



Horti-Bull

HORTICULTURAL BULLETIN

Published Monthly by the SAN ANTONIO MEN'S GARDEN CLUB
A club for Men and WOMEN interested in all aspects of gardening

[WEBSITE: mensgardenclubofsa.org](http://www.mensgardenclubofsa.org)

Volume 2024

December

Number 12



THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

It was a pleasure to serve as your president for the short period of time in 2024. I am confident that you have selected a great slate of officers for 2025. John Opiela is to be congratulated for his work as committee

chairman.

Hope to see you at our December 6 Installation and Christmas Party, and at the coming 2025 monthly meetings.

Your Friend, Elana Schrinner

ELECTION OF OFFICERS FOR 2025

John Opiela, Election Committee Chairman, conducted the election of officers for 2025. Because there was only one candidate for each office, he called each officer position individually. The floor was opened for additional candidates but NO nominations were made from the floor. Each person was voted in by acclamation.

OUR ELECTED OFFICERS FOR 2025 ARE:

| | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| President | Albert del Rio |
| 1 st Vice Pres | John Opiela |
| 2 nd Vice Pres | Vallerie Hartfield |
| 3 rd Vice Pres | Open |
| Treasurer | Paul Huegel |
| Secretary | Jeff Brown |
| Directors | |
| 2023-2025 | Barbara Lamm Leonard Martinez |
| 2024-2026 | David Badorski Ken Wolfgram |
| 2025-2027 | Andrew Waring Gary Ross |

ANNUAL INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS AND CHRISTMAS PARTY

**6PM FRIDAY DECEMBER 6
AT THE OBLATE GROTTO IN THE
ST. EUGENE HALL,
AT 5700 BLANCO RD
(FORMER MEETING FACILITY)**

**PLEASE NOTE THE TIME, DAY OF
WEEK, AND LOCATION**

CHILDREN'S VEGETABLE GARDEN PROGRAM

From Vallerie Hartfield

The Children's Vegetable Garden Program for the fall is ending on December 7, 2024. If you are interested in volunteering in the spring go to the website at sabot.org. Contact me, Vallerie Hartfield if you have questions at 210-240-1466. This is a great opportunity to share your gardening skills and to learn. We had the Vegetable contest on November 23 and the grand prize was a vegetable & flower bouquet. The children did a wonderful job in preparing their vegetables for the contest. They could enter 4 items. The Junior Master Gardener Classes were successful and they received certificates. They are our future gardeners and members.





Horti-Bull Gardening Calendar for December 2024

From Dr. Calvin Finch

Have you ever considered purchasing a living Christmas Tree that you could use to decorate for the Holidays and then plant it as a landscape feature in the landscape? Select the right species that is prepared appropriately, and the arrangement works well. I have both an Arizona cypress and a deodora cedar that are over 25 feet tall landscape features now that started as six feet tall Christmas trees and after 4 weeks in that role were moved from the house into the holes that were pre-positioned and dug for a successful transition. The deodora cedar was sheared to a Christmas tree shape and the Arizona cypress natural shape was suitable. In addition to knowing where you are going to plant the trees and digging the holes early so you can plant the trees as quickly as possible, also have plenty of help to move the trees, they are heavy! Start with your favorite retail nursery to find the right species, size and sheared shape to best meet your needs.

It is not too late in December to plant winter annuals for color. Cyclamen and primula for the shade are especially beautiful. Snapdragons, stocks, calendulas, alyssum, dianthus, sweet peas, pansies, and violas do well in the sun. Transplants work best for a December planting for all the selections except sweet peas, use seeds planted against a tomato cage or other trellis for sweet peas. Expect most of the winter annuals to bloom until May. The dianthus and sweet peas will usually bloom into June. The pansies and violas are the most cold tolerant and usually make it through the winter without any protection from all but the coldest spells. Cover the cyclamen with agricultural fiber when the temperature is forecast to drop below 30 degrees F.

Move your bougainvillea, tropical hibiscus, plumeria, mandivilla and other subtropical plants into a greenhouse or other shelter when the temperatures start hitting 40 degrees. Be prepared to cover the citrus trees, especially the lemons and limes when temperatures are forecast to fall to 26 degrees. The protection works best when you have a tent-like structure made from plastic pipe to hold the fabric in place. Wind is usually part of the cold weather. If it gets colder than 26 degrees, heat the inside of the tent with a mechanic's light or a poultry heat lamp. Make sure the lights are not heatless LED versions.

