



April/May 2006 Volume 5, Issue 2

M. Bloomers

A Garden Journal

"Don't wear perfume in the garden — unless you want to be pollinated by bees"...Anne Raver


What's New for Spring....Gay Houston, Staff

Spring Standbys—In our part of Texas, Spring may be brief with very cool days suddenly changing to very hot ones. March, April and May are fun because we never know what each day will bring, but we do know that almost overnight anything that blooms will suddenly burst out in the beautiful colors of spring. Any blooming tree, shrub, or perennial is usually at its best, and the annuals that we planted for winter often put on one last show. To our sorrow, weeds also start trying to crowd out the emerging perennials. Pulling, chopping, and spraying weed killer are all part of the process.

Don't forget to mulch now if you didn't during the fall and winter. More weeds will follow as the days grow warmer and mulch will certainly help.

Martha's Bloomers is excited about one of our upcoming seminars that will take place on April 8th. Angela Meyer will represent one of our best perennial sources, Magnolia Gardens located in Waller, Texas. She has a great deal of experience in landscaping and planning flowerbeds. The seminar will be a "come and go" affair between 10 am and 3

pm. We will have a huge selection of the "Go Texan Plants for Texas". They are Texas grown for Texas gardens. Angela and the Martha's Bloomers staff will be available to help you make selections, plan placement and spacing, and show you great choices for lasting color and beauty in your landscape. These plants are grown locally and proven to do well in our area. All have great information for care and growth habits, so plan to attend for the best choices.

As you get ready for all the fun and festivities of spring, don't forget the bright annuals for spots of color. Many petunias are now more heat resistant so they can be used in beds and containers all around the house. Large pots of geraniums are always great for a porch or step but other containers can be planted with a mix of annuals, grasses, and perennials. The profusion Zinnias, gazinias, portulacas, and angelonia are only a few of the annuals we have found to be very heat resistant and can fill a bed with color now and all summer. We are always ready to help you plan or plant containers and have many colorful ceramic pots that show off your living colors. 

"God made rainy days so gardeners could get their housework done"...Author Unknown



The Spring Garden... Vickie Deike, Staff

The Spring Garden...my favorite springtime plants are the ones that bloom the earliest!

As soon as the first bit of warm weather comes, I'm out inspecting the garden. When that first bloom appears it is so exciting, not only my husband, but the dog and cat have to come out and marvel at it with me. And then a boastful phone call is made to my mother. Needless to say I like to incorporate some early bloomers into the garden to help herald in Spring. The following are a few that I enjoy and are versatile enough to fit into most gardens.

The plant that I can count on every year for an early show has been the pincushion flower, blooming as early as Valentine's Day. It's a small plant, spreading to 18" wide and only 12" tall. Its shape is similar to a pincushion stuck full of pins, hence the name. The flowers are pale blue to pale purple. It will flower heavily all spring. The heat of the summer can be hard on it, so it would be a good idea to place it where it will get some afternoon shade.

Verbenas seem to be the most popular plant of the spring. There are so many varieties and colors to choose from. The most trouble-free verbenas are the Fushia Moss Verbena and the

Homestead Purple Verbena. The Fushia Moss Verbena has a split leaf giving it a fine texture. It is an aggressive grower, 4'x4' would be a modest size for one plant. It is an excellent sharing plant because the nodes of its braches put down roots which can then be dug up and transplanted as a new plant. The Homestead Purple Verbena has a rich purple flower, a nice compliment to the more typical pinks and yellows in the garden. It has a larger leaf and is not quite as dark green as the Fushia Verbena. All verbenas will benefit from a few shearings during the summer.

Who doesn't love a daisy? It is such a cheery little guy. The Blackfoot Daisy is a Texas native, is heat and drought tolerant, deer resistant, and blooms its little heart out. It is petite, only 1'tall by 2' wide and starts blooming in March until frost. Plant several together for a soft, white blanket effect that has a spreading habit which looks the best when spilling over a wall or a boulder.

There are of course more plants that are great for the spring. To find something that will work for your specific situation just stop into Martha's Bloomers. There are new plants coming in every week.



