

The Green Thumb

March 2004

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March meeting – Amanda Vanhoozier Coppell Community Garden

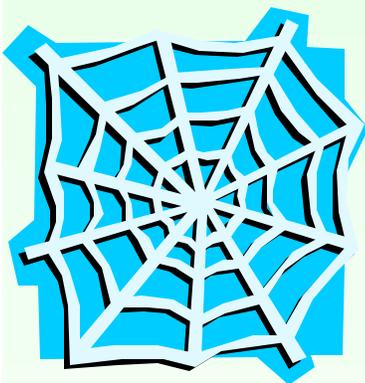
March's meeting will be held Thursday, March 25 at the Bob Duncan Community Center. Doors open at 7 p.m. and the meeting will begin at 7:30 p.m. Our speaker will be Amanda Vanhoozier from the Coppell Community Garden (CCG).

The Coppell Community Garden was founded on April 2, 1998. The organization was formed to provide support and resources in a community garden setting for the individuals and groups willing to use their gardening skills to grow food for families in need.



The mission of Coppell Community Garden is to cultivate a healthy community, where the garden activity promotes social cohesiveness, civic awareness and service, nutritional and food production benefits, environmental stewardship, and opportunities for education, therapy and recreation. CCG has four main programs: Adopt a Plot, Share the Harvest, Educational Programs, and School Partnership.

Please join us in welcoming Amanda for what is sure to be an interesting and educational program!



Website News (www.aogc.org)

Several areas of the website are being more regularly updated now, thanks to a "blogging" software from Movable Type (www.movabletype.org). This software allows updating of the site in a weblog ("blog") format, meaning that entries are created by date by filling out a form that requires no HTML or programming knowledge.

Among the sections already converted to this format are the Calendar, a new "Organics in the News" area, and some of the Shade Gardening articles (with more to come). Because this new method is so easy to update and requires no special software on the contributor's PC, we expect to be able to add fresh content frequently. Comments are also allowed to the stories – click on the "Comments" button at the end of any entry.

There may be a few growing pains while I figure out all the administrative ins and outs, and I am working to get the look of these pages consistent with the rest of the site. But it is up and running and ready for your input. If you would like to be a contributor to one of the areas listed above, or to another portion of the site (the same method can be used for any area of the site), please contact Angie Brown at 817-795-3300.

I am especially interested in input from those who have digital cameras and would like to post photos of what's blooming/fruitletting/looking good in their garden – similar to what has already been started in the Calendar area. I can show you how to upload the photos from your camera to the site in just a few easy steps.





Arlington Cleanup Day, April 17, 2004, 9 AM – 4 PM

Please take items such as trash, brush, tires, furniture, carpet, lumber, appliances and old auto batteries to any of the following sites: Arlington Sanitary Landfill, 800 Mosier Valley Road; Six Flags Hurricane Harbor, 1800 E. Lamar Blvd.; Sam Houston High School, 2000 Sam Houston Drive; or Summit High School; 1071 W. Turner Warnell Rd.

Proof of residency is required (no contractors), either a driver's license with an Arlington address or a current water bill.

No children will be allowed on the sites. No roofing material is allowed; limit of 4 tires.

This is not a hazardous waste dropoff, so please do not bring paint, pesticides, motor oil, etc. For information on how to properly dispose of household hazardous waste, call Neighborhood Services at 817-459-6777.

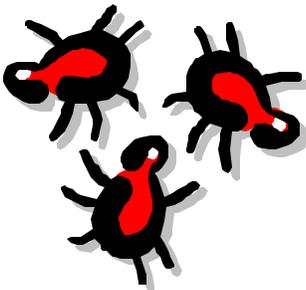
Note: this article was originally published by the City of Irving, Texas, for Earth Day '96. An online version can be found at <http://home.flash.net/~daled/orga.nic.htm>

How Not To Be Bugged Without Poisoning Your Lawn, Your Neighborhood and Your Drinking Water -- Alternatives to Pesticides

by Dale Denton

Some people consider the only good bug to be a dead bug. So when they see bugs, they spray and/or spread the yard with pesticides, and when the toxins are washed away by watering or rain, the bugs come back, and they spray and spread again. Then when the bugs start coming back sooner, or just stay around even with the new application of bug poisons, those folks either use more of the same, or switch to a different type of pesticide. With all the pesticides that get used, you'd think all the bugs would be gone, but obviously this isn't happening. It just seems to be a vicious circle, and the bugs seem to be winning.

