



March/April 2005

Volume 4, Issue 2

# *M. Bloomers*

## *A Garden Journal*

*"March bustles in on windy feet...*

*and sweeps my doorstep and my street"....Susan Reiner*

### *Garden Favorites...Gay Houston, Staff*

**OUR FAVORITE PERENNIALS...**Spring comes early here in Southeast Texas. Our cold wet winter has flower beds looking dead and gloomy, but green is fast coming. Blooms will be right behind them. If you have planned on some new perennials, now is the time to get them in. There are so many types available now that decisions are hard to make. Here are several that we have found valuable in our beds at Martha's Bloomers.

The cupheas and salvias are the basics. David Verity, Tricolor, Giant, and the adorable Bat Faced are the best cupheas. While the flower size is fairly small, they make up for that in the "cover the plant" placement of blooms, and the long, long blooming period. They bloom in oranges or red and blue combinations. They will soon be in full bloom in our beds for easy viewing. These are all also great nectar plants for hummingbirds and butterflies.

The salvias are too numerous to mention individually, but they can range in size from

ground cover to four feet tall. They are tough and drought resistant, bloom for long periods, and also attract butterflies and hummers. We have many varieties in which to choose.

Some other perennials we plant are bulbine in orange or yellow, yarrow in many pastels, walking iris, skullcap, and artemesia v.Powis Castle. These are good for both blooms and foliage. They usually do not die back in winter and are good to mix with perennials that do in order for your bed to not be totally "dead".

We have many great speakers for our Saturday seminars in March and April. Two of them will specifically discuss perennials. Heidi Sheesley of Treeseach Farms will make you want to plant "one of everything" and Dr. Bill Welch will help you decide to use restraint and plan for the best possible combinations.

In the meantime, we at Martha's Bloomers love to have you visit, walk with us beside our flowerbeds, and discuss some good choices.



*"The clearest way into the universe is through a forest wilderness"...John Muir*



## *Color Me Spring... Shirleen McDonald, Staff*

Come join us at our first annual "Color Me Spring" makeover event! The staff at Fountain View Salon—Spa—Fitness look forward to introducing you to the newest, most exciting looks for Spring.

Fountain View Salon's staff of hairstylists and makeup artists will show us the hottest hair colors and styles, along with the new Spring colors in makeup. And, you will never guess who the makeover models will be!

Café M. Bloomers will serve a delicious lunch which will include a mixed green salad with edible flowers and grilled chicken, followed by a decadent dessert of Peach Fosters Cheese-cake.

And to complete the event, expert floral designer, Tricia Barksdale of Petals 'n Bloomers will display her latest floral creations on the luncheon tables.

**Don't miss this colorful event!**

Monday, March 21 - 11:00 am

\$25/pp.

*Café M. Bloomers*

**(936) 870-3277**

Please confirm your reservations by credit card. Seating is limited.

Make your reservations today!



## *Happy Campers... Tricia Barksdale, Petals 'n Bloomers*

**Flowers and Plants Produce Happy Campers!**...Sometimes the key to successful work or home environments comes naturally. A research partnership between Texas A&M University and the Society of American Florists concluded that flowers and plants can be vital accessories in these areas.

These findings follow on the heels of previous research from Rutgers University. They studied the positive mood-elevating qualities of flowers. Specifically, A&M's research team found that in a workplace environment with flowers and plants:

- Idea generation, creative performance and problem-solving skills are enhanced substantially.
- Both men and women become more innovative thinkers.
- Men generate a greater number of ideas and women find fresh approaches to problem solving.

So the moral of this story is, take plants and flowers into your home and office, and you will have happy campers! (Thanks to the Society of American Florists for providing this information. To learn more about Workplace Productivity Study, visit [www.aboutflowers.com](http://www.aboutflowers.com)).

## *Spring Open House at Petals 'n Bloomers!*

Friday and Saturday, March 4 and 5  
10 am to 5 pm

### **Showcasing:**

- Spring Wreaths and Centerpieces
- Easter Gifts
- Riveting Ribbon Roses
- Linen Smocks
- Glass and Porcelain Crosses
- New Occasional Card Line (guaranteed to make you laugh!).

**Refreshments! Free Samples!**

### **Free Seminar:**

*"A Tisket, A Tasket, What Can You  
Put in a Basket?" Seminar*

Saturday, March 5 at 11 am.

