



March/April 2004 Volume 3, Issue 2

M. Bloomers

A Garden Journal

Ikebana... Nan Mitchell

Ikebana, the Japanese word for arranging living things, is based upon universal principles of all art forms which are recognized all over the world. While painting is an expression of art drawn on a canvas with a brush, Ikebana is an expression in three dimensions with branch material, flowers, and leaves arranged in a container of water. The sculptural quality of Ikebana, using live materials makes this a unique beauty that only live plants can express. One learns to respect and appreciate the natural beauty of the seasons and the way that plants grow.....thus the arrangements last for many days if kept in fresh water. Although all seasons have their own beauty, it seems that spring is the season that most expresses the beauty of line that the Japanese love.....bare branches of winter with a few buds breaking through with the promise of spring. That is why the cherry blossom in Japan is always expected with great anticipation. This art is steeped in the philosophy of developing closeness with nature. In cutting branches in the yard or woods and combining that with beautiful flowers you have created a scene from nature to enjoy in the home.

In the class studying Ikebana, we learn measurements, placement, and compatibility with the container to create a harmonious picture. Plants are always used as if they are

growing in the beginning stages of Ikebana. Later the more advanced classes enjoy creative arranging, even using plants combined with materials that have never been alive, such as plastics, wire, and metal. This is when creativity begins to flourish and a new awareness is felt....that beauty can be found not only in nature, but in many surprising places in the world. This study helps one to appreciate the insignificant in nature as well as many surprises!

Nan Mitchell, a certified Sogetsu instructor of Ikebana will present this spring series of classes at Martha's Bloomers to be held in March on Tuesday mornings from 9:30 am to 11:30 am. These classes will meet on March 2, 16, 23 and 30. This will be a hands-on class, and each person will complete an arrangement to take home. The arrangements will be early spring naturalistic styles. The history and symbolism of Ikebana will also be discussed. The supplies include clippers, kenzan (needle holder), and low bowl container, which will be available for purchase.

Tuition of \$25.00 per class includes seasonal flowers and branch material. You may register at Ikebana@MarthasBloomers.com or naninflowers@earthlink.net. For reservations or more information call Nan Mitchell - (979) 268-5310. 

SPECIAL! An Evening with Malcolm Beck
"Natural Spring Gardening" Seminar Monday, March 1
Refreshments 5:30 pm to 6:30 pm Seminar 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm
To Register call (936) 870-4044 or email: registration@MarthasBloomers.com.

"God writes the gospel not in the bible alone, but on trees and flowers and clouds and stars." Martin Luther



From the Hot House... David Albrecht, Horticulturist

While many of us are thinking about or working on getting our vegetable garden under way for the year, there are several other per-

Blackberries are one of the easiest and most forgiving of these crops to grow.....

ennial food crops that tend to be overlooked. These include fruit and nut trees, berries, and asparagus, just to name a few. These crops are also very economical from the standpoint of not having to purchase plants on a yearly basis since they remain productive for many years.

Blackberries are one of the easiest and most forgiving of these crops to grow since they are adaptable to a wide range of environments including soil types. Good soil drainage is a must, and they prefer a soil pH around 6.5. However, the following varieties will also adapt to the higher pH (up to pH 7.5) we encounter in this area. They also have very little pest and disease problems,

and therefore, require little, if any, pesticide use.

There are a couple of Arkansas varieties that have shown very good adaptation to Southeast Texas. They are Navaho and Arapaho and were released by the University of Arkansas in 1989 and 1993 respectively. Both are genetically thornless, produce a medium size fruit, and have a very upright growth habit. Therefore, they do not require a trellis. While both have good storage and handling potential, Navaho is better since it produces firmer fruit. Arapaho is the earlier ripening variety and produces fruit for about 4 weeks. Navaho begins ripening almost 2 weeks later, but produces better tasting berries for 5 to 6 weeks making it a higher yielder. One other blackberry that does well in this area is the Brazos Berry. This thorned plant has been a standard in Texas for many years. It is a high yielder with large berries, and is intended for cooking rather than fresh consumption.



There is something remarkably more beautiful about flowers that you yourself have planted, and divided, and cared for, than any other flowers. It reminds one that the creation of beauty is a happy experience.

Claudia Lady Bird Johnson

Herb Talk... Gay Houston

We are often asked why rosemary and lavender are so difficult to grow. Since they are favorites of most of us, growing them in containers may be the answer. If you have poor drainage or poor soil, too much shade, or no beds at all, consider buying a few clay pots, some good, light potting soil, and a few small plants.