Pesticides are now the number one pollutant of our lakes, rivers and streams. This means that they are the number one pollutant that has to be removed from our drinking water. Also, pesticides are a hazardous waste. We don't throw bottles of old pesticide in the trash- we don't want the toxins contaminating our landfills and leaching back out into our waterways. Instead, we save them, and dispose of them during our city's Household Hazardous Waste day. So pesticides are hazardous, and they don't work real well in the long run, anyway. There's got to be a better way.



Actually, there are several better ways. The first is to recognize that most (98%) insects are not pests, and in fact are beneficial to us. Sure, there are cockroaches, fleas, flies, ticks, mosquitoes, aphids, ants and other creepy-crawly pests that we don't want around, but that's a small number of the total number insects out there.

So why are most insects beneficial? Because they don't do things that bother us, or they do things that we like. Honey bees pollinate flowers, as do butterflies, other types of bees (mason bees pollinate more than honey bees, don't sting, and look like small flies than bees), and a variety of other insects. Beneficial insects eat other insects, and some especially like to eat those insects we want to get rid of. Here's a few to pay attention to:

Ladybugs (lady bird beetles) love aphids. An adult ladybug can eat up to 200 aphids a day, and the larvae can gobble up to 100 a day. Quite an appetite, eh? They also chow down on other soft-bodied insects like mealy bugs, thrips and the like.

Green lacewing larvae are another pest eater. They eat red spider mites, mealybugs, aphids, scale, and many worms.

Trichogramma wasps are gnat-sized parasitic wasps that feed on over 200 types of pest worms and caterpillars. They sting the pest worm egg, then deposit their own eggs inside. When the wasp eggs hatch, the wasp larvae feast on the pest eggs, so the worm never grows up to be a pest.

(continued next page)

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Alternatives to Pesticides (continued from previous page)



Japanese Rose

Kerria Japonica is in full bloom now, its nearly-bare green branches covered in cheerful yellow pom-poms. This perennial grows in sun to part shade (the one shown is in shade, just underneath a large post oak tree). It grows 4-6 feet tall, and is at least as wide as it is tall.

Japanese rose is a beautiful shrub, but is best in a casual setting: It refuses to be manicured into a specific shape.

Beneficial nematodes are microscopic roundworms that feast upon everything from termites and fleas to grubworms and Colorado potato beetles. They enter body cavities of the pests, lay eggs, then the young'uns eat there way out-and you thought poisons were a horrible way to die.

These are just a few from the multitude of beneficial insects, and these you can buy at the better nurseries throughout the metroplex. They come with easy distribution instructions.

Don't forget spiders. They may look mean, but except for the brown recluse and black widow, they leave people alone and catch and eats insects. Also, fireflies are another beneficial insect, and not just because they shine prettily. They eat snails and slugs, amongst other pests. Pity you can't buy these. Pesticides have cut their numbers down in the last few decades. That is one point to be made. If you use beneficial insects, definitely don't use pesticides. You'll just kill off your new friends and pest controllers.

There are other forms of non-toxic pest controllers available. *Bacillus Thuringiensis* (just call it Bt) is a beneficial bacteria that is sprayed to kill caterpillars. Another type of Bt kills mosquitoes. There is a growth controller available that can be used to control fleas indoors. It keeps the fleas from becoming adults, so they don't reproduce. There's a fire ant bait that's made from cow manure that's new on the market, and there are more such insect controllers of various types coming on the market each year.

Here are some non-toxic pesticides, to be used as a spot spray, or on a wider scale if you are not using beneficial insects. The first is called diatomaceous earth (DE), which is the skeletal remains of microscopic sea creatures that lived millions of years ago. These skeletons have ultra-sharp edges that essentially scratch the insects to death. Don't bother with the swimming pool variety of DE. That's been treated where the edges are no longer sharp. Pyrethrum is a relatively non-toxic (to animals) pesticide that is sometimes added to DE. It is made from a type of chrysanthemum.

Weeds are another type of pest we can all do without. One simple way to control many weeds is to spot-spray them vinegar during the heat of the day. Standard 10% vinegar works well, but 20% vinegar (you can find this at some nurseries) works even better. This is an indiscriminate plant killer, so be careful which plants you spray.

