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M. Bloomers

A Garden Journal

"Anyone can have dirt.

Gardener's have soil"...Unknown


Something Different...Gay Houston, Staff

Some Shrubs that are not Boring...at Martha's we are often asked, "What kind of shrub can I plant that is different?" Too much boxwood, ligustrum, and euonymus can be boring, although it often serves an important purpose in the landscape. Here are three shrubs that we like and usually have available. They are suitable for our area and each is well adapted to the soil and moisture conditions that we experience.

The first shrub is one that has been around for a long time and is part of a large herbaceous or shrubby genus *Hypericum*. St. John's-wort has a long history and is said to ward off evil spirits and thunderbolts for which it was worn on St. John's Eve. It has lately become an herbal remedy in the treatment of mild depression. At Martha's Bloomers we just grow it because it has bright yellow flowers and deep green foliage. It is easy to grow, blooms well, and will take sun or part shade. It is a great small shrub that will bloom most of the summer in almost any soil.

Another small shrub that is now available is "Little John" Bottlebrush. Australia is the na-

tive country for the many bottlebrush shrubs and small trees that are becoming very popular. It is a small but spectacular evergreen shrub which is great for attracting hummingbirds and butterflies. The short gray-green leaves are thick with the typical bottle-brush spikes of deep red flowers. Since it grows in full sun in almost any condition it is a good landscape plant. Four feet is about the maximum height and it requires little pruning. We have a very attractive group of "Little Johns" growing that have convinced us to encourage using it in any garden.

The final shrub that is a little different was once very popular in the old-fashioned garden. It is the Pineapple Guava. It can get fairly large, but can be kept in bounds as growth rate is moderate. The gray-green leaves are light and downy beneath. The flowers are really unusual with waxy white petals and numerous prominent crimson stamens. The fruit is egg-sized and shaped; both the petals and fruit have a rich guava-like flavor and are edible. It will take full sun but will also do well with some afternoon shade. The rounded shape and unusual evergreen foliage makes this a great accent plant. 

"If a June night could talk, it would probably boast it invented romance"...Bern Williams



Cool Down with Water... Vickie Deike, Landscape Designer

Is there anyone out there not sweating!

Even though I grew up in Texas, every summer I am amazed at just how hot a summer afternoon can be. With no relief coming from the weather we have to look elsewhere for refuge from the heat. Shade trees are a must. Shade arbors help, especially when equipped with ceiling fans. However, here at Martha's, what seems to actually drop the temperature are our water features. I'm not sure if it is the sound, the misty splash, or just the temperature of the water, but it always feels cooler when standing near our stream or waterfall. This same cooling effect can be achieved with smaller features as well.

Even the smallest courtyard can fit a bubbler boulder. A bubbler boulder is simply a boulder that has a small hole drilled through its center, just big enough to fit some plastic tubing through. This tubing runs from the bottom of the boulder into a hidden water storage basin and connects to a submerged pump. The pump sends water up through the tubing and bubbling out over the top of the boulder. The water runs down the boulder and back into the storage basin. Generally this type of hidden basin water feature is called a "Disappearing Fountain". Since there is not an exposed pool of water, this is a safe water feature for even small children to play with. The size of the feature can be tiny to quite large depending

on the boulder or boulders selected.

Another variation on the disappearing fountain is to use a ceramic container instead of a boulder. The tubing should run up the inside of the container, stopping at the lip of the opening. This helps to create the plume of water at the top before running over and down the sides. The selection of the ceramic container plays the most important part in the looks of the feature. A tall container can add height to a flat landscape. Coloring can be selected to blend with the surroundings or to add a bold splash that sets it apart. Containers can even be changed out if tastes or styles change. A grouping can be striking as well as create more of that cooling splash. Imagine a parade of various sized containers mixed with statuary that weaves around a curve in a pathway or frames the end of a patio. It looks beautiful, the sound is soothing, and most important it will drop the temperature a few degrees.

Our landscape department can professionally install one for you, or the nursery can sell you the pieces you need to put one together yourself. If you would like to see the details of how a disappearing fountain works, come to our seminar on June 10th and we will walk you through the installation steps.



Hot Summer News... David Albrecht, Horticulturist

Ligularia named for it's tongue-shaped leaves has it's origins in China, Japan, and Korea. Ligularia is commonly referred to as the leopard plant, even though most species do not have spots on the leaves. A member of the Asteraceae family, this zone 3 to 8 herbaceous perennial has remained evergreen this winter here at Martha's Bloomers.

