President’s Message by Donna Friedenreich, President, AAGC

“A gift is pure when it is given from the heart to the right person at the right time and at the right place, and when we expect nothing in return.”

....Bhagavad Gita

I recently read this wonderful quote in one of the many magazines I subscribe to and instantly thought of a very special person. A little background will help you to understand why.

A couple of weeks ago, Austin was hit by a hard freeze. Overnight, my backyard garden went from riotous, blooming annuals and perennials to a sea of shriveled, mushy plants. Gone were the Monarch Milkweed, Firebush, Pentas, Hostas, Basil, and Sweet Potato Vine—now, just memories captured in photographs. As I drove into Zilker Botanical Garden the Tuesday after Thanksgiving weekend, what was blooming only a week before was gone... Firebush, Pride of Barbados, Esperanza Yellow Bells.

But PARD staff had been very busy. Beds around the parking lot were filled with pansies, violas, snapdragons, cyclamens. And, this very special person had transformed the flower beds at the entrance to the garden center into a botanical fairyland! Who is that special lady?

(Continued on page 2)
It’s none other than Audrey Benitz! Creating amazing hanging baskets, the festive reindeer topiary, and the Bromeliad Christmas tree in the Greene Room is not part of Audrey’s “job description”. It’s her way of gifting all of us who visit, volunteer, and work at Zilker Botanical Garden. She gives us these visual gifts from her heart and expects nothing in return.

Thank you, Audrey, for all you do for Zilker Botanical Garden. You are a gift that keeps on giving.
Gifts and Treats at *Chrysalis* Gift Shop

*Chrysalis* gift shop has wonderful gifts and treats for the holidays. As an added incentive to do your holiday shopping at *Chrysalis*, there's a **20% off coupon** waiting for everyone who signs up for our E-News so be sure to tell your friends. (There's a link from our home page at [www.zilkergarden.org](http://www.zilkergarden.org).) Here is just a preview of the delightful items available.

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**Holiday Hours for Zilker Botanical Garden**

**Garden Center Building & Gift Shop**

- Sun Dec 13, 1p - 4:30pm
- Mon Dec 14 - Fri Dec 18, 9am - 4:30pm
- Sat Dec 19, 10a - 4:30pm
- Sun Dec 20, 1p - 4:30pm
- Mon Dec 21 - Wed Dec 23, 9am - 4:30pm

*Thur & Fri Dec 24 & 25, CLOSED*

Normal Hours Resume
- Sat Dec 26, 10am - 5pm
- Sun Dec 27, 1pm - 5pm
- Mon - Thurs Dec 28 - 31, 9am - 5pm

*Fri Jan 1 CLOSED*

(Normal hours resume Sat Jan 2, 10am - 5pm)

**Zilker Botanical Garden (grounds)**

- Sun Dec 13 - Mon Dec 21, 7am - 5pm
- Tues & Wed Dec 22 & Dec 23, 7am - 5:30pm

*Thurs & Fri Dec 24 & Dec 25, CLOSED*

Normal Hours Resume
- Sat Dec 26 - Thurs. Dec 31, 7am - 5:30pm

*Fri Jan 1 CLOSED*

(Normal hours resume Sat Jan 2, 7am - 5:30pm)
Upcoming Events at Zilker Botanical Garden

Central Texas Gardening 101, Travis County Master Gardeners Assn
Saturday, January 30, 2010

Austin offers a unique mixture of weather, soil, and environment and the rules of gardening here are likely different from other areas you might have gardened before. This seminar is great for those establishing new roots in our area and trying to figure out how to encourage their plants to do the same or for those who need a refresher on the gardening basics of our area.

Join Daphne Richards, Horticulture Agent at the Texas Agrilife Extension Service for Travis County, to cover what you need to know to be a successful central Texas gardener. Included in the discussion will be our seasonal growing calendar, how to work with challenging soils, maintenance schedules for pruning and planting, tips on giving your plants the best start in your garden, and more.

This seminar is free, open to the public and requires no reservations. It is presented by the Travis County Master Gardeners Association, a volunteer arm of the Texas AgriLife Extension Service in Travis County. For more details, see http://www.tcmastergardeners.org or call the Travis County Master Gardener's help desk at (512) 854-9600.