December is also a good time to plant recommended shade tree varieties in the San Antonio area. Our soil is often very difficult to dig so take advantage of the planting services of your favorite nursery if you want to plant a large specimen. If you want to dig the hole yourself pick a relatively small transplant such as under 15 gallons, Often the small transplants catch up and pass the growth rate of the larger transplants because the smaller plants become established quicker. The recommended shade trees include anaqua, Texas red oak, cedar elm, live oak, Mexican sycamore, bur oak, Mexican white oak, chin-kapin oak, and Montezuma cypress. If you follow the CPS Energy planting recommendations, you will save energy costs and be eligible for a \$50 rebate.

In the vegetable garden it is still a good time to plant spinach, onions, the cabbage related greens, turnips, beets, carrots, English peas, rutabagas, beets radishes and lettuce. Remember if you plant cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli, Brussels sprouts or other greens have a Bt product such as Bio -Worm Killer or Dipel on hand to spray the foliage at the first sign of any foliage damage.

MGCSA Officers for 2024

| | | |
|------------------|--------------------|--------------|
| President | Robert McDaniel | 210-542-1888 |
| 1st V.P | Elena Schriener | 210-269-8222 |
| 2nd V.P. | Vallerie Hartfield | 210-240-1466 |
| 3rd V.P | Vacant | |
| Treasurer | Paul Huegel | 210-385-9072 |
| Secretary | Ida Santiago | 210-387-5092 |
| Chaplain | Vallerie Hartfield | 210-240-1466 |

Directors

2022-2024

| | |
|-----------------|---------------|
| Teresa Martinez | 210--534-8100 |
| Gary Ross | 210-836-4052 |

2023-2025

| | |
|------------------|--------------|
| Barbara Lamm | 210-648-8001 |
| Leonard Martinez | 210-514-0584 |

2024-2026

| | |
|----------------|--------------|
| David Badorski | 815-436-3970 |
| John Opiela | 210-532-5963 |

Other

| | | |
|-----------------------|--------------|--------------|
| EX Officio | Todd Mernin | 210-218-4155 |
| HB Advertising | Paul Huegel | |
| Historian | Paul Huegel | |
| Webmaster | Ivan Roman | |
| HB Editor | Larry Cromer | 210-521-5350 |

MEMBERSHIP

Attendance: November 7th, 2024: 31 Members, 2 Guests.

We welcome all new members and guests.

If needed, contact Paul Huegel to update your membership and to pay your dues.

Happy Birthday to all Decemember births.

Healing and recovery to all who are sick.

Strength, comfort, peace, and love to all who are coping with losses.

HOSPITALITY

Again we thank Marion See and Marie Reyes for setting up the refreshments and cleaning afterwards. And, THANKS also to all who helped in this endeavor.

FREEZE PROTECTION

By Charles Bartlett

“Oh, it’s too cold outside!” This will soon be a comment heard all over Texas. Many of our MGC gardeners are expert in means of freeze protection for those special frost-sensitive plants we love (Citrus, tropical exotics, et al). But for our newer gardeners, and those who have just added a frost sensitive plant to your landscape, some basics might be of interest.

Radiation and Absorption. The environment surrounding your plants is important. Radiation from the sun comes in the form of short waves. These short waves do not heat the atmosphere, but they are absorbed or reflected in varying degrees by all materials they hit. Those include soil, plastic, foliage, glass, and water.

Water is by far the best heat storage reservoir we have. The ocean absorbs 95% of the heat waves, reflecting little back into the atmosphere. Because of the density of stone, and masonry, it absorbs about 50-70%. Average soil absorbs and stores about 30% of the sun’s heat. When cultivated, however, the figure drops to about 20%, as the air spaces created are poor conductors of heat. The capacities of sand and peat are greater when damp, with their air spaces filled with water. Grass and leaf litter, because of their many air spaces, are at the bottom end of the scale with only 5% storage capacity. On a clear, still night, reradiated heat escapes into the atmosphere and is lost.

There are several ways to trap reradiated heat at night to avoid cold damage to plants. For example, heat can be trapped under the overhang of a house or underneath a leafy tree canopy, or a frame covered with plastic. If a Citrus tree is close to a building, or a stone or concrete block wall, especially with a south exposure, the building or stone wall can act as a heat sink, collecting heat during the day and radiating heat from the structure to the tree(s) during the night.

Surrounding frost-sensitive trees/shrubs by lawn is hazardous since turf interferes with absorption of heat during the day and the radiation of heat from the grass/soil to the tree during the night. A wet lawn has some slight advantage, as the water holds more heat.

Tender trees/vegetation are best covered at night with an opaque cover – black plastic, canvas, or blankets to reduce radiation heat loss to the sky, especially on clear nights. Temperatures under CLEAR plastic can be lower than the outside air.

