



Wood County Master Gardeners January 2008 Newsletter

President's Message—Pete Smith

The past year was a year of great success for Wood County Master Gardeners. We are very fortunate to have great leadership that is provided by Clint Perkins. The Master Gardeners of Wood County are also blessed with a tremendous number of volunteers who are ready to take on a project and see that it is done to perfection. Please pat yourselves on the back for a job well done this past year. Now we have the opportunity to make this current year of 2008 another successful year. I would challenge each of you to make every effort to attend as many of the meetings as possible. Be ready to volunteer if called upon to help with a project and be available to serve on a committee when asked.

The New Year begins with another class for Master Gardeners with more than sixteen students enrolled. This provides an opportunity for the new students as well as for those who have completed the required academic curriculum. Please encourage the new students and do not miss an opportunity to promote the Master Gardener program.

There are a number of projects that are continuing in 2008: the Wildscape at the Mineola Nature Preserve, the Sensory Garden at the Mineola Nature Preserve, and the Earthkind Rose trial garden in Mineola. Those that are currently on the drawing board are: the Wood County Arboretum and Botanical Garden and the Junior Master Gardener training.

I have an idea that I have been contemplating for the President's message during 2008. I would like to spotlight an individual each month so that we can get to know each other on a more personal level. Let me know if you think this is an idea worth pursuing.

I am always open to input from each of you and welcome the opportunity to discuss ideas that will benefit the Wood County Master Gardener Program.

Pete

2008 Wood County Master Gardeners Officers

Pete Smith—President
Judy Dooley—Vice Pres.
Sandra Hocking—Secretary
Linda Avant—Treasurer

In this Issue:

- President's Message
- 2008 WCMG Officers
- Clint Perkins Gardening Corner
- Shrub of the Month - Witch Hazel
- Arboretum Update
- Yoga for the Gardener
- Out and About
- Next WCMG Meeting Thursday, Jan. 17th
- MNP Wildscape Update
- January Garden Tips
- December Volunteer Hours
- Pet - Garden Safety

Newsletter Comments to
Eileen Bartlett
ebartlett3@yahoo.com

Wood County Master Gardeners website:<http://www.mastergardenersofwoodcounty.org/>

Wood County Master Gardeners Officers - 2008



**Pete Smith, President; Linda Avant, Treasurer;
Sandra Hocking, Secretary**



**Judy Dooley
Vice President**

Following are some of the Wood County Master Gardeners who received acknowledgements for their 2007 project work. Some are missing from this photo. Linda Timmons received the award for WCMG of the Year 2007.



**Back row: Clyde McKinney, Fran McKinney, Linda Timmons, Linda Avant,
Pete Smith, Pam Riley, Cecil Wallace and Clint Perkins**

**Front row: Sandy Marshall, Billie Wilder, Kathleen Denmon, Liz Soutendijk,
Janet Starr, Mary Chaney, Eileen Bartlett**

Clint Perkins Gardening Corner

Planning the Home Fruit Orchard



A well-established and maintained fruit tree planting not only can be highly productive, but also can enhance a home's landscape and beauty. However, most fruit crops require years of patient care and hard work to be very productive.

Success with a home fruit depends on how well it is planned and how well the plans are carried out. Untold amounts of money have been lost due to neglect or purchase of unadapted fruit trees and plants. Successful fruit culture requires knowledge about many things including the following: site, soil, and variety selection; pruning, training, and related practices; and planting methods.

The importance of selecting the best possible site for fruit planting cannot be over emphasized. Cold air, like water, flows downhill. For this reason, fruit buds on plants set in a low spot are more likely to be killed than those on a slope. Frost pockets, low wet spots, and locations exposed to strong prevailing winds should be avoided. South facing slopes encourage early bud development, but can sometimes result in frost damage.

Deep, well-drained soil of good fertility should be selected. Adequate drainage is the most important characteristic. Poor soils can easily be improved by proper fertilization and cultural practices, but improving soil with poor internal drainage is difficult and expensive.

Determine your soil's internal drainage rate by digging a post hole 8 inches in diameter and 2.5 feet deep, then fill the hole with water. If the hole drains in 24 hours, the soil has excellent drainage and is suitable for all fruit crops. Stone fruit (peach, plums, and etc.) trees should only be planted on sites with excellent drainage. If the hole drains in 36 hours, the internal drainage is adequate for more tolerant crops, such as, fig, blueberry, strawberry, grape, apple, and blackberry. If the hole has not drained in 48 hours, the site is unsuitable for fruit production. In this case, crops could be planted on raised beds.