Austin Herb Society's Annual Seminar
Saturday, February 20

Austin Herb Society will partner with The Herb Association of Texas to present demonstrations and workshops on a variety of herbal topics on Saturday, February 20, in the meeting room of the Garden Center building at Zilker Botanical Garden. The seminar begins at 9am and is free to the public, so plan to come a little early and meet some of the local herbal experts who will be speaking. We invite AAGC club members and their friends, all levels of gardeners will find something of interest.

There will be "stations" set up around the room with 20 minute presentations on the following topics:

- Culinary Uses Of Herbs, which will teach drying techniques for herbs. Marianne Simmons will making refrigerator pickles with the herb of the year, dill; and Cindy Phillips will make her favorite salad dressing.
- Cathy Slaughter will speak about Cultural Herb Gardening including pruning, taking cuttings, and starting seeds for spring. If time allows we will give advice about xeriscaping with herbs for more butterflies.
- Another station for Herbal Bodycare Products might help you make a unique gift for someone you love.
- Cindy Burrows will give a hands-on demonstration covering Making Medicinal Poultrices and we plan to have Beth Patterson demonstrating Herbal Crafts For Weddings.

If this sounds like a lot to absorb, don't worry there will be a break for refreshments at 10am. The second half will start at 10:30am and go till noon. Following the seminar some Herb Society members will lead a tour through the gardens and answer questions. Please plan to join us for this informative and educational Saturday morning. Consult www.austinherbsociety.org for a complete list of topics and the guest speakers.
Austin Rose Society Rose Workshop  
Saturday, February 13  
The Austin Rose Society will host a Rose Workshop on Saturday, February 13, 2010 from 10am until 3pm. You are invited to attend these information packed sessions at the Austin Area Garden Center in Zilker Botanical Garden. 
Join local area enthusiasts as they pass on time saving techniques and economic ways to care for the Queen of Flowers. Learn the successful way to grow roses and receive handouts on growing roses organically, a booklet "Growing Roses in the Austin Area", and a one-year membership in the Austin Rose Society. The fee is $30 and lunch is included. For more information contact Terri Kendal at 512-894-3455.

Austin Organic Gardeners Seedling Sale  
Saturday, March 6  
It's time to begin thinking and planning for your spring garden. The Annual Organic Seedling Sale is scheduled for Saturday, March 6th from 8:30am until 2pm at Zilker Botanical Garden. For more information, call Joan Huntley at 512-478-1025

Zilker Garden Festival  
Saturday & Sunday, March 27-28  
10am-5pm  
Come celebrate our 53rd annual Zilker Garden Festival. This family friendly event includes children's activities, guest speakers, music, food, and tons of plants, crafts, and unique items. Admission is $5 for Adults, $3 for Children (3-12). Parking is $3 per vehicle.

Proceeds from Zilker Garden Festival benefit the activities of the Austin Area Garden Council and Zilker Botanical Garden. For additional information, call 477-8672 ext. 12 or email info@zilkergarden.org.
Whereas most flowering perennials bloom from spring to fall, late fall still produces some spectacular color at Zilker Botanical Garden. Noticeable in the Green Garden is the native Purple Coneflower (Echinacea purpurea).

How can one miss the brilliant red berries of the Yaupon Holly (Ilex vomitoria) that line the median strip in the parking lot at Zilker Botanical Garden. Not only a feast for the eye, the berries are relished by wildlife in the Garden. These berries along with their evergreen foliage will remain throughout the winter.

Although approaching the end of their blooming season, the dwarf Mexican Bush Sage (Salvia leucantha, cv. Santa Barbara), continues to dazzle both human eyes and the butterflies they attract so well.

If you are looking for something sweet to smell, try these white Butterfly Gingers in full bloom near the entry to the parking lot. The Hedychium coronarium is one of the most cold hardy of the exotic gingers which is ideally located in a shady understory setting.
Down the Garden Path

There is always something blooming at Zilker Botanical Garden, regardless of the season. Plant descriptions are included in the City of Austin’s Grow Green informative guide, Native and Adapted Landscape Plants: an earthwise guide for Central Texas (4th Edition, 2009). This publication is available at local nurseries and at the Garden Center at Zilker Botanical Garden. You can also download the guide at www.growgreen.org.