Garden Collectibles... Sabrina Mayfield, Staff

Watering cans are an item that never seem to go out of style, and are growing more popular all the time. Whether they are used in a garden or kept as a collector's item, there is something very nostalgic about them.

Watering cans have been around for thousands of years. One of the first pictorial records of a watering container, known then as a "watering pot", dates back to the 1400's. Sturdy clay pots were used to haul water to and from the watering source to the garden. By the early 1700's, the term "watering can" first appeared. The watering cans were being made out of copper, and a few were made out of brass. In 1886, founder John Haws obtained a patent for an improved watering can. It was easier to carry and to tip. He replaced the top mounted handle with a single round handle at the rear. It was a watering can designed with perfect balance, and to be used without any strain on the gardener. To this day, the original design has not been altered in any major way.

Depending on your needs, you can choose either a simple spout, or a shower head style,

called a "rose", (a device like cap with small holes) to break up the stream of water into droplets. Watering cans can be easier to use than the garden hose, and they deliver water more accurately than a sprinkler system. For the gardener who enjoys taking time to relax in the garden there is something nostalgic about using a good ole watering can.

For the collector of watering cans, you can find plenty of unique styles to form your collection. From small to large, plastic to the old galvanized cans, collecting watering cans has become fun to do. Especially finding an antique watering can. Prices range from \$25 to \$100 or more for the very unusual ones. Some cans to watch for are those made by the Haws Co., and Wheeling.

No matter if you are a regular watering can gardener, or just a collector, there is something wonderful about giving the gift of water. Whether the can is used or not. It gives us the knowledge that "Gardening is a way of showing that you believe in tomorrow", and that "Water is the driver of Nature" – Leonardo da Vinci.



"You can bury a lot of troubles digging in the dirt"... Author Unknown



Container Gardening... Shirleen McDonald, Staff

For many of us, gardening articles are just too technical. Or, we just don't have the time to care for flower beds. Try container gardening. You can easily add vibrant color to your surroundings just by adding a few containers to your porch, patio or doorway. Select several containers in like colors, and fill with quality potting soil. Keep your color theme in mind and select flowers in compatible color tones and varying heights. Don't forget to add a 'pinch' of trailing ivy or

vine to the outer edges of the planting. Your trailing ivy or vine will add dimension and balance to your plant selection.

There are gorgeous ceramic pots now available in vibrant colors and varying sizes, as well as the "long-time favorite" red clay pots and the selection of flowers are never greater than this time of the year. Come see the colors that nature has waiting for you at Martha's Bloomers!



Water Garden Fun Maintenance... The Series... Karen Breneman

Maintenance, the bane of all gardeners, is necessary, but in a balanced ecosystem is minimal. Plants tend to outgrow pots or space provided and need to be thinned. Winter months are a good time to do this when many of the plants are dormant; however, thinning can be done at any time. Tropical water lilies may need to be removed from the pond if the winter temperatures remain below freezing for a prolonged period. (Most winters in the Houston area this is not a problem.) Check underwater plants periodically through out the year to ensure growth of these essential plants, which may have to be caged to prevent grazing by fish and other water creatures.

Earthen bottom ponds in heavy clay soils may not clear due to suspended clay particles which are too small to settle out. This problem can be solved by adding gypsum to the water. Make a slurry of the gypsum in water from the pond and return the mixture to the pond. The amount depends on the degree of cloudiness- too much does not matter. Wait a day and if not clear add more until the pond clears. Once clear the pond should clear after rains unless there is excessive clay filled runoff. If that happens repeat the above procedure.

Algae can be a problem throughout the year. There are several chemicals available for treatment, but the most environmentally friendly method is to use barley straw. Float containers of the straw on the surface of the water. As the straw decomposes a chemical is released that prevents the algae from growing. For best results the straw should be added early spring and replaced every 3-5 months through the warmer months. Barley

straw works and also provides homes for many small members of the pond ecosystem.

Container grown plants such as water lilies do need fertilizer to bloom. Special tablets are available for this purpose and when added according to label directions do not add fertilizer to the water which could upset the balance.

