

# The Seedling

*Newsletter of the Northwest Louisiana Master Gardeners Association*

*An Affiliate of LSU Ag Center*

[www.nwlamg.org](http://www.nwlamg.org)

Vol.11 No.4

July/August 2008

## MG ACTIVITIES

### LE TOUR DES JARDINS

2008's Le Tour boasted gorgeous weather, almost 2,000 happy tourists and (at press time) a profit of \$18,900, some \$5,000 more than in 2007.

At a wrap-up meeting in late May, chair Alycia Bellah thanked committee chairs and head garden guides for their hard work. Committee chairs expressed satisfaction with the tour and made suggestions for next year.

**Janette Miller:** A major change, the relocation of vendors to the Pioneer Heritage Center at LSUS, proved successful. Some 1,400 people visited the 13 vendors. Free security was provided by the university, and parking was more than adequate. Marty Young, PHC director, hopes to staff the center's houses next year so that they can be open.

**Dona Anders:** Garden selection should be done earlier than autumn, when gardens are not at their best.

**Harvetta Colvin:** Comcast taped a 30-minute show publicizing the tour and broadcast it several times. And it created a public service announcement for local television stations.

**Sara Burroughs:** Members sold 1,255 tickets and Citizens' Banks sold 65 before the tour, and 618 tickets were sold at the gardens (229 at the Robinson garden) – a total of 1,938.

**Ruth Schlichtemier:** Almost 1,200 cups of lemonade were served at the Lipscomb garden.

**Brenda McCart:** Two of the artists who set up easels in the gardens have said they will return.

### A GUIDE'S REPORT

Half the fun of being a garden guide during Le Tour des Jardins is talking to the people and learning things you didn't know. I was at Jane Lipscomb's gazebo garden, the most unusual plant in my area was bear's britches, aka acanthus. This impressive herbaceous perennial with long dark green arching leaves and a spike of purple white flowers stole the show. Some of the folks were familiar with it and some not, but it definitely elicited more dialogue than any of the other plants.

The most interesting thing I learned came from Melvin Simmons, who said that the acanthus was used for the capitals of the Corinthian columns in ancient Greece. After looking it up on the internet, I found that this design was made more elaborate by the Romans and continued being used in medieval and Renaissance artwork, particularly in sculpture, wood carving and friezes. Who knew?

The best thing about Le Tour is that it gives people permission to be outside and to take in the beauty of gardens they would never have the opportunity to see if it were not for the Northwest Louisiana Master Gardeners. They visit with friends, drink lemonade and eat cookies just as people used to do not so long ago.

- **Harriet Daggett**
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## PLANT SALE

Angel trumpets, trees and shrubs were the fastest sellers at the April plant sale, which turned a profit of \$6,440, according to chairman Michele Wiener. More than 40 Master Gardeners donated some 955 plants for the sale, and the rest came from the greenhouse. About 20 MGs worked on Friday before the sale, and about 30 on Saturday.

“I got there at 7 a.m. Saturday, and there were already customers waiting to buy,” Wiener said. The sale was scheduled to begin at 8 a.m. but customers were already checking out 10 minutes before that.

Changes for next year’s sale, set for April 4, 2009, may include propagation of hydrangeas and native hibiscus. Wiener would like to see classes for Master Gardeners on what and when to propagate during the year.

## BULB SALE COMING

Last year Molly Rankin and I wondered if people in our area were interested in planting the old southern bulbs found in cemeteries and vacant country homes. The results of our first bulb sale last fall amazed even us! The project was a complete sell-out, with most bulbs gone within the first two hours. In fact, more than 4,000 bulbs were sold that morning. It seems these old favorites are in big demand and not readily available on the retail market.

For the Sept. 27, 2008, sale, we plan to offer many of the same wonderful old bulbs along with some we were unable to find last year. Several of you have already been on bulb digs for heirloom daffodils in our area. Molly has a plant nursery full of rare white spider lilies waiting to be dug, and we have found a grower for oxblood (schoolhouse) lilies, tiger lilies, and hardy glads in two new colors – Parrot (red-yellow) and White Texas Snow Flurry. I loved watching all my new bulbs come to life this spring and can’t wait to see the surprises this fall. Who says Christmas only comes once a year?

The success of the sale still depends largely on the bulbs donated by you, the Master Gardeners. **We need your extra bulbs for this year’s sale!** Most bulbs will bloom better if they are not too crowded – hence the need to dig and divide after several years. The trick is being able to FIND them after the foliage dies, so please don’t forget to mark the site. We will be able to store your donated bulbs in the Carriage House after the middle of August. There will be lots of volunteer opportunities to help package the bulbs during August and September.

