



Master Gardener Of The Ozarks

Newsletter

Oct—Dec 2007

www.extension.missouri.edu/stone

schnakenbergc@missouri.edu

THOUGHTS ON OUR BUSY TIMES FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

The last few months have been very busy times for Master Gardeners of the Ozarks. I have been amazed at the accomplishments of our dedicated MG volunteers. Due to hard work by many MG's, lots of progress has been made on our projects. We have also spread the work about Master Gardening in various ways. Volunteers have presented information about Master Gardeners at several venues: Crane broiler festival, Blue Eye reunion and Hollister grape festival. The Stone County Gazette has also featured information about a number of work projects of individual MG's who volunteer in church gardens.

The gardens at Dewey Short Visitor Center have shown the loving work of many hands over the growing season. A new sign installed by the Corps of Engineers now acknowledges the partnership with Master Gardeners of the Ozarks. The sign is prominently displayed in the planting area next to the entrance sidewalk where it is visible to all who visit.

Our annual endeavor for October is the Fall Gardening Workshop. This year the workshop was at the new community room of the Kimberling Area Library. Thanks to all of the committee members who assisted with this major project. The synopsis of the five presentations can be found in another article in this newsletter. The other major project for fall is the educational course at Gibson Tech, "Gardening 101". Each of the ten classes received more than the minimum number of registrants so no classes have been canceled. We are currently considering offering the series again next semester on Tuesday evenings so the conflict with MG monthly meetings will be avoided.

In September, the MG accepted another project as a new volunteer opportunity. Alice Troyke presented a proposal for a children's garden to be located adjacent to the playground area on the grounds of the Kimberling Area Library. I was very pleased with the enthusiastic response Alice received and the willingness of the group to take on another project. If you were not at the meeting and would like to volunteer to participate in this effort, please give Alice a call.

(Continued)

As Autumn progresses, many gardeners think ahead to Spring and plant pansies and kale for seasonal color. Within Master Gardeners of the Ozarks, we also will be thinking ahead to next year. If you have ideas for projects or programs for 2008, please contact a board member or email me at kkufahl@centurytel.net. We would like to include topics and places that can showcase the diversity of gardening here in the Ozarks.

Fall is a glorious season, may you enjoy the sunny days and cool evenings that are so great for gardening!

Kathryn

AMARYLLIS



With fall and winter approaching, it's time to think about bringing your amaryllises in and get them ready for their dormant period. Before frost, bring them inside & stop watering for 4-6 weeks. Dump an inch or so of topsoil around the bulb & replace with new potting soil. Then start watering again & wait 6-8 weeks for your bulb to begin again. Unlike other bulbs, they don't need a cooling-down period of several weeks to set their blooms. Amaryllis (botanical name: Hippeastrum) like to be potbound, so set the bulbs snugly into a shallow pot with a drainage hole. Use just enough potting soil so that the top third of the bulb sits above the soil.

Give them bright light and a good drink of water to start, then water sparingly until green shoots begin to appear. Soil should be dry to the touch about 1/2 inch down from the surface. After they begin to grow, water regularly to keep the soil moist but never soggy.

When in full flower, move the plants out of direct sunlight to make the flowers last as long as possible. Because amaryllis have all the food they need inside the bulb, you can also forgo soil completely & just set them in gravel or stones. Add just enough water to keep the roots wet.

Fourth Annual Fall Workshop

Forty—five gardeners attended the 4th Annual Fall Gardening Workshop on Saturday, October 6th. The Community Room at Kimberling Area Library was a very welcoming spot with fall decorations on each table.

Mike Micham opened the workshop with a witty song about home—grown tomatoes. Mike and his wife, Nance, practice Sustainable Farming and Mike spoke about their experiences with free range chicken, pigs, cows and raising vegetables.



Jason Cook from Keeling Company educated the group on Nightscaping, an outdoor system that operates on 12 volt power. Jason recommended identifying areas of the landscape that you want to feature before choosing light fixtures. Then the fixture can be chosen to appropriately match the task.



educated lighting. Jason recommended identifying areas of the landscape that you want to feature before choosing light fixtures. Then the fixture can be chosen to appropriately match the task.



What do you want from a tree? That was the question posed by Jeff Hansen of Hansen's Tree Service. Generally a tree is an investment for many years, so selecting the best one for the situation is an important decision.

A columnar shaped tree might be a better choice for a narrow planting area. A small tree will be a better choice for an area under power lines.

