

# Sharecropper



## Tarrant County Master Gardener Association



### FEBRUARY 2010 IN THIS ISSUE

The Vital Humus	1
MGs in Action	2
2009 Intern Graduation	3
President's Message	4
Leadership	4
TCMGA Meeting Minutes	5
TCMGA Announcements	6-7
Birthdays	7
Directory Updates	7
February 2010 Calendar	8
Upcoming Events	9
Master Gardener Highlight	10
Project Highlight	11
Texas Superstar Feature	12-13
Volunteer Opportunities	15
March/April Events	Back

#### ATTENTION

The March 4 TCMGA meeting  
has been moved to Thursday,  
March 11.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

### The Vital Humus: Do You Have Enough?

By Steve Chaney CEA - Horticulture



Manure, dried grass, fallen leaves, and other animal and plant refuse are the original sources of food for all plants, supplying the same macro- and micro-nutrients that modern chemical fertilizers attempt to deliver. These natural sources of plant foods offer their elements through a slow process of decay and decomposition, yielding nitrogen fertilizer along the way and *humus*, a partially decayed spongy vegetable matter, as an end result. It is this last substance, the humus, that functions like the chelated fertilizers, by making plant foods available in otherwise infertile alkaline soils. Moreover, humus and the population of soil organisms it supports are the agents which over time convert sterile rock into life-supporting soil. By its very definition a *fertile soil* is a soil with an abundant presence of this partially decayed organic residue.

Humus has another role in soils, however, that exceeds in importance even its value as a long-term fertilizer. This crumbly brown fresh-smelling substance familiar as the litter on the forest floor or as the end product of the gardeners compost pile acts like chemical glue on the tiny particles of clay. A sort of organic slime binds the clay minerals together into larger crumbs of soil, a process that vastly increases the availability of soil moisture and essential plant foods. With an abundant supply of humus even heavy alkaline clays remain open and friable, and thus are able to absorb erratic rains and feed them back to plants as needed. Pore space in the soil remains large and the air required by most plant roots to metabolize and absorb soil nutrients is readily available.



Take away the humus, however, and everything goes wrong. The clay particles line up shoulder to shoulder, admitting neither air

(Continued on page 14)

# Master Gardener's In Action



**Fruit Tree Class  
(left /above)  
&  
Bulb Class  
(below)**

Photos by Nancy Curl



# 2009 Intern Graduation



*Congratulations!!*

*Class of 2009  
has  
graduated!*



# President's Message

## February Newsletter



As we start our new year, we've diligently worked to establish new members to the 2010 Committees and Advisory Board.

Below is a list of those who have stepped up to the plate to serve in leadership positions and will serve on the Advisory Board:

### 2010 COMMITTEES/ADVISORY BOARD

Acknowledgements - Pat Lovejoy  
 Activities - Pam Braak  
 Audit - Dolores Geisel  
 Awards - Wendi Carlucci  
 Bulletin Board - Joan Schmidt  
 Eblast - Dorothy Launius  
 Garden Conservancy/Open Days - Ginger Bason  
 Garden Resource - Dave Wilson  
 Historian - Donna Turner  
 Home and Garden Shows - Judy Sargent  
 Hospitality - Natalie Wistrand  
 Immediate Past President - Tammy Edwards  
 Intern Advisor - Judy Ratzlaff  
 Members at Large - Sally Harris & Steve Purdy  
 Membership - Carl Trehus  
 Newsletter - Jackie Heidinger  
 Nominating - Sharon Chastain  
 Parliamentarian - Taddie Hamilton  
 Photography - Derald Freeman  
 Projects - Judy Ratzlaff  
 Raffle - Rhett Cervantes  
 Scholarship - Devanie Fergus  
 Speakers Bureau - Lucurtis Williams  
 Sunshine - Doris Hill  
 State Awards - Eleanor Tuck  
 State Delegates - Tammy Edwards & Susan Stanek  
 State Alternates - JoAnn Hahn & Nancy Curl  
 Website - Kate Kilmurray

When you see one of these folks, give an affirmation of thanks for serving. Sometimes, leadership in a volunteer organization can be more challenging than a paid position. Why do they do it? Because they love this association.

My sincere thanks to all of you who have stepped up to serve this year!

