



September/October 2007 Volume 6, Issue 5

# *M. Bloomers*

## *A Garden Journal*

*"In the garden my soul is sunshine"...author unknown*

### *Go Green...Sharon Murry, Staff*

**The move to "Go Green" is on, are you "Going Green?"** There are many ways to accomplish this simply by changing a few things we may not think of doing. For instance, gardeners are already "Going Green" by helping the environment. Plants provide us with oxygen and many plants and trees shade our streets and homes creating a cooling effect. This in turn helps save energy in the summer.

Trees can be used to reduce home heating and cooling costs dramatically. Planting evergreens on the north side of the house will shield against cold winter winds. Deciduous trees planted along the west side of the house will provide shade in the summer and allow the warming rays of the sun to provide solar heat in the winter.

There are many ways to be a greener gardener. A good start is selecting the right plants for the right area. Read the labels of the plants you purchase and plant species that provide shade in a location where they will thrive without extra care and maintenance.

Native plants are always a good choice. They are drought tolerant and adapted to our growing conditions. This means they tend to be hardier and require less water and intensive care. As an added benefit, they attract birds and butterflies and they in turn will get rid of

harmful pests and save you from using any harmful pesticide, herbicide or chemicals.

A high percentage of the bugs and insect species we encounter in the garden are actually beneficial to the garden. They pollinate plants, eat other bugs and provide food for the birds. A good bug book can help you educate yourself on the good and the bad bugs.

Going green in the garden also means recycling and re-using what nature has already provided. This fall use the leaves from your trees to provide carbon for your compost pile. The leaves break down fast and when mixed into your soil, they will help the soil maintain a loose texture.

You can add some shredded newspaper mixed with household vegetable scraps and you will attract earthworms. Earthworms in turn aerate the soil and leave behind their castings. The earthworm castings are often referred to as "Black Gold" because of their high nitrogen content.

This is just a brief summary of some of the ways to "Go Green". Start thinking about small contributions you can make to help the environment.

*"You are never too old to set another goal or to dream a new dream...C. S. Lewis*



## *Wildflowers: Bringing the Roadside to your Porch Side...M'Randa Miller, Staff*

**Planting, growing and maintaining wildflowers is not a labor-intensive job, hence the name "wild" flowers.** Mother Nature did it first, folks...before we decided to start potting them. She does not spend hours preparing holes to plant seeds, and she sure does not spend excessive time watering. Therefore, let us take a lesson from the one who seems to do it so naturally.

**Nature:** Wildflowers bloom throughout the spring and early summer and then begin to dry. Once the flower has dried in the fall, the seeds will release to the ground to begin the growth cycle. Note that Mother Nature sows with a random scatter and the seeds are covered by blown sand. Also, there are few wildflowers in extremely shady areas because they prefer at least 6 hours of sun per day. Where the seed falls, it falls. This saying goes for the rain as well as the seed. In early fall, there are a few more showers coming off the Gulf of Mexico that support seed germination and get those little plants to grow. Throughout the rest of the year, the wildflowers get and use only what rainfall they receive.

**Us:** We should also "release" our seeds in fall. Refer to the planting timeframe listed on seed packets for the southern United States. September 23<sup>rd</sup> marks the first day of Autumn, but here in South Texas, the best time to plant wildflowers is a little later due to our mild winters. Mid-October, give or take a week, is perfect. This will allow the soil to be warm enough for germination. Hand-scatter your seeds and give them a light raking or you can mix them with a little soil in a bucket and spread over your bed or container. Choose a bed or container that receives full sun and has good drainage and then give it a little shower. Want to save some money on your water bill? Watch your local weather and scatter your seeds at the end of a rainy week. Scattering before a rain will increase the chances that your seeds will wash away.

Given the basics, I will add one more suggestion. Before you scatter seeds, take time to eradicate weeds from your bed or container so your wildflowers will not be competing for sun, nutrients and water. You will be greatly rewarded with this extra effort when you have a clean, showy display of your very own wildflowers in early spring.

## *Shrubs Are Not a Bad Thing ...Gay Houston, Staff*

Gardening books and magazines have made so much of "Moustache Planting" that we often feel threatened when choosing and planting shrubs. Moustache planting refers to the orderly rows of shrubs such as boxwood or holly or photinia (that are often used in front of the average suburban home. They do not leave much to the imagination but do, at least, cover the foundation.

We now are encouraged to use roses, perennials, and other mixed plantings to give a more casual and individual look which is a good thing; we should remember, however, that great shrubs are still out there and the old favorites have their place. Many shrubs can give a fresh look to a bed and it is often wise to take out an old overgrown shrub and simply replace it with another that is more appropriate.

In selecting shrubs it can't be stressed enough

to pick ones that will meet your requirements at maturity. But maturity may never happen if soil and sun requirements are not first considered. I laugh with my customers when they realize they often ask for the impossible - an evergreen shrub that flowers all year 'round, but doesn't need much sun or water." If such a plant did exist in our area, all of our gardens would look just alike.

Once the conditions have been considered, it is time to prepare the bed. Good drainage is a must whether shade, partial sun, or full sun so invest time and money in working in compost. And more compost. Then use a thick layer of mulch. Tall shrubs are desired or needed, they should be picked first for they will be the background for other plants. Hollies, Elaeagnus, and Japanese Yew are tall shrubs that can often take sun or shade. They do well in our part of Texas, but

*"Experience is the name everyone gives to their mistakes"...Oscar Wilde*



## *Shrubs Are Not a Bad Thing...Continued*

do require irrigation. American Beautyberry and Cenizo (Texas Sage) are natives and require less water. The former prefers shade and the latter full sun and excellent drainage.

