

# *The Green Thumb*

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A Quarterly Horticulture Newsletter for  
The Nacogdoches County Master Gardeners & Other Horticulture Enthusiasts  
Winter 2008

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## **From the President**

First, I would like to congratulate all of the new Master Gardeners. This is a very good group and it will be a pleasure working with all of you. Everyone should have received Chad's letter about the meeting on January 14, 2008. There are a lot of things to talk about and some very interesting projects coming up so do not miss this very important meeting.

*Gerry Peacock*  
President

*(Note: The meeting is set for January 14<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m. in the Meeting Room at the AgriLife Extension Offices. Call Debbie Sanford – 560-7711, if you have not already RSVP's.)*

## **Chad's Chatter**

Well, it is now 2008. I hope each of you had a wonderful Christmas season and a Happy New Year. We have a lot in store for 2008. We are planning some exciting educational programs. Our new Master Gardener Course will get underway on January 10, 2008 with 6-10 new Interns. We are currently coordinating a Grafting Workshop in partnership with Dr. David Creech and the SFA Arboretum in March (*tentative date is March 18<sup>th</sup>*). Our Agency changed its name on January 1<sup>st</sup> to the Texas AgriLife Extension Service. More details about this name change will be forthcoming. I am looking forward to a great year in 2008.

*Chad Gulley*

County Extension Agent—Ag/NR

## **2008 Master Gardener Course**

As most of you know, one of the requirements to maintain your Master Gardener certification is twelve (12) hours of continuing education every two years. A great way to meet this requirement during the first 6 months of

the year and to keep up to date on topics of interest to you would be to sit in on one or more of the Master Gardener lectures. Classes start on Thursday, January 10<sup>th</sup> and typically meet on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons from 1 - 4 p.m. For a complete course schedule, contact the AgriLife Extension Service.



### **Master Gardener Plant Sale**

It may seem like a long time until the May plant sale, but Plant Sale Coordinators Tom and Dorothy Shone know that time will fly if you do not start getting your plants ready NOW. Tom says, "Now is a great time to start any hardwood cuttings, house plant cuttings and to really start putting effort into growing really fine plants for the sale. Exotics are not important (*we'll leave that to the Arboretum*), but common varieties are. Some really nice houseplants, especially large hangers would be great sellers. All plant material should be prepared and presented in a professional manner – pruned, shaped, weed free – that will depict the pride of the Master Gardener program."

*Tom and Dorothy Shone*

Plant Sale Coordinators

*(If you have any specific questions about preparing for the plant sale, feel free to contact The Shones - 462-7717.)*

### **Pot Vigilantes Needed**

Speaking of the plant sale, Dr. Carroll Gregory reports that a chance remark during the 2007 tour of the Blueberry Farm resulted in about 300 one-gallon pots being donated to the

Master Gardeners. If you are out and about and notice a new landscape being installed or know of any neighbors with extra 1 to 2 gallon pots that need a home, please collect them. And if storage space is at a premium around your home, Dr. Gregory will gladly store them at his place. (*Just contact him – 568-0863, if you need help.*)

### **Lunch'N'Learn**

Are you already missing those tasty treats and educational tidbits that are offered during the summer and fall Lunch'N'Learn sessions? As you may know, during the time of the Master Gardener course, Lunch'N'Learn goes on hiatus. But, don't worry, the new Lunch'N'Learn Coordinators, Penny Horne and Gay Thompson are already hard at work planning for the next sessions. Through their efforts and the ground work already laid by Carroll Gregory, the Lunch'N'Learn series will resume in June. Watch for more details as time draws closer. And feel free to pass along any suggestions for speakers or programs to Penny or Gay.



### **Agent's Advice**

Ag Agent Crispin Skinner offers the following information on Fire Ant Control.

When deciding on fire ant baits, there are several issues that need to be determined in order to use the correct bait. Primarily, the question becomes "do you want immediate action (death to the ants) or a more long term solution?" Texas A&M has done extensive research into the control and reduction of fire ant populations in our state. On their website at [www.fireant.tamu.edu/broadcastbait](http://www.fireant.tamu.edu/broadcastbait) you can find a long list of the Latest and

Greatest Fire Ant Baits. It is also anticipated that a list of even newer baits will be published this spring. Most of the newer products will be available in local home and garden centers, feed stores, etc. in the near future. The following products are currently available and are suitable for use as listed below.

#### For Agricultural Use

Extinguish  
Amdro Pro  
Extinguish + Amfro Pro Hopper Blend  
Esteem/Distance

#### Use in Non-Food Producing Land

Extinguish Plus  
Logic/Award  
Products with Conserve  
Ascend/Varsity/Clinch  
Firestar/Ceasefire  
Amdro Yard Treatment  
Advion  
Spectracide Once & Done

#### Contact Insecticides

Over'N'Out/TopChoice  
Sevin XLR Plus  
Other mound treatments (mostly pyrethroids)  
Other broadcast treatments

According to Mr. Skinner, now is the time to begin thinking about any and all problems that you faced in and around your gardens last year. Odds are that those same problems will raise their ugly heads again this year. So be aware and be prepared!

## **Dollars and Cents**

A couple of accounting notes:  
The Master Gardener fiscal year is January through December, so it is time for annual dues. Dues are \$12/year and are due in January. According to local treasurer, Sue Butts, \$10's of each dues payment stays here with our Master Gardener Club. The remaining \$2 goes to the Texas Master Gardener Association. If paying by check, please

make it out to Nacogdoches County Master Gardener Association and send or deliver to Sue Butts. Sue will be at the meeting on January 14<sup>th</sup> or you can mail your dues to Sue Butts at 3918 Red Oak, Nacogdoches, TX 75961.