- Susan Stanek, President

## LEADERSHIP

President: Susan Stanek  
 slstane@verizon.net

1<sup>st</sup> VPresident: Nancy Curl  
 nl\_curl@yahoo.com

2<sup>nd</sup> VPresident: Bill Vandever  
 bvandever@sbcglobal.net

Secretary: Sue Ellen Schlitzer  
 s.schlitzer@sbcglobal.net

Treasurer: Pat Higgins  
 ragdollpatb@sbcglobal.net

Newsletter Editor: Jackie Heidinger  
 rheidinger@tx.rr.com

Website: Kate Kilmurray  
 webmaster@tcmga.org

Activities: Pam Braak  
 p.braak@verizon.net

Birthdays/Sunshine: Doris Hill  
 artanddorishill@charter.net

Membership: Carl Trehus  
 c.trehus@gte.net

Hospitality: Natalie Wistrand  
 nattie57@yahoo.com

Bulletin Board: Joan Schmidt

Historian: Donna Turner  
 ddtturner@flash.net

Acknowledgements: Pat Lovejoy  
 patlovejoy@att.net

Garden Resource: Dave Wilson  
 ldwilson98@yahoo.com

Photo/Publicity: Derald Freeman  
 grgreatideas@sbcglobal.net

Raffle: Rhett Cervantes  
 r2b2cervantes@yahoo.com

Advisor: Steve Chaney  
 s-chaney@tamu.edu

# TCMGA Meeting Minutes

## January 7, 2010

The Program was "I Know Trees," presented by Kerry Kellam

The Business Meeting of the TCMGA was called to order on January 7, 2010 by President Susan Stanek at 11:00 a.m. with 74 certified members in attendance. The Secretary certified a quorum of voting members in attendance.

The minutes of the December, 2009, meeting were approved as published in the Sharecropper.

Carl Trehus presented the Treasurer's report as of December 31, 2009:

Checking account	\$ 929.30
Money Market	<u>\$17,260.79</u>
Total assets	\$18,190.09

Carl has completed the annual year-end report and it is available on file for anyone who would like to see it.

### COMMITTEE REPORTS

Ginger Bason reported a check was received from Garden Conservancy for \$2,034.72. The attendance for 2009 was higher than in the previous two tours. A request was made for members to recommend gardens for the 2011 tour.

Rhett Cervantes reported on the distribution of \$1,939.72 from the 2009 Raffle funds to the projects for 2010:

Alice Carlson	\$ 165.70
Fitzgerald Elementary	\$ 180.00
FWBG Children's Garden	\$ 110.00
FWBG Perennial Garden	\$ 100.00
FWBG Trial Garden	\$ 100.00
Heritage Elementary	\$ 250.00
Hulen Library,	\$ 79.02
John Peter Smith	\$ 80.00
SW Sub courthouse	\$ 275.00
Teen Challenge	\$ 200.00
Union Gospel Mission	<u>\$ 400.00</u>

Total \$ 1,939.72

### NEW BUSINESS

Pat Higgins, Treasurer, presented the 2010 budget.

Joann Hahn moved to reduce awards from \$400 to \$100 with only certificates being given. The \$300 budget reduction would be unbudgeted as an additional contingency. The motion was seconded. In a show of hands, 45 members voted for the motion and 13 members voted against the motion. The motion carried.

Wendi Carlucci moved to reduce the 2010 budget for the Holiday Party door prizes from \$200 to \$0. The \$200 budget reduction would be as unbudgeted as an additional contingency. The motion was seconded. In a show of hands, 42 members voted for the motion and sixteen members voted against the motion. The motion carried.

President Stanek called for a vote on the budget. The motion was seconded by Rita Hottel. The motion was carried with 61 voting in favor of the budget. There were no votes against the budget.

Steve Chaney announced that all Master Gardener Associations in Texas will become part of a state charter. He will e-mail further information to the membership.

### ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Natalie Wistrand announced that Hospitality Committee needs volunteers.

Wendi Carlucci is selling tickets for, "An Evening with Felder Rushing" to be held on January 28<sup>th</sup>. Tickets are \$10.

February will be our traditional meeting to welcome new interns at a hot dog luncheon. Hot dogs for members will be \$1.00 each.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:00 p.m.

Sue Ellen Schlitzer  
Secretary

Susan Stanek reported a new Web site is being developed by Kate Kilmurray that will be up soon.

## TCMGA Announcements/General Information

### February 4th Speaker

Pam Smith, Parks Landscape Mgr, City of Farmers Branch



#### Everything is Coming Up Roses!

While roses have greeted visitors to Farmers Branch for many years as they travel Marsh Lane, there has been a major transformation with the planting of the flowing shrub throughout the City. The City is host to the National EarthKind Trial Rose Garden. This experimental garden is the largest environmental horticultural research project known in the country. The Rose Gardens of Farmers Branch also include an All America Rose Selection test garden, an All America Rose Selection Display Garden, an American Rose Society Award of Excellence test garden and an EarthKind Demonstration Garden. There is a rose for every taste and interest.

The presentation will share the story of where we have been, where we are and where the vision might take us. Our Speaker for the February meeting, Pam Smith, Parks Landscape Manager Parks and Recreation for the City of Farmers Branch, has been in the green industry since she was 15....over 35 years. She earned her BS in Floriculture from Texas A&M 1979 and MS in Horticulture from Texas Tech 2005.



