



# Wood County Master Gardeners December 2008 Newsletter

## President's Message - Dick Walker

By all accounts, this has been a very successful Wood County Master Gardener year. Everyone is invited to attend the Interpretation Presentation from our Wood County Master Gardener Association to County Judge Bryan Jeanes. This will be on December 23, 2008, at 9:30 a.m. in the Commissioners Court at the Wood County Court House. Thanks to Clint Perkins' strong support and each Master Gardener's commitment, there will be a significant increase in hours over those presented last year.

These volunteer hours come from a wide variety of community enhancing projects that have let each of us, with our diverse backgrounds and personalities, find a fit.

Billie Wilder, with a team of volunteers, has accomplished much this year at the Mineola Nature Preserve Wildscape. After successful fundraising, the butterfly, bird, and bee gardens were established, as well as several seating areas being created, and the wildflower meadow is on its way to completion.

Valuable information is being gathered at the Mineola EarthKind Rose Trial Garden, which can lead to rose varieties being added to the EarthKind list. Linda Timmons and other volunteers are to be commended on a job well done.

The Arboretum at Jim Hogg Park continues to be a work in progress. Major clearing has taken place, plantings are being established, and the rose garden has been created near the Stinson House, thanks to Pam Riley and that team's many volunteer hours. The plant sales this year received strong community support.

Bart Bartlett's extensive planning and leadership allowed a group of volunteers to create and plant beds at the Wood County Airport. This project was significant in its quick timeline and turn-around. The Master Gardeners met this challenge to enhance the appearance of this expanding vital link. The Wood County Airport stands to provide significant impact on our local economy in the future.

Linda Avant and her team have received the necessary training to fully implement the Junior Master Gardener program in the upcoming year.

The annual Spring Conference was a huge success. With the attendance exceeding the previous year, valuable information was provided to the gardeners of Wood County and all of East Texas. The 2009 Spring Conference will be held on March 7th. Speakers already scheduled are Dr. Bill Welch of Texas A&M, and Kenny Rollins of Titus County AgriLife Extension Services.

Through hours of development, our Association now proudly presents an impressive and informative website. Be sure you are consistently logging on to [wcmgtx.org](http://wcmgtx.org).

Through these projects, along with many others, we can all take pride in the contributions we have made to our community in 2008, and look forward to 2009 with the same enthusiasm and excitement that a new year, and a new class of Master Gardeners brings.

## 2008 Wood County Master Gardeners Officers

Dick Walker—President  
Judy Dooley—Vice Pres.  
Sandra Hocking—Secretary  
Linda Avant—Treasurer



**Happy Holidays!**

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## Clint Perkins Gardening Corner



### Poinsettias, the Christmas Plant



The best selling plant during the Holiday season is the poinsettia. The poinsettia (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*) is a member of the spurge family. The plants in this family ooze a milky sap. The plant was introduced to the United States by Joel Roberts Poinsett. He was our first United States Ambassador to Mexico. Mr. Poinsett sent some of these plants to his home in Greenville, South Carolina in 1825, and the beautiful plant that we enjoy during the holiday season bears his name. Texas is one of 36 states that produce poinsettias. Americans spend more than 200 million dollars a year on these wonderful plants. Poinsettias come in different colors, with red being the most popular.

In nature, poinsettias are a perennial flowering shrub that can grow up to ten feet tall. The showy part of the poinsettia are not flowers, they are actually colored bracts (modified leaves). These flowers (Cyathia) of the poinsettia are located in the center of the colorful bracts. Contrary to popular belief, poinsettias are not poisonous. So, do not be scared of them.

### Tips For Caring For A Poinsettia

After selection is made, make sure you minimize exposure to low temperatures to keep from damaging the bracts and leaves. Keep your poinsettias away from cold drafts, or huge temperature fluctuations. Ideally, they require daytime temperatures of 60-70 degrees Fahrenheit and nighttime temperatures need to be no lower than 55 degrees Fahrenheit. High temperatures will shorten a plants life. Check the soil daily for moisture. Only water when the soil is dry. Poke your finger into the soil, and if moisture is not felt about an inch down into the container, then it is time to water. Water the plant thoroughly and allow excess moisture to drain. If you intend to keep the plant past the holiday season, apply a houseplant fertilizer once a month.