One of the finest and most colorful of our tender perennials is the Penta. Zilker Botanical Garden has used this plant so effectively in the entryway displays and they remain blooming until the first frost in shades of red, pink and white. And finally, colorful foliage blended with bloomers adds an incredible combination of color, texture and interest as demonstrated in this area planting near the entry. Seen is Tasmanian Flax (Dianella tasmanica), Blackfoot Daisy (Melampodium leucanthemum), and a colorful hybrid coleus.

There is always something blooming at Zilker Botanical Garden, regardless of the season.

Austin Area Garden Council Officers

President
Donna Friedenreich
Vice President - Community Support
Sandra Holt
Vice President – Education
Anita Mapes
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Director, PARD (Ex-officio)
Sara Hensley
Zilker Botanical Garden Manager, PARD (Designee)
Melvin Hinson
County Horticulturist (Ex-officio)
Daphne Richards
**ASK THE GARDEN GURU**

This new feature of *Down the Garden Path* invites you to submit questions relating to ornamental gardening. Submit questions to info@zilkergarden.org, subject “DTGP Guru”

From John D: *Help! Some of my Agaves have rotted at the base and collapsed, only to find a mushy and decayed mess. What is causing this?*

Guru: Sounds like you have been attacked by the Agave Snout Weevil (*Scyphophorus acupunctatus*). This is a nasty little creature, ½ to 1” long, black, wingless, with a typical weevil snout that bores holes into the base of more mature agave, yucca and other related plants with a base diameter of 2” or more. Then it introduces bacteria which is necessary to cause rapid tissue decay in the plant to feed its white legless grub larvae at the same time it lays its eggs. Once hatched, the larvae feed on the rotting and bacterial rich inside tissue of the agave plant causing it to eventually collapse. It then pupates from larva to adult in the surrounding soil. If this pest is not discovered early on, there is little one can do to save the plant.

What you may need to do to prevent this nasty creature from destroying your Agave and Yucca plants is apply a systemic insecticide (liquid or granular form) that is effective on grubs. Bayer Advanced Tree & Shrub Insect Control, with the active ingredient imidacloprid (under the trademarked name Merit) has been used effectively. Recommended treatments should be in spring and once absorbed into the plant, should protect your plant for up to a year. Treating the surrounding is also necessary. Diazinon is also used to combat this pest. Other systemic insecticides can be used if they are recommended for treating grubs. Always follow the directions on the product labels.

As much as I hate to use any chemical product, this unfortunately is the only effective way to combat the Agave Snout Weevil once discovered. Observation and immediate removal of infected plants and soil around them is also effective in combating this pest. Agaves grown in containers with sterile soil are much less susceptible as the weevil is soil borne during it’s development. This weevil is doing much damage to commercial Agave crops in Mexico (Tequila, Sisal), therefore it is having an economic impact as well. Ironically, it is this grub that is often placed in the bottom of a bottle of Tequila. The picture below shows the adult and the grubs which were embedded in a *Yucca aloifolia* plant and the damage they cause.

![Agave Snout Weevil](image)

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Read reviews from visitors to Zilker Botanical Garden on Yelp.com – 4 ½ stars out of 5 makes our garden sing!

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**Violet Crown Garden Club**

is one of the oldest garden clubs in Texas. It was established by Clara Driscoll in 1924, and federated in 1928. Read more about Violet Crown Garden Club on their website—

www.violetcrowngardenclub.org
PLANT TALES: What’s the Name of the Plant?
by Don Telge

A gardener was cleaning his greenhouse one day and found a plant about two inches high growing under one of the benches. It was quite evident that the plant was new to this world but what was the name of this plant? He placed the plant in a container and left it on one of the benches. Time passed. One day, the gardener was amazed to see this small, insignificant plant had grown into a beautiful plant, with branches extending out around the trunk. The plant continued to grow and thrive. The gardener decided it was time to find out the plant’s name.

To free up the bench space for other plant specimens, the gardener carried the plant outside so it could enjoy some sunlight. The plant was so happy it began to sing, causing it to grow some more! The plant struck up a conversation with a Knockout Rose, and, of course, the rose asked the plant to introduce itself. The plant starting crying, saying “I don’t know my name!” The rose tried to comfort the plant but it would not stop crying. A nearby Hardy Geranium joined the rose in an attempt to make the plant happy.

The plant had grown too big for its small container. The gardener decided to dispose of the plant because he did not have time to research its name. He picked up the plant, walked out to the waste bin and threw the plant into a pile of pots, weeds and trash.