She worked for 16 years as the Horticulturist for Brookhaven Country Club and has been with the city of Farmers Branch for 14 years where she serves as the Parks Landscape Manager and best of all...she will become a Grandmother in June!!

Nancy Curl  
1st VPresident

### Raffle Committee Update

It's Better to Give than to.....



As always it appears that Master Gardeners are more interested in giving than receiving. So in keeping with this tradition, while raising monies for our various projects, I solicit your assistance in supporting the Raffle Committee. Let's all clean out those closets, garages, attics, basements and storage sheds and donate all those "unwanted and no longer used items". This is a simple way to not only support the projects but to end up with a less cluttered, neater and cleaner house.

Rhett Cervantes  
Raffle Committee Chair

**ATTENTION ATTENTION**

The March 4 TCMGA meeting has been moved to Thursday, March 11.

**MARK YOUR CALENDAR!**

Below are links in the electronic version.

**Our local TCMGA website**  
<http://www.tcmga.org/>

**State MG Website and TMG news:**  
<http://www.texasmastergardeners.com>

**State Newsletter:**  
<http://www.tmgnewsletter.org>

**Our RC Demo Garden Website:**  
<http://www.localharvest.org/member/M27123>

## TCMGA Announcements/General Information (cont'd)

### American Citizenship!!



Congratulations to Fatima and Walter Gameiro for attaining their American citizenship in December! After much paperwork and effort, they have finally completed their citizenship qualifications. They have stated it was a wonderful Christmas Gift and said they are now very proud American Citizens. Please take a moment to congratulate Fatima and welcome her to America!

### TCMGA Website - New Year, New Website!

Happy New Year everyone! I hope you are looking forward to 2010 as much as I am. Speaking of things to look forward to, your website committee would like to let you know that you can look forward to a brand new and improved website in 2010. We're currently putting some finishing touches on it and hope to have it rolled out to you in the next couple of weeks, so keep your eyes open.

In the meantime, all the best - Your Webmaster

### Take the EARTH-KIND Challenge!



Is your landscape contributing to a healthy and sustainable environment?

There's one way to find out - take the Earth-Kind Challenge. It's easy. Just answer a series of on-line questions about the cultural principles and practices used in maintaining your landscape. The higher the score, the more you are doing to help preserve and protect the environment in which we live. The Earth-Kind Challenge link is <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/EARTHKIND/>



### February Birthdays

- 1 Charlie Shiner, Kay Gunn,
- 4 M.J. Martinez, Phyllis White
- 5 Sher Dunaway
- 11 Leonora Alvarez del Castillo, Sherry Flowers, Joyce Wuetig
- 12 Greta Beckler, Louise Kelly-Bellew
- 13 Ann Conrad
- 14 Ileana Craft, Sue Ellen Schlitzer
- 15 Beatrice Stevenson
- 16 Peg Surber
- 17 Ed Vaughan
- 20 Terri Mann
- 25 Evaline Woodrey
- 26 Molly Hollar
- 27 Edith Pewitt, Judi Martin
- 29 Toni Hernandez

If your birthday is this month and you don't see it. please contact Doris Hill, (817) 337-8484 or email [artanddorishill@charter.net](mailto:artanddorishill@charter.net).

### Directory Updates

Please note the following updates in your membership directory:

Cullen, Susan – new e-mail address is [culleniv@verizon.net](mailto:culleniv@verizon.net)

Wistrand, Natalie – new e-mail address [stonecropoil@yahoo.com](mailto:stonecropoil@yahoo.com)

As a reminder, Diane Carlyse replaces Raelene Darling as Head Timekeeper.

Report any changes or corrections to Carl Trehus at [c.trehus@gte.net](mailto:c.trehus@gte.net) or 817-481-3435.

