Down the Garden Path
A Quarterly Publication of the Austin Area Garden Council

Fall 2015
President’s Message
By Marion Alsup, AAGC President

Greetings, Garden Club members! I hope you all had a great summer despite the heat and drought!

Things have been as busy as ever at the Garden Center. We're planning a Porcelain Art & Plant Sale on September 26 from 10:00 to 4:00. The Porcelain Art Club of Texas is sponsoring this event. Other participating clubs include the Austin Daylily Society, the Austin Herb Society, the Austin Pond Society, the First Austin African Violet Society, the Iris Society of Austin and the Violet Crown Garden Club. Items for sale will be lovely hand painted porcelain, organic herbs and fall vegetables, daylilies, iris rhizomes, aquatic plants, African Violets and more. We have some very talented artists and gardeners among our membership! For more information, call Marion Alsup at 512-970-3405.

Work is progressing on the Zilker Botanical Garden Conservancy. You'll recall that we're setting up this new organization to improve fundraising for ZBG. We now have our 501c(3) designation, so we're official! Thank you Lynn Langley, Sabrena Wright, and Emily Yantis for all of your hard work! It takes a village, but it really helps when that village includes a lawyer, a CPA, and a retired analyst who can evaluate 501c(3) applications! Several new members have joined the Conservancy Board, and it's been great to get to know these wonderful newcomers.

Other projects that we've been working on include AAGC bylaws revisions, a new map of ZBG for visitors, a new yearbook for AAGC club representatives, and plans for garden improvements.

Did you know that we have two important anniversaries coming up this fall? Saturday, November 14, is the 25th anniversary of the date that our Sister City relationship began with Oita, Japan. A delegation from Oita will visit Austin and tour the Taniguchi Garden on that day.

Monday, November 30, is the 60th anniversary of the founding of our organization, the Austin Area Garden Center! Yes, I know we had our 50th-anniversary celebration last year, but that was for the building. I just wanted to mention another anniversary because I really appreciate the folks who started our organization so long ago to "promote and advance interest in gardening ... conserve native flowers, shrubs and trees and protect wildlife ... provide educational and recreational opportunities for all ages through the media of gardening and outdoor life.”
Iris Rhizome Sale – Saturday, September 12
By Nelda Moore, Iris Society of Austin

Bearded irises are exotic, unique, colorful flowers that have caterpillar-like beards that can range from solid yellow or orange to tri-colors in today’s newest hybrids. If ‘Persian Berry,’ ‘Thai Orange,’ ‘Glitter Gulch,’ or ‘Thornbird’ beckoned to your artistic imagination on April 11 during the 25th accredited show at Zilker Botanical Garden, or if you toured the stunning Portland, Oregon, Gardens May 18-23, you became a true fan of these religious symbols that have three standards raised heavenward and three petals or falls curved downward toward earth. These beautiful flowers, however, can have unusual appendages on the beards such as horns, spoons, flounces, or even carnation-like puffs making them space-agers or novelty irises. All of them are grown from fleshy stems called rhizomes that the Iris Society of Austin will be selling Saturday, September 12, at the Norris Conference Center, 2525 W. Anderson Lane. The sale begins at 9:00 and usually ends at 2:00 when most of the rhizomes are sold because of their popularity as an attractive plant with fan-shaped leaves that require very little water.

Other rhizomes that will be available will be the native wildflowers of America called Louisiana irises, which are equally as beautiful since they grow at the edge of a pond, in a water feature, or in a low place in a garden that stays damp and has acid soil. The flowers range in color from true red to purple. Their blooms are their greatest asset and can range in diversity from semi-flaring to flat, from open to pendant, from full-overlapping to ruffled. While their leaves are narrow, they contain specks like pepper when held up to the light. After all, they come from Louisiana.

Spurias go dormant during the summer heat, but their wiry rhizomes come back to life with great vigor when the weather becomes cooler in Central Texas. The flowers on these tall irises with very slender green foliage are truly amazing resembling the Dutch irises grown from bulbs, but with an exotic flavor all of their own. These rhizomes do
not need to be dug up and divided for many years. They also need no extra water during their dormancy. Water and feed heavily with rose food when they begin to show foliage in the fall. All of these will extend the bloom time of irises, create interest, add texture, and make any garden a true place of beauty.

