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The Green Thumb is a publication of the Arlington Organic Garden Club

www.aogc.org

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October Meeting – Potluck and Business Meeting

This month's meeting will be held Thursday, October 30 at the Bob Duncan Community Center. Doors open at 7 and the meeting will begin at 7:30 p.m.

The October meeting is our last one of the year and, as is our tradition, it will be a pot luck feast. Our special guest again this year is Jay Mertz from Rabbit Hill Farm.

We have some business issues we need to discuss at this month's meeting. First and foremost, is election of board members for next year. Anyone who is interested in serving on the board (and even if you're not!) *please attend*.

In prior month's newsletters we had included proposed changes to our club's charter for member consideration. We have had some feedback on these, and would like to discuss (and possibly take a vote) at the October meeting



Arlington Computer Roundup Event

If you have an old computer, keep it out of the landfill by participating in Arlington's Computer Roundup Event.

When: Saturday, November 15th, 9 am - 4 pm

Where: Southeast corner UTA parking lot at Mitchell and Cooper

What: They will be accepting computers, monitors, keyboards, printers, TVs, radios, cell phones, VCRs, video cameras. They will **not** be accepting large household appliances such as refrigerators, washers, and dryers. Call Neighborhood Services at 817-459-6777 for disposal of these items.

While at the Computer Roundup event, register to win a Digital Camera donated by Panasonic!

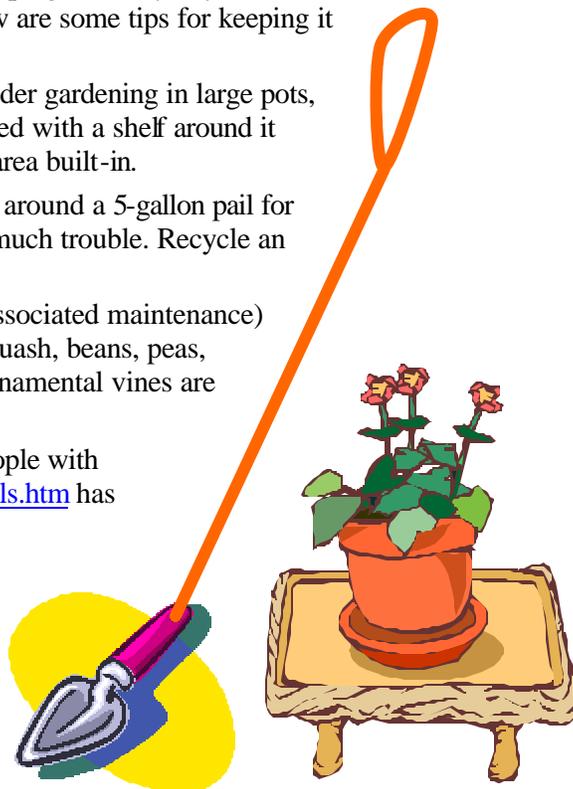
All items will be recycled at Resource Concepts, Inc. of Carrollton, TX.

For more information, please call Neighborhood Services 817-459-6777.

Gardening with Disabilities

Not as flexible as you used to be? Having trouble bending and stooping? Or maybe you use crutches or a wheelchair? No need to let this keep you from your garden! Below are some tips for keeping it up even with some physical limitations.

- Bring your garden up to a comfortable seating level. Consider gardening in large pots, or having 28-30" high raised beds constructed. A raised bed with a shelf around it (lumber, a stone wall, etc.) provides a convenient seating area built-in.
- Invest in a good garden cart or wagon; you can even haul around a 5-gallon pail for foliar feeding (or consider hose-end sprayer) without too much trouble. Recycle an old golf bag to keep and haul your long-handled tools.
- Trellises/Vertical Gardening – bring the plants (and any associated maintenance) up to a level where you don't have to stoop. Tomatoes, squash, beans, peas, okra, clematis, morning glory, climbing roses, and many ornamental vines are all appropriate for vertical gardening.
- Look for tools specially designed to be comfortable for people with limited mobility. <http://www.gardenguides.com/articles/tools.htm> has some recommendations.
- Use native & well-adapted plants to reduce the required maintenance.
- Mulch well to keep the weeds down and reduce watering needs.
- If you're planning new construction, don't use Bermuda grass. I have never seen a flower bed in a Bermuda grass lawn that wasn't filled with grass (or didn't require aggressive weeding).
- If you have gates, consider widening them to 36" or more to make it easy to maneuver a garden cart or a wheelchair.