## February 2010 Calendar

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	<b>1</b> 8:30a Alice Carlson 9a Union Gospel	<b>2</b> 9a Randall Mill PK Greenhouse 8:30a BG Trial 8:30a CG Veggie  <i>Intern Class:            Plant Pathology</i>	<b>3</b> 9a Veterans Park 9a Teen Challenge 9a BG Perennial 9a BG Children's 9:30a Thistle Hill 3:15p Fitzgerald	<b>4</b> <b>10a TCMGA MEETING</b>  8:30a Alice Carlson  <i>Intern Class:            Pruning</i>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b> 9a Wildscape Class: - "Bugs What Would We Do Without Them"? By E. Tuck
<b>7</b>	<b>8</b> 8:30a Alice Carlson 9a Union Gospel	<b>9</b> 8a Liberty Gdn. 9a Randall Mill PK Greenhouse 8:30a BG Trial 8:30a CG Veggie  <i>Intern Class:            Field Trip</i>	<b>10</b> 9a Veterans Park 9a Teen Challenge 9a BG Perennial 9a BG Children's 3:15p Fitzgerald  Brit Brown Bag Botany	<b>11</b> 8:30a Alice Carlson   <i>Intern Class: Entomology</i>	<b>12</b> 8:30a CG Veggie 8:30a JPS	<b>13</b> 9am SW Crthse 9am Compost Demo
<b>14</b> 	<b>15</b> 8:30a Alice Carlson 9a Union Gospel 2:45p Heritage Elm.	<b>16</b> 9a Randoll Mill Pk Greenhouse 8a Liberty Garden 8:30a BG Trial 8:30a CG Veggie  <i>Intern Class:            Landscape, Xeriscape, Container</i>	<b>17</b> 9a Veterans Park 9a Teen Challenge 9a BG Perennial 9a BG Children's 9a FW Library 9:30a Thistle Hill 3:15p Fitzgerald	<b>18</b> 8:30a Alice Carlson   <i>Intern Class: Turf</i>	<b>19</b> 8:30a CG Veggie	<b>20</b>
<b>21</b>	<b>22</b> 8:30a Alice Carlson 9a Union Gospel	<b>23</b> 9a Randoll Mill Pk Greenhouse 8:30a BG Trial 8:30a CG Veggie  <i>Intern Class            Plant Propagation</i>	<b>24</b> 9a Veterans Park 9a Teen Challenge 9a BG Perennial 9am SW Crthse 9a BG Children's 3:15p Fitzgerald	<b>25</b> 8:30a Alice Carlson   <i>Intern Class:            Field Trip</i>	<b>26</b> 8:30a CG Veggie 8:30a JPS	<b>27</b>
<b>28</b>	<b>March/April Events can be found on the last page(16)!</b>					



## 2010 Up-Coming Events

### Caladium Bulb Sale—February 4th

At the February 4th Master Gardener meeting we will be taking orders for Caladium Bulbs to be delivered at the April MG meeting. The same four varieties that were offered last year will be available for order. These varieties are: Candidum Classic White, White Queen, Sunrise and Carolyn Whorton.

The bulbs will be #1 variety and will be purchased from the same source that we used in 2008. The performance last year of all varieties was excellent.

The price per bulb will be 60 cents this year. No limit on quantities per order. Make sure you place your order at the February meeting. Orders cannot be accepted after that meeting. Your complete order must be paid for by cash or check at the time of ordering.

If you have any questions, call Bill Vandever at 817-244-1580.

Bill Vandever, 2nd VPresident

Candidum Classic White

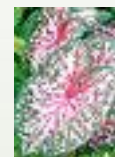


Classic White



White Queen

Carolyn Whorton



### Put Saturday, April 17 on your Calendar! Master Gardeners 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Plant Sale at Community Garden!



We hope you'll help just like you did last year to make this year's sale even better than last year's. Again, proceeds will be shared by the Community Garden and all the other projects of the TCMGA.

We are adding a few new things – Pat Baughman will demonstrate planting pots with companion plants - and we have other ideas to flesh out! We will again have Ginger Bason at the Ask a Master Gardener table and ET passing out MG information. We will continue to sell perennials, grasses, trees, herbs, vegetables and succulents. Please let me know if there are plants we did not sell that you think we should, or if there are things we sold you think we should forget! Yes, no begonias this year!!!

We also need your Heritage Plants. Please think of us when you thin your cannas, iris, lirioppe, amaryllis, and any other plants you are willing to share. Label the color of your cannas and iris and plan to have your Heritage Plants in 4" pots or even gallons and labeled. If you propagate cuttings or seeds and have more than you need, we will be glad to take them in 4" pots or larger. We do need them to be fully rooted so start early! Claire Alford is chairing the Heritage Plants section and would love to know what plants you are willing to share so we don't duplicate plants as we purchase the wholesale ones.

We will need lots of help setting up on Thursday and Friday and selling on Saturday. The Garden is so large and we have plants all over, we will need everyone helping this year. What makes the sale fun, is getting to know so many people through working on a project that benefits us all. We will begin to sign up volunteers in March.

Another way to participate is to help with the publicity. We will send the flyer online so you can distribute them to your friends and family. If you know of places we need to put flyers, let me know.

Again, thanks for all your help last year. Our sale was a success because everyone helped set up, sell on Saturday, bought plants, and talked it up with friends. Thanks for all you all do for the Tarrant County Master Gardeners!

Taddie Hamilton

## Master Gardener Highlight: Mary McCoy



**Mary McCoy**  
2009 Educator  
of the Year

I often think of what my Granddad taught me while visiting him at his farm. He and I would often take a walk or a tractor ride to check on his crops. He was always mindful of the progress in the growth of the plants. Was there enough water, sunshine, or manure for fertilizer? He would talk about what he planted, and when the seeds would break through with seedlings.