Clay pots are best for most herbs...

Clay pots are best for most herbs because they help solve the problem of poor drainage. Plastic and glazed ceramic pots can hold both water and heat, and if placed in the sun and rain in our summers, the humidity is deadly. Rosemary and lavender need at least six hours of sun a day; if they get some shade it is best in the afternoon. Some of the best lavenders for our area are

Goodwin Creek, Provence, and Sweet.

Rosemary may be either upright or prostrate. Most cooks like upright and claim prostrate does not have as much flavor. Both are beautiful, and can be used together, with other herbs, or as a specimen. They may outgrow a container, but can be pruned or transplanted to a raised bed. When selecting varieties look for Arp or Hill Hardy in upright. They are good for Texas. We grow prostrate rosemary from cuttings in our front beds at Martha's. They are very hardy and seem to flower more than others.

There are many other herbs that do well in containers, one being basil. Basil loves warm weather, can take lots of moisture, and is wonderful for cooking. It will grow almost anywhere there is sun.



"Spring has come home with her world-wandering feet. And all the things are made young." Francis Thompson



TLC Bulb Floral Designs... Tricia Barksdale, Petals 'n Bloomers

Tender Loving Care for Bulb Flowers in Floral Designs... Synonymous with Spring are those traditional harbingers such as tulips, hyacinths, daffodils, and iris. Simple care and handling techniques can extend their vase life. And, their exquisite beauty make them worth the effort.

First, temperature is the one factor that contributes most to the longevity of bloom. Natural conditions outdoors are chilly when bulbs bloom, usually right above freezing temperatures. Therefore, you can easily improve your vase life if you keep them cool. You may even set the arrangement in the cool garage or sheltered porch while you sleep at night. Then bring them back in during the day to enjoy.


Secondly, use your regular fresh flower food with the bulbs. While they do not need the nutrients provided in the mixture, they do benefit from the biocide. This keeps the stems from getting clogged with bacteria. New to the market is a fresh flower food especially formulated for bulb flowers. We will report more on this later as information is released.

Also, a factor in bulb flower vase life is the stage of development when the flowers were harvested. If they are cut too early, the bloom will not open. If they are cut too late, they will not last long. As with any fresh flower, always re-cut the stem if it has been out of water for any length of time.

Finally, and this is true in any type of fresh arrangement, remove any spent blossoms as soon as they pass their prime. This practice will get rid of the ethylene gas given off by the declining flowers. The ethylene gas adversely affects those flowers that would last longer. In addition, this culling procedure keeps the overall appearance looking better. A little TLC for bulb flowers means you can bring Spring indoors earlier and enjoy it longer.

Now Available: The Bluebonnet variety Lupinus havardü, native to West Texas, is one of six Lupine species which have the official state flower status. With stem lengths ranging 12-36 inches and a vase-life of 7-10 days, this stately beauty enhances any floral arrangement. *Petals 'n Bloomers* has fresh shipments available on a weekly basis until May.

Send a Smile Any Day!

Call (936) 825-8577 to place an order. 


Cooking at the Café... Amy Keilers

Reviving an Afternoon Tradition... Tea is a beverage with much history. From its roots in ancient China to the infamous Boston Tea Party, the beverage has been a staple in cultures around the world for centuries. Texas is no exception. Here we like our tea in a tall glass filled with ice and the perfect amount of sweetener, which could be a pinch or a whole packet depending on the size of your sweet tooth.

While we still enjoy tea in its various forms, long gone are the days of tea parties where the well-to-do sipped out of fine china with raised pinkies and feasted on crumpets, clotted cream and cucumber sandwiches. Afternoon tea was once an endeared pastime, but the hectic pace of modern lifestyles has placed it on the endangered leisure activities list. However, starting in March, Café M. Bloomers is providing everyone with the opportunity to experience the

tradition of afternoon tea.

This spring, Café M. Bloomers will host a themed tea party complete with samplings of scones, clotted cream, fruit, teacakes, and hot and cold teas. The first themed tea, "Life is a Bowl of Cherries", will be held on March 7 from 2 pm to 4 pm. Future themed teas include an "Easter Bonnet Tea" to be held on March 28 and "A Pocket Full of Posies Tea" to be held on April 18, both from 2 pm to 4 pm. The cost of each tea is \$15.00 and credit card confirmed reservations are required.