These are just a few non-toxic (except to the bugs and weeds) ways to control pests in and around your house. There are other benefits as well. You don't have to worry about your kids or pets rolling around in poisons when they play in the yard, or getting into where the pesticides are stored. Not having those toxins around the house can in and of itself be one less source of worry.

There's one last item. Unless you use the bug zappers for your evening's entertainment, unplug them and take them down. It seems that some people have researched these things and found that the zappers do a much better job of attracting beneficial insects than they do of zapping mosquitoes.

Club Notes

We are very pleased to announce that April will also include a **field trip to Patsy Rosen's Iris Garden**, where we can see her irises in bloom. Patsy will also be our guest speaker in April. The field trip is tentatively scheduled for April 24, which is the Saturday before our normal monthly meeting. Please mark your calendars. If the date changes due to weather (spring seems a bit early this year, and we want to make sure there are blooms to see) we will let you know. Details will be sent out to members via an early newsletter or postcard.

If you have not paid your **2004 dues**, please do so now. Next month's newsletter mailing will be based on the latest member list.



Sources:

<http://citybugs.tamu.edu/FastSheets/Ent-1001.html>

<http://www.msue.msu.edu/msue/imp/mod02/01500544.html>

<http://insects.tamu.edu/extension/buletins/l-1783.html> (picture)

Creature Feature: Carpenter Ants

By Doug Brown

The early spring and late winter are typically the times these pests are noticed. This is the mating season for all types of ants and they emerge to mate and form new colonies. The presence of winged ants inside a building is typically a sign that there is a nest in the structure.

During mating season, carpenter ants can easily be identified by their two pairs of wings and relatively large size. They also tend to be one of the largest ants in Texas. Of the 18 Texas species, the most common indoor carpenter ant is 1/4-3/8 inch-long with a black tail and a reddish-brown head and thorax. Other features are a pinched waist, elbowed antennae (termites have straight antennae), and a single bump between the abdomen and thorax.

Carpenter ants do not eat wood and while not typically destructive to homes, they can be quite a nuisance. Texas carpenter ants like to nest in voids around doors and windows and in walls. Generally they prefer existing cavities and do not excavate, so their nests tend to be smaller. Carpenter ants in the Northwest and Northeast tend to be far more destructive.

Ants of all types are opportunistic feeders and invade homes looking for food sources. As most ants do, carpenter ants look for food in the kitchen or where food is eaten or stored. And they prefer sweet or greasy foods.



Carpenter ant.

What attracts carpenter ants is wet wood, so the underlying issue is the water leak causing the wet wood. More important than killing the carpenter ants is the need to correct the leak. Don't be pressured into buying a long-term treatment program by a pest control company that does nothing to locate the nest and fix the true cause. One way to track the nest is to look for frass, which is the wood shavings and other materials excavated from the nest. It is usually in a small pile at the base of a wall, pushed out a small hole, which sometimes leads directly to the nest chamber. Also getting outside with a flashlight on a warm night may help find the track of ants. They will typically be on trees, wires, or fences.

Carpenter ant control requires a minimum of two things: correct the defects in the structure to deny them a home and then correct the defects to deny access.

Look over your house for water-damaged wood and correct the cause. Pay close attention to areas where pipes or vents go through walls or near toilets, bathtubs, or showers. Caulk or weather strip around openings to the outside such as windows and doors. Check the flashing around chimneys, standpipes, or other roof vents. Trim any trees growing close to the home, especially those overhanging the roof.

Using bait will help you determine where the ants are coming from, inside or out. Since carpenter ants like sweet and greasy foods, one recipe from the web has two parts jelly and one part cheap dog or cat food for a total less than half a cup. Place the bait where you have seen the ants, but safe from pets and children.

Once the ants have discovered and are regularly feeding from your bait, put out new bait but mix in a tablespoon of boric acid per cup of bait. The ants will carry the "poisoned" bait back to the colony, share the food, and eventually the colony should be destroyed. Peanut butter or molasses may be used instead of the jelly and pet food. If they are not responding to one type of bait, try another. At sometimes of the year, protein is more desired than sweet.

If this hasn't helped then you need to consider a more vigorous control program or hiring a professional.