Clint Perkins, Wood County Extension Agent  
Ag & Natural Resources

## PLANT OF THE MONTH: DECEMBER

By: Nancy Weaver

**Scientific Name:** Schlumbergera Bridgesi

**Common Name:** Christmas cactus

Even though the poinsettia is considered “THE” holiday flower of the Christmas season, the Christmas cactus makes a beautiful show of its own. It is reported that the cactus has evolved over 30 to 40 million years. Hmmm. This may rank the Christmas cactus (Schlumbergera bridgesi) as an old fashioned plant passed on from our forefathers. (foremothers?)



Colors are available in red, purple, pink, orange, fuchsia, cream and more. It has flat, chain-like segments with buds and flowers appearing at the tips. This succulent is an epiphyte which means that in nature it grows hanging from trees and in the crotch of trees in tropical forests. Even though rain is a frequent event, the cactus quickly dries. In addition the structure of the chain of spines allows less water to evaporate than regular leaves. Christmas cactus thrives in a well-drained medium such as half sand and half fine bark or coarse peat moss.

### Nancy's Christmas Cactus

Fertilize every two to four months with a standard water soluble 20-20-20 fertilizer while in active growth stage. Occasionally leach fertilizer salts with plain water. Allow plant to become almost dry between watering. Stop the fertilization in September and make certain the plant receives total dark from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. I leave mine outside until threat of frost. By this time buds should be formed. Leaving it outdoors, darkness is assured.

During growing season 70 – 80 degrees is ideal. However, in Texas with 90 – 100 degrees it is important to shelter the plant. Christmas cactus needs a bright location out of direct sunlight. My cactus remains on a porch on the north side of my house and is shaded but still blooms when the holiday season arrives.

After the cactus has finished flowering, it needs about 2 months of rest. Give it very little water or fertilization at this time. When the cactus starts to grow the sprouts will show at the tips. You can start new plants after blooming season by cutting segments 3 – 4 inches and placing in a peat and sand mixture. Water must be applied sparingly to prevent rotting.

The lifespan of a cactus is long and with proper care, can live for many years and grow quite large.

**Merry Christmas!**

**Out & About**  
**by Linda Timmons**

**“The gardening season officially begins on January 1st, and ends on December 31st.”**  
**Marie Huston**



We don't have a lot of gardening events for December but it is time to start your 2009 calendars. Don't forget to reserve the 3rd Thursday of each Month for our WCMG Business Meetings at 9AM. They're a great opportunity to get to know each other and be involved in decisions about our association. We also get CEUs for the programs.

December 23 , the Wood County Master Gardener Association will be presenting a mock check to the Wood County Commissioners representing the total hours volunteered to the county by our association in 2008. The meeting will start at 10AM - Wood County Courthouse in Quitman.

**2009**

January 6th will be the first class for the Wood County Master Gardener 2009 Training Class. The complete training class schedule is posted in the "Members Only" section of our new web site at [WCMGTC.org](http://WCMGTC.org).

**Feb 6-8, 2009 Texas Conference on Organic Production Systems 2009**

The TOFGA annual conference will be held in Killeen at the Texas Civic Center, Feb 6-8, 2009. Info can be obtained by going to TOFGA ([www.tofga.org](http://www.tofga.org)), click on TCOOPS 2009 (Texas Conference on Organic Productions Systems 2009). Some of the presentations will be given by MGs and TAMU personnel. You will get lots of good information for farming, home gardening and landscaping without chemicals.

**East Texas Turfgrass Conference - February 5, 2009** (Texas AgriLife Research & Extension Center - Overton)

**East Texas Landscape & Garden Conference - February 14, 2009** (Tyler Rose Garden Center)

**East Texas Commercial Fruit & Vegetable Conference - February 17, 2009** (Tyler Rose Garden Center)

Make plans to join attend the 2009 Texas Master Gardener State Conference April 23-25 to be held in beautiful Marshall, Texas. The conference will feature world class speakers, workshops and tours. This year, something new, the Earthkind Rose Workshop, an all-day session will be presented the day before the '09 conference and will feature some of the most renowned experts in the Earthkind rose field!! Information on registration for this workshop will be added to the regular registration form, come a day earlier and don't miss-out on this added feature! Registration forms will be available on line at <http://tcaaa.tamu.edu/09statemeeting.htm> .

