Happy 4th Of July!!

JULY, 2008

The GREENLEAF NEWSLETTER

SHADES OF GREEN INC.

HOURS: MON - SAT 8:00 A.M. TO 5:30 P.M.
SUN 10:00 A.M. TO 5:00 P.M.

We will be closed for Independence Day
to spend time with family and friends.

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GARDENS On Tour

by Rob Wier

It just so happens this year on June 7th the McKinney Garden Club, the Allen Garden Club, and the City of Dallas WaterWise tours all fell on the same day. So I borrowed my daughter's little Scion car (basically a go-kart with air conditioning), packed a small cooler with water, took my camera and my sweetie and away we went. Out of seventeen homes and gardens from McKinney to North Dallas we made it to nine of them.

It's always a treat to visit other peoples' gardens as an observer. I enjoy seeing their creativity along with feeling their passion and pride as they talk about their yard. It's fun to hear them share similar observations which I can relate to from my own gardens. "I planted this plant here but a seedling came up over there and it seems to be doing better."

There is always something new to learn. Interesting ideas abound. We saw natural-sculpted water features, unique planting combinations, creative use of garden art and

continued on pg 5 ...

Timely Hints

Plant ...

◊ **Add COLOR** to your planting beds if they are weak or boring. Yes it is hot, so add some of those bright and bold colors - hot pinks, yellows, and reds. Periwinkle, Purslane, and Lantana love this heat. Don't leave out the Tropicals - Crotons, Ixora, Mandevilla, Duranta, and Hibiscus! Next thing you know you'll be doing the Macarena out there. If you had just one or two plants in a container that didn't make it, replace just those plants with something fresh and blooming.

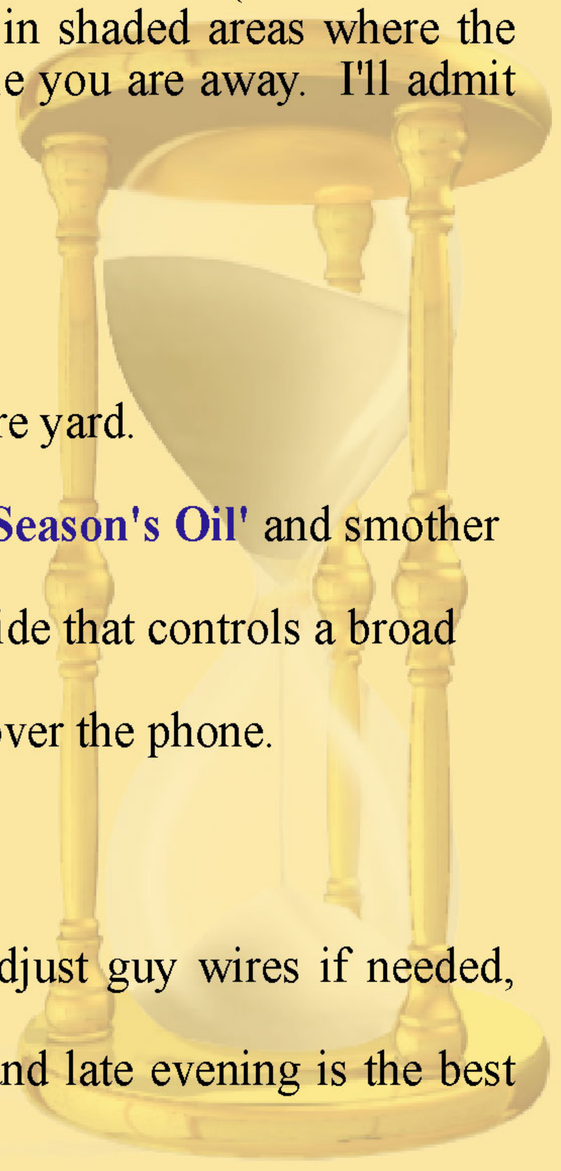
◊ Now is the best time to choose Crape Myrtles for their color. Be sure to check the mature size for the one you choose and be sure to give it the right space. Remember you can prevent 'Crape Murder' by selecting properly.

◊ Container trees can be planted as long as you are prepared to water and tend to your new tree properly. Wait until fall to return for planting B&B (balled and burlapped) trees.