I loved the smell of his farm, and the harvest that fed his large family. His vegetables were delicious, with corn, carrots and tomatoes being some of my favorites. He would say, "Put good food in your body and your body will be good." I think he was a wise man.

When I became a Master Gardener I wanted to learn to be able to identify plants for landscaping around my house, so I worked at the Wildscape. After a while I wanted to learn more about vegetable gardening so I began volunteering at the Children's Garden. It was a wonderful place to learn vegetable gardening and I enjoyed it very much. Vegetables and school kids are two of my favorite things that I like to be around.

We have students from schools come to the Children's Garden in the Botanic Gardens. We work with the students using the Jr. Master Gardening Program. The beauty of the Jr. Master Gardeners Program is that the activities are matched up with state standards; this enables the students to be successful with the state standards in science, reading and writing.

I believe the Children's Garden is making a big difference in these student's lives, and not just on test scores. Our volunteers have big hearts. They see the same students each time they come and we get to know them a little bit better each time. We are investing in them and they can count on us.

We grow vegetables and herbs until fully grown and harvested. We manage eight beds measuring 15' long and 4' wide, 2 triangle beds measuring 12

square feet, and 2 square beds 6' x6'. Our total vegetable and herb planting is 650 sq. feet

I believe the best way for us to grow vegetables is by seed and occasionally by transplants, such as garlic, potatoes and onions.

We donate all our produce to the Union Gospel Mission. As the students harvest vegetables for the less fortunate, they understand that they can make a difference for someone that day.

Each time the students visit us we explore a different part of the Botanic Gardens. We consider this a privilege for them and for us. We realize what a wonderful place the Botanic Gardens are, and we want to pass along the awe, and the diverse amount of botanicals, insects, birds and even an occasional reptile. Our thinking is perhaps someday they will come with their families and lead them on their own guided tour.

Our Children's Garden area has a chain link fence that is locked when we are not there, so it is easy for viewing anytime.

At the end of school we have completed enough lessons that the students have earned a beautiful certificate with their name on it from Texas A&M University. We celebrate with a trip to the Japanese Gardens.

If you have a love for vegetable gardening and working with future vegetable gardeners, I would like to encourage you to join us. Bring your tools and come share the fun on Wednesdays, 9:00-12:00. You will be glad you did.

Looking forward to seeing you.

Mary McCoy  
BT Children's Garden Project Chair

**It is the dedicated Master Gardeners, such as Mary, who inspire us all and make this organization the outstanding chapter it is. Watch for future profiles of our Master Gardener of the month in coming months.**

## Project Highlight: CASA House



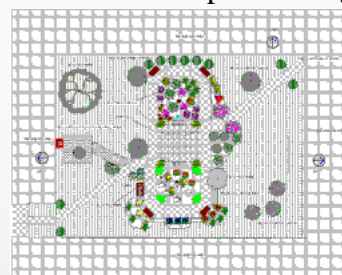
Last year, the Tarrant County Master Gardener Association was contacted by the Catholic Charities board and staff to design and install a garden for the Community and Shelter Assistance (CASA) House residents. One of the many services Catholic Charities Inc. offers is to provide low income housing for individuals over the age of 62 and disabled adults over 18 years of age. The CASA House is a housing facility provided by Catholic Charities for these individuals in Tarrant County. Catholic Charities and the CASA House provide non-denominational services. CASA House is located at 3201 Sondra Drive, just north of Camp Bowie between University and Bailey Avenue.

The area for the garden is approximately a quarter of an acre contained in the center of a 5 story housing facility. We immediately began gathering information regarding the needs of the residents. Residents and board members had a part in the plan which was to provide a peaceful, serene environment where residents and their guests can sit and enjoy the birds, butterflies and flowering shrubs. The residents wanted an area for outdoor entertainment as well as an outdoor cooking area. It was agreed by all involved that native plants be used as much as possible.

Considering these needs, a plan for the new garden was developed and presented to the Catholic Charities and CASA House staff and residents in early August. The CASA residents were very enthusiastic and excited about being involved in the implementation and maintenance of the new garden. Within the plan we included garden beds as well as raised beds for handicapped residents. There will be areas for herbs and vegetables, as well as flowers. There is a small water feature planned, a central covered patio with electrical lighting, outdoor fans and seating areas on the patio as well as throughout the garden area. Also included in the design concept is a barbecue area with tables and chairs.

As far as plant selection for the garden, we certainly hope to get assistance from Master Gardener's who volunteer on the project. In addition, we hope to solicit a bit of assistance from Barbara at Herrmann's Nursery.

Needless to say, the Catholic Charities board and the CASA House residents enthusiastically accepted the garden design and immediately began the process of making needed improvements to the irrigation system and hardscape. Currently a new handicap accessible door and ramp are being designed, in conjunction with the Fort Worth Fire Department, HUD and the City of Fort Worth Housing Authority.



