

Herb Garden Diary



The Purple Gate Farm Newsletter

August 2010

Our Herb Garden Diary Newsletter explores herbal knowledge, practical garden information with historical insight and current research to reveal the delight and enrichment of life by the growing and using of herbs. We explore the seasons in our south central Texas gardens and share our gardening experiences in this environment.

August seems a part of something old and something new. August feels to me like announcing the end of summer is near and autumn cool breezes are coming soon. It is the eighth month of 2010. Where did seven months go?

Bud and I would like to announce that we are closing The Purple Gate Herb Farm in Caldwell, Texas. We are moving to Smithville, Texas in the area of the Lost Pines near Bastrop. We will reopen the Herb Farm as soon as we can get everything organized. We are looking forward to a new experience in a new area of Texas. We purchased two acres and are presently drawing up plans for our move. The soil at our new site looks very promising. It looks like good garden sandy loam. The pine woods of the State Parks all around our new location fills the air with a wonderful scent that reminds me of my home-place in Alaska. We cannot predict how soon we can sell our Caldwell property and that will determine how soon The Purple Gate Farm will reopen. Thank you all for your interest and support of our herb farm.

I hope this August fills you with good memories, energy and health.

Bud and Mary Mills

Here is an upcoming garden event for this month:

--- On **Mon, 7/12/10, Bonnie Martin** <bonnielaurie@austin.rr.com> wrote:

From: Bonnie Martin <bonnielaurie@austin.rr.com>

Subject: Event Announcement: How to Manage Garden Insects

To: bonnielaurie@austin.rr.com

Date: Monday, July 12, 2010, 9:38 PM

New Event Announcement from Travis County Master Gardeners Association:

How to Manage Garden Insects

Saturday, August 21, 2010

10 am-Noon

LCRA Redbud Center, Rm 108N

3601 Lake Austin Blvd.

Austin TX 78703

Insects can be one of the biggest challenges for gardeners. But you can deal with pests effectively without spraying general insecticides all over your plants. Integrated Pest Management (IPM) can teach you how to protect your garden without harming the environment or your plants. Learn to distinguish beneficial insects in your backyard from harmful insects. Basic IPM strategies will be described that can help manage insect pests throughout the landscape, in vegetable gardens, even in the home.

This seminar is free and open to the public. It is presented by the Travis County Master Gardeners Association, a volunteer arm of the Texas AgriLife Extension Service in Travis County. www.tcmastergardeners.org or call the

Travis County Master Gardener's help desk at (512) 854-9600.



Help, Hurt or Hype?

Mary H. Mills

In 2003 Family Circle Magazine (9/2/03) reported that “natural”, “alternative”, “complementary”, “holistic” or “integrative” non-traditional medicine was taking the country by storm. The magazine polled 2,848 men and women and found 43 percent had used or were using some form of these herbal remedies. Half of the respondent who were not using non-traditional medicine would consider doing so. This trend seems to continue to grow as people are becoming more informed about their own health issues.

In the survey, 81 % of the respondents wished their M.D. was more knowledgeable about alternative medicine.

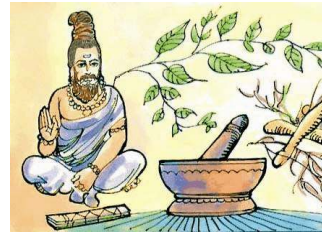
Medical doctors are reported to have divergent attitudes concerning these alternative medical practices. Some M.D.'s still feel many alternative remedies are little more than quackery; homeopathy is regarded as worthless by some and Ayurvedic

medicine has been described as a vast hodgepodge of ideas.



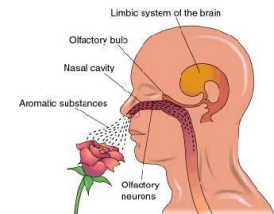
Alternative medicine is gaining credibility

however. Chiropractic doctors were once regarded as outlaws but now they have been accepted as part of the traditional system of healing that is very helpful to many. There is growing evidence that massage is useful for muscle-skeletal problems, in alleviating anxiety, depression and pain.

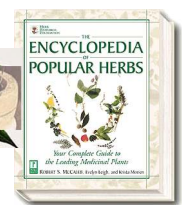


Ayurvedic practice has been around for at least 4,000 years and research is growing on the whole system and its effectiveness.

Some medical doctors will admit that aromatherapy herbal remedies are effective in alleviating tension/stress.



More attention is focused on herbal remedies than ever before to determine if they actually help patients.



It is true that modern medicine relies heavily on pharmaceutical remedies, many that derived from information originally gathered from herbal and alternative remedy texts.

There are cautions to be observed with these “natural” herbal remedies. Herbal remedies have had their “active ingredients” identified, isolated and concentrated” in



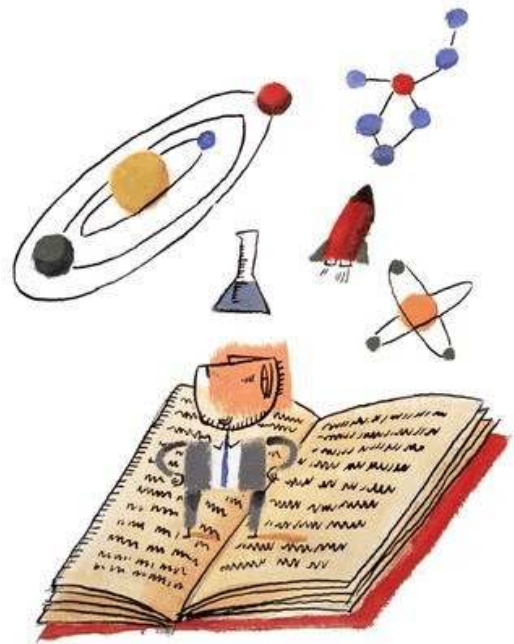
modern times. Many herbal remedies are more like drugs in their effect and due to the new strength of some of these concentrations can cause dangerous side effects, especially when mixed with traditional drugs and prescriptions. Herbal remedies should be taken as directed by a knowledgeable practitioner. Although “natural,” they do have the ability to hurt a patient if misused.