Before a fruit tree is planted, there must be adequate space. Most fruit trees require an area 25 feet by 25 feet; dwarfs need about 12 feet by 12 feet. The site must have full sun to maximize production. A single peach tree can easily produce two bushels of fruit (about 100 pounds). So, be careful not to plant too many tree for your needs.



Fruit trees are best planted in mid-winter to allow time for root development prior to spring growth. During the months prior to planting, the site should have been prepared as follows: clear the site of perennial weeds, and till an area at least 4 feet by 4 feet wide. Any hard pan (clay layer) beneath the soil should be broken up to help with the drainage. Level the site, and till again. Organic matter may be added to the planted area, this is left up to the growers. Do not add fertilizer to the prepared area. To allow for soil water drainage, the site may be built up so that the tree will be sitting on a small berm.

At planting time, plant the tree in a hole as big as the root system, usually about 12 inches square, and at least 18 inches deep. Plant the tree and refill the soil to the same depth that the tree grew in at the nursery. Weeds need to be removed at least 3 to 4 feet around the base of the tree. This can be done manually or by using a glyphosate herbicide (Roundup or generic). Be extremely careful not to get any of the herbicide on the bark of the young tree. It is critical that this be done if the tree is to perform well; if little else is done, maintain this weed-free circle around the tree. The weeds will compete with the tree for nutrients and water.

The best tree to plant is a variety adapted to and recommended for Wood County. Select mid-sized trees; they are cheaper and grow better than larger trees. It is far easier to prune 3 to 4 foot trees back 18 to 24 inches, than to prune 5 to 6 foot trees. Pruning the fruit tree is necessary to remove apical dominance, put the top in balance with a reduced root system, and force out strong vigorous shoots which are easy to train. The trees should have healthy white roots with no brown streaks. Check the tree for the presence of bores. With proper care, it is highly possible for your fruit tree to set fruit the second year after planting.

Clint Perkins

County Extension Agent - Ag & Natural Resources

Wood County Extension Office - 618 S. Main. Quitman, Texas 76520

903-763-2924 - Fax 903-763-2092 - email wood-tx@tamu.edu

Extension programs serve people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, disability or national origin.

The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners
Courts of Texas Cooperating

SHRUB OF THE MONTH: WITCH HAZEL - A WINTER BLOOM

Hamamelis x intermedia 'Jelena'

Family: Hamamelidaceae

Genus: Hamamelis (ham-uh-MEE-lis) Species: x intermedia

Cultivar: Jelena Height: 10-12 ft. (3-3.6 m)

Spacing: 4-6 ft. (1.2-1.8 m) Sun Exposure: Sun to Light Shade

Hardiness: USDA Zone 5a: (-20 °F) TO Zone 9b: to (25 °F)

Bloom Color: Red-Orange, Gold (Yellow-Orange)

Bloom Time: Late Winter/Early Spring - Mid Winter

Foliage: Deciduous Good Fall Color, Winter Blooms

Other details: Flowers are fragrant; Provides winter interest

Average Water Needs: Water regularly; do not overwater

Soil pH requirements: Mildly to strongly acidic

Propagation Methods: By grafting

Plant does not set seed, flowers are sterile,

or plants will not come true from seed

The witch hazels of our continent received their common name from water diviners of the 17th century.

When compared to its Asiatic cousins, the flowers of the American species pale; the spidery yellow to reddish flowers are later than the species (late winter). The multistemmed tree or large shrub, however, is unparalleled in its end-of-season finery, alighting in shades of burgundy, copper and coral.

This plant can be found while following streams through natural wooded areas. They prefer moist, acid, well-drained organic soils and full sun to part shade. They grow 15-20' high and wide, and are probably best treated as a small tree to better show off the flowers and fall foliage:

'Arnold Promise' has clear yellow fragrant flowers with a reddish calyx cup, each petal almost an inch long, blooming anywhere from late January/February into March.

'Jelena', also sometimes listed as 'Copper Beauty', is described by Michael Dirr* as "excellent in flower and from a distance glows like copper; each 1" long petal is red toward the base, orange in the middle and yellow at the tip, sweet but faint." It has a rich orange-red fall color as well.