Bring your girlfriends, daughters, granddaughters, or husbands (if you dare) and settle in for a Sunday afternoon of steaming herbal tea and fresh blueberry scones. Make afternoon tea a new tradition in your life and join Café M. Bloomers for a tea party with all of the frills...raised pinkies optional. Call Café M. Bloomers at (936) 870-3277. 

"If I knew I would die tomorrow, I would plant a tree today"... Stephen Girard



Landscape Dreams...Wanda Jones

Don't wait any longer...if you want to walk the paths of your landscape, smell the scents of Rosemary or Chocolate flower, see your beds filled with vibrant colors, and have plentiful amounts of birds, butterflies, and hummingbirds for the coming seasons.....now is the time to start planning!

Many of us are very comfortable planning the design and décor of our homes, but our ideas often go awry once we move to the out of doors. This may be because most of us see our house and garden as separate entities, and even treat them as such. The house and garden should be closely related, both visually and physically. Colors and textures can be transitioned to your landscape from interior choices. The garden should be looked upon as a series of rooms, each with a different purpose.

Play spaces for children or animals may be

necessary ingredients. Spaces for meditation and reflection are relaxing after a long, stressful day. Herb gardens and outdoor kitchens are good companion spaces. How we arrange these rooms in the design is determined by our personalities and the needs of our families. My role as the designer is to help you create your garden with these goals in mind and create a design that is perfect for you.

The invitation to step into your garden should be a strong one and the elements such as pathways, water features, lighting, and planting should provide an atmosphere of peace and contentment. Good planning and preparation is as essential for a beautiful functional landscape as it is for that new addition to your home.

For the landscape of your dreams, call
(936) 825-7777 ext. 104.



Natural Gardening...Sharon Murry

You may think of Molasses only when it comes to cooking. Molasses has great value in growing plants and is helpful in insect and weed control. Molasses is a by-product of sugar processing and is an excellent carbon source for the microbes in your soil. It is food and energy, which feeds the natural bacteria and microbes whose role in the soil is to release the natural nutrients and minerals locked up in the material. Molasses also contains sulfur which acts as a mild natural fungicide. Liquid or dry molasses can be used in many ways in creating and maintaining a healthy soil.

To use as a foliar spray, mix 1 teaspoon liquid molasses per gallon of water and

spray the entire leaves of your plants. Apply early in the morning or in the evening. To use as a soil conditioner, mix 2 tablespoons liquid molasses per gallon of water. Water plants or lawn as needed. The molasses added to your fertilizer also seems to "chase" fire ants away. It is a main ingredient in many organic fire ant products. You can make your own fire ant control with 1 part compost tea, 1 part molasses and 1 part orange oil. Use 2 to 4 oz. of this mixture in a gallon of water on the fire ant mounds. You may add a small amount of molasses to your compost pile to "speed up" the decomposition process by providing food for the microorganisms.



Seminar Highlights...Stewart Thompson

Diana Wilson, Landscape Architect will present concepts in design of a Prayer Garden on Saturday, April 10 at 11:00 am. Diana designed the Prayer Garden for the First Baptist Church Conroe, which provides an area for private meditation and small group meetings and classes. Diana will discuss the spirituality and symbolism associated with various plants and patterns in the Holy Lands. The Hanging Garden of Babylon and the patterns of the Labyrinth are among the topics that will be discussed.

To register call (936) 870-4044 or email us at: registration@MarthasBloomers.com.

"To Garden is to open your heart to the sky." Michael P. Garafalo"



Ask Martha & Bloomer....

Dear Martha: Are there any flowering shrubs that need fertilizing this time of year?

Martha here...Absolutely! Begin feeding your shrubs after pruning, start a rose feeding schedule and spray and feed your gardenias and camellias, just to name a few.

Dear Bloomer: Are there any diseases or pests that I need to look for on my plants this early in the spring?

Bloomer here....Watch for aphids on new growth, spider mites on older leaves and cut worms on young transplants.

Flowers have spoken to me more than I can tell in written words. They are the hieroglyphics of angels, loved by all men for the beauty of their character, though few can decipher even fragments of their meaning...Lydia M. Child

What's Cooking at Café M. Bloomers?...Amy Keilers

If you love to learn about new ways to spice up your menus at home, Café M. Bloomers has the perfect solution. The Café is introducing daytime cooking schools designed for those with family, work or other evening obligations. The daytime schools are one hour long and provide generous samples of the featured menu items, so they are perfect for a lunch break outing.