If you plan to divide your flowering bulbs and donate the extras for the sale, here are a few guidelines:

**Tropical Bulbs**, such as spider lilies, crinum, rain lilies, crocosmia, St. Joseph’s lilies, Philippine/Formosa lilies, amaryllis – Mark the site of your bulbs while the foliage is still visible and harvest in August.

**Dutch Bulbs**, such as daffodils, snowflakes, Dutch iris – Harvest when the foliage dies or mark the site and harvest later. You may also harvest and replant in containers until the foliage dies.

Harvested bulbs can be stored in paper bags and kept in a dry place at room temperature (70 – 90 degrees). For additional questions about specific bulbs, please contact Denyse Cummins.

The September sale will start at 9 a.m., so we won’t need to set up before dawn this year. Remember, time spent digging and preparing bulbs can be counted as volunteer hours.

Since one repeated suggestion from last year was, “Get more bulbs,” the Bulb Sale Committee is on a mission to do just that. We’re all looking forward to a bigger and better sale this September.

- **Mary Catherine Googe**

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### ON THEIR SHOULDERS

In 1998 the first class of Northwest Louisiana Master Gardeners graduated. Some of those members – Virginia Cathey, Wendy Kelly, Mary Lipsey, Don and Lou Osborn, Sue Crow, Janet Creech, May Elizabeth Berry, Mel Johnson and James Willett – are still active in our organization.

May Elizabeth Berry sent an email describing what that first class was like. “After graduation we took up a ‘love offering’ at each meeting because we had no money to operate on. At Dr. White’s suggestion I wrote my first and only grant request. It was to Shreveport Green. They approved our request and we got \$500. This was the ‘seed money’ from which Le Tour des Jardins grew. And as they say, ‘The rest is history.’”

Ten years later our organization has over 150 members and over \$40,000 in the bank, and Le Tour just finished the year by raising almost \$20,000. We have our own headquarters in the Carriage House, a working and instructional greenhouse, a popular seminar series for the general public, several wonderful public gardens and community gardens throughout town that we have built and continue to maintain, and a bulb sale and plant sale that educate and delight area gardeners. We are adding interesting and helpful projects annually, so this laundry list is ever growing.

As I look back over the two years I was fortunate enough to be your president, I cannot help appreciating those who came before me. Every year in the last 10 there have been Master Gardeners working to grow our organization. I reflect upon my good luck to have come behind former president Randa Durham and her fiscally sound, hard-working administration that left us with enough money to accomplish so much. I think that financial base launched a new era for our organization and certainly allowed us to expand our horizon.

I thank each and every Master Gardener for allowing me to be your president. It has been so enjoyable and added so much to my life. I could not have asked for a better executive committee and board. They have always been positive and ready to do whatever needed to be done. Working with Denyse Cummins has been a great experience, and watching Grace Peterson develop NWLAMG into new and exciting areas has been a joy. I’ve had a grand ole time. I look forward to being a civilian and helping the next administration achieve their vision. I leave you with great expectations. Adieu.

- **Judy Roemer**

## GREEN THINGS

Amaryllis species and hybrids (Amaryllidaceae family, genus *Hippeastrum*), grown from bulbs, have long been a favorite flowering plant in U.S. homes. What Americans have called an amaryllis for many years is actually a *Hippeastrum*. These plants are native to the tropical areas of Brazil, where they are considered more of an evergreen perennial. The flowering bulbs belonging to the genus *Amaryllis* are native to South Africa and vary from *Hippeastrum* by differences in their inflorescence. These are not used commercially as *Hippeastrum*.

In subtropical climates (USDA Hardiness Zones 7b through 8) *Hippeastrum* bulbs flower naturally during April and May. Foliage matures and slowly fades during the summer. In the autumn the bulbs go dormant (whether this is true dormancy is a subject of debate) until emergence of leaves and usually two buds per bulb each spring. Dormancy can be imposed by harvesting the bulbs, shipping temperatures, storage temperatures or drought. Most of the *Hippeastrum* grown commercially for forcing are hybrids but there are numerous species and hybrids that should be reconsidered for their use

as both flowering pot plants and landscape plants. Some of these bulbs have been grown in Southern landscapes for years and are often referred to as the “Lily of the South.”