Bill Eskes from Grimes Horticulture shared wonderful suggestions for fall season warm days of fall and tolerant flowers that thrive in the cool nights and tolerate some frost. Argyranthemum, bidens, bracteantha, osteospermum were some of his recommendations for autumn. Using perennials like ajuga, bergenia, foliage variations.



suggestions for fall season warm days of fall and tolerant flowers that thrive in the cool nights and tolerate some frost. Argyranthemum, bidens, bracteantha, osteospermum were some of his recommendations for autumn. Using perennials like ajuga, bergenia, foliage variations.

Ted Switz from Arkansas was the final speaker of the afternoon. Along with his wife, Sharon. Ted operates Barren Fork Ranch and produces worm castings. Castings are the by-product of worm digestion. Worm castings contain auxin which is a root-growth stimulant so plants grow stronger and more productive. Castings also contain numerous trace elements and nitrogen—fixing bacteria. The worms are kept in buckets with holes for ventilation, 280 per container. Ted stressed that chemical fertilizers should never be used with worm castings since nitrates will inhibit the action of the castings. For best results, mix 75% soil with 25% castings.



Washing Your Fruits & Vegetables Safely

This is a condensation of an article in the Stone County Gazette dated 9/27/07 by Jim Long of Long Creek Herbs. A study by Cooks Magazine and confirmed by Tennessee State University compared rinsing, Veggie Wash, and White Vinegar for its effectiveness in killing bacteria. The White Vinegar killed 98% in these tests.

For a fruit or vegetable soak, combine 1 cup of White Vinegar with 3 cups of water (25%) and rinse or soak the product. A short rinse is OK you are just removing the vinegar taste. Remember the crevices which would require a longer rinse to reach the entire product.

For a spray, mix a 25% mixture of White Vinegar and water in a spray bottle, spray the product and rinse.

The full article is available in the Stone County Gazette dated 9/27/07

DeVere

Lemon Thyme and Lemon Verbena have a new use!

All summer we have toiled in our gardens, watered, dug and planted. Ok now what do we do with all that we have produced. We know to dry our herbs, keep the potatoes and squash dry and cool to make them last into the winter months. This article will hopefully give you some new ideas or revitalize some of the old ones. We are coming up on the time of year when food is celebrated in one form or the other until about Jan. 1, 2008.

Then we will snuggle in and like hibernating bears, reading and planning all of our spring and summer gardens for next year. Thinking of food can make you hungry.

My belief is that planning “your garden should start in your mouth with your taste buds!”

Knowing what you or your family and friends like to eat and what you use in your favorite old or new recipes will help you understand “How your garden should grow”.

So let's use our time this year to plan your pantry for next year and while enjoying this year.

This year I grew some Lemon Thyme and I am going to use it in ice cream, yes that's right ice cream. You can use Lemon Verbena or the zest from ½ lemon and 2 sprigs of Lemon Thyme to substitute. They (who ever that is) say we eat more ice cream in the winter than in the summer, so get ready for a snowy day when nothing else is going on or you have a taste for something different.

This ice cream can be topped with any berry sorbet or use fresh or frozen raspberries to enhance the flavors even more.

So get your imagination and your taste buds, ready to think outside of the box. This is not a recipe for a beginner cook, but I have tried to write the recipe so the beginner can try and have a good chance of succeeding. A word to the wise, don't cut corners when you are making ice cream, at least the first time through.

(continued)

Lemon Thyme and Lemon Verbena have a new use!

(continued)

Lemon Verbena Ice Cream/ with Berry Sorbet or Fresh Berries

2c. half-and-half

1 1/2c. Whipping cream

1/2c. Lightly packed fresh lemon verbena leaves or

the zest from 1/2 lemon (the yellow part only no white) and 2 sprigs of Lemon Thyme to substitute for verbena.

7 egg yolks

(Use the left over whites to make a white cake)

3/4c. Sugar

In a large saucepan, mix half n half, whipping cream and lemon (which ever). Cook and stir over medium heat until tiny bubbles just form around the edge. (This is referred to as scalding). Do not boil. Remove from heat and let sit in pan for 15 minutes.

2. Place the egg yolks in a medium bowl; slightly beat with fork or whisk. “Gradually” add eggs yolks, while continuously whisking, add about 1 c. of the hot cream mixture into the egg yolks at first. (Make sure to continue whisking the eggs as you add hot cream, very important.)