The next step is to meet January 20<sup>th</sup> with Catholic Charities and CASA House staff to formulate a time line and plan to start the garden in the early spring. Additionally, we just received notice that HUD has approved some restricted funds for the necessary irrigation and concrete pads. This is great news, as these are the first steps for the garden!

Suffice it to say, this is going to be a wonderful project for TCMGA. In order to implement the garden, we need to utilize and harness all the experience and knowledge from our members. We are tentatively planning on Thursday and Friday work days. We will send out email announcements once we are ready to break ground. The CASA House staff and residents will maintain the garden once completed. Continued involvement with the garden then focuses on providing educational classes and speaking engagements to the residents.

We hope this update has demonstrated how excited we are to provide this service to our community and hope the TCMGA members will be as excited as we are about the project and want to be a part of the CASA House team! The Casa House residents are so looking forward to gardening with us!



Judy Ratzlaff and Rocky Deutscher  
CASA House Project Leaders



# Texas Superstar Feature: Timely Tips on Starting Seedlings at Home

By E. E. Janne, *Extension Landscape Horticulturist (deceased)*, and Dr. R. E. Roberts, *Vegetable Specialist (retired)*,  
Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas



Starting transplants from seeds in your home is a good way to get a head start on the growing season. At least 4 to 8 weeks can be cut from the time required between planting and harvesting or of getting effective landscape color by setting vigorous transplants rather than seeds into the garden.

Growing your own plants may be the only way to obtain a new or special variety you want. Commercial plant growers cannot be expected to grow all of the hundreds of varieties offered by seed houses. And, plant nurseries are often reluctant to offer varieties which have not been given widespread publicity.

## Growing Media

Use of a loose, fertile, disease-free soil mix is a basic key to success. To prepare a mix of this type combine by volume one part sandy loam with one part sand or vermiculite plus one part Michigan or Canadian sphagnum peat. Anyone having clay loam should use one part soil to two parts sand or vermiculite and one part peat.

The mix must be pasteurized to kill harmful fungi, bacteria, weed seeds and nematodes which it may contain. This is easily done by placing the soil mix in a shallow metal pan, covering the pan tightly with aluminum foil and heating the soil to 160° in an oven. Keep the soil at this temperature for at least 1 hour or until a potato imbedded in the soil is baked. After cooling, the soil is ready for planting.

Premixed, soilless material can be bought in nurseries and stores. Soilless mixes are more expensive than the home mix but can be used

right from the bag without pasteurization. These mixes are economical when used carefully. The following soilless mix can be prepared at home if the ingredients are available in a local nursery or through a catalog.

- ü 1/2 bushel horticultural perlite, vermiculite, calcined clay, or humus
- ü 1/2 bushel coarse sphagnum peat moss or shredded pine bark
- ü 3 ounces 20 percent superphosphate
- ü 6 ounces dolomitic limestone or ground limestone
- ü 3 ounces complete fertilizer as 8-8-8 or 12-12-12

This "peatlite" mix is excellent for starting seeds and growing seedlings to transplant size.

The peat mixes with the other ingredients more easily if it is moist - not soaking wet. The night before, spread the dry peat out and sprinkle with just enough water to dampen it, or dampen in the bag. Follow these steps in mixing the ingredients:

1. Pour the dampened peat moss or shredded pine bark and perlite or vermiculite in a rough pile. Sprinkle the fertilizer over the top.
2. Shoveling from the base of the pile, make a second cone-shaped pile by pouring each shovelful directly on top so ingredients dribble down the sides.
3. Shovel from the second pile and repeat the cone-shaped pile as before.
4. Repeat the process again. It should now be well mixed. Store the mix in clean plastic bags or plastic cans to keep it moist and clean.

## Containers

Any shallow wood, metal or plastic container at least 3 inches deep makes a suitable plant growing box. Milk cartons, foam cups, peat pots, and egg cartons make nice individual plant containers. Punch holes in the bottom of any carton, cup or pan to allow water to drain from the soil.

Sow seeds in rows 2 inches apart in a box of soil. If seedlings touch, remove some and transplant to give them more room to grow. If enough growing space is available, plant seeds directly into individual pots thereby eliminating the initial transplanting.



Regardless of the starting method, gardeners should allow proper space for each plant to develop. Crowded seedlings become stretched and unhealthy.

### Seedings

Soil temperature is important. Cool soil retards germination. Warm the soil to about 75° if possible until seedlings have emerged above the soil surface. Provide an air temperature of 70° to 75° during the day and night temperature of at least 60° to 65°.

Cover the seed only enough to make it disappear from view [rule of thumb: 2X their diameter]. The seed packet usually gives correct planting depth. After seeding, water the soil gently but thoroughly until water drains out the bottom of the container, being careful not to wash seeds away. Place containers in plastic bags or cover the soil surface with plastic film until the first sign of seeding emergence. Then remove the plastic cover immediately and be sure the container gets maximum exposure to light. Most seeds do not require light to germinate, but seedlings need full exposure to light as soon as they emerge.