OAK RAIN BARRELS



These wonderful Oak Rain Barrels add old world charm to your garden and catch 50 gallons of rain water. Our Rain Barrels come with a faucet that a 2 gallon watering can or bucket will slide under and a hose attachment that a soaker hose can be attached to. The top of each barrel has been drilled and fitted with a 10" catch that is lined with screen for mosquito control.

Your plants will love the nitrogen filled rain water that you collect. Food crops especially benefit from rain water.

Our rain barrels are \$140.00

Delivery is free in the following areas:
(Arlington, Ft. Worth, Grand Prairie and others)

Check with Lucy

To order contact Lucy at 817-572-0148

or e-mail: lucygeorge5208@sbcglobal.net

Barrels may also be purchased at GREEN MAMA'S
817-514-7336

- Scatter colorful trowels around the garden so they are always available when you need them.
- Tie a 3-4 foot length of twine around the handle of your favorite tools, with a large loop at the other end. Loop it through your belt loops when out in the garden so if you drop your tools you don't have to stoop to find them.

References/for more information:

This page contains links to several informative sites:
<http://inthecountrygardenandgifts.com/jspece/gardenin/g/accessible.html>

There is also a book out by Jim Wilson, 78-year-old gardener and former host of the "Victory Garden" television show: "Gardening Through Your Golden Years" (Cool Springs Press, \$19.99).

"CUTTINGS; Who Needs a Cane When a Hoe Is at Hand?" by Patricia A. Taylor, *New York Times*, Sept. 7, 2003.

– Angie Brown

Star Anise Tea Warning

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has advised people to avoid teas made with star anise after the ingredient has been linked to illnesses. Star anise is sometimes used in teas used to treat colic in infants, but over the last two years 40 people (15 of them children) have been made ill with problems ranging from seizures to vomiting and jitteriness. Fortunately, all recovered with no lingering problems.



Chinese star anise is generally recognized as safe as a spice or flavoring, but Japanese star anise is believed to be toxic and should only be used in decoration. However, in their dried form, the two can not be distinguished from each other just by looking – only through chemical analysis. The FDA has been unable to determine which star anise was linked to the illnesses so they recommend avoiding the ingredient altogether until more information is known.

The American Botanical Council (ABC) replies that the cases of poisoning reported by the FDA were not from herbal teas sold by reputable tea companies in the United States, but were likely the result of consumers purchasing the star anise in bulk (Japanese star anise is a popular potpourri ingredient) and making their own teas.

<http://www.forbes.com/markets/newswire/2003/09/10/rtr1078619.html>

http://www.celestialseasonings.com/research/allaboutherbs/staranise_abcpresrelease.php

Illustration from <http://www.theepicentre.com/Spices/staranis.html>

Upcoming Events

8th Annual Texas Gourd Society State Show

Nov 1st, 10 am – 5 pm

Travis County Expo Center, 7311 Decker Ln, Austin, TX.

Admission: \$3 for Adults, Children under 12 are free.

For more information: www.geocities.com/TexasGourdSociety

Fall Open House at Our Thyme Garden Herb Farm

Oct 31st-Nov 2nd, 10 am - 5 pm

4017 CR 424, Cleburne, TX 76033.

For more information call: 817-558-3570 or visit:

www.ourthymegarden.com

Organic Garden Club of Fort Worth

<http://www.organicgardenclubfw.org>

Meets at 7 pm at the Ft Worth Botanic Gardens

November 18th – Lucy Harrell speaks on “Native Plants Use Less Water”

Denton Organic Society

Meets at 7 pm at the UNT Environmental Sciences Building

November 19th – “Water Quality & Pollution Sources” – UNT Faculty Member



Leaf Recycling - Don't fill the landfill!

Throughout the year, about 10% of the solid waste generated by Texans is bagged leaves. Another 10% comes from grass clippings and other landscape wastes. Composting this waste, instead of sending them to the landfill, adds nutrients to the soil and saves taxpayers money in reduced fees and taxes.