Ligularia prefers partial shade to full shade and medium wet to wet soils. One should never let the soil dry out completely. Ligularia is very susceptible to the heat of late summer and subject to wilting in the late afternoon, but will recover after the sun goes down. This plant is clump-forming and is grown for its lush dark-green foliage as much

as it's showy spikes of daisy-like yellow flowers.

Some species such as *L. stenocephala* 'The Rocket' can reach a height of 5 feet. *Ligularia dentata* "Othello" gets 2 to 3 feet tall and has long, red petioled, lush, dark green leaves with scalloped edges and red veins. The yellow blooms rising above the canopy of leaves usually appear mid summer and are 2 to 4 inches across. *Ligularia tussilaginea* 'Aureomaculata' also gets 1 to 2 feet tall and is a ligularia that actually has gold spots on the leaves.

One last ligularia worth mentioning is *Ligularia tussilaginea* 'Cristata' or crested ligularia. It has very ruffled leaves that are covered with hair top and bottom when new. *Cristata* gets 1 to 2 feet tall and also has the characteristic yellow daisy-like flowers.



"The poetry of the earth is never dead"... John Keats



Flying Flowers... Sharon Murry, Staff

Imagine sitting in a comfortable lawn chair, enjoying the sun filled skies of a summer morning. You close your eyes and listen to the chirping birds singing their unique songs. You are surrounded by your many flower beds and vegetables as they are slowly coming to life. Feel the slight breeze, hear the rustle of tree branches...you open your eyes and all around you there are flowers flying everywhere! There is orange with black, black with white, iridescent blue and many other colors. You look closer and realize the flowers are the many different butterflies attracted to your yard. They are flying here and there looking for nectar sources and add a sense of calmness as you watch them flutter through the air.

Butterfly watching ranks high among our outdoor pleasures, right alongside enjoying birds and wildflowers. The aesthetic appeal of these winged creatures is even more significant once we realize that butterflies neither sting, bite, nor transmit disease.

There are many butterflies common to our area that can be attracted to the yard simply by planting their favorite food or host plant. A few of the favorites and most common in our area are the Monarch, Black Swallowtail, Gulf Fritillary and the Pipevine Swallowtail.


To be successful when creating a butterfly garden, you should have a basic understanding of the miracle of metamorphosis and learn to identify the butterfly species. Get to know their food needs and the plants that provide them. Plant a combination of adult nectar sources and larval host plants. The stages of the butterfly are the egg, larva (caterpillar), pupa (chrysalis) and adult. When you see that big green caterpillar with black stripes munching away on your dill or

parsley plant, you will realize it really is a Black Swallowtail butterfly in disguise. Soon it will form a chrysalis and in time the mystical, magical transformation into a butterfly will take place.

The purple passion vine is the host plant for the Gulf Fritillary butterfly. If you have many orange and black caterpillars feeding on your passion vine to the point that the plant has few leaves left, do not panic. The leaves will grow back as soon as the caterpillars go into the molting stage. Plant Milkweed, also known as butterfly weed, as the host plant for the Monarch butterfly and the Dutchman's Pipe vine as the host plant for the Pipevine Swallowtail butterfly.

Nectar plants provide the nourishment for the adult butterflies. Generally speaking, the best butterfly nectar plants are those that are sun-loving. These include ground covers, annuals, perennials, shrubs and trees. Petunia, bee balm, daisy, nicotiana, impatiens, lantana, marigolds, zinnia, milkweed, verbena, buddleia, firebush, coneflower and ruellia are just a few of the many nectar producing flowers that butterflies will seek out. Plant them in clusters to create a burst of color and fragrance.

For a finishing touch, add damp spots or shallow puddles for drinking. Place large stones for basking in the sun and pieces of fruit (citrus, bananas or peaches) for supplemental nectar around your yard.

Butterflies are important to our ecology. They go wherever they please and please wherever they go. Avoid pesticide applications whenever possible. All butterfly stages are very sensitive to pesticides. Why not enjoy some flying flowers in your yard! 

Take a break from the Hot Summer Sun...

Join us in the Arbor Room on Saturday's for free and fun gardening seminars.

And, Petals 'n Bloomers and the Café will be presenting two delightful and delicious cool summer luncheons on Monday, June 12 and July 10.

"A garden is a lovesome thing"... Thomas Edward Brown




What's Cooking at the Café.... Jamie Swain, Staff

Fun new flavors in the tearoom! Come experience our great summer dishes featuring fresh herbs from the Martha's Bloomers garden. Cool salads and light entrées are a new addition to our summer menu.

"When in Rome do as the Roman's do"...Join us the first Thursday of every month for our

newest addition to the tearoom..."Italian Day"! Pasta, pastries and wine-a-ritas...Saluté!