Learn how to fill different types of baskets (wicker, metal, glass, Easter) with surprises!

*Petals 'n Bloomers*

**(936) 825-8577**



*"To create a little flower is the labor of ages" William Blake.*



## *The Great Prickly Pear.... Karen Breneman, Guest Writer*

A story of survival...prickly pear cactus are fascinating plants with an ancient history. Evidence left by prehistoric man documents the use of prickly pear as a source of food, clothing, containers, medicine and dye. Most of the fossilized remains left by early people contain parts of the cactus, suggesting that all parts of the plant were eaten either raw, baked, or roasted. The early European explorers tell of the annual migration of different tribes to obtain the fruits called Tunas and the resulting celebrations with the gathered fruit providing the main food supply for at least 3 months.


Prickly pear cactus, over 90 different species and varieties, are all American. Explorers in the 16<sup>th</sup> century took samples to Europe where botanist likened them to an odd prickly plant the Greek philosopher and naturalist Theophrastus had described growing near an African village Opuns and named the new plant Opuntia. The two plants are unrelated. Early herbalists called the prickly pear an Indian fig.

The prickly pear is the national flower emblem of Mexico. According to legend, the early nomads in Mexico called Mexica where told by the Great Spirit to build a city where they found an eagle holding a snake in it's mouth perched on a cactus. The site of this discovery is present day Mexico City.

As a landscape plant, prickly pear is unde-

manding. It prefers full sun and good drainage, but many species survive in part shade and heavy clay soils. The beautiful lemon yellow or red flowers contrasting with the bluish gray pads add to the late spring garden. The wine colored tunas enhance a fall garden and make wonderful jelly. Pruning is done as with any perennial, although heavy gloves and a machete are preferable to regular gloves and pruning shears. Prune when the pads are young and use them in cooking (Nopalitos). A thorn-less variety is available which grows tall developing a trunk almost like a tree for those who do not wish to deal with the prickles. However, the prickles work very well as a barrier to unwanted visitors.

All sizes of the cactus are available depending on species from very small ground cover to the large spreading variety. Do not collect cactus in the wild or on private property without permission. Many varieties have been lost in the wild due to "Cactus Hunters". Purchase specimens only from known sources such as Martha's Bloomer's.

Plant prickly pear varieties and enjoy the ease of care. Use the young pads to make nopalitoes-great in scrambled eggs or a salad, and the tunas make great jelly. Enjoy this amazing plant and remember the importance it had to the earliest people in Texas. Without the prickly pear, would the native people have survived? 


## *Organics... Sharon Murry, Staff*

**Natural Fire Ant Control...**Spring time is a good time to get those fire ants under control... Impossible you say? No, it is possible to control them; however, finding the right treatment can be daunting.

Start rebuilding the natural micro-organisms back into your soils. Beneficial Nematodes can be applied anytime of the year that the ground is not frozen. These microscopic worms will consume hundred's of different types of larvae, including flea, tick, termite and ant larvae in the soil. One application will last for two years as long as you do not use any chemicals that would kill these good workers.

To tackle those ant mounds already popping up around your lawn and sidewalks, try Anti-

Fuego or sometimes called Aunti-Fuego Soil Conditioner made by Garden-ville. This is a 100 percent organic fire ant control which contains molasses and orange oil. Mix 4-6 oz of the soil conditioner to a gallon of water. Push a long stick down the middle of the ant mound and pour the mixture down the hole and around the edge of the mound with a sprinkling can. Use 1 to 2 gallons of the mixture, depending on the size of the mound.

The drench must be applied in sufficient volume to penetrate the entire nest. This mixture will kill the ants. The combination of Beneficial Nematodes and the application of Anti-Fuego Soil Conditioner should get you on the right track to controlling those fire ants. 

*"Gardens are not made by sitting in the shade"...Rudyard Kipling*



## *Plan your Escape... Vickie Deike, Landscape Designer*

**A Garden for Hummingbirds & Butterflies...**As the designer for the Landscape Department at Martha's Bloomers, the most popular request I receive when planning gardens is to include plantings that attract hummingbirds and butterflies. And it's no wonder! These little visitors to the garden bring as much enjoyment as the plants themselves. The following are a few favorites that do well in our area.