Water evaporates and needs to be replenished. In small ponds to maintain the health of the creatures it is necessary to pre-treat the water to remove the chorine and chloramines. Several different products are available for this purpose. Follow label directions on the product of your choice. Larger ponds can handle small additions at a time of untreated water. If in doubt-treat.

If you have a pump, it is necessary to periodically clean the filter. Follow manufactures instructions.

Do not clean the bottom of your pond! This is where the water creatures live and feed. The only exception is if the pond develops a foul odor. This is usually a result of a pond in the wrong location where it is getting leaves and other plant material. If the pond cannot be moved, place a screen or netting over the pond during leaf drop.

Put in a water garden. Sit beside it. Enjoy the peace and the beauty. Stress will melt away and peace of mind will return.

For more information or to review this series, please check out Karen's book [Gardening with Nature in Texas](#).



"Despite the gardener's best intentions, Nature will improvise"... Michael P. Garafalo



Corn Gluten Meal, An Organic Pre-emergent... Sharon Murry, Staff

Corn gluten meal is a natural by-product of the wet corn milling process and should not be confused with corn meal. It is regularly used in cattle, dog, fish, poultry and other animal feed because of its high protein content.

Corn gluten meal was discovered by Dr. Nick Christians of Iowa State University in the 1980's and he was issued a patent in 1991. Corn gluten meal may be used as a natural non-toxic pre-emergent herbicide. In our area, it is best to apply in early Spring or early Fall; however, it can be applied year-round on lawns to reduce the establishment of dandelions, crabgrass, grass burrs and many other troublesome annual weeds. Corn gluten meal works on seeds, not on established plants and it inhibits seed germination by drying out a seed as soon as it cracks open to sprout. It does not kill the existing weed; rather it keeps the weeds seeds from germinating.

Tests have shown that if corn gluten is applied regularly, in the spring and fall, dandelion infestations have been reduced by 100% in a period of 4 years. It is also a powerful natural fertilizer and will create large, healthy weeds if

you apply it at the wrong time. The key is to apply the corn gluten meal before the weeds germinate.

Broadcast it at a rate of 20 lbs. per 1000 sq ft. on your lawn. As a plant food, corn gluten has an N-P-K ratio of 9-1-0 or 10% nitrogen by weight.

Corn gluten meal can also be used in vegetable gardens as a fertilizer and to help weed control after your vegetable seeds have sprouted, have true leaves and the plant roots are well established. The treatment will last 5-6 weeks. After this time, seeds can be planted in the treated areas without being effected. It is a good fertilizer and weed control for around well established vegetables, flowers, fruit trees and shrubs. Corn gluten releases nutrients into your soil over a long period of time and results improve with repeated use. It will not work until wetted, so wet it down using a fine soft spray after applying. Consider it a natural "weed and feed". You may also use the same treatment on your lawn in early October or 4-5 weeks before cool season weeds emerge.

Reprinted from Mid-South Synergy's edition of the Texas Coop Power Magazine, March 2004 issue.



A Garden for Hummingbirds & Butterflies... Vickie Deike, Staff

As the designer for the Landscape Department here 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 visit

www.texasuperstar.com.)

Butterflies are easy-to-please little guys. One rule: You cannot have too many 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' tall) 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. If you would like help designing or installing a garden for hummingbirds and butterflies give Martha's Bloomers Landscape Department a call, 936-870-4111.



"All gardeners live in beautiful places because they make them so"... Joseph Toubert



Easter Buffet... Pam Hays, Staff

Spring is in full swing and Easter is right around the corner. As always, an approaching holiday means many of you will be spending the day visiting with family and enjoying lots of good food. Don't let the prospect of holiday cooking overwhelm you -- whether you're hosting a large family dinner, planning a small celebration with a few friends, or simply bringing a dish to pass at another person's home, you can easily and quickly prepare delicious dishes that will get you out of the kitchen and into good conversation with loved ones.

A **Honey-Glazed Turkey Breast** makes for a great main dish that can be complemented by a variety of casseroles or sides. We recommend pairing the **Honey-Glazed Turkey Breast** with another sweet dish -- **Sweet Potato Casserole With Praline Topping**, a guilt-free indulgence which is an easy way to have your vegetables and enjoy them, too!