**Inside Austin Garden Tour – Saturday, October 17, 2015**

_Travis County Master Gardeners_

The Travis County Master Gardeners Association has set Saturday, October 17, 2015, for their popular Inside Austin Gardens Tour (IAGT). The tour provides a rare look inside six private gardens and one public experimental garden that demonstrate realistic, sustainable gardening practices for Central Texas.

The tour’s theme remains “For Gardeners. By Gardeners,” focusing on the practical beauty, variety, and stamina of native and well-adapted plants in the garden. In turn, each garden has a theme that demonstrates a particular set of characteristics Central Texas gardeners are likely to encounter in their own gardens. Those themes are:

- Flashy Natives – bright and colorful
- Sunbathing Natives – brutal, full sun
- Shady Natives – shade and under trees
- Death-Defying Natives – especially hardy, minimal water
- Cottage Natives – Texas tough classics
- Oh Deer! – deer-resistant, not deer-proof
- Native Testing Ground – new varieties and proven winners

**Flashy Natives**  
**Sunbathing Natives**  
**Cottage Natives**  
**Deer-resistant**
Wendy Buck, the 2015 IAGT chair, described the unique nature of the tour this way: “This really is a garden tour for gardeners, by gardeners. Interested visitors can experience a wide range of ideas, learn the details from the Master Gardeners that created the gardens, and learn how to execute those ideas successfully in their own gardens.”

Native and well-adapted plants require less water and less maintenance. They survive the Central Texas environment, which includes erratic swings in temperatures, high summer heat both day and night, drought, flood, clay soil, and rocky soil. Natives provide food for animals and insects while establishing a beautiful, unique sense of place. They are the foundation of all the sites on the Inside Austin Gardens Tour.

Complete information and tickets can be found at www.InsideAustinGardens.org.

For more information about the Travis County Master Gardeners Association and educational programs conducted by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, visit the Central Texas Horticulture website at http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/travis/.

**Porcelain Arts Club Sale**  
*By Joanna Burch*

The Austin Porcelain Arts Club would like to invite you to our 2015 Annual Sale, Saturday, September 26, 2015, in the Austin Area Garden Center at Zilker Botanical Garden from 10:00 to 4:00. We will be selling beautiful pieces of hand painted china (plates, vases, mugs, jewelry, etc.), as well as framed artwork. We will also have demonstrators painting throughout the day and available to answer any questions.

*Members of the Porcelain Arts Club at the 2014 Christmas sale. From left to right, standing: Susan Hilburn, Carol de Wind, Alice Nelson, Ellen Westmorland, and Donna Gatewood. Sitting: Candy Ferren and Joanna Burch.*

**Growing Orchids Indoors and Behind Glass- Part I**  
*By Stephen Van Kampen-Lewis*

Growing orchids outside in Austin can be difficult. The humidity often fluctuates from the mid teens to nearly 100% within the span of a few hours, and the temperature will soar well past 100°F for months at a time during the summer. Many people here in the Capital
City are fortunate enough to be able to grow their plants in the relative confines of a greenhouse; but for those of us without the space, time, or money to erect such a sanctuary, we have to improvise. Often a windowsill becomes the grow space of choice for a number of hobbyists. However, the rampant desire to collect more orchids often exceeds the limitations of a windowsill as more plants fill up available space and block precious sunlight from each other and the weekly trips to the sink become a bi-daily, hour-long chore to be dreaded. How is it possible to prevent the joyous art of growing nature’s most exotic plants from becoming a monotonous hassle?

Easy, just build a tiny greenhouse! I have two homemade orchidariums that were not all that expensive to buy, nor difficult to assemble. In part I of this two-part orchidarium series, I will show how I was able to take a ten-gallon aquarium and turn it into a habitat that my ‘chids will enjoy for years to come. I do, however, need to proclaim my complete incompetence when it comes to building…..stuff. I am not a handy person now, nor have I ever been. My wife did request that if I build something, please make sure it is not hideous, and I felt that that was a constraint I could live with.

