

Tarrant County Master Gardeners



TEXAS A & M AGRILIFE EXTENSION AGENCY

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Tarrant County Sweeps State Awards...how is it done? By Eleanor Tuck

You've probably not thought a lot about our awards---both those given within the Tarrant County Master Gardener Association and those sent to "State". I've had the good fortune since 1998-1999 (yes, the last century) to be able to work with the committee who writes and rewrites the awards sent to State---after Steve approves and signs them !

The Texas Master Gardener Association has an awards committee

who gather the submissions and present to Jayla Fry, our State MG Coordinator. She then sends the forms to judges out of state of Texas. This provides a fair and balanced evaluation of each award. There are three judges for each award which also provides some fairness---some judges grade harder than others. Just as our local committee is given a specific form to use, the judges are given specific criteria for their judging.

The Search for Excel-

lence forms we are given to work with are the same for several subjects, but the format for JMG, Association and Individual are unique. There are questions on all the forms which limit us to 150 words, absolutely no more. Each form is limited to three pages and the size and type of font is prescribed. No special colors or emphatic fonts are acceptable; however, we are allowed a fourth page on which pictures are placed and they say it all for us.

Once the forms are judged and returned to Jayla, the State Awards Committee meets to prepare the plaques for presentation at the Annual State MG Meeting. The plaques are arranged according to County size. Tarrant only competes with other "Extra Large Assn" (200 or more members): Bexar, Collin, Dallas, Galveston, Harris and Montgomery.

The Committee for 2016, was Ginger Bason, Camille Eckersley, Joyce Hallbauer, Carol Vance & Tammy Edwards. Look on page 2 for the Awards that were entered and the winners!



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Awards continued



Claire Alford receiving the award for 2nd place in Outstanding Individual.

Following are the awards that Tarrant County entered, along with the winners!

Written Education: “A Child’s Guide to the Japanese Gardens”/A Coloring Book for Children. Our Intern Avice Ward carried most of the responsibility for this award and the Botanic Gardens is considering printing this guide. A winner! 3rd place in Written Education.

JMG Youth: Hillside Community Center Demo Garden. Our Master Gardener Hester Schwarzer is the lead at this garden and is assisted by her students.

Educational: Heritage School “Earth Day/ Science Camp” This reflects a very special day at Heritage with our MGs: Pam Braak, Harold Annis, Dick Pafford and others to truly highlight all that the demo garden. A winner! 2nd place in Educational.

Project: Molly Hollar Wildscape. All that continues to be done, taught and enjoyed is reflected at Molly’s garden and is directed by Molly Hollar and Ann Knudsen and many other MGs. A winner! 2nd place in Project.

Research: Durham Intermediate School “Dirt to Table” Potato Research in collaboration with A&M and many, many MGs. Henry Cole directed this event. A winner! 1st place in Research.

Individual: Claire Alford—as many of you know, she is a quiet one who gets things done and that is what we emphasized! A winner! 2nd place in Individual.

Association: Once again it was a challenge to condense our group into 150 words! And this is our fourth year in a row to be first---so be challenged in 2017. A winner! 1st place in Association.



Tarrant County Master Gardeners holding the State Awards that were received.

Baseball Bats and Bugs



By Nora Coalson (2014 MG)

I love baseball. It's now that glorious baseball time of year, and the Texas Ranger schedule is posted on my refrigerator. If the previous night's game was on the west coast, my first waking action is to check the final score.

Surely this has nothing to do with Master Gardening. To quote my husband, "You so WRONG!" Only in pee-wee baseball are the bats made of metal. Major leaguers use wooden bats – specifically ash – more specifically white ash. Ash is the hardwood that provides that soul-satisfying crack when the baseball is hit just right and soars over the fence. You know you just pictured "Na-po-li" doing just that; didn't

you?

