



January/February 2008 Volume 7; Issue 1

M. Bloomers

A Garden Journal

It's Winter - Now What? ...M'Randa Sandlin, Horticulturist

It seems when most people think of gardening they think of a lush, well pruned spring and summer display of their favorite plants. Here we are - with winter in full effect, now what? I suggest you take a few **T.R.I.P.S.** to get you on the right path.

Tidy - Take time these next few months to rake up your fallen leaves and do some winter weeding. Weeds are the ultimate survivors. Although many of your perennials may be dormant, that does not mean your weeds are! Because your flower beds are as bare as they will be all year, utilize this time to really get in there and do some serious cleaning.

Rest - Let's face it, after a long growing season and two major holidays in a row, you are tired! Enjoy these two months with minimal work in the flowerbeds.

Irrigate - Although most of your plants are "sleeping" they would still appreciate an occasional drink of water.

Your bulbs that are starting to pop up will love it, too! The weather is cool, so water is not evaporating as quickly and plants are not losing much water through transpiration be-

cause of their dormant state. Be sure that you are not over-watering.

Prune - February is the time to start pruning those roses. Remove any dead wood and freeze-injured areas. Cut back about 1/2 to 1/3 of the plants new growth. You will also want to reach in and thin out crowded areas with many crossing limbs.

Prune your grape vines and summer-blooming shrubs during this time as well.

Study - You wowed your friends last year with that beautiful garden...how are you going to do it this year? Take January and February to curl up with your favorite seed catalog and decided what to plant this coming season. Do some research as to what plants may be new in your area.

Most importantly, try to use plants that have similar cultural requirements (light, water and fertilization) in one bed. This will eliminate many common plant deaths and sicknesses.

I hope your **T.R.I.P.S.** this winter season set you up for a bountiful spring and summer. One final thought: plant both early and late blooming plants so you will have knockout color all season long!

"Good habits are not made on birthdays, nor Christian character at the New Year. The workshop of character is everyday life. The uneventful and commonplace hour is where the battle is lost or won.." - Author Unknown

Corn Gluten Meal ... Sharon Murry, Staff

A natural by-product of the wet corn milling process, corn gluten meal should not be confused with corn meal. It is regularly used in cattle, dog, fish, poultry and other animal feed because of its high protein content.

Corn gluten meal was discovered by Dr. Nick Christians of Iowa State University in the 1980's and a patent issued in 1991, that corn gluten meal may be used as a natural non-toxic pre-emergent herbicide. In our area, it can be applied in late February and March.

Used on lawns, corn gluten meal helps to reduce the establishment of dandelions, crabgrass, grass burrs and many other troublesome annual weeds. It works on seeds, not on established plants. It inhibits seed germination by drying out a seed as soon as it cracks open to sprout. It does not kill the existing weed; rather it keeps the weed seeds from further germination. However, tests have shown that if corn gluten is applied regularly, in the spring and fall, dandelion infestations have been reduced by 100% in a period of four years.

It is also a powerful natural fertilizer and will create large healthy weeds if you apply it

at the wrong time. The key is to apply the corn gluten meal before the weeds germinate. Broadcast it at a rate of 20 lbs. per 1000 sq ft. on your lawn. As a plant food, corn gluten has an N-P-K ratio of 9-1-0 or 10% nitrogen by weight.

Your vegetable garden can benefit, too. Applied to vegetable gardens after your vegetable seeds are up, have true leaves and well established plant roots, corn gluten meal acts as a fertilizer and weed control agent. The treatment will last 5-6 weeks. After this time seeds can be planted in the treated areas without being affected.

It is a good general fertilizer and weed control product around well established vegetables, flowers, fruit trees and shrubs. Corn gluten releases nutrients into the soil over a long period of time and results improve with repeated use. It will not work until wetted, so wet it down using a fine soft spray after applying. Consider it a natural "weed and feed". You may also use the same treatment on your lawn in early October or 4-5 weeks before cool season weeds emerge.

So as we're all trying to think more "green" - consider trying corn gluten meal in your garden this spring and reap the benefits!

By Popular Demand ... Tricia Barksdale, Petals 'n Bloomers

Petals 'n Bloomers is proud to present
an exciting floral luncheon in February!

*"A Tisket, A Tasket, Fill Up Your Easter Basket
Easter Floral Luncheon"*

Monday, February 25, 12:00 Noon

Luncheon includes a scrumptious meal prepared by Cafe' M. Bloomers followed by a floral design demonstration by Tricia Barksdale of Petals 'n Bloomers.

Each table is decorated differently to give you lots of ideas. \$22 pp.

For reservations, call 936.870.3277



My Newest Passion: Blue Plumbago ...M'Randa Sandlin, Horticulturist

Here at Martha's Bloomers we have carried blue **plumbago** for some time, but a recent trip to Central Florida allowed me to see these exuberant evergreens in a new light.

