

The Seedling

Newsletter of the Northwest Louisiana Master Gardeners Association

An Affiliate of LSU Ag Center

www.nwlamg.org

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Thanks so much for the opportunity of serving as your president this year. I am surprised to be in this role but so far so good. We are all blessed with a talented executive committee and committed board of directors, not to mention the committee chairmen who spend many hours making NWLAMG a great organization. We have many new ideas, some of which we hope to implement with your help.

One new initiative that we have adopted is a one-time amnesty for past Master Gardeners who have allowed their memberships to lapse. NWLAMG has been in existence almost 10 years. During that time we have moved our offices three times, been homeless for a time and generally gone through the growing pains that plague any new organization. Also, many Master Gardeners, not realizing that going inactive for a time was an option, let their memberships lapse due to short-term personal or business demands. Some of those folks have inquired as to how they can be a part of NWLAMG again. In response we have instituted this amnesty program. In September we will be sending out letters to all Master Gardeners who are no longer a part of our organization. If you know anyone in that group, please pass the word.

Let me mention some of the new projects coming up in this year. In addition to Le Tour, Extreme Garden Makeover and the plant sale will be the landscaping of the front gardens at Randle T. Moore and the World of Gardening Series of Lectures. In December we will have a very special awards presentation and Christmas Party to honor Master Gardeners who have really gone above and beyond in serving our organization. In the

spring we look forward to the National Master Gardeners Convention in Little Rock.

A world of talent exists within NWLAMG. Just this week I have met with a computer whiz, a caterer, an accountant, a thespian and a personal trainer. All of these folks from their diverse backgrounds are a great resource for our organization. If you have not yet found your niche within NWLAMG, I urge you to get involved. Together we have the power to do great things for our community and have lots of fun in the process.

All of your ideas and thoughts are welcome. You can reach me at 465-0000 or judyroemer@mail.com. Looking forward to hearing from you.

- **Judy Roemer**

MG ACTIVITIES

CASTOR PROJECT

Northwest Louisiana Master Gardeners' recent donation to the Castor Festival Committee for plants made possible the landscaping around a new "Welcome to Castor" sign. The flowers, purchased from Tom's Nursery in Friendship, are in shades of blue and yellow, complementing the sign's colors. Master Gardeners Virginia Cathey and Randa Durham were resources for information and advice.

The festival site is on the Louisiana Trail, and the committee had earlier planted crepe myrtle trees along the trail. Each year after the November festival, improvements are made. The trail is a former railroad

line, and the soil is hard with rocks and concrete; only bermuda grass was growing there. The committee killed the grass around the sign and then got prison trustee labor from the Bienville Parish Sheriff's Department to do the tilling. Then they hauled in manure, leaves and pine straw to improve the soil.

With a borrowed tiller they loosened soil to a depth of about a foot. Last spring they installed two large pots of

Mona Lavender Plectranthus, purple eye, marigolds, light blue verbena, day lilies, melampodium and purple petunias. So far they have installed only annuals and perennials; more permanent plants may come later.

The final step was the addition of drip irrigation, with lines connected to an existing water meter, courtesy of the Village of Castor.

- **Mary Hamner**



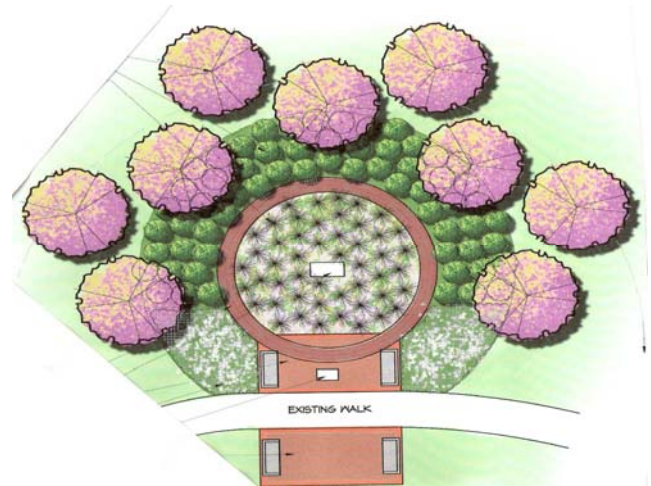
Sunshine Williams and Sally Gray of Festival Committee at Castor Welcome Marker

PINK RIBBON GARDEN

Help will be needed to prepare beds and install plants at the Pink Ribbon Garden in Betty Virginia Park in September, according to Penny Durham, project director. She hopes for a dedication in October, which is Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

Pink granite stone has been ordered, and the "slab" that will hold the pavers and other tributes should be poured soon. Jeff Carbo of Alexandria, landscape architect, has provided a plan that has been approved by the city; Penny says it will need adjustments because money to

buy twice the number of trees in the plans has already been received.