Prune ... As needed to shape errant growth. Consider abandoning that hedging syndrome and let your plants grow out naturally. Personally, those little meatballs and cubes went out with my bell bottoms. Spent blooms and flower stalks can be removed from perennials.

Fertilize ... with **Gardenville 7-2-2** for everything if you didn't back in June. Use **Colorscapes** on color plantings and pots. Most tropicals bloom on new growth so fertilize well to keep them growing and blooming. For those with Palms, we have a good **Palm Food** to help them.

Water ... Be 'Water Wise'. Just because we have ample supplies now, don't squander it. Be a good neighbor and help those that are new to the area by showing them how to be 'water wise'. Water when plants need it. Check your plantings regularly throughout the summer. Hand-water individual plants ***as needed*** between running the whole sprinkler system. Just because some cities allow you to water twice a week doesn't mean you need to. Use your water wisdom and tools (rain gauge and moisture meter) to determine when and how often your yard needs water. Use automatic mode for vacations (but be sure to have a rain sensor). Potted plants need almost daily hand watering. Put them in shaded areas where the sprinkler can reach them while on vacation or get someone to tend to them while you are away. I'll admit I've come home to many a crispy container on the back porch.



Pests ...

◊ Tackle fire ants with a three-pronged attack:

1) **Molasses** drives them out of your yard and improves your soil's health.
2) **'Come and Get It'** is bait which can be used on mounds or over your entire yard.
3) **Mound Drench** those stubborn ant mounds to get back at 'em quickly.

◊ Watch for Scale on Crape Myrtles, Hollies, and Magnolias. Spray with **'All Season's Oil'** and smother the little plant suckers.

◊ For the fungus among us we carry **'Serenade'** which is a new organic fungicide that controls a broad spectrum of fungal problems.

◊ As always, **bring us samples** - it's hard to make accurate recommendations over the phone.

Other Bits And Pieces ...

◊ Check our website under the **'Plant Care'** link for summer gardening tips.

◊ Check newly planted trees regularly (at least twice weekly) for water. Adjust guy wires if needed, mulch and use **Superthrive™** if needed for stress.

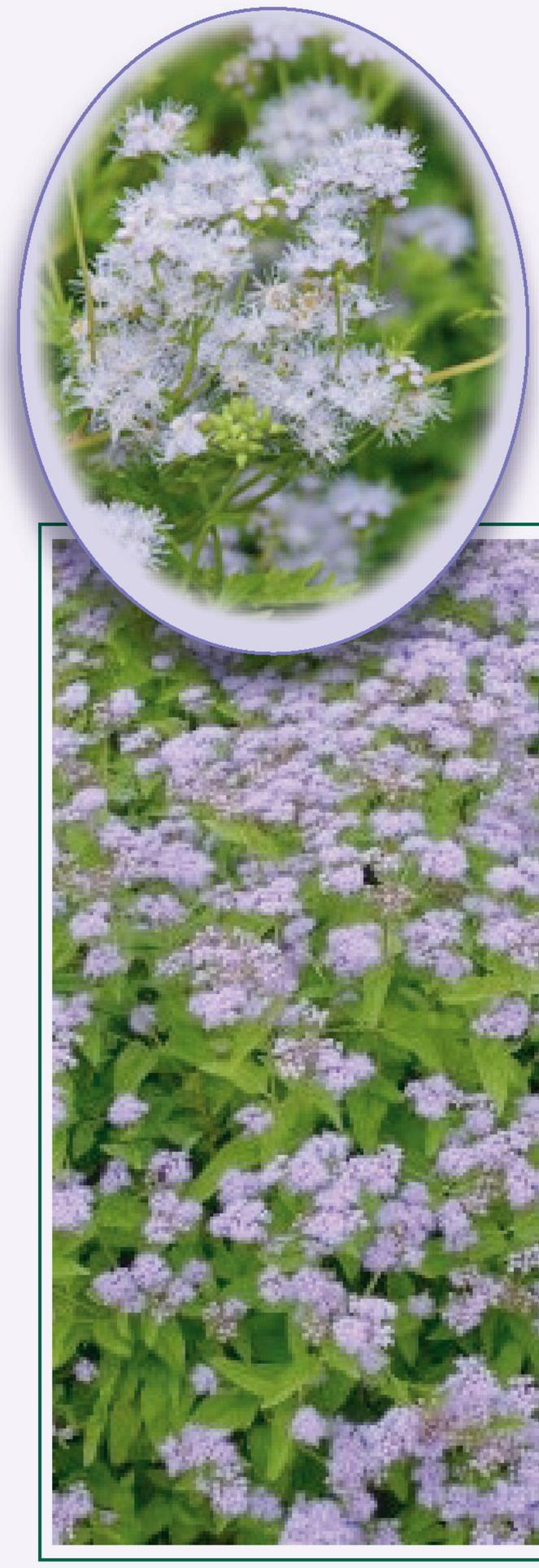
◊ Be on the lookout for hummingbirds. They can be shy, so early morning and late evening is the best times to spot them.