Recently I spent two delightful days participating in the Master Gardener First Detector Specialist classes, held most appropriately at the Arlington Sheraton Hotel located within walking distance of Globe Life Park, home of baseball's finest Texas Rangers. In classes taught by Dr. Kevin Ong, director of the Texas Plant Disease

Diagnostic Laboratory, Dr. Mike Merchant, Extension Urban Entomologist out of the Dallas Research and Extension office, and Madi Shires, a graduate student at Texas A&M University, we focused on four specific pests: The Emerald Ash Borer, the Brown Marmorated Stink Bug, Crape Myrtle Bark Scale, and Rose Rosette Disease

Baseball concerns aside, I was impressed with the relatively new organization (established in 2002) called the National Plant Diagnostic Network. The NPDN's purpose is to protect "the health and productivity of plants in agricultural and natural ecosystems in the U.S." As Master Gardener First Detectors, we citizen "scientists" become a part of that information

sharing, educational network. The class introduced us to an overwhelming amount of available information and then narrowed our focus to the four above-stated problem areas. Of those four, two of them are definite problems in our area (Crape Myrtle Bark Scale and Rose Rosette Disease), and two (the Emerald Ash Borer and Brown Marmorated Stink Bug) are headed our way but not yet established.

In Texas, the plan is to develop *regional Master Gardener First Detector programs focused on invasive pests and diseases pertinent to those specific areas. Once trained, First Detectors will focus on: early detection, accurate diagnosis, and rapid communication. The classes included information on how to assess plants for disease, how to collect proper samples (both plant and insect), how to take proper photographs, as well as proper reporting mechanisms. Dr. Ong gave us a crash refresher course on plant pathology, while Dr. Merchant did the same for us on insects. Then we moved on to the targets for our area.*

First up was the Emerald Ash Borer, *Agrilus planipennis*, a half-inch long green beetle which was first discovered in Detroit, Michigan in 2002. Since we now know that areas have probably been infested for four to six years before the beetles are discovered, you may correctly surmise that these baseball-bat-killers have been around in our country at least since the 1990's. In Michigan, they have killed 99% of the forest ash with stems greater than 2.5 cm. Since that time, the beetles have been documented in twenty-nine states, including Texas (2017 USDA – EAB Range Map). In our state EAB's have been found only in a trap in Harrison County, which borders Louisiana just west of Shreveport. No trees have exhibited signs of infestation, yet.

Imported from Asia, probably on wooden pallets or packing crates, the EAB attacks sick and weakened

Baseball Bats and Bugs continued

trees as well as healthy ones. Our country's ash trees are all vulnerable to devastation by this borer, which has marched quickly through trees in forests and urban areas. Imported exotic pest like the EAB are problematic in part because our trees have no natural resistance to them and the borers themselves have no natural predators here. The larvae of the EAB feed under the bark, effectively disrupting the tree's ability to transport water and nutrients. Once noticed, an infestation can kill a healthy tree within one to three years.

In states where the EAB infestation is documented, many have implemented fire wood quarantines to prevent inadvertent spread of the pest. While we are not under any sort of quarantine because there have been no documented infestations, it is wise to consider that infestations are occurring in our border states, Louisiana and Arkansas. Bringing back firewood from neighboring states would be like inviting the EAB to our turf.

In this battle for baseball bats, there are some hopeful signs. Scientists have imported three species of non-stinging parasitic wasps from China to control the invasive

beetle. At least two U.S. species of ash trees have adapted to EAB. We have learned that Asian ash trees are resistant to EAB infestation, making the source of this resistance a focus of research. There are several effective treatment methods, including one organic. Prophylactic treatments can protect vulnerable trees, but it is not recommended until an infestation has occurred within fifteen miles. Post-infestation chemical treatment can help a tree survive and look good for many years.

The good news in Texas is that the ash tree makes up less than two percent of our forest canopy. It does, however, play a much larger role in urban landscapes, particularly in our area and through most of east Texas. Rapidly growing species (Mexican Ash and Green Ash) are popular in urban areas because they quickly provide much desired shade canopy. Since these species die more quickly once infested, they are poor choices for our landscapes. There are several ash species which are native to our area, including the Green Ash (a rapid grower), Texas Ash (AKA – Mountain Ash), and my favorite, the White Ash.