3. Next take the mixture that you have been whisking and add it back to the saucepan with the rest of the hot cream.

4. Stir in Sugar.

5. Cook and stir over medium heat until mixture will coat a spoon (use a candy thermometer that is about 170 degrees)

6. Quick chill the mixture by placing the saucepan in a large bowl of ice water (make sure none of the water goes into the cream mixture it will change the quality)

7. Stir this cooling mixture for 1 or 2 minutes (why to prevent skinning and give a smoother quality to the finished product.)

8. Strain mixture through a fine mesh sieve into a large bowl to remove lemon leaves and any lumps that may have formed.

9. Cover and Chill cream mixture in refrigerator for 6 to 24 hours.

(Covering keeps odors and taste out of your cream mixture from other foods in your refrigerator. If you use plastic wrap and place it directly on the cream mixture it will prevent skinning, a skin like substance that has a tendency to form on cooked custards.)

10. Freeze the custard mixture in a 4 quart ice cream freezer according to manufactures directions. If you like you can ripen this mixture for 4 hours. (To ripen the mixture lets the flavors blend and give a smoother taste, but it hard to wait, believe me.)

Sandra Reames

Luffa Sponge Gourd

Background:

Luffa (*Luffa aegyptica* Mill syn. *L. cylindrical*). Or Loofah or vegetable sponge is a member of the Cucurbitaceae family. Luffa is closely related to and has similar cultural requirements as the cucumber. It is an annual climbing vine, which produces a fruit containing a fibrous vascular system. When separated from the skin flesh and seeds, the fiber network can be used as a bathroom sponge. Luffa can also be used as packing material, for making crafts, and as filters. Used as a bath sponge it produces a mild glow on the skin. The blood circulation of the sponge induces on the has been credited as a relief for rheumatic and arthritic sufferers. The versatility of the Luffa goes beyond producing sponges. The young fruit, when small, (around 6 inches) are delicious used in soup or stew. They can also be cooked like summer squash. Older fruit have been reported to develop purgative chemicals. Because Luffa has compact network of close fibers, its resiliency makes it useful for many products like filter, slipper soles, baskets. Small pieces of Luffa sponge are good for scraping vegetables like carrots without having to remove the valuable nutrients by peeling them. You can also wash dishes, scrub your tub, etc. with Luffa. When they become soiled throw in the washer! Luffa is environmentally safe, biodegradable and a renewable resource.

Growing:

Luffa requires a very long growing season in order to mature into dried spongers. Luffa is cold sensitive. The seed should be sown outside after the ground is thoroughly warm in the spring and all danger of frost is past. For faster germination, scrape the seed coat with a nail file before soaking overnight or soak for 24 hours. Seeds may be started in peat pots about three weeks prior to moving them outside. Be patient if seeds are slow to sprout—that is the characteristic of Luffa. Luffa's grow best in full sun in a well prepared bed. Plant seeds 8-12" apart alone a fence, or in hill of 3 or 4 seeds 1 1/2" deep with hills 4 to 6 feet. apart. Luffa needs plenty of moisture while growing. It prefers a pH of around 6.0 to 6.8. Water deeply and cover the bed with mulch, keep the mulch away from the stem. Excessive water can result in poor growth and root disease. Damping off can be a problem with young seedlings if growing in too wet condition, and fruits rot may cause losses if the fruit are allowed to grow on the ground. Gourds are heavy feeders and require fertile soil. Nutrients and water may be reduced in late summer to slow growth rate and encourage fruits to harden off. Although Luffa can be left to grow along the ground, best yields and fruit quality are obtained by using a support structure or trellis so the fruit rests on the ground as little as possible. The vines can reach up to ten or twelve feet. The fruit will be preceded by lovely yellow flower. The fruits are green, smooth and look like cucumbers, reaching 12 to 18 inches in length. Fruits may weigh up to 3 lb., the stake of trellis must be strong enough to allow the fruit to hang free. Any constriction will result in deformed fruit. Removing all the first flowers, male flowers, and the first four lateral branches helps produce better fruits later. Generally speaking, cultivation is similar to growing cucumbers and melons. If any fruit develops rotten spots or holes, remove it from the vine. It cannot be saved.

Harvest:

It is from the Luffa gourds that the organic sponges are produced. Towards the end of the summer (or into fall) the Luffa will begin to loose weight. This is sign that it is beginning to mature on the vine. When harvesting the Luffa, in order to get high-quality vegetable sponges, allow to ripen on the vine an harvest wh the skin has turned yellow or brown.. Leave on the vine for as long as possible. After the first frost you must remove them from the vine immediately to keep from rotting. You will not be able to salvage every Luffa that is on your vine. Only fruit that appear on the vine in early sin summer will have the length of time required to mature.