An extension cord and 150 watt, or more, light bulb (red incandescent heat lamp) can provide needed heat (especially the 250-watt type) for up to 2,000 hours, so the bulb can often be used for several years. Locally, Tractor Supply is a good source for reasonably priced heat lamps. The extension cord can be plugged in when needed at night or on very cold days.

Leaves exposed to a clear, cold sky may attain temperatures several degrees BELOW the surrounding air if little or no air movement is taking place. One big advantage of air movement is that undercooled air at the leaf/air boundary of a cold leaf can be removed and replaced by warmer ambient air. Trees/shrubs within solid fenced yards, or in depressions (valleys) are in hazardous situations. The confined air cannot be replaced by moving ambient air and can become colder than the surrounding, drifting air mass.

Protection of container trees/shrubs can be accomplished by moving the containers to a warmer location, garage, or even indoors, if the cold is severe. Incandescent heat bulbs are helpful if the container is too heavy to move and is covered by plastic sheeting or a blanket. Some gardeners have had success by placing their frost-sensitive plants in plastic wading pools filled with some inches of water. The water collects heat during the warmer day and radiates heat at night, releasing latent heat as the water gets colder.

Continued on page 4



‘Dakota Gold’ Bitterweed (*Helenium amarum*)

Ten years in the making – selected by Texas A&M staff
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Height: 10-12” Width: 24”

