



March/April 2007 Volume 6, Issue 2

M. Bloomers A Garden Journal

"I perhaps owe having become a painter to flowers"...Claude Monet

News from the Hot House... David Albrecht, Horticulturist

The Canary Island date palm (*Phoenix canariensis*) is native to the Canary Islands located in the Atlantic ocean off the coast of northeast Africa. This date palm is used around the world in mild winter climates, including along the Gulf of Mexico coast line and California, as well as on the French Riviera providing a distinctive Mediterranean look. This palm is rated for zone 8, and is one of the palms that do well in our area.

The Canary Island date palm lends itself well as a landscape specimen due to its very large, impressive stature. Growing up to 60' tall, the trunk is very massive, and interesting due to the diamond shaped markings left behind by the loss of old leaves. On the top of this massive trunk sits a huge crown of arching pinnately compound leaves measuring up to 18' long. At the base of these leaves are very long, sharp spines. This species of palm is

dioecious, meaning there are separate male and female plants. The orange colored dates are of this variety are edible and very decorative, but they are not very good to eat due to their small size and thin flesh. The edible dates sold in stores are from a different species of date palm, *Phoenix dactylifera*.

The Canary Island date palm is slow growing when young, but once the trunk reaches it's full diameter the growth rate increases. Fertilization in spring and summer is very important in maximizing its slow growth rate. While this palm enjoys a moderate amount of water, it must be planted in a well- drained soil. Full sun is best, but it will tolerate some shade. This palm is drought resistant once established.

Martha's has a wide variety of palms to add the perfect tropical touch to your landscape.



Fun Job... Shirleen McDonald, Staff

Calling all Plant Enthusiasts! If you like working indoors and outdoors, surrounded by colorful flowers and plants, a fun job awaits you.

The friendly staff at Martha's Bloomers invites you to join them in working with plants, people and beautiful home décor.

Flexible, part-time hours including some weekend work. A willingness to learn is more important than previous gardening experience.

Apply in person Monday thru Saturday, 9 am to 6 pm, or Sunday, 11 am to 5 pm. Applications are available at Martha's or send your resume to funjob@marthasbloomers.com.



"Weeds never grow on the path between friends"...Anonymous



Texas Tough Perennials... Gay Houston, Staff

Winter rains and cold temperatures were with us this year, but spring is bringing back the garden and our urge to get out and plant! A few "tender perennials" might have been lost and other perennials may be slow to reappear. Now is a great time to visit Martha's, look at all the great annual and perennials that are bursting with color, and get ready for the season.

As we pull those irritating winter weeds from our beds, it is time to add soil amendments. Giving the soil a boost will pay off in better plant growth and less water requirements. We are now carrying a great new compost containing 15% protein with cotton burrs, and it is also acidified. Compost and mulch will make a tremendous difference in plant growth and health.

We at Martha's Bloomers are ready with suggestions for perennial additions in both the dependable old varieties and some of the more recent introductions. If you are having trouble with some bare spots in your flowerbeds, let us suggest some tough plants and shrubs that seem to be working for others in our area. Since spring often brings us the gardener who says, "I have a brown thumb", here are three plants that have proven to work for almost everyone.

Yarrow is an old favorite that is so easy to grow that it is perfect for those who want to fill in a bed and not have to worry about it. It

might be considered invasive by some as it does spread, but for beautiful foliage and almost constant bloom it is often overlooked. It is available in yellow, white, pink, and paprika. It is an ancient plant that grows all over the world. It was used as a compress on soldier's wounds for centuries.

Another almost foolproof perennial is Society Garlic. While the name does not evoke beauty and delicacy, it is a bulb with habits similar to the cousins that we use in cooking. In the landscape it blooms throughout the hot summer, loves heat, and has handsome strap like leaves. The leaves can be used as garlic chives to add a fresh taste to salads and as a garnish. The lilac colored blooms that reach two feet are great behind colorful annuals.

One more perennial that is almost foolproof is the Butterfly Weed. It is a must for butterfly gardens as it is both a nectar plant for all butterflies, and a host plant for the Monarch Butterfly. It is also easy to grow, blooms from spring through fall, and only requires sun and moderate water. It is a tall plant that has brilliant orange and red blooms. The plant may be cut back during the summer to bloom constantly. Seedlings will appear and are great for sharing and moving to other locations. Butterfly Weed will make larger and larger clumps and will be a permanent addition to the garden, so give it room!



Spring Begins March 21!

- A tropical oasis awaits you our greenhouse.