It would be foolish to decide that any one method of treatment is **the “magic” remedy**. There is a movement toward integration of many of the allopathic (traditional Western Medical practice) and non-traditional remedies in the United States. This integrative medicinal practice has existed a long time in other countries. German doctors refer to the German Commission E monographs on herbs to prescribe herbal remedies or combine herbal and traditional western style treatments. Chinese doctors have been reported to rely heavily on compounds of herbs in their practice. Folk healers and herbalists also acknowledge the benefit of combining remedies. Using the strengths of each method to cure a patient makes sense.



There is a plethora of articles extolling the benefits of herbal and alternative remedies like massage, acupuncture, aromatherapy, and Ayurvedic Medicine and others. Remember there is a lot of “hype” and “natural” herbal remedies have the potential to hurt but can help if used appropriately. Choose your sources for information carefully. Herbal societies, web sites, modern herbals (some early herbals recommend

plants that have proven to be bad for you) and organizations like the American Botanical Council exist to try to help you understand and use alternative remedies wisely. There are increasing volumes of scientific studies into the herbal remedy practices and it makes very interesting reading.



Modern western medical practice excels in diagnosis. Application of other methods that address health problems may offer less side-effects to address an illness. Combining many methods of cure can only give the patient a feeling of well-being since many parts of his illness are being addressed, his mind, body and spirit. It seems many ancient healers knew that illness had many manifestations and attempted to treat the patient on many levels.

As more study and attention is focused on these and many other alternative methods, we will gain confidence in their ability to aid in healing.

Some Like It Hot

Mary H. Mills

I am willing to admit that some organisms like it hot, well....I am not one of them, at least not as hot as July was in Central Texas. I am hiding out in the house with air conditioning in the late morning and afternoon and feel like I am entering an oven when I go outside. I stay away from towns as the concrete and blacktop concentrates the heat to really unbearable levels. At least earth, grass and weeds cool the temperature of the sun beating down on them around the Purple Gate Herb Farm.

Bud and I go out earlier and earlier to beat the heat while weeding and trimming plants in the gardens. We start around 5:30-6 a.m.



and end our outdoor work day around 8:30-9a.m. I know it is a short work day but anything longer wilts us for the rest of the day. If we do not stay out much later in the morning we can still function at other indoor chores. We have observed that some plants do not wilt in the afternoon heat, they seem to like it hot! These plants have effective survival strategies. That is what makes them so useful to humans for food, fiber, medicine, and building materials. They provide us with wax, oils, dyes, lubricants, and soaps. In the garden they shade us, fill the air with scents to enrich our well being and flowers to delight our eyes. Spending any time in the garden will enlarge this list of benefits to humans and our animal friends.

We observe Texas natives will grow naturally in specific areas of the state. Each area has characteristic trees, shrubs, vines, grasses and flowers. If the basic requirements of each of these seeds is met, the seed will flourish. Otherwise it will grow weak and probably not survive. The key to the plants

survival strategies are found in its physical characteristics.

For example, Yaupon thrives in under-story areas away from the direct heat of summer. It has waxy, resinous and small leaves to reduce evaporation losses during the hottest, often dry summers. This should give us clues to how to select plants for our summer gardens that will survive and whether to plant them in full sun, partial shade or deeper shade. Here are some of our herbs that like it hot.



Many varieties of basil look healthy and happy in the burning noon-time sun.



Mexican Marigold Mint (*Tagetes lucida*) forms tight domes of fragrant leaves and prepares to launch its flowers into the autumn air.



Yarrow is full and feathery, adding an airy light feeling to the heavy summer atmosphere as long as it gets enough water; it will flourish in the heat.



The Passion Flower vine is growing like the storybook beanstalk that Jack grew. It is flowering with exotic blossoms that you cannot help stopping to admire, no matter how rushed you may feel.



Rosemary seems to reach up to the sun, never seeming to feel the need to shy away from the searing heat. Brushing against it fills the air with aromatic scent.

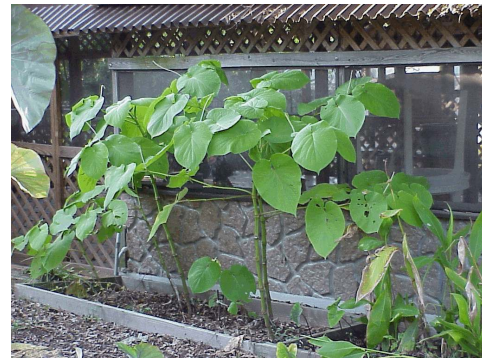


Other plants, like comfrey, sheltered from the direct sun and provided enough water are doing well here.



Lemon grass

and chives each are lush.



Makulan or acuyo is mistakenly called Hoya Santo (Rootbeer Plant) by many. In Mexico the leaves are chopped and used as a spice and the leaves are used whole to wrap tamales or meat. The leaves smell like sassafras due to safrole in large amounts.

Plants, People, and Culture: The Science of Ethnobotany by Michael J. Balick and Paul Alan Cox, 2005.

These plants are thriving and almost too invasive in our gardens as long as they are provided with a good amount of water. Study your summer herb garden for the plants that are among those that like it hot so you can plant more of them each year. The key is selecting the best location-sun, partial shade, or shade, and providing ample water to those plants.