There are three main components to this project that need to be considered before the details are undertaken. First, we need an aquarium (or any suitable container) to hold the orchids. Next comes the ability to elevate everything off the ground, and finally the lighting.

For this project, I went to Wal-Mart and purchased a ten-gallon aquarium for about $12. Just about any container will make do, but if you buy glass, make sure it is NOT tempered. This is because I had a hole drilled in the back of my tank so that excess water can flow out and down a hose to a small bucket below the tank. Tempered glass will shatter when drilled, while un-tempered glass will not. Some people have the means to drill their own exit hole (i.e. they have a drill, diamond encrusted drill bit, and the knowledge to use this equipment without shattering the tank), but I do not. I do, however, know that many saltwater aquarium enthusiasts prefer to have their aquariums drilled for similar purposes and that many retail marine ornamental stores will cater to this need on-site. I was able to employ such expertise at Fishy Business for about $25. Not only do they drill the hole, but also install a bulkhead at no extra cost, and I was able to attach some PVC piping with PVC cement purchased from Home Depot for about $10. This hose leads down to the bucket below the table that I can empty out at my convenience.

The orchids appreciate the added humidity that this set-up provides. Having a drain hole a few inches off the bottom allows about the same amount of water to be sitting in the tank at all times. In order to prevent a pool of water from becoming a bucket of algae slime, I filled the space with LECA (small balls of fired clay) and then put Riccia fluitans and Glossostigma elatinoides (found at most aquarium stores with freshwater fish) in the media so that added nutrients
from excess orchid fertilizer will be taken up by ornamentally attractive plants. These plants then directly compete with the algae for light and nutrients, which works to keep algal blooms very low. I also used white egg crate (from Home Depot) as a support system to elevate my orchids off the media so they do not sit in the water at the bottom of the tank. Both the *Riccia* and the *Glossostigma* have no trouble growing over the egg crate.

To lift the tank off the ground, I went to Ikea where I bought a two-tiered baby changing table ($30) that fit very nicely in a nook of my apartment. The orchids go on the top level, and the excess water drains down to the small bucket on the second level. I also store my one-gallon containers of water and pre-mixed fertilizer for the plants and some spray bottles (including one filled with rubbing alcohol, which I use just for mealy bugs) in this lower area.

Finally, the lighting is a 4-foot-long, 4-bulb fluorescent lighting system (high output t5 bulbs or t5HO) that I got from Brite Ideas, a hydroponics store just off of Ben White Blvd. This system (including the bulbs) I bought used for about $100, and it is hooked up to a $9 automatic timer that I got from Home Depot. I hung the fixture above the tank using framing wire that attaches to cast iron plant brackets that are drilled directly into the wall and purchased for less than $10, also at Home Depot.

I have since added more orchids to fit in the spaces around the aquarium and have also added another light fixture (with LED lights instead of t5) to accommodate these orchids, though I have the distinct feeling that the extra lighting was probably not necessary. In my defense, however, the bulbs were on sale and the light fixture that I needed to make it work cost about $20! How could I say no?! Either way, the final product is working quite well, and I have been able to bloom a beautiful *Cattleya maxima* and grow many species of *Cattleya* all year round, including several that should be dormant right now (*Catts. leopoldii, amethystoglossa, walkeriana, nobilior, dowiana*, etc.) but are actively putting out fresh new growth. If you have any questions, feel free to shoot me an email at isurus09@gmail.com.

You can also see these pictures and more at: [http://www.flickr.com/photos/isurus79/sets/72157629179720397/with/8074952607/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/isurus79/sets/72157629179720397/with/8074952607/).
Violet Crown Garden Club

Velia Sanchez-Ruiz

On Saturday, October 17, 2015, at 1:00, the Violet Crown Garden Club will hold its annual fall flower show at the Zilker Botanical Garden Center.