*Manual of Woody Landscape Plants, by Michael Dirr, revised 1998



Photo Credit: Doreen Wynja

Gov Hogg Park Arboretum/Gardens

"Rooted in the Past,
Focused on the Future"



Arboretum Update - Pam Riley

We are making arrangements to start building our raised beds in the front of the Arboretum. There will be rose beds around the concrete picnic table next to the Stinson House. The island in the street in front of the Arboretum will be cleaned up and a raised border built. It will be planted with flowers to match the other beds built at the entrance to the Arboretum, on either side of the walkway leading to the bridge. The old sign sitting there now is going to be replaced with a gazebo. We plan to meet every Wednesday at 9:00 a.m. (until further notice), and depending on the weather.

Arboretum/Botanical Garden presentations will be given to the Mineola Lions Club on Thursday, January 10th and to the Holly Lake Garden club on the 29th of Jan.



Wood County Master Gardeners, represented by Pam Riley and Clint Perkins, gave a symbolic "check" to the Wood County Commissioners Court representing the amount of \$38,454.90 that the WCMGs have given to the citizens of Wood County by calculating their volunteer hours of 2,838 hours into dollars for 2007.



YOGA FOR THE GARDENER

by Linda Wray, Wood County Master Gardener

Most of us love gardening (that's why we're Master Gardeners, right?), but sometimes we may overdue it and feel not-so-good after a few hours Of digging, hoeing, etc.

One solution for relieving the aches and pains is doing yoga poses. Some simple poses such as "Legs up the Wall" and "Knees to the Chest" can be done both before and after gardening to warm up and stretch out the back, hips, and hamstrings.

Start by lying down on the floor (use a towel if you don't have carpet). Begin by lying on your side and sliding your legs up the wall slowly. Your hips are close to the wall, while your legs are straight with feet relaxed. Arms are fairly close to your sides. Breathe deeply for 5-10 minutes with your eyes closed. Come out of the position slowly. You can also do this pose before bedtime to promote relaxation and deeper sleep. For "Knees to the chest", lie Down on the floor (or in bed) and bring your knees into your chest, arms wrapped around. You can rock side to side to massage the back, and feel almost instant relief from minor back pain.

Veronica D'Orazio has written a book entitled "Gardener's Yoga" which might be an interesting addition to your library of gardening books.

So go ahead..have fun in your yard, but remember these two simple yoga poses done before and after can make outdoor activities a lot easier on the body!

If you have questions or need more information, please call me (903-569-4232). I will be happy to demonstrate these poses for you; or you can come to my yoga classes in Mineola.



OUT & ABOUT - LINDA TIMMONS

January gardening events are in short supply. But we do have educational opportunities.

Tuesday, January 15th - Training Classes for our 2008 Class of Master Gardeners start. The first class will be held at the extension office. Depending on enrollment, the next classes might be held at the Masonic Lodge just south of Quitman on Hwy 37.

January 15th Chris Wiesinger from Southern Bulbs in Golden will be the first speaker. Clint will also present a class on Plant Botany. On the 22nd Clint will present Part One of his Soil class. The 29th will be at Overton with Doug Welsh presenting "Environmental Landscaping".

February starts our gardening season---at least our preparation for gardening season. We have several opportunities you may want to put on your calendar.

February 16 - Spring Landscape & Garden Conference at the Tyler Rose Center.
8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. For more information: visit our web site,
<http://EastTexasGardening.tamu.edu> click on "Programs & Events". Topics include:

Texas Superstars in Your Garden
Secrets of Successful Vegetable Gardening
Gardening for a Lifetime (Health Tips & Benefits of Gardening)
Landscaping with Texas Native Plants
Common Problems with Small Engines & How to Prevent Them
Calibrating Sprayers and Spreaders (plus a demonstration).

February 19 - East Texas Fruit & Vegetable & Garden Conference
Rose Garden Center, Tyler - 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

February 21 the SFA Arboretum Les Reeves Lecture Series will present Ed Bush speaking on Plants that Transcend Time. This lecture series is held the third Thursday of each month from 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm in room 110 of the Stephen F. Austin University Agriculture Building on Wilson drive (between the Art building and the intramural fields) located in the piney woods of Nacogdoches, Texas right off Hwy 59.

For directions, go to: <http://arboretum.sfasu.edu/location/location.htm>

It is FREE and open to everyone! Refreshments are served before the talk and a rare plants raffle is held afterward.