With hummingbirds due to arrive in our area at the end of March or beginning of April, it's a great time to add plants that will encourage them to linger before continuing on their journey.

Carolina Jessamine is an evergreen vine for sun that sporadically blooms yellow tube flowers in the winter and then absolutely explodes with blossoms at the first sign of spring.

Russelia is a mounding perennial with tube flowers and very fine textured leaves that make it appear almost grass-like. It is a unique look and comes in red, coral, and yellow varieties. Plant in full sun.

Columbine is a great perennial for dappled light areas and is also an early spring bloomer. The Texas Gold Columbine has

been designated a Texas Superstar™ ! (For more information on the Texas Superstar™ program - [www.texassuperstar.com](http://www.texassuperstar.com))

Butterflies are easy-to-please little guys. One rule: You cannot have enough blooms! Coral Vine grows by tendrils in full sun and has profuse bright pink flower spikes in the summer that butterflies love, but watch out, so do the bees.

A few low growing, (2'-3' ht.) full sun perennials that are easy care and give extra bang for the buck are Plumbago, Lantana, and Salvia Greggii.

Butterfly Bush buddleia, is a semi-evergreen shrub typically 4'-5' tall with flowers spikes all summer. It comes in yellow, pink, blue, and purple varieties.

Duranta is a large, perennial shrub, 5'-6' ht. with lush foliage and clusters of small blue / purple flowers spring to fall. It is one of the few butterfly plants that can take part shade.

Hopefully one or several of these suggestions will fit right in with your garden.

**(936)-825-7777 ext. 104**

Vickie Deike, Landscape Designer



## *From the Hot House... David Albrecht, Horticulturist*

**Chilling Injury in Tomatoes and Peppers...**Tomatoes and peppers can easily be referred to as two of the most popular vegetable garden crops to home gardeners in the state of Texas. For many of us, it is important to be successful in producing these crops in our gardens. While there are many successes, there are also those of us that have an off year as far as these two crops are concerned. One thing that gets us from time to time is chilling injury.

Chilling injury is not freeze damage. Chilling injury in tomatoes and peppers is the effect of temperatures between freezing and 60°F. Exposure of tomatoes and peppers to these low temperatures can cause injury that will not be evident until weeks later as these plants begin to mature. Keep in mind that the lower the temperature and the longer the duration, the more severe the chilling injury will be.

Tomato plants that suffer from prolonged temperatures below 55°F can have misshapen fruit.

Temperatures below 50°F can cause a fewer number of fruit to set. If plants are subjected to temperatures below 40°F, stunted growth, increased susceptibility to disease and wilting may occur.

Peppers are more susceptible to chilling than tomatoes. Peppers can show signs of injury by prolonged temperatures below 60°F.

One other factor contributing to chilling injury is low soil temperature. At a depth of 4 inches, it is best to have a soil temperature greater than 60°F before planting.

While March 6 may be the average last freeze date for our area, it is safest to wait until after one week in April has passed before planting. Also, the use of row covers and wind breaks as protection can be very beneficial in having a successful tomato and pepper crop. When using row covers do not let the temperature under the cover exceed 90°F.



*"As is the gardener, such is the garden"... Hebrew*



## Ask Martha & Bloomer....

Dear Martha:

My houseplants seem tired after winter. What can I do?

**Martha here....**Most houseplants love to be on a porch or under a big tree for the summer. Try reviving them this way, and don't forget to feed and water!

**Dear Bloomer:** My perennials are putting on leaves, but some look long and lanky? What should I do?

**Bloomer here...**Pinch or trim growing tips now before they produce buds. They may also need thinning if crowded.



### Tea Time at Café M. Bloomers

Bottoms up...and pinkies up too!

Sunday afternoon tea is back at Café M. Bloomers and it's time to reserve your seat. Join us one Sunday a month for seasonal themed tea parties complete with tasty treats.

**Make your Reservation Today!**

Seating is limited & reservations confirmed by credit card required.

Call Café M. Bloomers at (936) 870-3277.