Violet Crown Garden Club is one of the oldest garden clubs in Texas. Founded in 1924 by the well known Clara Driscoll, its first meetings were held at Clara Driscoll’s home, which is now Laguna Gloria. In 1928 the garden club became affiliated with the National Garden Club of America and is now also affiliated with the Texas Garden Clubs. Twice a year, the Violet Crown Garden Club offers a flower show to share with our public audiences the beauty in nature that surrounds our community. Club members and other gardeners bring in their best flowers, fruits, and plants from their garden and home.

Floral designs are created so the public can see how plant material is used to bring beauty into a home setting. Some of the best designers in Texas are members of our club, which is known throughout the state for its beautiful and well organized flower shows. Because of this, Violet Crown Garden Club has a "Gold" standing in the ratings among all clubs in Texas.

"Transportation…..Land, Sea, Air" is the theme for the October show. The design section of the show will depict all forms of transportation---hot air balloons, sail boats, canoes, cars, airplanes, and more. The horticulture area of show is a sight to see, the best of the plant world. If you want to see well grown ferns, begonias, African Violets, lemon trees, roses, cactus, and so much more, then you must come to our show in October and then again in March--more on that later.

Other than a nominal entrance fee to the Garden, the flower show is free, and members will be present to guide you and give you information. Bring the entire family--grandma, grandkids, relatives--and enjoy!

The Austin Herb Society

By Jan Bland

The Austin Herb Society (AHS) resumed Member Garden Tours this spring in May. Three AHS members opened their homes and gardens for a well timed tour of each unique garden beginning at 9:30 on a Friday morning and ending around noon, in time for lunch.
After the third and final tour of the morning, everyone enjoyed a picnic potluck under the shade of a huge sycamore tree. The members of AHS are the best at incorporating fresh herbs into their culinary delights. Sharing ideas, whether for the garden or for a good recipe, is part of the mission of AHS.

Anyone wishing to join the Austin Herb Society is encouraged to attend meetings on the first Tuesday of the month from 9:30 to noon at the Garden Center. Annual dues are $30.00.
Austin Herb Society Begins a New Year

By Kate Alsobrook

At Austin Herb Society we are excited to leap into our new year. We have an array of interesting programs starting with the annual Member Luncheon on September 1 and featuring the Garlic Queens of Dripping Springs. The event is from 9:00 to noon at the Zilker Garden Center. There is no admission charge for members who have paid their dues for the current year. Non-member tickets are available at the door for $10.00.

Our Speaker’s Bureau is being revamped and will offer a variety of speakers on topics such as: Growing Herbs: 10 Steps to Success; Ayurvedic Herbs; Grow a Pizza Garden With Your Kids; Unusual Culinary Herbs for Austin; Fabulous Herbs for Austin; Fighting Inflammation with Herbs and Foods; Herbs in the Landscape; and Easy Herbs for Austin. If your club is interested in having a speaker for a meeting or event, contact Lucinda Rudin at 512-971-2307.

Fall is a great time for gardening in the Austin area, so join us on Saturday, September 26, for our annual Fall Plant Sale. From 10:00 to 4:00 the public is invited to shop for organic herb and veggie plants for their fall gardens. This event will be part of a Plant Sale hosted by Austin Area Garden Clubs and the Porcelain Arts Club. It will feature hand-painted porcelain art, iris, daylily, African violet, and aquatic plants, as well as herbs and vegetables. Here is a great opportunity to pick up new plants and art for your fall garden.

To learn more about the Austin Herb Society and the year’s program schedule, visit our website www.austinherbsociety.org where you can also find a membership form.

Zilker Botanical Garden Virtual Tour

By Wilda Campbell, AAGC Vice President – Education

Late this summer or early fall, the Austin Area Garden Council of Zilker Botanical Gardens will release a Virtual Tour for use on phones, tablets, and computers. The Tour may be found at either AAGC's website or on the City of Austin's Zilker Botanical Garden website, and will be available in both English and Spanish. It may be downloaded and used to guide the viewer through ZBG's themed gardens before going to the garden or while at the garden. The Tour contains useful plant information, garden history, information about garden clubs and many photos.
The Tour was developed with technical guidance and support from Virtual Tour App and many volunteers who provided information, photos, editing, and translation. AAGC and the City of Austin greatly appreciate not only the many hours of volunteer time, but also their contributions of funds and the technical guidance.