*Hippeastrum x johnsonii*, or Saint Joseph’s lily, has a bright red flower with a thin white stripe down the center of each petal. A close relative is the ‘Voodoo Lily’ (Naughty Lady). They are variety names. Many of the more popular hybrids used as flowering potted plants will also do well in the landscape. These plants require a well-drained soil and full sun for best growth.

The sale of *Hippeastrum* bulbs for forcing occurs in late August and early September. The bulbs can be marketed as “dry bulbs” to be potted in soil or gravel by home-owners or sold in ready-to-plant kits where the bulb, pot and soil are sold in a decorative box. The plants can also be sold as a finished flowering pot plant for use in the home, office or in a large commercial interior display. Whether the plants are sold as flowering pot plants or as a dormant bulb to be forced, they have a high dollar value.

*Hippeastrum* bulbs are planted in pots in October through January for production as potted plants. There is simultaneous emergence of four leaves and a 12-inch flowering stalk. The average forcing time to market stage is three to five weeks. Bulb grades for commercial use are 20/22, 22/24, 26/28, 30/32 and 32/up centimeters in circumference. Flowering is regulated by bulb size (diameter or circumference and not by weight) with a minimum size of 20 centimeters (8 inches) in circumference.

The environments for bulb production and storage vary between growers and by the country in which they are produced. Bulbs produced in the Netherlands, Israel, South Africa and Brazil are harvested at different times of the year, resulting in storage times and temperatures that vary. These differences in harvesting have had a positive impact by providing a greater availability of bulbs at reduced prices. However, these differences have also increased the variability in growth and flowering during forcing. Because these bulbs are brought out of storage for forcing or for sale as a dormant bulb, emergence and flowering may be highly variable.

Growers should pay careful attention to where the bulbs originated and the storage conditions they were exposed to before they were delivered. If bulbs are going to be stored prior to forcing, the storage temperature should not exceed 48°F and they should not be stored for more than 15 weeks. The minimum storage temperature is 41°F, which causes more rapid emergence and flowering. Different varieties will respond differently to storage times and temperatures.

High temperatures during forcing (77F-86F) hasten development and elongation of the leaves and increase growth of bulbs, but may prevent flowering. Low temperatures (54F-63F) cause the leaves to unfold and elongate slowly and bulbs are slow to enlarge with little floral development. Temperatures of 63F-75F induce intermediate vegetative growth and bulb enlargement and optimum flower emergence. Research has found that there is no effect of day length on growth and flowering.

- **Jeff Kuehny**, LSU AgCenter

## POTPOURRI

### CULTIVATING KNOWLEDGE

My favorite picture is of my grandmother leaning down over a tender tomato plant amidst a field of green growing things with me standing at her side holding her old tried and true garden hoe. She used the same hoe blade for most of my life, lovingly sharpening it each spring of those 30-something years. Yes, it was considerably shorter than the ones you are used to seeing. Thirty years of filing had reshaped it to just the right sharp-cornered rectangular form to get to those pesky weeds that like to nestle close to your prized vegetable stem. Hers was a cruelly accurate yet gentle magical tool with a handle worn smooth by years of tending.

My grandmother grew everything. She also cooked, canned and preserved everything. Supper always included various vegetables fresh from the garden or from the winter stockpile in the deep freezer. Summer evenings were not complete until the youngest child (usually me) was sent out into the garden to collect the meal's accompaniment of fresh sweet and hot peppers, sweet onions, cucumbers, and tomatoes, all of which would be sliced and beautifully arrayed in a colorful, enticing montage on a white china platter. You know the kind of display that transports your small dinner table into a fine restaurant somewhere. The kind that made you feel sad for those who only had 5-a-day.

Our vegetable garden was bigger than our back yard. It was big enough to hold a large house and still have room to play. Perfectly straight dirt rows mounded up, topped with healthy vibrant plants of corn, squash, peppers, peas, carrots, okra, eggplants, cucumbers, beets, onions, garlic, watermelons, beans, potatoes, you name it. We had our very own produce market ripe for the picking most of the year. There is nothing more delicious than a carrot sweet from the soil or a tomato still warm from the sun. Whatever we wanted could be found right there among those green rows.

Warm evenings were spent carrying the galvanized bucket of weeds from the turn-row to the compost. Then my grandmother and I would sit on the swing or at the picnic table shelling peas or some other lazy chore while patiently allowing the water hose to soak the furrows of each line before moving on to the next. Many late nights were spent running out every 20 minutes to move the hose with a flashlight. Goodness cannot be rushed.