A good **Green Bean Casserole** is a staple in your arsenal of favorite recipes. Change things up a bit by preparing a kid-friendly version, which is a healthier alternative to this popular dish. Roasted potatoes are a nice simple side and by using a combination of sweet potatoes and baking potatoes, you have added flavor, color and nutrition.

Finally, **Lemon Poppy Seed Cake** is a wonderful light dessert and a perfect finish to your holiday menu. You'll cut preparation time by starting with a prepared cake mix and if you're really ambitious, you can whip up some homemade vanilla ice cream to go with it. Then again, you can always head to the grocery store to pick up the "homemade" brand of your choice!

You'll be well on your way to a delicious Easter Buffet with these suggestions. Enjoy the day and your friends and family.

HONEY-GLAZED TURKEY BREAST

1 (5 lb.) turkey breast Salt and pepper to taste* 1/3 cup honey 3 Tbsp Dijon mustard
1-1/2 tsp dried rosemary leaves

Preheat oven to 325°F. Remove the skin from the turkey breast and discard; place the breast in a roaster pan. Season with the salt and pepper. In a small bowl, mix together the honey, Dijon mustard, and rosemary. Pour half the glaze over the turkey breast, and bake, uncovered, for about 2 hours, or until the meat ther-

mometer registers 170° to 175°F in the thickest part of the breast. You may want to add a little water to the bottom of pan, if needed. During the final 15 minutes of baking, brush the remaining glaze over the turkey breast. Serve. **Makes 10 to 12 Servings.**

SWEET POTATO CASSEROLE WITH PRALINE TOPPING:

3 cups cooked mashed sweet potatoes (yams) 1/2 cup sugar 1 egg 1 egg white
1 (5-ounce) can evaporated skimmed milk
1-1/2 tsp vanilla extract

Praline Topping:

1 cup light brown sugar
1/2 cup all-purpose flour
1/2 tsp ground cinnamon
6 Tbsp margarine, melted
1 tsp vanilla extract
1/2 cup chopped pecans, optional

Preheat oven to 350°F. In a mixing bowl, blend together the potatoes, sugar, egg, egg white, evaporated skimmed milk, and vanilla. Place in a 2-quart casserole dish coated with nonstick cooking spray, and cover with Praline Topping (see recipe below). Bake for 45 minutes until topping is browned and casserole is thoroughly heated. Serve. **Makes 8 to 10 Servings.**

Praline Topping: In a medium bowl, mix together the brown sugar, flour, and cinnamon. Add the margarine, vanilla, and pecans, stirring until crumbly. Proceed with recipe as directed above.

GREEN BEAN CASSEROLE

1 (16-ounce) package frozen French-cut green beans 1 onion, chopped
1 Tbsp margarine 2 Tbsp all-purpose flour
Salt and pepper to taste* 1/2 cup skim milk
1/2 cup nonfat plain yogurt or fat-free sour cream 1 cup shredded reduced-fat sharp Cheddar cheese.

Cook the green beans according to the package directions; drain well. Preheat the broiler. In a small pot, sauté the onion in the margarine until tender. Blend in the flour, salt, and pepper. Gradually add the milk, stirring and cooking over medium heat until thickened and bubbly. Stir in the yogurt and green beans; heat thoroughly, about two minutes. Transfer to a 1-1/2-quart casserole. Sprinkle

"The best fertilizer is the gardener's shadow"... Author Unknown



Continued from Page 4...Easter Buffet...

with the cheese, and broil in the oven until the cheese melts. Serve. **Makes 8 Servings.**

LEMON POPPY SEED CAKE

1 (18.25-ounce) package yellow cake mix
1/4 cup canola oil 1/4 cup water
1-1/3 cups nonfat plain yogurt
1 egg 3 egg whites 1 tsp almond extract
1/3 cup plus 3 Tbsp lemon juice
1 Tbsp poppy seeds 1 cup confectioners sugar

Preheat oven to 350°F. Coat a 10-inch Bundt pan with nonstick cooking spray; set aside. In a large mixing bowl, combine the cake mix, oil,

water, yogurt, egg, egg whites, almond extract, and 1/3 cup lemon juice. Beat until creamy. Stir in the poppy seeds. Pour the batter into the Bundt pan, and bake for 40 minutes, or until a wooden toothpick inserted in the center of the cake comes out clean. Cool in the pan on a wire rack for 10 minutes.