The plant lay in the trash pile, crying incessantly. A beautiful Lady dressed in a long white gown and carrying a wand heard the plant crying and asked what was wrong. The plant said, “I have been discarded and thrown in this pile of trash.” The Lady said, “Stop crying! You are destined to grow beautiful multi-colored flowers that will transform you into the most beautiful plant.” The Lady waved her wand over the plant. In an instant, a sudden mass of multi-colored blooms appeared. The Lady said, “Happy Holidays to all Plants!” She said “You see, plants always look so gorgeous at Christmas time, when homes decorated with plants provide elegance and beauty and increase the Joy of Christmas”.

The now beautiful plant was moved by a parishioner to a needy church. When the plant was placed in front of the altar, churches everywhere wanted Christmas plants in front of their altars, to bring peace and love to all. The Lady waved her wand over the plant and instantly, all churches received Christmas plants in front of their altars.

What was the name of the plant found in the greenhouse, you ask? You know the name of these plants: they are called Christmas plants, Easter plants, Sunday plants in a Church, and Sweetheart plants you give as a gift of love to your wife or daughter. What is the plant’s name you ask again? The name is Plant! It answers to…a plant for my loved one, a plant to a sick person, and a plant that makes everyone smile. So enjoy these plants, marvel at God’s creation, and care for your plants so they do not need to cry.

Mark Your Calendar!
53rd Annual
Zilker Garden Festival

Saturday, March 27th and Sunday, March 28th
10 am - 5 pm daily
$5 Adults $3 Children (3-12) Parking $3
Watch for details at www.zilkergarden.org
THE DOWN TIME GARDEN
by Bob Beyer, Travis County Master Gardener

Is the winter period the "ho hum" time of year for your garden? Does your garden lack the interest that draws you to it during this time? Well, let's change that image!

Plan for “all season” color, not just “seasonal”
So much emphasis and effort is placed on our spring to fall garden. The winter garden gets overlooked and is usually unattractive. All season plants that are permanent, preplanned, and integrated into the overall garden design can change that. Seasonal plants are temporary, and meant only for specific periodic plantings. The winter season in Austin generally runs from December 1 thru March 31. We reside primarily in cold hardiness zone 8b (minimum coldest temperature ranging between 15 and 20), but a small area around Austin itself is in zone 9a (20-25 degrees). Although we rarely see temperatures that low, we must be prepared for that possibility. Plants must deal with subfreezing temps, ice, sleet, rapid temperature change and wet and cold combinations.

The Challenge
Central Texas native and adaptive plants are mostly deciduous/perennials. Evergreens are a garden treasure in Central Texas, but limited. Winter color plants can be seasonal, or all season – cold hardy. Landscape areas should blend both evergreens with seasonal plants. Winter color can be from foliage or flowers – don’t overlook foliage. Foliage can be variegated white/yellow, green, blue/silver, & purple. Marginally hardy or semi-evergreens need protected micro-environments. Cool weather seasonal plants offer more color variety and bloom. Use colorful, eye catching hardscaping to add interest to winter gardens. Avoid container plantings except in very protected areas as roots freeze much faster than terrestrial plantings. Now let’s look at some plant choices…..

Good plants for off-season temporary garden color in FALL:
Sumac, Bradford Pear, Red Maple, and Crepe Myrtles -for foliage color. Mums, Copper Canyon Daisy, Fall Aster, Mexican Mint Marigold, Philippine Violet - for flowering

Good plants for off-season temporary garden color in WINTER:
Cyclamen, Pansies, Snapdragons, Dianthus-for winter flowering
Flowering cabbages, kale, or colorful Swiss chard for cool weather colorful foliage

Permanent Evergreens to Use
Colorful variegated cultivars of well known Evergreen plants:
Eleagnus pungens, cvs Maculata, Gilt Edge, Hosobo Fukurin
Abelia grandiflora cv. White Marvel or other variegated cultivars
Yucca filamentosa cvs Golden Sword, Variegata, Gilt Edge, Color Spot
Daniella tsamianca cv. Variegata
Viburnum tinus cv. Bewleys Variegated
Myrtus communis cv. Variegata
Trachyspermum jasminoides cv. Variegata
Yucca rotundifolia cv. Margaritaville
Tulbaghia violacea cv Variegata (Society Garlic)
Ophiopogon (Monkey Grass) –variegated, black, dwarf, etc.
Ligularia species and variegated cultivars