This tropical haven is sure to provide just the perfect plant specimen for your home or office.

- Plant your vegetable and herb garden today!

- Colorful and cheerful Spring décor to brighten up your home and garden!

- Long-stemmed bluebonnets are now available at Petals 'n Bloomers.

These fragrant beauties are grown in greenhouses in West Texas and are shipped overnight. Their brilliant color and distinctive shape add that unique Texas touch to any arrangement. If placed in water with a floral preservative, these blue beauties can last up to 7 to 10 days.

*"A diplomat is a man who always remembers a woman's birthday
but never remembers her age"...Robert Frost*



Flower Power Gains Momentum... Tricia Barksdale, Designer, Petals 'n Bloomers

Just in case the 2005 Texas A&M research did not convince you, now Harvard Medical School has conducted their own study. In 2006, the Society of American Florists partnered with Nancy Etcoff, Ph.D., of Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School, to explore the effects of flowers in the home environment. This four-month behavioral research uncovered three main findings:

Flowers feed compassion.

Study participants who lived with flowers for as little as a week felt an increase in feelings of compassion for others.

Flowers chase away anxieties and worries at home.

Overall, people in the study felt less negative after being around flowers at home for just a few days.

People can feel the power of flowers: Partici-

pants most frequently placed the flowers in their kitchens, dining rooms and living rooms, where they spend a lot of time at home. Wanting to see the blooms first thing in the morning was their desire.

Living with flowers can provide a boost of energy, happiness and enthusiasm at work.

A positive impact on your mood at work was a carry-over from having flowers at home.

When flowers are present in their home environment, people are more likely to feel happier and have more enthusiasm and energy at work.

With all these benefits, why wait for company coming to your home before you come home with flowers?!

Petals 'n Bloomers Florist

936 825-8577



Cotton Burr Compost... Sharon Murry, Staff

Spring time is the time for being outside and enjoying the birds, butterflies and the early blooming bulbs and plants you have in your yard. It could also be the time for yard maintenance or creating new vegetable or flower beds. If you are contemplating creating new beds this year, you should seriously consider adding compost to the soil. Horticulturists the world over agree that the number one solution to most soil and plant problems is good compost.

For new beds, till as much compost (up to 6 inches) into your native soil as your budget will allow. For existing beds, apply up to 2" of compost on top of the existing soil and water in thoroughly. A general rule of thumb is: in clay soils use up to 1 part compost to 2 parts native soil. In sandy soil, you may use up to a half and half mixture. If you don't have a compost pile, think about starting one.

Cotton Burr Compost is tops when it comes to conditioning the soil. It is a natural organic fertilizer and excellent food source for beneficial organisms. It is prized for its ability to

break up clay soils and holds as much moisture as peat moss.

Cotton is a heavy feeder and depletes the soil of nutrients as it grows. The nutrients end up in the fleshy seed pod, or "burr" of the cotton plant. When properly composted to eliminate weeds, insects and pathogens, cotton burr compost is a rich food source for soil organisms and considered an almost perfect soil conditioner.

In vegetable gardens and flower beds, incorporate Cotton Burr Compost in the soil and as a mulch in the furrows between the rows and water it in thoroughly.

For new lawns, whether seeding or laying sod, add up 2" Cotton Burr Compost to the surface and lightly rake it in. For existing lawns, apply the compost as a top dressing any time of the year. The compost helps to prevent fungus and mildew, helps reduce thatch, increases moisture retention and reduces water requirements.

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"Limitations live only in our minds. But if we use our imaginations, our possibilities become limitless"... Jamie Paolinette



Cotton Seed Compost...continued

Martha's Bloomers carries the Back to Nature brand in three different types:

* Back to Nature Cotton Burr Compost, which is 100% composted cotton burrs.

* Back to Nature Natures Blend with alfalfa and humate. This is 44.5% composted cotton burrs, 44.5% cattle manure, 10% alfalfa and 1% humate. Specially formulated for all types of lawn and garden applications.

* Back to Nature Acidified Cotton Burr Compost, which is 99% composted cotton burrs and 1% sulphur. This may be used as a top dressing and as a mulch. The added sulphur is perfect for those with high alkaline soils and water.

When doing your yard maintenance this spring, the addition of Cotton Burr Compost (Natures Blend) will be a noticeable improvement because of its finer texture.



What's Cooking at the Café...Melissa Rodriguez, Staff

Spring is just around the corner and Café M. Bloomers has some exciting events for you this season. From planning a wedding to enjoying an afternoon of tea, or taking a new and informative cooking class, Café M. Bloomers has planned several fun and festive events to chase away the winter doldrums.