Meanwhile, combine the confectioners' sugar and remaining 3 tablespoons lemon juice, stirring until smooth. Remove the cake from the pan onto a serving plate, and drizzle with the lemon glaze. Cool. **Makes 16 to 20 (Slice) Servings.**



Exclusively Yours... Tricia Barksdale, Petals 'n Bloomers

Pick Up a "Right-Hand" Bouquet...most people have heard the stories and seen the ads about the "right-hand diamonds". This trend encourages women to buy diamonds for themselves. Worn on the right hand, the diamonds indicate a woman's confidence and style. This same approach should apply to fresh flowers.

The "Why Wait?" program in Europe was launched by the Flower Council of Holland. Directed towards the "you're worth it" concept, it encourages women to buy their own flowers regularly. Since we know that flowers in an office or home improve creativity, problem solving and general feelings of well-being (according to research conducted by Rutgers

University, The Society of American Florists, and Texas A&M University), then waiting to receive flowers from someone else is not necessary. Conclusion?

Pick up a "Right-hand Bouquet"...

You're worth it!



Petals 'n Bloomers

(936) 825-8577

Be a Winner... Shirleen McDonald, Staff

Barbara Porsch is the fourth winner of our our Be A Winner Contest! She received a gift certificate for two for lunch at Café M. Bloomers! Barbara submitted a great soup recipe.

"Creamy Cilantro Potato Bisque"

6 cups chicken broth
1/4 teaspoon white pepper
1/2 heaping teaspoon ground cumin
1 can (7 oz) chopped green chiles
2 or 3 white rose potatoes (about 2 lbs)
peeled and coarsely chopped.
1 cup lightly packed fresh cilantro springs (no stems)
4 green onions, thinly sliced, including tops
1 cup sour cream Salt to taste

In a large saucepan or dutch oven, combine

broth, potatoes, pepper and cumin. Bring to boil and reduce heat. Cover and boil gently until potatoes are very tender when pierced, about 15-20 minutes. Let potatoes cool. In processor or blender, combine half of the potato mixture with chiles, cilantro and onion. Whirl until smooth. Transfer to another container. Puree remaining potato mixture and sour cream. Combine pureed mixtures and salt to taste. Can be served warm, or chilled and served cold.

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"!



"Green fingers are an extension of a verdant heart"...Russell Page



Calendar of Events...

Saturday Seminars - and they are Free!

“Go Texan Plants for Texas” - Saturday, April 8 starting at 10 am and ending at 3 pm. A “come and go” demonstration and ongoing discussion of free planting advice and viewing of Texas Perennials. Presented by Angela Meyer, Magnolia Gardens.

“Fashionable Floral Trends for Spring” - Saturday, April 22 at 11 am. Presented by Tricia Barksdale, Petals 'n Bloomers Florist.

“Eden in a Container” - Saturday, May 6 at 11 am. Presented by Karen Weir, B.A. Horticulture, Sam Houston University.

“Colorful Gardens for Sun or Shade” - Saturday, May 13 at 11 am. Presented by Dr. Bill Welch.

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.
Please email to: suggestions@MarthasBloomers.com

For Cooking Classes, Teas and Luncheon Reservations confirmed by credit card,
please call Café M. Bloomers at (936) 870-3277.

New Positions Open...

Accountant

Responsible for general accounting and financial statement preparation.
Requirements: Computer literacy, strong organizational skills,
minimum of five years accounting experience.
Bachelor's degree in Accounting or related field preferred.
Knowledge & experience with QuickBooks accounting software.
Send resume to: funjob@marthasbloomers.com or fax to: (936) 825-7703

Landscape Crew Supervisor/Project Manager

Horticultural background and irrigation license preferred.
Minimum of 3 to 5 years experience required.
Send resume to: funjob@marthasbloomers.com or fax to: (936) 825-7703.



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