I have always thought of blue **plumbago** as a beautiful, free-form shrub that should be planted as a flowerbed's filler. Boy, was I wrong!! Not only had they used them as a filler plant, but as a focal point, formal shrub, mass planting, border and climbing vine. Upon some research into this versatile beauty, I discovered that it handles regular pruning like a champ and is deer resistant.

Now, before you get too excited and plant this guy everywhere, allow me to give you some of its cultural requirements to see if it is an appropriate plant for your landscape.

Cold Hardiness: Blue **plumbago** is hardy as a summer annual starting in Zone 6a, an herbaceous perennial beginning in Zone 8b and a woody shrub in Zones 10 and 11.

Sun: As a general statement, full sun to partial shade is required. To be more specific, full sun will lead to dense growth and partial shade will give you a more open growth form.

Soil: Blue **plumbago** does best in rich, well



drained soils with a pH from about 6.2 to 7.5. Although it will tolerate less fertile soils, it will become chlorotic (yellow) and will need nitrogen and manganese supplementation. Nitrogen and manganese can be found in any general fertilizer. Blue plumbago will not tolerate poorly drained, dense textured soils. This also means do not over water!!

Central Texas ranges from Zones 8a to 9a, so choose appropriate placement in a semi-protected area. We also have a large range of soil pH and texture, so be sure to do some research before you place this plant in your landscape. Do note that blue **plumbago** is tolerant of a planter life on your patio providing that you fertilize it once a month and do not over water.

What's Cooking at the Cafe...Melissa Kirk, Cafe' M. Bloomers

Enchanted Evening Dinner

Thursday, Feb. 14, 6 pm. \$23.99 pp

Choice of Soup or Salad - Tomato Bisque, French Onion Soup, Caesar Salad, Spinach Orange Salad, Garden Salad or Bleu Cheese and Apple Salad

Choice of -

Roast Beef Au Jus with a Horseradish Sauce, Garlic Mashed Potatoes and Roasted Vegetables or

Lemon & Herb Crusted Halibut, Vegetable Rice Pilaf and Steamed Squash or

Baked Chicken with Artichokes and Mushrooms, Vegetable Rice Pilaf and Fresh Garlic Green Beans

Dessert Selection

Triple Chocolate Cheesecake, NY Style Cheesecake with a Sauce Selection, Chocolate Truffle Pyramid, Bourbon Pecan Pie

Valentine Tea

Sunday, Feb. 10 from 2 pm - 4 pm. \$15 pp

Deviled Ham Toast

Egg Salad and Dill Tea Sandwiches

Cranberry Chicken Salad Sandwiches

Blueberry Scones, Apple Cinnamon Scones and

Raspberry White Chocolate Scones

Apple Streusel Cake

Chocolate Brownie Bites

Strawberry Shortcakes

*For tea, luncheon & dinner reservations
confirmed by credit card,
call Cafe' M. Bloomers at (936) 870-3277.*



Calendar of Events...

Saturday Seminars - (They're Free!)

"Why Organic?"

Saturday, February 2 at 11 am. Presented by Isaac Smuin, Natural Resources Group.

"To Prune or Not to Prune"

Saturday, February 16 at 11 am. Presented by John Warner, Texas Forest Service.

"Growing Success with Favorite Herbs"

Saturday, March 1 at 11 am. Presented by Ann Wheeler, founder Log House Herb Farm

Special Events

"Spring Landscaping and Planting Seminar"

Saturday, February 23 8 am—4 pm. Presented by Grimes County Master Gardeners.

\$35 per person (includes lunch)

For registration and info, call Grimes County Master Gardeners at 936.873.2181.

Information is also available at the following Navasota locations:

Grimes County Extension Office, Coufal-Prater and Martha's Bloomers.

Teas, Luncheons & Dinners

"Valentine Tea", Sunday, February 10 from 2 pm—4 pm. \$15 pp

"Enchanted Evening Dinner", Thursday, February 14, 6 pm. \$23.99 pp

"A Tisket, A Tasket, Fill Up Your Easter Basket Easter Floral Luncheon",

Monday, February 25, Noon. \$22 pp

*For tea, luncheon & dinner reservations confirmed by credit card,
call Café M. Bloomers at (936) 870-3277.*

For more information on our seminars, visit us at www.MarthasBloomers.com.

To Register for Free Saturday Seminars: Call (936) 870-4044 or
email: registration@MarthasBloomers.com.

We welcome your suggestions for future seminars.

Please email to: suggestions@MarthasBloomers.com

For Luncheon and Tea reservations confirmed by credit card,
please call Café M. Bloomers at (936) 870-3277.



Store Hours Mon-Sat 9am - 6pm Sun 11am - 5pm Martha's Bloomers (936) 825-7400

Café M. Bloomers, a Tea Room (936) 870-3277

Cafe Open Tues-Sun (Closed Monday) Serving Lunch 11am - 3pm Desserts until 4pm