April 24-26, 2008 - Texas Master Gardener Conference in Conroe, Texas.

For current information and registration forms for the upcoming state conference go to <http://www.2008texasmastergardenerconference.org/program.html>

**Wood County Master Gardeners Meeting at
Wood County Extension Office: THURSDAY, January 17th -
8:30 AM ARRIVAL MEETING STARTS AT 9:00 AM**

Program for January 17th WCMG Association meeting will be "Getting to Know Your Association" an overview of the Association; its genesis, structure, and long term goals.

NOTE: We will again ask the committee and project chairmen to share with us their goals for this coming year as well as their long term plans for their com-



Wildscape - Progress Report

Monday - January 7th, we began work on our "Sheet Composting" demo area that will eventually be the area on our site map designated as "Butterfly Garden".

We also mounted the sign enclosure on the wall of the pavilion. In it is a description of the Sensory Garden plants. Our turnout today was great and a good bit was accomplished thanks to Billie's husband Gary and his John Deere.

Judy Dooley

Wow! What progress!!! Mounds of leaves, compost, manure and cardboard were transformed into a large bed of sheet compost which will later be planted with butterfly plants. There will be a number of beds with walking paths between each. There is plenty of raw material so we'll meet every Monday at 10:00 a.m. (until further notice) to work on the beds as well as maintain the rest of the wildscape.

We DO need you to come with pitchforks, rakes, shovels and hoes (for weed control in the native grass area). After a 1 1/2 to 2 hour work day on Monday, lets meet somewhere local for lunch. Thanks to all and especially to Liz Soutendijk for her leadership in this endeavor.

Billie Wilder



JANUARY GARDEN TIPS



Care for Your Houseplants

- Ψ When the heat is on, humidity inside our houses tends to be relatively low. Group plants together to raise the humidity around them. Plants in smaller pots may be placed in trays of pebbles with water added. Avoid locations where warm air from vents will blow directly on them or locations where cold drafts will blow on plants.

Care for Your Perennials - Planting and Transplanting

- Ψ Now is the time for transplanting perennials. Apply mulch over the crowns and roots of some of the less hardy perennials during the coldest part of the winter. Pine straw, clean hay, pine bark mulch, dry leaves, etc. All work well for this purpose.

Watering

- Ψ Cool to cold temperatures, typical rainy weather, and the dormant conditions of many perennials generally make watering unnecessary. If the weather turns mild and/or dry, water beds as needed.

Fertilizing

- Ψ Few herbaceous perennials are in active growth during the winter and January is not the best time to fertilize them. Dormant perennials do not need fertilizer.

Pest Control

- Ψ Insect and disease problems are at a minimum this time of year. Cool season weeds will be in active growth any time mild weather occurs. Keep beds mulched 3 to 4 inches deep and promptly pull up any weeds as they appear. If the temperatures rise above 65 degrees, tough weeds, like wood sorrel, may be treated with a weed-control aid. Since you should be careful not to get any on the foliage of plants, it is easier to use when the perennials are mostly dormant and there is little or no foliage present.

Pruning

- Ψ Cut back and remove old, dead upper portions of dormant perennials. This will keep the garden looking more attractive. Chop up the material and put in your compost pile. Some perennials don't go dormant until the first freezes hit.

Care for Your Shrubs - Planting and Transplanting

- Ψ This is an excellent month for planting and transplanting shrubs.

Watering

- Ψ Generally, no need to water established shrubs unless newly planted. They should be watered thoroughly but may not need to be watered thereafter if rainfall is regular. If a hard freeze is expected and the soil is dry, water thoroughly before the freeze.

Pest Control

- Ψ This is an excellent time to apply horticultural oil sprays to shrubs that are prone to scale. These include camellias, hollies, magnolias, euonymus, privets and cleyera. Spray gardenias with oil for whiteflies. Do not spray with oil if the nighttime low is predicted below 40 degrees Fahrenheit.