### Transplanting

Begin transplanting when the first true leaves are forming, usually 2 to 3 weeks after sowing. Set the seedling at the same level it was in the seedling flat. When firming the soil avoid injuring tender stems.

Immediately after transplanting, water each seedling container thoroughly. Wilting at this point can damage young plants severely. To prevent excessive wilting, shade plants from strong sunlight for 2 or 3 days after transplanting.

### Spacing

Frequently, plant quality suffers from crowding too many plants into a small area. Crowded seedlings become weak and spindly and are more susceptible to disease. Wider spacing or larger containers permit stronger growth. As a rule of thumb, to produce high quality plants, space them so that the leaves of one plant do not touch those of another.

### Watering

Add water to soilless media only when moisture can no longer be squeezed out by pinching the medium between the thumb and forefinger. Water soil only when it no longer feels moist when rubbed between the fingers. Apply enough water at each irrigation so that some drips out of the drain holes in the bottom of the container. Be sure the water is passing through the rootzone—not just down the inside wall of the container.

### Fertilizing

After seedling emergence and during early development, strong, rapid plant growth can be assured by watering the soil with a carefully prepared solution of a soluble fertilizer which is specifically designed for plant production. Prepare the solution exactly as prescribed on the label. Apply the solution as an irrigation when water is needed. Apply enough to allow some to flow out the drain.

**Additional information on starting seedlings can be found on the link below:**

<http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/extension/ornamentals/seedlings/seedlings.html>

(Continued from page 1)

nor water. Heavy spring rains puddle on the surface and run off as if the earth were an asphalt roadway. Plants struggle in the ensuing summer's drought, and leaves yellow as oxygen-starved roots fail to deliver the vital elements to the growing plants. The dying soil shrivels and contracts, forming deep cracks as it dries into lifeless adobe.

Whether a gardener chooses to use chemical fertilizers or relies on natural manures and composts, the critical message of these researchers is that calcareous soils must be fed, and fed often, in order to maintain their fertility. Few gardeners today have access to enough fresh manures and composts (or the necessary labor to spread them) to rely solely on these excellent sources of plant food. Yet without a modicum of humus even the most powerful chemical fertilizers will fight a losing battle to feed the plants in our gardens, and much of their value will be wasted, remaining locked in the alkaline clay minerals. Calcareous soils are crying for organic food; like the parents of open-mouthed nestlings, as gardeners we are charged to see they get enough.

The compost pile is one of the gardener's most reliable assets in the campaign to add organic matter to alkaline soils, and even a small garden should set aside space for this invaluable material. All manner of leaves, grass clippings, tender shoots, shredded paper, kitchen scraps, and other organic remains may be thrown on the pile. Manure or, if this is unavailable, nitrogen fertilizer may be added to speed the decay process. Some gardeners construct boxlike enclosures to house the decomposing vegetation, but all that is really needed is a reasonably well

ventilated heap and patience. The best assurance of ventilation is frequent forking and turning of the pile, and in a warm climate only a few weeks or months are needed to yield the desired result: crumbly brown humus. Since the collection of compostable debris is generally an ongoing activity, most gardeners find a second pile an asset, so that accumulation may continue while the first heap is ripening.

Gardeners can improve and build the fertility of their garden soils even more by imitating the natural cycle of plant growth and decay with the frequent addition of mulches. Covering flower beds with organic debris not only provides an *in situ* compost heap, but improves the moisture holding capacity of the earth as well. A mulch of leaves or shredded plant remains reduces the hot summer temperatures of soils, slowing down the breakdown of organic matter and encouraging the accumulation of vital humus.

Whatever the choice of mulching materials, gardeners on calcareous soil must always bear in mind this admonition: to watch and do nothing to cover exposed bare earth constitutes an unforgivable sin, for without a renewing source of organic matter the soil will simply exhaust its supply of humus.