Meanwhile, our local control efforts are focused on monitoring this potential invasion by training observers (like MG First Detectors) and by placing purple ash borer traps. From what I

read on the USDA web site, trap placement is best left to the professionals. However, we can all be smarter about our tree planting choices and we can all be eyes in the forest. Signs of possible infestation are:

- Canopy stress – dieback
- Epicormic shoots (suckering) – very weird looking new growth near base of a tree
- Bark splits
- Woodpecker damage – not the usual holes in a line but more erratic flecking
- Small (3mm) D-shaped exit holes
- Serpentine larval galleries.

Keep your eyes peeled, Master Gardeners. Find an ash tree in your area and just watch it regularly. If you happen to see what you believe to be a problem, please do report it to Agrilife Extension.

Another imported pest is the Brown Marmorated Stink Bug, *Halyomorpha halys*. This one also comes from Asia and was first discovered in this country in the late 1990's in the state of Pennsylvania. It has since become a major pest devastating orchards, gardens and small acreage farms, primarily in the mid-Atlantic states. This tree-loving true bug with its piercing sucking mouth parts not only attacks crops but also has become a nuisance pest. It has a most annoying habit of moving indoors in the fall, and not in ones or twos, but in the hundreds. Enough to cover walls. And like their name implies, they really

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smell awful when squished. So far this pest has become a severe agricultural problem in at least nine states. Its presence has been confirmed in forty-three states and four Canadian provinces.

Most of us have some familiarity with stink bugs. Watching for this particular one is critical to those in the agriculture industry as well as to smaller farmers and gardeners. This is a tree-lover with a wide host range. Correct ID is not a difficult as you might expect. Dr. Merchant showed us a grouping of at least four different stink bugs, including the Brown Marmorated one. There are four markings which, taken together, distinguish it from its cousins. Under some magnification you will notice that presence of: alternating white and dark bands on the margins of its abdomen, white bands on its antennae and legs, along with smooth-edged and rounded shoulders.

This voracious eater has done so much damage to crops that a separate research group called stopbmsb.org has been set up, funded by the USDA. Their web site is worth a look, enabling you to click on a US map and gain up to date information on the level of problem in any given state. Texas has confirmed a specimen, but the numbers here are not great enough for it

to have become either an agricultural or nuisance pest. However, it is a great hitchhiker, having been found in clusters under warm hoods traveling from states with severe infestations. Travelers beware.

This is a bug you should report to AgriLife Extension or on the web site: www.eddmaps.org/bmsb.

The two definite problems in our area have both appeared in my own patch of land in Arlington. Long before I ever heard of Rose Rosette Disease I lost four of my roses to what was probably RRD. My one remaining rose appears healthy, but I'm keeping a close watch for any sign of problems.

The two tree-sized Crape Myrtles in my front yard both had scale. A fellow Master Gardener told me what it was, and courtesy of my Weekend Warrior job with Bayer Advanced I knew how to treat it. Did you know that the Crape myrtle bark scale is also an unfortunate, probably accidental, import from Asia? How did it get here? Probably from some hapless traveler who put something forbidden in his or her suitcase.

CMBS was first noticed in 2004 in Richardson, TX. At first it spread slowly through the metroplex, but in the last five years has spread more rapidly to states north and east of here. It has now been reported in eleven states, mostly in the southeast. This scale causes heavy honeydew deposits which then lead to a hideous black sooty

mold. Unfortunately, this pest is not as finicky as the EAB. CMBS makes itself at home on other plants, such as the American beautyberry, a type of pomegranate, Japanese persimmon, and a common fig.

Two years ago, when I had a problem with CMBS, I noticed that my neighbor's crape myrtles were turning black. Further investigation revealed scale on all her trees (six). Not only were her crape myrtles infested with scale and covered with black sooty mold, they also had been topped by her landscape crew. Nobody on that crew recognized the scale or mold problem. This is a sad commentary on many lawn crews across the state.

Well-documented insecticide trials have given us very good data, both about **what does not work:**

- Horticultural oil alone
- Trunk or foliar sprayed neonicotinoids
- Malathion alone
- Sevin & cypermethrin – make scale worse by eliminating natural predators like the twice stabbed lady beetle

and **what does work:**

- Early (January/February) applied dormant oil sprays
- When practical, scrub bark & main branches with brush dipped in soapy water to remove sooty mold and egg masses.