I subscribe to Dave's Garden e-newsletter. There is an excellent article in it by Tamara Galbraith (Texas Tam) who is a Collin County Master Gardener. It is the best article I've read on moving plants in winter:



Go to: <http://davesgarden.com/guides/articles/view/1921/>

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**Wood County Master Gardeners Meeting**  
**Wood County Extension Office: Thursday, December 18**  
**8:30 AM ARRIVAL, MEETING STARTS AT 9:00 AM**

The December meeting of the WCMG Association will be a short business meeting followed by brief comments from the members about their hopes for the future of this group.



Come and share your ideas for future projects, changes in format of the programs or other comments you might have about changes you might like to see in 2009.

Refreshments donated by several of the members will be served. Guests are welcome at this end of year social.

Judy Dooley



## Wildscape Project



The wildflower meadow is composted and seeded, so now it's Mother Nature's time. We will not have another work day in December as our big projects are completed. Even with nothing blooming, it is truly beautiful.

Thanks to each who played a part in accomplishing this native wonderland this past year. There will be several big issues to tackle in the New Year, so rest up and enjoy the holidays!

Billie Wilder

### Gov Hogg Park Arboretum/Gardens

"Rooted in the Past,  
Focused on the Future"



Ho Ho Ho everybody.....The Christmas lights are up and working, thanks to Peggy Rogers husband Dean. Everything is hooked up and working. With gale force winds and the off and on threat of rain, we got'er done.

Saturday, Dec 6, there will be a lighting of the lights and Christmas program at the Gov Hogg Park in Quitman. There will be hot chocolate, cookies and other goodies about 5 pm and the program starts at 6 with the lights being turned on shortly after the start at 6. It sure would be nice to have several, if not all, of the Wood County Master Gardeners and Friends of the Arboretum be there when we do our own switch-on of the lights at the Arboretum. Look forward to seeing you there. Happy Holidays and Merry Christmas!!!!!!

Pam Riley

## Wood County Master Gardeners - Project Total Volunteer Hours November 2008 Hours ending 11/30/08

Project Code	Nov. Service Hours	Cumulative Service Hours 2008	Project_NAME
MISC	3	610.0	MISCELLANEOUS
ADMIN	15.5	263.5	Administration/Executive Tasks
SPKR	2.5	60.5	Guest Speaker
WEB	8	112.5	Website & Email (Email Added 8/6/6)
MSG		52.0	Mineola Nature Preserve, Sensory Garden
MWG	46	904.5	Mineola Nature Preserve, Wildscape Garden
HHH		7.5	Hawkins Helping Hand
MSP	2	42.5	Mineola South Park
CCGSC			Children's Church Garden, Smith Chapel (Mineola Smith Chapel Pioneer Club)
MERT	2.5	234.5	Mineola Earthkind Rose Trial (Addendum Request Submitted 02/17/07)
CEU			Continuing Education Units (Units = Hours)
QL	4	36.0	Quitman Library
NLTR	7	85.0	Newsletter
CONF		357.5	Conferences
WMMM		24.0	Winsboro Morgan Mercy Mission
WCAP		101.5	Wood County Airport Landscaping
T	1.5	44.0	Training
QSH		25.0	Quitman Stinson Home
PROP		57.5	Propagation
QEO		9.0	Quitman Extension Office
WEC		2.0	Winsboro Episcopal Church
WGC		13.0	Winsboro Garden Club (PHW)
GHPA	7	1447.0	Governor Hogg Park Arboretum & Botanical Garden
QSE			Quitman Special Education
JMG		65.0	Junior Master Gardeners
<b>Total</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>4554.0</b>	

Reminder: Please get your Project Hours form to Nancy Weaver at the end of each month