***By its very definition a fertile soil is a soil with an abundant presence of partially decayed organic residue.***

## Volunteer Opportunities for TCMGA

<u>Project Code &amp; Name</u>	<u>Work Days/Times</u>	<u>Project Manager</u>	<u>Phone</u>
301 BRIT Activities	Call chairman	Kay Yount	817-292-7690
302 BG Perennial Garden	Wed. 9:00 a.m.	Cindy Woelke	817-366-4436
302 BG Trial Garden	Tues. 8:30-11:30 a.m.	Susan Miller	817-261-1420
303 Community Garden			
Project Co-chairs:	Nancy Curl (817-319-1795) and Tom Scott (817-427-9009)		
Barn beds:	Charlotte Berck, wrberck@peoplepc.com		817-426-6417
Compost:	Sue Ellen & Ron Schlitzer s.schlitzer@sbcglobal.net		817-294-1329
Education:	Nancy Curl, nl_curl@yahoo.com		817-319-1795
Enabling beds:	Jeanette Berggren, jberggren@sbcglobal.net		817-249-6815
Greenhouse:	Tom Scott, trutexen@aol.com - Tuesdays		940-433-2601
Herb Garden:	Rita Hottel, aescom@charter.net - Wednesdays		817-295-2883
Mowing/Edging:	Tom Scott, trutexen@aol.com - Tuesdays		940-433-2601
Orchard and Berry	Renee Beckum jrbeckum@sbcglobal.net		214-914-6597
Perennial beds: (developing)	Joann Hahn, joannhahn@att.net		817-923-9250
	Ginger Bason, gbason@hotmail.com		817-838-7321
Propagation	Claire Alford, Joy Lease, and Donna Morris		
Roses:	Nan Garvin garbre@hotmail.com - Fridays		817-477-2867
TCU students	Pat Higgins, Ragdollpat@sbcglobal.net		817-946-6278
Vegetable garden	Tues, & Fri. 8:30 a.m.		
304 Thistle Hill	1 <sup>st</sup> , 3 <sup>rd</sup> Weds. 9:30 a.m.	Emily Ward	817-281-5925
304 Union Gospel Mission	Mon. 9 a.m.	Gay Larson	817-441-6560
304 Teen Challenge	Wed. 9 a.m.	Debbie Bollinger	817-498-1508
304 JPS Meditation Garden	2nd & 4th Friday 8:30 am	Kay Lewis	817-281-6600
304 Casa House	Call coordinator	Rocky Deutscher	817-991-7171
203 Grapevine Botanic Garden			
Docents	Call coordinator	Shari Stanfield	817-685-9990
<b><u>Environmental Projects:</u></b>			
305 Composting Demo	2 <sup>nd</sup> Sat.	Charlie Shiner	817-488-6123
305 FW Library at Hulen St.	3rd Wed. 9 a.m.	Devanie Fergus	817-861-1932
		Evaline Woodrey	817-295-5281
305 SW Sub-Courthouse	2 <sup>nd</sup> Sat, last Wed. 9 a.m.	Gailon Hardin	817-475-0923
305 Liberty Garden	Call chairman	Wendi Carlucci	817-488-5640
	2nd Tues, 8-11 a.m.		
305 Veterans Park-Wildscape	Tues. 9-12n Randoll Mill Pk. Greenhouse		
	Wed. 9-12n, 1st Sat, 9-12 a.m.	Nancy Swan	817-535-9991
305 Bob Jones Nature Center			
<b><u>School Gardens:</u></b>			
306 Alice Carlson	Mon/& Thurs 8:30 a.m.	Sharon Chastain	817-926-2575
306 Fitzgerald	Wed. 3:15 p.m.	Leeann Rosenthal	817-237-7180
306 BG-Children's Garden	Wed. 9-11:30 a.m.	Mary McCoy	817-561-0598
306 Heritage School OLE	2nd & 4th Monday 2:45p	Jackie Peel	817-581-0977

**Tarrant County Master Gardener Association**  
**200 Taylor St., Suite 500**  
**Fort Worth, Texas 76102-7308**



## March/April Events

Mar. 2	Intern Class - Fruit & Nut	Mar. 29	Holiday - Cesar Chavez Day
Mar. 4	Intern Class - Meeting (am), Field Trip (pm)	<b>Mar. 29</b>	<b>Specialist Training-Irrigation Efficiency Training</b>
Mar. 9	Intern Class - Rainwater Harvesting, Irrigation		<a href="http://www.texasmastergardeners.com">http://www.texasmastergardeners.com</a>
Mar. 10	BRIT Brown Bag Botany	Mar. 30	Intern Class - Make-up Day
<b>Mar. 11</b>	<b>TCMGA MEETING</b>	<b>Apr. 1</b>	<b>TCMGA MEETING</b>
Mar. 11	Intern Class - Trees & Shrubs	Apr. 2	Holiday - Good Friday
Mar. 16	Intern Class - Native Plants	<b>Apr 8-10</b>	<b>Texas MG Conference - Dallas</b>
Mar. 18	Intern Class - No Class		<a href="http://www.2010tmgaconference.org">http://www.2010tmgaconference.org</a>
Mar. 23	Intern Class - Photography & PowerPoint	Apr. 14	BRIT Brown Bag Botany
Mar. 25	Intern Class - Field Trip TBD	April 17	2nd Annual MG Plant Sale

Steve Chaney—For up-to-the-minute  
TCMGA news visit: [www.tcmga.org](http://www.tcmga.org)



More state news:  
[www.texasmastergardeners.com](http://www.texasmastergardeners.com)