Leaves contain 50-80% of the nutrients a plant extracts from the soil and air during the growing season. Why waste this valuable source of organic material?

There are many ways to use this leafy bounty, but three that are the easiest are: mowing the leaves with a mulching mower back into the lawn, raking the leaves into a compost pile, or shredding the leaves and placing that back into your yard. Here at Chateau Brown, we use the first two methods.

Leaves on the concrete surfaces or deck are blown into a pile, shredded, and then placed into the compost pile. Shredded leaves really compost a lot faster than unshredded. The only downside of the mulching mower is that we have no grass to put into the compost pile!

Compost is usually ready in the spring but shredded leaves can be used immediately.

Compost can be used to:

- enrich the soil by adding nutrients
- loosen tight, heavy soils
- help sandy soils retain moisture and nutrients
- add to potting soils for container grown plants

Shredded leaves can be used:

- Around the base of trees and shrubs apply a 3-6 inch layer of shredded leaves
- In annual or perennial flowerbeds apply a 2-3 inch mulch of shredded leaves
- For vegetable gardens a thick layer of leaves between the rows functions as a mulch and as an all-weather walkway.



Want to Know More? For a free booklet, the Basics of Composting, call Neighborhood Services at 817-459-6777. Attend a free class offered once a month by the Arlington Master Composters. This two-hour class is held the second Saturday of every month from 9 am to 11 am at the River Legacy Living Science Center.

-- Doug Brown

www.ci.arlington.tx.us/environment/leafrecycling.html

Creature Feature: Land Planarian (*Bipalium kewense*)

Bipalium kewense are mucous-covered, worm-shaped creatures with a flat head and longitudinal stripes along their bodies, which can be up to 10 inches long. They belong to one of the most primitive animal groups, the Phylum Platyhelminthes--also known as flatworms. Planarians are native to Asia, ranging from Vietnam to Kampuchea, possibly extending to Malaysia. They have been introduced to the United States through importing of potted foliage plants.

Planarians thrive in high temperature and humidity, and can be found in and around greenhouses throughout the United States. Once greenhouse populations have been established, the Planarians can disperse to the adjacent environment in tropical and sub-tropical areas. They have been detected in natural habitats in Florida, Louisiana, and Texas.



Planarians are not harmful to plants or humans, but they are predators who eat earthworms, slugs, insect larvae, and each other. Their predation on earthworms has caused concern among biologists and gardeners, and they have been reported to be destructive in earthworm-rearing beds. They have no known enemies (other than themselves, due to their cannibalistic nature), and how to control this creature (or even if control is recommended) has not been determined.

Planarians can reproduce by fragmentation; the posterior fragment adheres to the substrate and the parent worm pulls away. This fragment can wiggle right away, and within seven to ten days a head begins to form. One to two fragments are released each month. They also reproduce by laying eggs, which are deposited in bright red cocoons, which turn black within 24 hours. Planarians emerge in approximately 21 days.



– Angie Brown

References:

<http://citybugs.tamu.edu/FastSheets/Ent-1039.html>

http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/BODY_IN206

Next meeting. . .

Thursday, October 30, 2003

7:00 pm social, 7:30 pm meeting

Potluck & Business Meeting

No meeting in November & December



Club Information

Membership dues: \$20/year (individual or family) – membership year begins in April
Join/renew at any meeting, or send check to return address above.

Meetings are last Thursday of the month (January – October)

- Doors open at 7 pm for refreshments, meeting begins at 7:30 pm
- Open to the public unless meeting is designated “members only”
- Awesome raffle prizes are donated by Redenta’s Garden and by Rabbit Hill Farm!
- Meeting Location: The Garden Room, Bob Duncan Community Center, 2800 South Center Street (Vandergriff Park)

If you would like to serve on the AOGC board, please contact any of the current board members, or send email to board@aogc.org

Newsletter deadline: Third Thursday of each month

Please send newsletter submissions to Angie Brown, angie@aogc.org (include “Newsletter Submission” in the subject line, please), (817) 795-3300.

Want the newsletter but live too far away to go to meetings? Subscribe to the newsletter for \$10/year (to cover printing and postage). Send a note to us (see return address) along with payment and the newsletters will keep coming.

When one tugs at a single thing in nature, he finds it attached to the rest of the world.

- John Muir, Naturalist -



Address correction requested