Keep your summers easy and breezy...Café M. Bloomers can cool off your kitchen by letting us prepare your summer meals and desserts. Call Café M. Bloomers today at 936-870-3277 for a complete list of our entrées and fresh baked goods! 


Summer Luncheons.... Tricia Barksdale, Petals 'n Bloomers

Can't make it to the Mediterranean this summer? Well, we're bringing it to you! Café M. Bloomers and Petals 'n Bloomers are presenting "**Under the Tuscan Sun Luncheon**" on Monday, June 12 at 11 am and again at 1 pm. The summery Italian menu will wake up your tastebuds, and the tablescapes will inspire you to try new entertaining venues. Sunflowers, rustic pottery, olives, basil and lavender are just a few of the table themes. Join us for a carefree vacation!

And to continue our summer fun, Barbara Elkey, who is an author, floral designer and motivational speaker, uses the Lily as a symbol of women's struggles with breast cancer. She describes the Lily as "delicate and resilient" in her educational foundation called Grow for Life. As a breast cancer survivor herself, Barbara's quest for breast cancer awareness takes her across the country with this fragrant symbol.

Café M. Bloomers is partnering with Petals 'n

Bloomers to bring you a "**Luscious Lily Luncheon**", Monday, July 10 at 11 am and again at 1 pm. A portion of the funds raised from this luncheon will be donated to the American Cancer Society.

This "Lilyfest" will feature all types of lilies — Casa Blanca, Stargazers, Oriental, Asian and Peruvian. The tablescapes will inspire you for your own summer entertaining. Also, this program will be educational as the specifics of each lily variety are discussed. The cause will encourage you; the floral designs will amaze you; the scent will delight you; and the menu will gratify you! Join us for this Lilyfest! 

Make your luncheon reservations today by calling Café M. Bloomers
936-870-3277

Cost is \$25 per person.

Reservations confirmed by credit card.

Be a Winner... Shirleen McDonald, Staff


Linda Romer is the fifth winner of our Be A Winner Contest! She received a gift certificate for two for lunch at Café M. Bloomers! Linda submitted this great vegetable salad recipe.

Rainbow Vegetable Salad

1 can French Style green beans, drained
1 small can English peas, drained
1 small can corn, drained.
1 small jar diced pimentos
1 medium purple onion, chopped
3/4 cup sugar 1/2 cup white vinegar
1/2 cup cooking oil

Mix vegetables, onion and pimentos in a small casserole dish. In a small mixing bowl combine sugar, oil and vinegar to make a marinade liquid. Stir marinade until well blended. Combine vegetables and marinade together in a casserole dish. Chill covered in refrigerator until cold. Serve salad using a slotted serving spoon.

If you want to "Be a Winner" just send in your favorite recipe, garden tip or question to gardenjournal@marthasbloomers.com.

Please keep your recipes or garden tips coming and watch to see if you are our next "Winner"! 

"Who loves a garden loves a greenhouse too!"... William Cooper



Calendar of Events...

Saturday Seminars - and they are Free!

"How to Build a Disappearing Fountain" - Saturday, June 10 at 11 am. Presented by David Albrecht, Horticulturist, Martha's Bloomers.

"Sizzling Summer Colors" - Saturday, June 17 at 11 am. Presented by Dr. Doug Welsh, Professor and Extension Horticulturist for Texas Cooperative Extension, Texas A&M.

"Identifying Birds in Your Garden" - Saturday, July 15 at 11 am. Presented by Jerry Walls, Director of Christmas Creek Nature Preserve.

Monday Luncheons— Call Café M. Bloomers at 936 870-3277 for reservations confirmed by credit card.

"Under the Tuscan Sun" Floral Luncheon—Monday, June 12. Two seatings: 11 am and 1 pm. Meal prepared by Café M. Bloomers, will feature summery Italian foods. Table decorations by Tricia Barksdale, will also be based on Italian themes. \$25 pp.

"Luscious Lily Luncheon" - Monday, July 10. Two seatings: 11 am and 1 pm. Café M. Bloomers and Petals 'n Bloomers are again teaming up for this fund raiser for the American Cancer Society. \$25 pp.

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.

Fax Job.....

Supervisor for Landscape Crew

Experience in landscape installation required.

Apply three ways:

In person at Martha's Bloomers - 8101 Hwy. 6 Bypass, Navasota;

fax confidential resume to: (936) 825-7703;

email to: funjob@marthasbloomers.com



Store Hours Mon-Sat 9 - 6 Sun 11 - 5 Martha's Bloomers (936) 870-4111
Café M. Bloomers (936) 870-3277 Tea Room Serving Tues-Sun 11 - 4