Shown here are nine crape myrtle trees, Indian hawthorn in the large circle and gulf coast muhly grass (which has pink blooms) in the middle. The red inner circle is the memorial brick path; outside the circle will be pink and white coneflowers. Gray rectangles are benches (area below the existing path is for expansion).

GREEN THINGS

DIVIDE AND CONQUER

Hot or not, August [and September] is a good time to divide crowded spring-flowering perennials and bulbs. Dividing is an excellent way to increase your supply of favorite plants or to share plants with others, and it can rejuvenate old plants that have lost vigor.

Mature perennials that have expanded with new side growth may not bloom well in the centers because of crowding and competition with the surrounding roots. The same problem can occur with bulbs that have multiplied and become crowded. Daisies, daffodils, irises, daylilies, coreopsis, coneflowers, blanket flowers (gaillardia), cannas, violets, liriopse and ajuga are among the spring-flowering perennials that should be divided in late summer or early fall.

If the plant is healthy and you want to have more like it, you can remove the outer sections with a sharp spade or

knife. Before cutting, loosen the soil around the sections to be removed. Be sure you have roots and growth buds on each section. To dig up the entire clump, loosen the soil around and under it with a garden fork; then gently lift the plant. Remove or trim damaged or dead areas, including roots. If the center of the clump has stopped blooming, cut it away and discard it. Before digging bulbs or rhizomatous plants, clip the foliage to a height of 6 to 9 inches with sharp pruning shears or scissors.

Rhizomatous plants should be cut into sections with a sharp knife. If clumps of other types of plants are small, the sections usually can be pulled apart by hand. Separate large clumps with a sharp spade or garden fork. Replant the divisions as quickly as possible so that they do not dry out.

- **H.S. Stevens**, in *Dallas Morning News*, August 27, 2004

READING AHEAD

THE NAMING OF NAMES

The Naming of Names: The Search for Order in the World of Plants by Anna Pavord. Bloomsbury, 2005.

Anna Pavord's previous books are modestly titled: *Border Book*, *Plant Partners*, *Foliage*, *The New Kitchen Garden*, and *The Tulip*; only the last one prepares a reader for the stunning accomplishment she calls *The Naming of Names*. It is a 2000-year history of the classification of plants, starting in the third century B.C. and ending in the early 18th century, just before Carl Linnaeus assigned binomial labels (genus and species) to plants. She celebrates the plantmen (until the late 17th century, the word "botanist" did not exist) on whose shoulders Linnaeus stood.

The book is framed by two questions asked by Pavord's first hero, the Greek Theophrastus, 3rd century B.C.E. student of Aristotle: "What have we got?" And "How do we differentiate between these things?" He was the first to list and describe plants not used by doctors, the first to suggest divisions; his were trees, shrubs, sub-shrubs and herbs. To Theophrastus we owe the names of the peony, narcissus, iris, crocus, anemone.

Her heroes are not exactly household names. After Theophrastus, there are illustrator Hans Weiditz, 16th century, who produced the first lifelike drawings for a book; William Turner, 16th century, first compiler of a

list of English plants; Lobelius, 16th century Flanders scholar, who tried to organize plants by the form of the leaf (and so distinguished between monocotyledon and dicotyledon); and Thomas Johnson, 17th century English apothecary, editor and organizer of plant expeditions.

Her favorite seems to be the reclusive Englishman John Ray, who, after 30 years of travel, study and comparison, dying of gangrene in 1705, answered Theophrastus' question about differentiation. Rejecting habitat and usefulness as standards, he set up six rules that are the foundation of plant taxonomy. For example, "characteristics of a group must be clearly defined and not rely on comparison (no more 'bigger than box')," and "characteristics must be obvious and easy to grasp." Ray also coined the word "petal" and so distinguished petals from leaves.

Pavord tells her story against a background of war and revolution, exploration and upheaval. To her Baghdad means not insurgents and bombs but a center of horticultural learning and experimentation in the 9th and 10th centuries; trade routes to the east mean the importation of tulips, daffodils and iris (easy to transport as bulbs); the discovery of the New World means a huge influx of plants to Europeans, among them tobacco, tomato, corn, pumpkin, yucca, sunflower, watermelon and strawberry; England's civil war is noted only because Thomas Johnson lost his life in it.

Unlike most scholars, Pavord frequently describes personal experiences: visiting John Ray's grave in a village called Black Notley, studying in the Cambridge University library, flying over Guyana's rain forest, seeking traces of Theophrastus in Athens. How can you not like a writer who, riding in the mountains of Kazakhstan in search of plants, mutters an apology to the flowers as her horse squashes yellow Juno iris? It is a flower she had seen before only once, at the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew.

- **Sara Burroughs**

DEADLINE FOR NOV./DEC. SEEDLING IS SEPT. 30

Send fall vegetable recipes, ideas for preparing your yard or garden for the winter, and – omigosh! – it's time to think about the holidays.