**Wood County Master Gardeners - Project Total Volunteer Hours
December 2007 Hours and Cumulative for 12 Months ending
12/31/2007**

<u>Project Code</u>	<u>Dec. Service Hours</u>	<u>Cumulative Service Hours 2007</u>	<u>Project_NAME</u>
MISC	15.5	460.5	MISCELLANEOUS
ADMIN	25	291.5	Administration/Executive Tasks
SPKR		64.5	Guest Speaker
WEB		9.5	Website & Email (Email Added 8/6/6)
MSG		27.5	Mineola Nature Preserve, Sensory Garden
MWG	37	464.0	Mineola Nature Preserve, Wildscape Garden
HHH		5.0	Hawkins Helping Hand
MSP	2	34.0	Mineola South Park
CCGSC		6.3	Children's Church Garden, Smith Chapel (Mineola Smith Chapel Pioneer Club)
MERT		165.5	Mineola Earthkind Rose Trial (Addendum Request Submitted 02/17/07)
CEU	0		Continuing Education Units (Units = Hours)
QL		52.5	Quitman Library
NLTR	5	71.5	Newsletter
CONF		159.5	Conferences
WMMM	2	11.0	Winsboro Morgan Mercy Mission
MTD		19.0	Mineola Train Depot
T		33.0	Training
QSH		333.5	Quitman Stinson Home
PROP		117.5	Propagation
QEO		25.5	Quitman Extension Office
WEC		14.0	Winsboro Episcopal Church
WGC		19.0	Winsboro Garden Club (PHW)
GHPA	21.5	386.5	Governor Hogg Park Arboretum & Botanical Garden
QSE		45.0	Quitman Special Education
JMG		22.0	Junior Master Gardeners
Subtotal	108	2837.8	

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



Bell County Master Gardener, Deb Martin, Interviewed on keeping your pets safe in your backyard jungle. Killeen Daily Herald Posted on: Saturday, October 20, 2007 By Desiree Johnson

Submitted by Liz Soutendijk, WC Master Gardener

Your backyard can be a makeshift jungle for your pets; puppies play in the dirt, and cats meander through the bushes. Yet, among the landscaping can lie hidden dangers that could be harmful, even fatal to your four legged family members.

Deborah Martin, dog owner and master gardener, said some flowers can be harmful if animals dig up and eat the bulbs, such as daffodils and hyacinths. The bulbs can cause gastrointestinal problems and can mean an unexpected trip to the veterinarian. "Oleander bushes are extremely poisonous," Martin said. "Every part of the plant is harmful, and they're pretty common in this area. Usually the odor keeps pets away, but sometimes a dog can eat them anyway." Martin also said some flowers planted for their aesthetic beauty can be harmful, such as larkspurs, foxgloves and irises. Harmful plants can even come in unexpected places. Rhubarb stems, for example, are fine for making pies, but any part of the rhubarb plant could kill an animal. The same goes for vegetables. Tomatoes themselves aren't harmful to pets, but the plant's stems and leaves can be. And don't forget indoor house plants, either. "A common plant in homes and offices is dung cane," Martin said. "It has big green leaves and doesn't need much light to grow. If pets eat (the plant), it can cause a heart attack and become fatal."

At Town and Country Veterinary Hospital in Killeen, Dr. Mitchell Jacobs said while the occurrence of pets sickened by harmful plants is not common, it can still be a problem. "Most of the time, dogs or cats won't mess with (harmful plants), but sometimes you get that puppy that just chews on everything," Jacobs said. "The problem is, they eat things and we never know about it. They just get sick and usually we have no idea what plant the animal ate."

Jacobs, who owns two cats, two dogs, eight chickens and three beehives, said while some plants such as English ivy are problems year-round, most plant dangers occur around this time of year, closer to the holiday season. "I see a lot of problems with pets who have eaten poinsettias, or the cat ate the mistletoe," Jacobs said.

This time of year also involves non-plant-related illnesses in pets. "Some people change car fluids on the street or a radiator hose breaks in the winter and those fluids have a sweet taste to animals. Not to mention bait placed around the house for rats, mice and roaches," Jacobs said. These potential dangers are not limited to pets, either. Small children can be curious about the outdoors and parents should take precaution in what kids might pick up and put in their mouths. "I recommend education," Martin said. "Teach kids not to go near poisonous plants, and label Dangerous ones with a cartoon face so they know not to go near it if they can't read."

Martin also suggests being careful with pesticides you spray on your yard. Dogs often chew on grass to clean their teeth and improve digestion, which is good for them, but the presence of pesticides could be dangerous. Ultimately, if you're truly concerned about the safety of your pets and kids, simply don't plant potentially harmful greenery in your yard and remove the ones that exist. Taking an extra step to make sure furry family members are safe in the great outdoors will mean a worry free future for the entire family.