## Romance at the Café... Pamela Hays, Staff

Spring has sprung, and its time to replace those hearty winter comfort foods with a lighter fare – and what better to decorate your dishes and delight your palette than fresh, edible flowers. Edible flowers make excellent additions to iced drinks, salads and many main dishes. Here are some suggestions for making the most of those springtime blossoms:

- Steep Maid of Orleans jasmine in your tea to add a touch of sweetness, or steep the leaves and flowers of lemon verbena to add a natural lemony flavor.
- Cut the petals of carnations away from the white base of the flower and sprinkle them over a freshly iced cake to add a touch of color. The petals have a peppery taste, so toss them in with your salad greens to add a splash of color and flavor.
- Marigold petals taste similar to saffron and can be used to top pasta or rice dishes or mix the petals into soups or spreads to add a yellow tint and a burst of flavor.

- Queen Ann's Lace has a light, carrot-like flavor and tastes great in salads.
- Rose petals are sweet with light undertones ranging from fruity to minty, but darker colored roses pack the most flavor. Use them to garnish cakes and other desserts or freeze them in ice cubes and float the cubes in your favorite punch.

Before using edible flowers in cooking, be sure that the flower you have chosen is indeed edible, and do not use flowers from florists or nurseries that may have been treated with pesticides, unless that pesticide is labeled for use on edible crops. Eat only the flower petals of most edible flowers and be sure to remove the pistils and stamen and wash the petals before eating. As with any new food, introduce edible flowers into your diet slowly and enjoy!

*Café M. Bloomers*

**(936) 870-3277**



*"To be awake is to be alive"... Thoreau*



## Calendar of Events.....

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

“A Tisket, A Tasket, What Can you Put in a Basket?” - Sat., March 5 - 11 am. Tricia Barksdale, floral designer, Petals 'n Bloomers Florist.

“Visions for Brazos Valley Gardens” Seminar - Sat., March 19 - 11 am. Dr. Bill Welch.

“Herbs—From Greenhouse to Garden” - Sat., March 26 - 11 am. Ann Wheeler, founder Log House Herb Farm.

“Wildflowers” Seminar - Sat., April 9 - 11 am. Dennis Marquardt, Tx. DOT.

“Repotting Orchids” Seminar - Sat., April 16 - 11 am. Dr. Rainer Fink, Orchid Specialist.

“Timeless Treasures & Dazzling Discoveries” Seminar - Sat., April 23 - 11 am. Heidi Sheesley of Treesearch Farms.

“Folklore and Facts of Texas Native Plants” Seminar- Sat., April 30 - 11 am. Karen Breneman, Author of Gardening with Nature in Texas.

“Orchids for Mom” Seminar - Sat., May 7 - 11 am. Dr. Rainer Fink, Orchid Specialist.

“Containers and Hanging Baskets for Summer” Seminar - Sat., May 14 - 11 am. Gay Houston and Karen Weir, B.A. Horticulture, Sam Houston State Univ.

“Irrigation Systems in One Hour” Seminar - Sat., June 4 - 11 am. Gaye Hammond, Rose Specialist.

**Cooking Classes**—Call Café M. Bloomers at (936) 870-3277 to make your reservations confirmed by credit card. All Cooking Classes by Chef Erin McFarlane.

“Classic French Dining” Cooking Class - Tuesday, March 8 - 6:30 pm. \$40/pp.

“Pies, Pies, Pies” Cooking Class - Friday, March 25 - 10:30 am. \$25/pp.

**Teas, Fashion Shows, Luncheons & Dinners**—Call Café M. Bloomers at (936) 870-3277 for your reservations confirmed by credit card.

“Luck of the Irish” Tea - Sunday, March 13 - 2 pm to 4 pm. \$15/pp.

“Color Me Color” Makeover & Luncheon by Fountain View Salon & Spa - Monday, March 21– 11 am. \$25/pp.

“April Showers” Tea - Sunday, April 10 - 2 pm to 4 pm. \$15/pp.

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).

For Cooking Classes, Teas, Luncheon or Dinner Reservations confirmed by credit card, please call

Café M. Bloomers at (936) 870-3277.

We welcome your suggestions for future seminars.



**Return Service Requested**

*If you have an email address and would like to receive reminders and special offers, please email us at [emailupdates@MarthasBloomers.com](mailto:emailupdates@MarthasBloomers.com) to register.*

*"Naturally," our newsletter is printed on recycled paper which meets or exceeds federal EPA guidelines for recycled paper!*

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**Mon-Sat 9-6 Sun 11-5**