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The Ladybug's Calendar (April 2004)

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
21-Mar	22-Mar	23-Mar	24-Mar	25-Mar	26-Mar	27-Mar
		OGCFW: Dr. Edit Pewitt, Growing House Plants Organically; 7 PM		 AOGC Meeting: 7 PM Amanda Vanhoozier -- Coppell Community Gardens DOGC: Speaker: Greg Grant; 6:30 PM City of Arlington: Yardwise Class; 7-9 PM		DOS Field Trip: Mineral Wells Area; Bat World & Boudreau Herb Farm; 9-4 FWBG: Ft. Worth Orchid Society Sale NPSTX: Propagation class; 10-3
28-Mar	29-Mar	30-Mar	31-Mar	1-Apr	2-Apr	3-Apr
						DOGC Plant Sale FWBG: Garden Club Flower Show; 12-5 FWBG: Spring Festival in Japanese Garden; 10-5
4-Apr	5-Apr	6-Apr	7-Apr	8-Apr	9-Apr	10-Apr
FWBG: Garden Club Flower Show; 1-5 FWBG: Spring Festival in Japanese Garden; 12-5			Ladies of the Garden Organic Class (Free); 5208 Hidden Oaks Ln., Arlington; 7 PM	BRIT: David Stahle, The Cross Timbers Project; 7PM		
11-Apr	12-Apr	13-Apr	14-Apr	15-Apr	16-Apr	17-Apr
			Ladies of the Garden Organic Class (Free); at Designs in Nature Nursery; 7 PM		DA: Southern Living Gardening School; 9:30-3:30	TDG: Earthfest for the Metroplex; 10-3 DA: Garden Gallery; 10-5 FWBG: Spring Plant Sale; 10-2 FWBG: Iris Show; 1-5
18-Apr	19-Apr	20-Apr	21-Apr	22-Apr	23-Apr	24-Apr
DA: Garden Gallery; 10-5			Ladies of the Garden Organic Class (Free); Green Mama's; 7 PM	DOGC: Speaker TBA; 6:30 PM		 AOGC Field Trip: Patsy Rosen's Iris Garden FWBG: EarthKind™ Rose Symposium; 9-5 FWBG: Flowercade; 12-5
25-Apr	26-Apr	27-Apr	28-Apr	29-Apr	30-Apr	1-May
FWBG: Flowercade; 1-5		OGCFW: Sonny Hines, Wild Birds in your Backyard; 7 PM		 AOGC Meeting: 7 PM Patsy Rosen -- Irises		FWBG: Bonsai Show and Sale; TBA

AOGC: Arlington Organic Garden Club meets at 7 PM at the Bob Duncan Community Center, 2800 S. Center St., Arlington, TX. <http://www.aogc.org>
 BRIT: Botanical Research Institute of Texas meets at 7 PM in the Ft Worth Botanic Gardens, 3220 Botanic Garden Blvd, Ft. Worth, TX. <http://www.brit.org>
 DA: Dallas Arboretum is located at 8617 Garland Road, Dallas, TX. <http://www.dallasarboretum.org>
 DOGC: Dallas Organic Garden Club meets at 6:30 PM (lecture starts at 7) in the King of Glory Lutheran Church, 6411 LBJ Hwy, Dallas, TX. <http://www.dogc.org>
 DOS: Denton Organic Society meets at 7 PM on the third Wednesday of the month at the UNT Environmental Sciences Building, West Hickory and Avenue D, Denton, TX.
 FWBG: Ft. Worth Botanic Garden is located at 3220 Botanic Garden Boulevard, Fort Worth, TX.
 NPSTX: Native Plant Society of Texas meets at 7 PM on the first Thursday of every month at the Ft. Worth Botanic Gardens. <http://txnativeplants.org>
 OGCFW: Organic Garden Club of Ft. Worth meets at 7 PM at the Ft. Worth Botanic Gardens, 3220 Botanic Garden Blvd, Ft. Worth, TX. <http://www.organicgardenclubfw.org>
 TDG: Texas Discovery Gardens at Fair Park is located at 3601 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Dallas TX. <http://www.texasdiscoverygardens.com>

address correction requested



Next meeting. . .

Thursday, March 25, 2004

7:00 pm refreshments, meeting starts at 7:30

Amanda Vanhoozier – Coppell Community Garden



Club Information

Membership dues: \$20/year (individual or family) – membership year begins in January.

Join/renew at any meeting, or send check to return address above.

Meetings are last Thursday of the month (January – October, except June garden show on third Saturday)

- Doors open at 7 pm for refreshments, meeting begins at 7:30 pm
- Open to the public unless meeting is designated “members only”
- Awesome prizes are raffled off at each meeting!
- 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 -