**Events at a Glance**

**Austin Cactus & Succulent Society Fall Show and Sale—Saturday and Sunday, September 5 and 6**
10:00 to 5:00 in the Austin Area Garden Center
Plant show with specimen cacti and succulent plants from around the world. Plant sales with vendors from Texas, New Mexico and Oklahoma. Handcrafted pottery for sale.
For more information, visit the website: [http://austincss.com/Show-&-Sale](http://austincss.com/Show-&-Sale)

**Iris Rhizome Sale – Saturday, September 12**
Norris Conference Center, 2525 W. Anderson Lane, off Mo-Pac Expressway 1 near Wal-Mart, 78757
Starts at 9:00 and usually ends at 2:00
For more information: contact Nelda Moore 512-327-0401

**Monarch Appreciation Day – Saturday, September 12**
10:00 to 4:00 in the Austin Area Garden Center
There will be educational booths, a pollinator plant sale, a silent auction, presentations, children’s activities, and other educational events.
For more information, visit the website: [http://www.zilkergarden.org/about/events/MonarchDay2014.html](http://www.zilkergarden.org/about/events/MonarchDay2014.html)

**22nd Annual Texas Bamboo Festival – Saturday and Sunday, September 19 and 20**
10:00 to 5:00 in the Austin Area Garden Center
There will be presentations, and bamboo plants and crafts for sale.
For more information about this event, visit the Texas Bamboo Society Festival webpage at [http://www.bamboocentral.net](http://www.bamboocentral.net); call Carole Meckes, President of the Texas Bamboo Society, at 512-929-9565; or email her at bamboo@texas.net.

**Porcelain Art and Plant Sale – Saturday, September 26**
10:00 to 4:00 in the Austin Area Garden Center
Items for sale include hand-painted porcelain, organic herbs and fall vegetables, daylilies, iris rhizomes, aquatic plants, African Violets and more.
For more information, call Marion Alsup at 512-970-3405.

**Inside Austin Gardens Tour – Saturday, October 17**
For more information: [www.InsideAustinGardens.org](http://www.InsideAustinGardens.org)

**Violet Crown Garden Club Annual Fall Flower Show – Saturday, October 17**
1:00 to 4:00 in the Austin Area Garden Center
Message from the Editor  
By Jean Love El Harim, AAGC Vice President – Publications  

After a hiatus of several months, our quarterly newsletter is back. The purpose of this message is to let all AAGC club members know that Down the Garden Path is your newsletter, your voice, the place for AAGC clubs to share information that is relevant to our members, friends of Zilker Botanical Garden, and the greater gardening community. To facilitate your sharing of news, I am asking that each garden club select a DTGP liaison who can ask their club members if they have an idea for a submission and decide if it is something the club wishes to publish in DTGP. Liaisons receive the club members’ submissions and submit them to editor.downthegardenpath@gmail.com by the deadline for the following issue. Each entry should include the name of the author and the author’s club. Photographs should be labeled with the photographer’s name and club, and should indicate the caption for the picture. Here is the newsletter production process and schedule in a nutshell:

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Let’s work together to share our news and make our newsletter interesting and relevant for all our readers. You are all welcome to send comments and suggestions for our newsletter to editor.downthegardenpath@gmail.com.
Contributions

This issue of Down the Garden Path has been published thanks to the contributions of the following AAGC club members:

**Photographers:**
- Marion Alsup
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- Marion Alsup
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- Nelda Moore
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- Velia Sanchez-Ruiz
- Jan Bland
- Joanna Burch
- Kate Alsobrook
- Wilda Campbell

**Editor:**
- Jean Love El Harim

**Assistant Editor:**
- Martha King

Down the Garden Path Submissions:

AAGC club members are invited to submit articles, announcements, and photographs of club activities, photographs of Zilker Botanical Garden, and events and activities of interest to our readers for publication in our newsletter.

Please submit all contributions to your club’s Down the Garden Path liaison.

Down the Garden Path is a publication of the Austin Area Garden Council, Zilker Botanical Garden.

Send questions and suggestions regarding the newsletter to editor.downthegardenpath@gmail.com.

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