Also, Master Gardener Bill Teague has purchased some official Texas Master Gardener patches, suitable for shirts, jackets, etc. Patches are for sale at \$2.00 each with the profits from the sale going back to our Master Gardener program. If you would like a patch or two, please contact Bill Teague at 559-9007 or see him at the meeting on the 14<sup>th</sup>.



## **Is it a Pest or a Friend?**

Have you noticed any of those colorful little bugs with spots on their backs around your home? If you live in a wooded area or have light colored walls and ceilings, then you may be seeing the somewhat annual resurgence of the Asian Multicolored Ladybeetle. Light-colored homes, especially located on hillsides in forested areas are like 'homing beacons' to these beneficial insects.

The Asian multicolored ladybeetle (*Harmonia axyridis*) was introduced to our country in the early 1900's to control certain insect pests, but sizable populations of these bugs were not noticed until the late 1980's. By this time, it is unclear if their presence was a result of the intentional introduction around 1916 or from

accidental transport on imported nursery products.

While it is particularly effective in controlling aphids in pecan orchards, this beetle is an unwelcome guest for most homeowners. The most effective method of removal is sweeping and vacuuming. The use of insecticide is unnecessary. And squashing the little critters is not advised. When mashed they exhibit reflex bleeding, which can leave a yellow stain on walls, drapes and carpets.

The best form of prevention is to insure that the spaces around windows and doors are airtight, as the beetle will often over winter within the wall spaces of homes, coming out in search of food as the days warm up. So adequate caulking is a must, if you really want to keep them at bay.

For more information on the Asian multicolored ladybeetle try [www.tamu.edu/is/br/lbeetle/index](http://www.tamu.edu/is/br/lbeetle/index).



## **Gardener's Activity Checklist For January and February**

It may seem like the dead of winter, but there are many things to do in order to be one step ahead once those balmy spring days arrive to stay. January and February are the perfect months for such activities as:

- Starting vegetable seeds indoors. The warm season vegetable transplants need to be at least 6 weeks old to insure their hardiness when transplanted

- February is the last call for cole crops and root vegetables, as summer comes soon in Texas and these cool-season crops need time to grow and be harvested before the heat gets here.
- January is the prime time to plant woody ornamentals. Also, if you need to move any of these, best do it immediately. They need time to get established before it gets hot.
- February is rose month, a time for planting new bushes and pruning your existing ones.
- Lawns may be dormant or "on hold", but ground covers such as liriopse and Mondo grass will benefit from a good trimming as will those cast iron plants that are showing their wear from last summer's heat and this winter's stress.

Other timely tips for January and February include caring for those potted plants received as gifts over the holidays. Maintain moderate soil moisture. More houseplants die from over watering than from drought! The decorative foil or other plastic containers around the pot tend to hold water, so remove the pot from this material before watering it. Allow the water to drain from the pot for a while before returning it to the decorative wrapping.

Now is the perfect time clean those garden tools. Sharpen hoes and shovels, removing any rust spots with a wire brush. Then apply a thin coat of oil

or rust preventative on the blades. Also a quick sanding of the wooden handles to remove burrs and potential splinters followed by a light application of linseed oil will have them ready to go when spring arrives.

Grass will be turning green soon and neighbors may be cleaning up their property and hauling bags of leaves to the curbside. This is a great source of extra leaf material for composting and mulching during the summer months.

Finally, that lawnmower has sat for a while now. Get a head start on mowing season by having your mower serviced now. At least get those blades sharpened. And a full tune-up is the best insurance that your mower will perform to your standards in the coming months.

For more information on the activity checklist, check out [www.texasgardener.com](http://www.texasgardener.com)

## Spring Planting Guide

There is an excellent spring planting guide for vegetables in the January/February issue of Texas Gardener. It breaks out the number of seeds to plant/50 feet of garden; planting depths; distance between rows and plants and crop heights, all divided according to planting zones.

Other interesting articles in that issue includes an in depth story about Coreopsis and a nice piece on palms.

## From the Editor

Also, in the Jan/Feb issue of Texas Gardener is a great article by our friend Greg Grant on children's gardens. Remember the first time you went into the garden with a favored adult? Maybe it was a parent or a teacher or a grandparent who showed you the magic and wonder of growing flowers, fruits and vegetables. Now you too can be that same favored adult to another child with wondering eyes and a mind like a

sponge. So stop and share, a little encouragement from you just might be the start of the next Greg Grant or David Creech or the next generation of Master Gardeners.

If you are looking for other sources of gardening information, Texas Gardener is a bi-monthly magazine by and for Texas gardeners. They also have a weekly email newsletter available at no charge. For more information about the magazine and the newsletter, go to [www.texasgardener.com](http://www.texasgardener.com)

This newsletter is for and about Master Gardeners. If you have stories you would like to have included or topics you would like to see in print, please let me know. We hope to publish The Green Thumb on a quarterly basis with issues coming out around the first week of January, April, July and October. So, until next time, here's hoping your garden grows well.

*Lynn Teague*

Editor

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## 2007 New Master Gardeners

Back Row, left to right:

Chad Gulley, CEA—Ag.NR, Bill Teague, Tom Shone, Dorothy Shone, and James Lynch.

Front Row, left to right:

Lynn Teague, Ozeda Lynch, and Sylvia St. Andry.