Bitter tasting-deer proof, rabbit proof, cattle won’t eat

Extremely drought resistant --- Blooms March – December

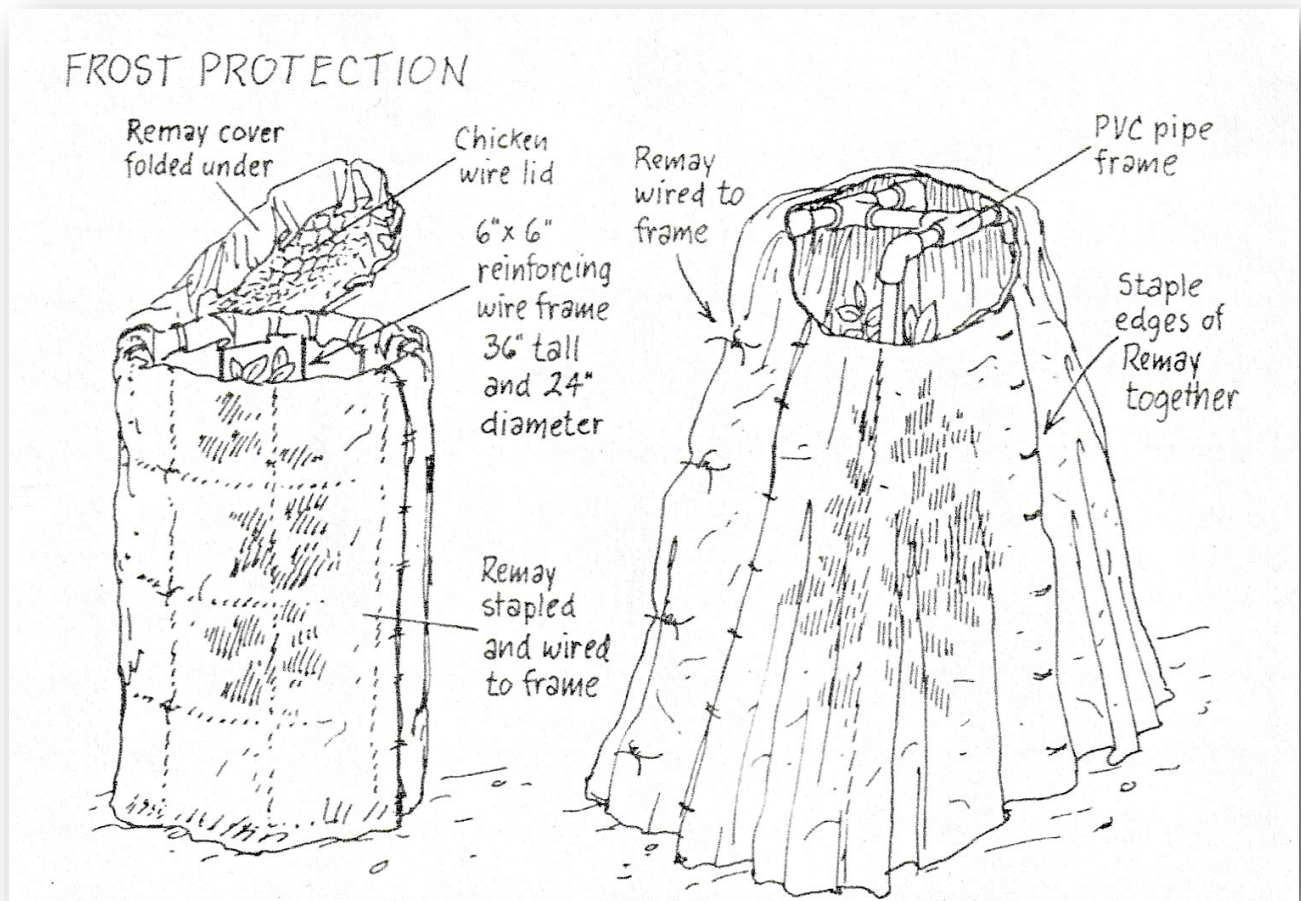
Essentially no maintenance

FREEZE PROTECTION Continued from Page 3

Frost protecting fabric has also become popular. "Reemay" is a spun-bonded, white polyester fabric made by Dupont and was released to the horticultural public in 1984. Polyester fabric is often used as row covers for winter vegetables. The spun-bonded polyester is a cloth-like material used originally in the rug and clothing industries and comes in rolls of varying weights and lengths. It's lightweight, porous to water and transmits 75-80% of available sunlight. It's able to protect plants down to 28 degrees and survives in good condition for about 4 years in the garden, so has both summer and winter uses. It can be draped

over tomato-type, or reinforcing wire cages, or larger cages made from 3/4" PVC plastic pipe. The cages covered with white polyester fabric or plastic film can be supported against wind damage by using 2x2 wood or 3/8" steel rebar stakes driven into the ground. Heat loss during the night is greatly reduced by using the "Reemay" or equivalent fabric or plastic covering, and emergency supplemental heat may be provided by incandescent (NOT LED) heat lamps.

Using these techniques some of our expert gardeners have been able to grow large tender plants, and Citrus trees which are now 8 feet high, and 10 feet wide for the last 3 decades.



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COMMENTS ON THE HORTI-BULL

We want to hear from you!

What do you like?

What do you dislike?

Paul Huegel moderates the Show and Tell program for the November 7, 2024 Meeting.

Paul invited group participation by asking questions and adding to the presentations with pertinent information.

The first presenter, Al Del Rio, talked about plants for the season such as carnations and dianthus.

John Opiela discussed his multi-purpose tool that he made and uses. John then showed tools for picking up items from the ground, including garden hoses, and a magnet on one end to pick up small metal items. John used to oppose raised beds but likes them now. He discussed how he built the raised beds and what he grows in them now.

Jane McDaniels talked about gardening in Ireland. Ireland has very distinct seasons, and summer is much cooler in Ireland than here. She discussed strawberries and how to obtain new plants from "baby

parts" of old "mother" ones. The new strawberry can last 7 or 8 years. She said she learned this technique while in Germany and growing a garden on a rented 1/4 acre lot. She remembers using a hole in the ground to keep her beer cool.

Charles Bartlett talked about a plant called 'Dakota Gold' Bittersweet. He had handouts about the plant. It is a Texas Superstar, grows in many Texas environments, has lots of yellow flowers. But alas, it not available in stores at the present. He will try to obtain seeds to share.

At this point in the show and tell, Paul announces how Al Del Rio and others have sold plants benefitting the club hundreds of dollars.

Joe Shinnars had a lot of "Black Friday" products to show and to tell about. Their cost was usually \$1.00 or less. He had a device that spun metal film strips in the air above it. Its purpose is to repel bugs and mosquitoes.

From Jeff Brown.

— — — OUR SHOW AND TELLERS — — —



Show and Tell, bottom left, clockwise:

1. Al discusses 'Plants for the Season'.
2. John and his homemade tools that he uses everyday in his gardening.
3. Jane McDaniel talks about gardening and the 4 distinct seasons in Ireland.
4. Charles Bartlett tells about a new Texas Super Star he is working with.
5. Joe Shinnars displayed and discussed his 'Black Friday' prizes.

Pictures from Ivan Roman



John Opiela's Celebrity Tomato

Last spring I bought one celebrity tomato plant. I saved the first tomato from it for seed. I planted the seeds on Sept 7. They grew super-fast and are now almost four feet tall. The raised bed is almost pure compost and garden soil. The tomatoes are about golf and tennis ball size. They are hard to see in this picture because the tomato plant has grown so much. I have not protected it from the cold yet. But I will be covering it with a 6 mil plastic wrap, and putting an electric heater in there also. The 2 inch plastic pipes are very easy to put together and I use no glue. They will be easy to knock down next spring and be reassembled when needed. See you at the Christmas Party. John O.

Picture and text from John Opiela.



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Paul dishes out the Tamales at the Tamalada.

Photo from Ivan

Ronnie Grell
Managing Partner



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RAINBOW GARDENS also at 8516 Bandera Road