Plant of the Month

[Eupatorium greggii]

Blue Mist Flower

by Brice Creelman



I'm sure that everyone who finally found the right spot for this plant knows that it is constantly covered with Monarchs. Monarchs love this plant more than you ever will. This one plant we are planting for butterflies, not for you.

Blue Mist Flower has some 'pressures' on it. Like if you were to plant it in nice, deep, rich soil, it would spread completely out of control. And as it grows wildly, it gets aphids that disfigure the new foliage. And when you cut it back, it just makes it mad and it spreads even more.

Eupatorium will do its duty in our native soil. Do not over-water or over-fertilize. Let it fill in a harsh area. Chop out sections you don't need each year. Plant in full sun or part shade. Usually gets 24"-30" tall and 3'-4' across. Don't let it scare you, because when it is blooming it will be a magnet for butterflies in a four-block area. Our 'yankee tags' show a plant with pink flowers. You just go ahead and put it out and act surprised when it blooms blue. Remember, this one time is your life it has nothing to do with you. It's for them. Thanks for being so big. Native to Texas. Maintenance involves usually ignoring it, but you can trim it back once or twice a year so you still feel important. Green side up, please.

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July's Fragrance Of The Month!

Water Cooler Talk

by Brice Creelman

I went to Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, Texas at the end of May for the 4th Lone Star Regional Native Plant Conference. Good information on some native propagation and visited some local garden centers (Naconiche Gardens and King Nursery). A lot of information was passed around on invasives. The 'big three' for us in Collin, Denton, and Grayson County are Johnson Grass, Privet, and Honeysuckle. We don't sell green (Hall's) Honeysuckle but I have seen it at other garden centers. Don't plant it. Now we have to prove that Variegated Privet reseeds, and if it does or has been we will have to deal with it. An invasive in the making is possibly Scabiosa atropurpurea. This plant is specific to Collin County and the surrounding area. Maybe came in with hay from the Midwest. No one knows what plants turn out to be a problem. Our **Scabiosa 'Butterfly Blue'** does not re-seed and is not a worry. However, the state of Texas has no single authority in charge of dealing with invasive species, and that ***is*** a worry. (See Scabiosa along Preston Rd going north).

Up until now, I and almost everyone else have repeated that **Hydrangea quercifolia (Oakleaf Hydrangea)** is native to Texas. No one has ever proved that. Apparently, Oakleaf is native to western Louisiana but was never found growing in Texas. Don't let that change your opinion of it. It's still a great plant, so plant it and enjoy it. Keep it in a well-drained, shady site. Only thing it doesn't like is wet clay soils. There are some beautiful specimens planted at S.F.A. University in the Pineywoods Native Plant Center, which would be reason enough to visit.

Everyone has a favorite plant that performs in their landscape and that they love to rave about. If you had to pick one plant (any plant) that you couldn't live without, please email it to us. I think we should put together a list of "10 Ultimates" that no landscape can be without for next year. I have to say that **Neirembergia 'Starry Eyes'** is maybe one of those plants. Since it's been planted, it has bloomed for four months (and still going) and is looking better with age. It doesn't grow too fast, or too slow. (And that's probably just what they said about the Kudzu vine! I'm kidding.)

Not far from 'Starry Eyes', I planted a Gaura 'Geyser White' from last year. It came out in the spring and looked a little off (I thought maybe too wet), and it was covered with spider mites. I've never had a problem with mites before, so I tore it out roots and all. All other Gauras are doing well. If you had a problem with it, let us know.