The garden was not just a thing or a place; it was a state of mind. The words "I'm going to the garden" invoked an irresistible excitement that drew me out the door to see what was going on out there. The breeze was always cooler, the scent sweeter in the garden. Silence was savored in the rhythmic chop of a hoe or the yielding tug of a weed between my fingers. Slowly moving through a forest of okra and corn stalks was the most delightful game. Feeling the warm earth clinging to the new red potatoes was the perfect appetizer for the creamy sauce dinner they promised later. Don't get me wrong; my grandmother had more than an ample supply of roses, hydrangeas and other old-time beauties surrounding the house. But her truest joy was in the enchanted vegetable garden.

Now I am an adult, and she has gone on to her Master's garden. I look at our picture and thank her for silently teaching me how to break down and rebuild furrows, how to carefully plant a row of seeds, how to thin out crops, how to tie and hang up onions to dry, how to sharpen tools, and how to enjoy life while working up a sweat. I did not learn everything, but I do have the confidence to keep learning. I have her name, her patience and her tenacity. I have the same dark earth running through my veins. We are gardeners, and flowers will never be enough.

**Mary Dumars**

## **BLOOMS ON WALLS**

If the heat of summer is getting to you and your garden, go to the R.W. Norton Art Gallery for some flowers that will continue blooming through July – on the walls.

The 58 works in "Blossom: Art of Flowers" are in a variety of media: oil, colored pencil, graphite, watercolor and etching. They depict flowers that won't appear together in any garden: hydrangeas, dahlias, hibiscus, roses, sunflowers, hyacinths, columbines, orchids, daisies, peonies, thistles, angel trumpets, tulips, mock oranges, poppies, banana flowers, camellias, rhododendrons and cactus flowers.

Some are still lifes, with the flowers demurely in vases. Others are close-ups of a single flower, so large on canvas that the viewer steps back to take it in. One painting features a newspaper clipping about the reunion of siblings separated for 65 years; two flowers, stems crossed, are placed beside it. Some flowers appear in landscapes; my own favorite is a cactus flower with Big Bend scenery in the background.

Not all the depictions are conventionally beautiful. A couple of the works show sunflowers gone to seed (one is called "I Am the Dung on Which These Flowers Grew"), and there's a weedish masterwort I found unappealing.

"Blossom: Art of Flowers" offers the tops in a juried competition that drew 1,740 entries. It will be at the Norton, 4747 Creswell, through Aug. 3. Hours are 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesday-Friday and 1-5 p.m. weekends.

- **Sara Burroughs**

# KITCHEN SINK

## RATATOUILLE

2 medium eggplants	2 large zucchini, sliced
4 or 5 tsp. of olive oil	1 ½ lb ripe tomatoes, seeded, peeled, chopped
Large onion, sliced	2 yellow squash, sliced
2 or 3 garlic cloves	1 T. herbes de Provence
Large red or yellow pepper, seeded and cut into strips	salt and freshly ground black pepper

Preheat the grill. Cut the eggplants into slices and brush each side with olive oil. Grill on each side until lightly browned. Cut the slices into cubes. Heat one T. of olive oil in large, heavy saucepan, and cook the onion over medium low heat for 10 minutes until lightly golden; stir frequently. Add the garlic and pepper strips and cook 10 more minutes.

Add the tomatoes, eggplant cubes and dried herbs. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Simmer gently, covered, over a low heat for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. Uncover and continue cooking for a further 20-25 minutes, stirring now and then, until the vegetables are tender and the cooking liquid has thickened slightly. Serve hot or at room temperature.

- **Kristiane Gavin**

## FRESH TOMATO SALAD

5 tomatoes, diced  
Onion, chopped  
Cucumber, sliced  
Green pepper, chopped  
½ cup chopped fresh basil  
½ cup chopped parsley  
2 tablespoons crushed garlic  
2 tablespoons white wine vinegar

In a large bowl, combine and toss all ingredients. Add salt and pepper to taste. Chill and serve.

- **Mildred Smith**

## LETTUCE WRAPS

2 very ripe avocados  
3 tomatoes, diced, 2 T. yellow onion, diced  
½ jalapeno pepper, diced  
3 cloves fresh garlic, minced  
¼ cup fresh cilantro, chopped  
Kernels of one ear of raw organic corn  
2 tsp. fresh lime juice  
6 to 8 large romaine lettuce leaves

In a medium sized bowl, mash the avocados. Add remaining ingredients and stir until well mixed. Spread two or three tablespoons of the mixture onto lettuce leaves and wrap. Enjoy!

- **Mildred Smith**