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- Soil drench applied neonicotinoids – after the leaves emerge.

This too is an insect we are asked to report to www.eddmaps.org/cmbs.

Rose Rosette Disease is something most of us have become very familiar with since DFW is a state hot spot. Tarrant MG's have done a thorough job of helping us understand and identify this devastating disease. I erroneously assumed most Texans were equally well-informed. So it was interesting to meet Master Gardeners from Houston and Austin who had not yet encountered it. A Master Gardener from Williamson County just north of Austin, reported symptoms in her roses that sounded very suspicious. That got Dr. Ong's attention and a request for plant specimens.

Though I may have begun on a light note about baseball, this topic is about serious pests causing billions of dollars of damage annually to our agricultural and landscape plantings. An impressive amount of collaborative research is ongoing for each our target problems and many others. It is both exciting and daunting to be a

part of these efforts.

When a problem feels overwhelming to me, it helps to remember a favorite quote by Carl Jung, a Swiss psychiatrist.

"If they have planted a cabbage right, they have saved the world in that spot."

It reminds me that every effort we make in the right direction counts. Master Gardeners do a lot of world saving, and I am proud to be one of them.

Postscript: To all you other baseball nuts: Yes, I am aware that baseball bats are also made of maple & now bamboo. Still, ash is a favorite of many players.



The plant sale committee was treated to a lovely thank you lunch at Debbie Rosenthal's house, hosted by Debbie and Wanda Stutsman. Oh no! Margaret Shuping got cut out of the picture! Mary Reagor was the photographer. Thanks to Debbie and Wanda for superb leadership!



From the President's Corner

As we approach June, I'm reading and reflecting on our Mission Statement...

To provide horticultural and environmental research-based information and techniques. To volunteer in area horticultural projects.

Words are inadequate to express the scope of work our members accomplish every day. In our school projects as we work with children, teach conservation, learn about the environment, plants that become a habitat for insects and animals, growing vegetables and delight as they enjoy foods they never tried, but now like. These children are our hope for a better future and you are touching lives and challenging growing minds. We have a new program that also works with young and older mentally challenged clients, it's called STAR and sponsored by Goodwill at the GreenWorks GreenHouse, next to The Water Works Learning Center. I volunteered last week. What a delightful group of young people learning about propagating plants in a

classroom and a greenhouse setting. Their supervisor told us many of these young folks are opening up and sharing as never seen before. I hope you will choose to check out this project, I guarantee you will receive much more than you give.

I know so very many events and projects need volunteers and sometimes we get involved in our own little areas, but you may be missing out on the big picture. We are 420 strong, but I still hear cries for help. There are so many ways each of us can contribute not only physically, but with things where you could be inside. Pick up a friend to join you working or bring them to a meeting. Come and do what we have always done, think, learn, inspire and share the love and passion as we reach out in the community and serve. And while your doing all of that, look around, see who's missing, invite them back or if they have passed, just remember the joy you shared.

Let folks know they're doing a wonderful job...those who educate, arrange events, take us on exciting field trips, feed us, inspire us and work beside us.

You are amazing and I am proud to be a member of this wonderful association. You can say where are we headed? I want to know, where do you want to go? I will listen

and embrace new ideas on this journey we are taking together.

*Hugs,
Judy*



Important June
Dates

Thursday, June 1
Master Gardener
Monthly meeting

Thursday, June 15
Executive and Advisory Board meeting

In the Kitchen

From Lorie Grandclair-Diaz, who got it from her friend Terri, who got it from her FW Organic Garden Club friends, Lil & Gil

Peach Liquor

10 peaches, pared and cut up

3 cups vodka

8 cloves

3/4" vanilla bean

3 allspice, whole

1 tsp. vanilla

Steep one week, shaking occasionally. Filter and strain, squeeze juice from fruit. Add sugar syrup. (6 tbs/1500 ml) Mature 4 to 6 weeks.



It's for sipping, not gulping!

Look What We Dug Up!

Digging done by Lena Goff

Does anyone remember working in this Master Gardener Office? Almost 19 years ago!