Roses should be considered as a shrub and an excellent landscape plant. Antique and the new Texas Earthkind Roses are widely available and do well without the intense care that hybrid roses demand. There are forms that grow tall and others that can be used as a border - and many in between. Valuable information can be found in any of the excellent books that have been written by well-known horticulturists that live in our area - Dr. Bill Welch, Mike Shoup, or Dr. Doug Welsh (whose new book is coming out this fall).

A medium shrub to consider is Anthony Waterer Spirea, a summer blooming shrub that keeps its leaves almost year round. It grows well in sun or partial shade. Leatherleaf Mahonia is another excellent medium shrub that does well in shade. It has spiny leaves and beautiful blue fruit that looks somewhat like grapes. Mockingbirds and other birds are attracted to it, too. Nandinas can be used as medium to short shrubs depending on the variety. They thrive in sun or partial shade and

have a great display of colorful leaves and berries in the fall.

Nandina is not the only border shrub that works for our area. While we often grow tired of yaupon, the dwarf variety fills some needs that many other plants cannot. The ability to grow almost anywhere with little care makes it perfect for the gardener that just wants green. Other shrubs that offer more diversity are Crimson Pigmy Barberry and Dwarf Pomegranate. Both shrubs need full sun and offer color in different ways. The leaves and stems of the deciduous Barberry give a nice contrast to green. Pomegranate has brilliant orange flowers and fruit that, while not edible, adds interest all winter long.

These are only a few of the shrubs that we have found useful. Many of these mentioned are available in regular, semi-dwarf and dwarf varieties. Consider carefully the mature size but remember that information is for a plant in perfect growing conditions. Look at yards and gardens that appeal to you and make an informed decision. We will also help you when you visit by showing you many of these shrubs as planted or in containers for sale.

## *What's Cooking at the Café...Melissa Rodriguez*

Cafe M. Bloomers welcomes the cooler fall weather with the warmth of the scents of the season. Let the aromas of allspice, pumpkin and cinnamon surround you as you embrace the seasonal changes.

We have all wanted to get together with our girlfriends during the holiday season, but felt we could never find the time or place? Cafe M. Bloomers is hosting a **Silver Bells Winter High Tea** on Sunday, December 2 where family and friends can get together to share gifts or recipes for the Holidays! Delight in seasonal flavors of scrumptious truffles, pecan tarts and Loafer's Classic English Trifle along with our house orange spice tea and a variety of other seasonal teas. Please leave the holiday hassle to us and come enjoy the season with those closest to you.

**Silver Bells Winter High Tea**, Sunday, December 2 from 2 pm to 4 pm. \$15 per person. Seating is limited. Reservations confirmed by credit card are required for all teas.

**Calling all Brides...**Cafe M. Bloomers is the perfect environment to make your bridal luncheon or shower most memorable. Surrounded by beautifully landscaped gardens, Cafe M. Bloomers can provide a very peaceful and tranquil bridal brunch as well as an intimate shower in our hidden Arbor Room. Please contact Ms. Bonnie Larsen to schedule your upcoming bridal event.

**Seating is limited - Make your reservations confirmed by credit card today!**

*Café M. Bloomers*

**(936) 870-3277**

*"Our attitude toward life determines life's attitude towards us"...John N. Mitchell*



## *A Change of Seasons... Tricia Barksdale, floral designer, Petals 'n Bloomers*

With the welcomed cooler weather of Fall we are reminded that the holiday season will soon follow. On the first day of Christmas.....Tricia will demonstrate a dozen different vignettes for Christmas decorating. From Williamsburg to Candyland; from Traditional to Cappucino—these are just some of the themes that will be presented at “**The Twelve Doors of Christmas**” Seminar on Saturday, November 10 at 11 am. No matter what your style, one of the twelve is sure to match your décor. Door pieces, garlands and centerpieces will be clustered around old doors to help you visual-

ize how they might look in your own setting. This is one floral art gallery you'll not want to miss! Who needs a partridge in a pear tree anyway?

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

## *Holiday Announcements*

**Plan your festive holiday event at Cafe M. Bloomers!**

Just call Bonnie Larsen at (936) 870-3277

Special holiday menus available.

**Martha's Bloomers' Annual “Holiday in the Garden”**

Friday and Saturday, November 16-17 from 9 am to 6 pm



*“...nature itself means nothing, says nothing except to the perceiving mind*

*... beauty is where it is perceived ... you surely will see ...*

*if you are prepared to see it—*

*if you look for it ... ”*

*Henry David Thoreau*

## *Calendar of Events...*

### **Saturday Seminars** - and they are Free!

**“Fresh Ideas for Tired Gardens”** - Saturday, October 20 at 11 am. Presented by Dr. William (Bill) Welch, Professor and Extension Horticulturist, Texas A&M University.

**“12 Doors of Christmas”** - Saturday, November 10 at 11 am. Presented by Tricia Barksdale, floral designer, Petals 'n Bloomers.

**“Orchids for Christmas”** - Saturday, December 1 at 11 am. Presented by Dr. Rainer Fink, Orchid Specialist.

### **Luncheons, Teas, Book Reviews and other Special Events**

**“Silver Bells Winter High Tea”**, Sunday, December 2 from 2 pm to 4 pm. \$15 per person.

*For luncheon & tea 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](http://www.MarthasBloomers.com).  
To Register for Free Saturday Seminars: Call (936) 870-4044 or  
email: [registration@MarthasBloomers.com](mailto:registration@MarthasBloomers.com).

We welcome your suggestions for future seminars.  
Please email to: [suggestions@MarthasBloomers.com](mailto: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**