Colorful evergreen shrubs and cultivars (other than green)
Silver colored foliage, e.g.
Leucophyllum fruteceens ‘silverado’ (Texas Sage)
Teucrium fruticans (Bush Germander)
Saphora secundifolia ‘silver peso’ (TX Mt. Laurel)
Yucca pallida (paleleaf yucca)
Dasyliron wheeleri -Wheeler’s Sotol
Silver-leaved fan palms, e.g. Brahea armata, Serenop repens (silver leaf form)

Purple colored foliage, e.g.
Loropetalum chinensis ‘plum delight’ –Chinese Fringe Flower

Deciduous winter color from berries/bark, e.g.
Ilex decidua (Possomhaw Holly) –persistent red berries
Lagestroemia indica cvs (esp. Natchez) –brown exfoliating bark

Green is a color too!!
Evergreen shrubs to consider:
Acca sellowiana (Pineapple Guava)
Michelia figo (Banana Shrub)
Fatsia japonica (for a tropical look)
Roses (earthkind varieties and minis)
Ilex vomitoria (Yaupon Holly) –weeping, upright, dwarf forms
Thuja occidentalis (Arborvitae) –one of few suitable conifers
Podocarpus microphylla (Japanese Yew) -comes in dwarf forms
Cold hardy small palms and cycads
Rosmarinus officinalis (Rosemary) –fragrance, texture, etc.
Punica granatus cv nana (Dwarf Pomegranite) –semi-evergreen
Nandina domestica (only dwarf non-berry cultivars, e.g. San Gabriel)
Malpighia glabra (Barbados Cherry) –semi evergreen
Opuntia cactus –thornless
Saphora secundifolia –TX Mountain Laurel

There are no winter-flowering hardy evergreen shrubs/plants for our area.

Hardscaping to add winter garden interest. e.g.
Natural materials, e.g limestone rocks and boulders, Cedar driftwood
Nostalgia items, e.g. old wagon wheels and garden tools
Décor items, e.g. signs, art work, water features

(Continued on page 11)
Why let winter be your garden’s “down time” when it can be nearly as vibrant and enjoyable as the spring to fall gardening "prime time". We are fortunate to not have severe winter conditions in Austin, but with some limitations, we can enjoy year-round color and visual interest in our gardens. See our presentation (with plant pictures) on Winter Gardening at [www.centraltexasgardening.info/wintercolor.pdf](http://www.centraltexasgardening.info/wintercolor.pdf)

A variety of plants that will add interest and color to your garden during the winter “Down Time” period.

**KLRU's Central Texas Gardener**

This weekly gardening show is a rich source of information for Austin and Central Texas gardeners. Check out their weekly show schedule for topics & air times, the "To Do List" for monthly gardening tasks, and much more…
What We’re Thankful For

ZBG received two grants from the Austin Parks Foundation in 2008 and 2009— one for development of the Escarpment Trail for our dinosaur exhibit and one for the retaining wall for the new fern beds. We’d like to share their holiday letter:

[Image of Austin Parks Foundation letter]

It’s the time of year when we like to think about it is we’re thankful for. We’d like to share with you some of the things Austin Parks Foundation has to be thankful for this year!

• 17,500 acres of beautiful Austin parkland
• More than 60 park-adopter groups, using our services to improve their neighborhood parks
• The thousands of volunteers who attended It’s My Park Day, Project Build a Park, Trees for Pease events, and many others
• The hundreds of trees planted last spring by volunteers that made it through the driest summer in recent memory
• Fall rains restoring Austin to a brighter shade of green
• Great partnerships with the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department at all levels, from executive to maintenance crews
• Our donors and members, who make it all possible.

Austin Parks Foundation is committed to providing the resources and partnerships that create and sustain beautiful and active parks. We need your help.

If you are not a member, won’t you join us today?

If you are already a member, consider making a special end-of-year gift to help us continue this important work? We welcome your gift of any amount at www.austinparks.org/donate.html

With sincere thanks,
Rosie and Charlie

Rosie Weaver, Outreach Director
Charlie McCabe, Executive Director

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Sign up for Austin Notes, the City’s dynamic e-mail update system and get news about Austin neighborhoods, parks, road closures, and more. Sign up at www.ci.austin.tx.us/news/notes/index.cfm