Let us host your special bridal event, from showers to rehearsal dinners, to an intimate wedding. Consider our Arbor Room banquet facility. Visit with our event coordinator, Bonnie Larsen.

Whether you are a novice or a gourmet cook, join us this Spring as our Executive Chef, Terry Howry begins a series of progressive cooking schools. Participants will be served samples of featured menu items.

The spring series commences March 30th with **"Starting from Scratch"** cooking basics at 6:30 pm. Chef Howry's personal instruction will guide you on your way to preparing savory stocks, aromatic soups and sauces simmering with robust flavor. \$30 pp.

The second in our spring series of cooking schools, **"All Sides to It"** will be on Friday, April 13th at 6:30 pm. Chef Howry will demonstrate his techniques for preparing the perfect side dishes to flatter that perfect entrée. \$40 pp.

The spring series will conclude on Friday, April 27th with **"A Feast Finale"** at 6:30 pm. Chef Howry will bring all of his techniques to-

gether and create a gourmet meal of Chateaubriand. Chef Howry's personal instruction will guide you on your way to professional cooking. \$50 pp.

With the coming of Spring, so comes Mother's Day! Join us on Sunday, May 6 for our "Mother Daughter Tea" from 2 pm to 4 pm. Chef Howry will prepare scrumptious finger sandwiches, summertime scones and other decadent desserts accompanied by our own orange-spiced tea. Floral table decorations by Petals 'n Bloomers will enhance your dining experience. Seating is limited. \$15 pp.

You don't have to wait for a holiday, make afternoon tea a new tradition in your life! Bring your girlfriends, daughters, grandmothers, grand-daughters or husbands (if you dare) and enjoy an afternoon of steaming herbal tea and fresh desserts.

Be sure to visit Café M. Bloomers' Gourmet Shoppe. It is brimming with new food and beverage products, innovative cooking accessories, and our homemade Orange Spice Tea.

Call Café M. Bloomers at

936-870-3277

Seating is limited for cooking schools and teas, so make your reservations today!



*"I can't change the direction of the wind,
but I can adjust my sails to get me to my destination"...Jimmy Dean*



Calendar of Events...

Saturday Seminars - and they are Free!

"Herbs for Now & Later" - Saturday, March 24 at 11 am. Presented by Ann Wheeler, Log House Herb Farm.

"Jazz Up Your Landscape Plantings" - Saturday, March 31 at 11 am. Presented by Dr. Doug Welsh.

"Identifying & Managing Oak Wilt in Texas" - Saturday, April 7 at 11 am. Presented by Sandra and Robert Stuckey.

"Orchid Growing and Care" - Saturday, April 21 at 11 am. Presented by Dr. Rainer Fink, Orchid Specialist.

"Accessorizing the Landscape" - Saturday, April 28 at 11 am. Presented by Dr. Bill Welch.

"Basil, Basil & More Basil" - Saturday, May 12 at 11 am. Presented by Ann Wheeler, Log House Herb Farm.

"Attracting and Identifying Birds" - Saturday, June 9 at 11 am. Presented by Jerry Walls, Director of Christmas Creek Nature Preserve and Park Naturalist, Lake Houston Park.

"Snakes of All Kinds" - Saturday, July 14 at 11 am. Presented by Jerry Walls, Director of Christmas Creek Nature Preserve and Park Naturalist, Lake Houston Park.

"Lesson's from a Rose Rustler" - Saturday, Sept. 29 at 11 am. Presented by Mike Shoup, Antique Rose Emporium.

Teas & Cooking Classes

"Mother/Daughter" Tea just in time for Mother's Day! - Sunday, May 6. 2 pm to 4 pm. \$15 pp.

"Starting from Scratch" Cooking Class - Friday, March 30 at 6:30 pm. Presented by Chef Terry Howry. \$30 pp.

"All Sides to It" Cooking Class - Friday, April 13 at 6:30 pm. Presented by Chef Terry Howry. \$40 pp.

"A Feast Finale" Cooking Class - Friday, April 27 at 6:30 pm. Presented by Chef Terry Howry. \$50 pp.

Texas Wine Vintner's Dinner—to be announced.

Seating is limited. Make your reservation today!

Call Cafe M. Bloomers at 936 870-3277.

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.



Store Hours Mon-Sat 9 - 6 Sun 11 - 5 Martha's Bloomers (936) 825-7400
Café M. Bloomers (936) 870-3277 Tea Room Serving Tues-Sun 11 - 4