Cleaning and Preparation:

If you don't have time to clean the dried gourds right away, they can be stored in a dry location. Gourds left to dry on the vine are ready when the shell is brown and hard and you dry seed inside when shaken. Break off the bud end and shake all the seeds out (save—see seeds below). Submerge in water a couple minutes until softened. The water needs to be change frequently to avoid staining the fibers. The skin and pulp should remove easily. Soak the sponges in another bucket of a bleach and water mixture (about 30:70) to whiten the fibers further if necessary. The fibers may also be bleached with hydrogen peroxide. Leave the sponges in the bleach and water mixture around fifteen minutes or until you reach the desired color. Rinse in clean water to remove bleach. When the remains clean, the sponges can be remove, trimmed and dried. Hydrogen peroxide is sometimes used as a bleach to attain the lightest color. For best results air dry the sponges. Lay them out on a sunny day for sun bleaching and drying. Once cleaned and dried you store the sponges in a dry location until you are ready to use them. Fiber density, texture, and appearance are the main quality parameters. A dense, fine-to medium textured fiber is preferred. The price paid for each sponge usually depends on the quality and sponge length. This sponge is machine washable.

Seeds:

Start with fresh seed from a quality seed producer, especially if you plan to sell you sponges. Seeds saved from prior harvests may be use if you are sure that they were only pollinated from other Luffa gourds. The Cucurgitaceae may cross pollinate and the seed saved and planted may not give rise to what you expected. If there are no other gourds or squash growing nearby you may be able to save you seed for the next crop.

Coloring Luffas:

To color or dye sponges, use only clean and bleached sponges. Cut the sponges to desired lengths. Buy Rit Dye in colors that you like. Follow the directions on the box, when thoroughly mixed, place the sponges into the dye. Stir gently or if in a washer, mix on the gentle cycle, for about a minute. Then, let the sponges soak for several minutes until color desired is achieved.. Drain the colored water, then rinse with clean water or on the gentle cycle in the washer. Shake lightly to dry or spin dry for only a minuet on the gentle cycle to remove excess water. Place the sponges in a warm dry place or put them outside in a sunny location to air dry.

Other Uses:

Attach yarn through one end of the sponges to hang in the shower.

Place a cleaned natural or colored sponge in a clear freezer bag and tie off with a ribbon for gift giving.

Include a tag, or a note inside the bag, that tells that the sponge was home grown by you.

Use sponges in basket along with soaps for gift giving.

Your can cut thin slices off the sponges to create discs that look like snowflakes to use for crafts. Glue small dried berries and pinecones to the center of the disc with a hot glue gun. Then glue a small bow, made of ribbon, and use the same style of ribbon to make a hanger for Christmas tree ornaments or glue to a magnet to make a refrigerator magnet.

References:

Commercial Luffa Sponge Gourd Production, Jeanine M. Davis; North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service; Horticulture Information Leaflet 120, 4/97; at <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/hil/hil-120.htm>.

Gourd, Luffa—Luffa cylindrical (L.) Roem., Luffa aegyptica Mill., and Luffa acutangula (L.) Roxb., James M. Stephens—Fact Sheet HS-604; at <http://hammock.ifas.ufl.edu/txt/fairs/12467>

Growing Gourds, Jonathon R. Schultheis, 1/98; North Carolina cooperative Extension Service ; HEL-29;at <http://ces.ncsu.edu/hil/hil-29.html>

Growing Loofah Gourds, Peggy Moore; at: <http://sv.cc.va.us/pmoore/hobby1/PeggysLoofahPage.htm>

(continued)

(continued)

Luffa, Plant Sciences Group of Central Queensland University; updated 15 March 1999.

Luffa Sponge Gourds; A Potential Crop for Small Farms, Jeanine M. Davis and Charles D. DeCourley, 1993; in J. Janick and J.E. Simon (eds.), *New Crops*: Wiley, New York:

at <http://hort.purdue.edu/newccrop/proceedings1993/V2-560.html>

Luffa—the sponge gourd, John Follett; Ruakura Agricultural research Centre, New Zealand

Loren Schoenholtz

Thanks to everyone, the material came in late but in abundance!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Please update your E-Mail records, my address is now devere1@centurytel.net