The daytime schools ...are perfect for a lunch

Erin McFarlane, a graduate of Lenotre Culinary Institute in Paris, will be one of the featured daytime class chefs. McFarlane's cooking schools provide short courses in specific food topics that give attendees new ideas they can incorporate into their repertoire of favorite recipes. McFarlane will lead "Quiche and Tarts", Friday, March 26 at 10:00 am to 11:00 am, with lunch served with samples of the featured menu items. Her second class will be "Outrageous Cheesecake Toppings" Friday, April 23 at 10:00 am to 11:00 am,

with a salad sampler lunch and featured dessert menu items.

Molly Fowler, the Café's evening cooking school chef, will also hold a daytime cooking school. Fowler will provide attendees with ideas for what she calls "company-worthy" menus that are perfect for entertaining. She also provides tips on cooking techniques and advice on the latest cooking gadgets. Fowler's classes include "Herb Cooking" Tuesday, March 9 and "Salad Sampler Lunches" Friday, April 2 from 10:30 am to 11:30 am, with lunch served with samples of featured menu items.

All daytime cooking classes are \$25 and reservations confirmed with a credit card are required. Call Café M. Bloomers at **(936) 870-3277** to make your reservation.



"Spring makes its own statement, so loud and clear that the gardener seems to be only one of the instruments, not the composer." Geoffrey B. Charlesworth



Calendar of Events.....

"Date Night Dinner" Cooking Class—Fri., March 5 at 6:30 pm. Presented by Molly Fowler. Limited seating for this cooking class. \$40 per person. Reservations confirmed by credit card are required. Call Café M. Bloomers at (936) 870-3277 for your reservation confirmation.

"Spring and Summer Bulbs" Seminar — Sat., March 6 at 11am. Presented by Margaret Cherry.

"Herb Cooking" Cooking Class—Tues., March 9 at 10:30 am. Presented by Molly Fowler. Limited seating for this cooking class. \$25 per person. Reservations confirmed by credit card are required. Call Café M. Bloomers at (936) 870-3277 for your reservation confirmation.

"Creating A Texas Garden" Seminar— Sat., March 20 at 11am. Presented by Dr. Bill Welch.

"Quiche's & Tarts" Cooking Class—Fri., March 26 at 10 am. Presented by Erin McFarlane. Limited seating for this luncheon cooking class. \$25 per person. Reservations confirmed by credit card are required. Call Café M. Bloomers at (936) 870-3277 for your reservation confirmation.

"Foolproof Containers and Hanging Baskets" Seminar— Sat., March 27 at 11 am. Presented by Karen Weir.

"Salad Sampler Lunches" Cooking Class—Fri., April 2 at 10:30 am. Presented by Molly Fowler. Limited seating for this luncheon cooking class. \$25 per person. Reservations confirmed by credit card are required. Call Café M. Bloomers at (936) 870-3277 for your reservation confirmation.

"Poetic Posies—A Showcase of Spring Floral Designs" Seminar — Sat., April 3 at 11 am. Presented by Tricia Barksdale, Floral Designer, Petals 'n Bloomers.

"Prayer Garden" Seminar—Sat., April 10 at 11 am. Presented by Diana Wilson.

"Spring Time Entertaining" Cooking Class—Tue., April 20 at 6:30 pm. Presented by Molly Fowler. Limited seating for this cooking class. \$40 per person. Reservations confirmed by credit card are required. Call Café M. Bloomers at (936) 870-3277 for your reservation confirmation.

"Outrageous Cheesecake Toppings" Cooking Class —Fri., April 23 at 10 am. Presented by Erin McFarlane. Limited seating for the luncheon cooking class. \$25 per person. Reservations confirmed by credit card are required. Call Café M. Bloomers at (936) 870-3277 for your reservation confirmation.

"Ikebana" Japanese Flower Arranging - March 2, 16, 23 and 30. Presented by Nan Mitchell. Tuition \$25.00 per class includes seasonal flowers and branch material. Register at ikebana@MarthasBloomers.com or naninflowers@earthlink.net or call Nan at (979) 268-5310.

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

Saturday Seminars are Free.

To Register: Call (936) 870-4044 or email us at: registration@MarthasBloomers.com. We welcome your suggestions for future seminars. Email to: suggestions@MarthasBloomers.com



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