Butterfly Bush (Buddleia) is a vigorous grower, as you know if you have one. Because they grow so fast, they can get quite root-bound in a plastic pot. Make sure you water it every day after it's planted. It will take about two weeks for the roots to work their way into the native soil. Because it wilts down every day, if you don't watch it you could lose it quickly. Put a 2-gallon container filled with water with a small pinhole in the bottom right next to it to keep it moist. It would be hard to over water it at this point. Soon, it will be on its own. Also, cut Butterfly Bush back hard in early spring to keep it 4'-6' and blooming. Almost to the ground is best. It will re-grow each year to full size.

> How did we get so far removed from something so enjoyable?

Salvia pratensis 'Rhapsody in Blue' didn't make the cut this year. We received liners in March and they struggled to grow. As they were becoming saleable, we discovered they were covered with insects. We have some new plants that tell us pretty quickly how they are going to do. 'Rhapsody in Blue' went to the compost pile, never to be seen again. Tough love. There are too many great plants out there to be messing with marginal ones.

When you plant perennials, some of them can be slow to establish. Make sure you give them time to get to their full size. This generally means one full growing season. By the next year, they look completely different. Hostas, Heucheras, Daylilies, and Baptisia are like that. Once established they will last for years. This is what we are looking for in a sustainable landscape. What does this mean? Be aware of your surroundings (sun, shade, etc) and plant native and adapted plants from your local independent garden center, compost freely, water once a week or less, and wait for all the livestock to visit (hummers and butterflies). Most people who change over to this type of landscape can't wait to walk around their landscape each day to see what's happening and what's blooming and buzzing. How did we get so far removed from something so enjoyable? It's not too late to start. This weekend would be perfect.

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GARDENS On Tour

by Rob Wier

objects, and each had its own unique sitting area. (Maybe a roving Happy Hour? I'm in!)

It really is such a treat to see the efforts of people doing waterwise and sustainable gardens. Every year more and more embrace the idea. Unfortunately, one homeowner commented that their yard was considered too unconventional by the neighborhood and the dreaded H.O.A. My wife and I were amazed. The front was tastefully done exhibiting a variety of texture and color. It was a model example of low water use and maintenance. There was little grass to mow (so less gas used, less CO2 emissions, less noise), yet the H.O.A. wants the front yards to be a minimum of 50% lawn "so the neighborhood will look the same". Clearly it will take some more time to change peoples' perception of nice landscaping.

Thanks to all that opened up their private gardens for others to see. Your gardens gave inspiration to others on new possibilities for their own. Every time I heard my wife say "ooh", I knew it would cost me in time or money. Oh well. You know what they say ... time spent with your loved one - Priceless!

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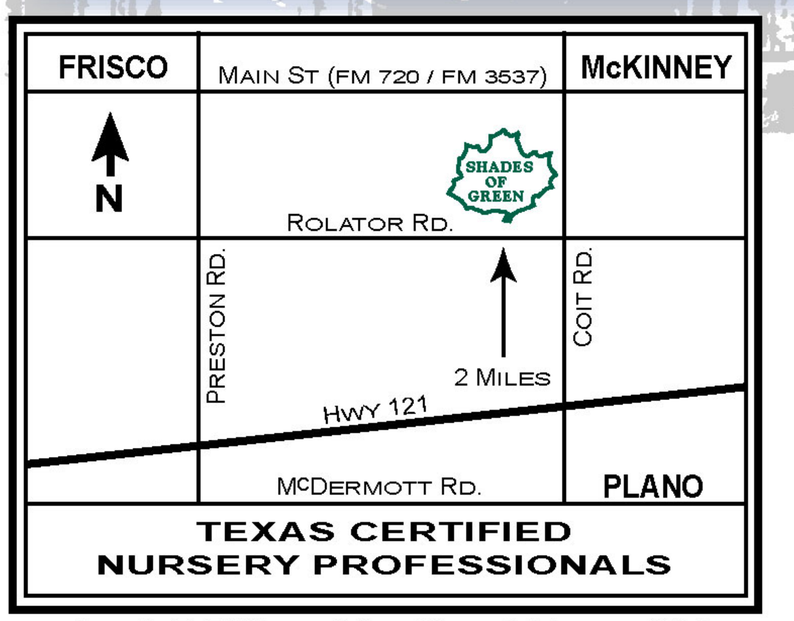

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Do You Know What's What?

See if you can identify these photos.

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One entry per household, please.
Answers must be recieved by July 31, 2008.

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Good Luck!