes through a stage called metamorphosis, the time when its final colors and spots begin to show. Metamorphosis lasts about one week, during this time the beetle does not move unless it is disturbed or to regulate the body temperature. After metamorphosis the pupa has undeveloped adult body parts.

SUMMARY

The Ladybug beetle is a predator and parasite of bad insects. Ladybug beetles including their larvae eat aphids and scale insects. They should not be destroyed unless their presence in your home becomes out of control.

—Derald Freeman



WEED CONTROL by Dotty Woodson from The Sharecropper April 2009

The early cold rain in late summer made many winter weeds germinate before homeowners and landscapers had time to apply pre-emergent to keep the annual winter weeds from germinating. Now early warm spring and rain has made the winter weeds grow fast and large. We have received many calls to the office about weed control. Most homeowners want to rush out and apply a weed and feed product thinking the weed control in the product will take care of the weeds. While most weed and feed products have pre-emergent herbicides in the bag, there are a few that now have a granular post-emergent herbicide in the bag. I have no reports about how well these products work but I just wanted you to be aware of the situation. Most weed and feed products only have pre-emergent herbicides, which do not work on growing weeds. Pre-emergent herbicides keep seeds from germinating or kill the emerging seedling. Post-emergent herbicides are applied to growing weeds. Read the label very thoroughly and apply herbicides very carefully.

I do not recommend weed and feed products because in this area the fertilizer does not need to be applied at the same as an herbicide. Right now, the winter weeds are growing very fast and the summer weeds are germinating. Adding a fertilizer to this mix will cause the weeds to grow faster and if the weed control is only a pre-emergent it may help control summer annuals weeds but many of them have already germinated. If the product has a post-emergent it will affect the winter weeds currently growing but not stop the summer annuals germinating. Read the label.

Weed seeds blow into landscapes and birds and animals drop weed seeds. Weed seed is in soil used for landscaping. We carry weed seed on our car tires, boots and lawn equipment. However the weed seeds arrived in your landscape, weed seeds germinate when there is soil contact, moisture, sunlight and the correct temperature. Annual winter weeds germinate in the fall and annual summer weeds germinate in the spring. Perennial weeds grow from their roots left from the previous season. The first steps to combat weeds in a lawn is mowing, fertilizing and watering to create a thick healthy lawn. Since weed seeds have to make soil contact and receive light to germinate, a thick lawn prevents weed seed making soil contact and receiving light if the seeds do find the way through the thick grass to the soil.

The first step to control weeds in the shrub, flower and garden areas is to add a thick layer of bark mulch. The mulch helps control weeds by preventing sunlight on the seeds and burying the seeds too deep. If weed seed blows into a mulched area and germinates, weed seedlings are easier pulled from mulch than soil.

Herbicides (weed killers) are available. When selecting a herbicide, read and follow the directions very carefully. Many homeowners have damaged desirable plants by misapplying herbicides. Two classes of herbicides exist, post-emergent and pre-emergent. Post-emergent herbicides are used to control actively growing weeds. Pre-emergent herbicides are used to prevent weeds from germinating and growing. There are three categories of herbicides in these two classes: grassy weed killer, broadleaf weed killers and non-select. Grass herbicides kill grass. Broadleaf herbicides kill all plants except grass. Non-select herbicides kill all plants. A fourth post-emergent herbicide for sedges such as nut grass is also available. As you can see, there are many choices. Herbicides are a good tool for controlling weeds if you apply the correct herbicide at the right time using the correct formulation. First identify the weed as grass, broadleaf or sedge. Then consult your local nurseryman or feed store owner for advice on herbicide selection. Read the label before purchasing the product. Herbicides cannot tell the difference between weed and a desirable plant. If herbicides are misapplied, you can damage desirable plants.

Post-emergent herbicides are applied to active growing weeds. These herbicides are usually applied with a sprayer. Carefully mix the herbicide according to the label directions. Label all tool used for

Weed Control Continued.

measuring and applying herbicides so you will not use them for anything but herbicide applications. Only apply the herbicide when the wind is below 5 mph, rain is not expected for 48 hours and on a hot sunny day.

Pre-emergent herbicides are applied before the weed seed germinates. To control winter weeds, apply a pre-emergent in the fall before the weed seeds germinate. To control spring weeds, apply a pre-emergent in late winter/early spring and repeat in summer according to directions. Pre-emergent herbicides are usually granular and applied with a fertilizer spreader. Water the area after the pre-emergent herbicide is applied. The pre-emergent herbicide forms a barrier on the surface of the soil to prevent weed seed germinating or the seedling from growing.

Most of the weeds growing now are winter weeds. These weeds germinated last fall. Mowing, pulling and post-emergent herbicides are the only control. Mow often to stop seed production. Pull weeds before seeds are dispersed. Use a post-emergent when necessary. If you have a large amount of winter weeds, remember to use a pre-emergent next fall. If you had a large amount of summer weeds last summer, apply a pre-emergent now.



Did you know?

TCMGA offers a **[scholarship](#)** each year to a qualified applicant. The purpose of this scholarship is to encourage the study of Horticulture, Floriculture, Landscape Design, Conservation, Forestry, Botany, Agronomy, Plant Pathology, or other related subjects. Scholarships may be awarded to any of the following enrolled in or accepted to a college with a declared major in horticulture-related subjects: a graduating high school senior residing in Tarrant County, a scholarship recipient from the previous year, or a college student with a permanent residence in Tarrant County.

Please contact Donna Findley for the link to access the application, and then send application to Donna Findley at **rfindley58@yahoo.com** by Nov 1, 2020.