



June 2007

Volume 14 Number 6

Rainbow Garden Club June Meeting

Date: Sunday, July 10th
Time 2:00 PM
Program: Storm Water Management
Location: Home of Robert and Mark Richardson
1507 Vista Real Dr.
Dallas, TX, 75211

Program Details

Our program will be on the topic of Storm Water Management and how we can prevent storm water pollution. Our guest speaker for this program is Richard Smart who is the Environmental Coordinator for the City of Dallas Storm Water Management Office. Richard's presentation will help us better understand this type of pollution, why it is important and teach us how we can help prevent storm water pollution. A specific area he will address is how we can prevent storm water pollution by properly using and disposing of pesticides and fertilizers.

In Dallas, and most municipalities, storm water runoff that flows into storm drain inlets is not cleaned or treated. The storm drain system carries storm water and everything in it, directly to local creeks, rivers, and lakes. If the storm water becomes polluted with oil, sediment, pesticides, or fertilizers then those pollutants can end up in the local water bodies we use for recreation and to supply our drinking water.

To learn more about SWM visit www.wheredoesitgo.com & www.trinity-trudy.org.

Host Residence

Robert and Mark Richardson have a beautifully landscaped yard with a great deck, pool and spa! They will serve hamburgers and/or hot dogs and a batch of cool Sangria! Don't forget to bring your swimming trunks and towels if you would like to swim after the program! You can RSVP your plans to attend by sending an email to Mark at mrichardsonrn@sbcglobal.net.

Directions

Vista Real Drive is off of Keeneland Parkway in Oak Cliff. Those driving south on Loop 12 can exit to the left and go east on Keeneland Parkway and then take a right on Vista Real Drive. Mark and Robert's house will be on the right side of the road. Click on this [link](#) to view a MapQuest map to Robert and Mark's home.

May Meeting Highlights

Contributed by Tom Forsyth

The May meeting was held at the home of Tom Forsyth & Glen Hawkins on Saturday May 12th. The

first hour of the meeting was spent touring the beautiful gardens, viewing photos from the Ft. Worth Botanical Garden and eating a tasty afternoon feast. Glenn fixed a menu of keabobs, quiche, potatoes, cinnamon rolls & trifle for dessert.

The meeting started at 3 p.m. Our speaker was Brenda Cunningham from the Dallas County Master Gardeners. She provided handouts about rain water harvesting and rain water gardens. She then presented a slide show illustrating a number of examples of govt. and private buildings that are harvesting rain water. She showed a number of systems for harvesting rainwater from simple to complex. She illustrated a number of containers that homeowners and businesses are collecting rainwater to use in watering home gardens.

It was a very informative meeting. After the meeting, it started to storm outside.

From the Garden

Contributed by Stan Aten

It has been a very wet month. Officially, the drought is over; however, I am still going to explore getting equipment to harvest rainwater since I know summer will be here soon. When the rain stops, I will be busy in the yard cleaning out flower beds and mowing weeds. I have lots of plants to share this year. If you would like some iris, larkspur seed or even bluebonnet seeds, just email me at s.aten@att.net.

Plant of the Month

Contributed by Jimmy Turner

Latin Name: *Musa* hybrid 'Little Prince'

Common Name: Little Prince banana

Flowers: none

Foliage: large, upright leaves splashed with red

Mature height: 2 1/2 ft.

Hardiness: sub-tropical hardy to Zone 7 with protection

Soil: not picky

Exposure: full sun to light shade

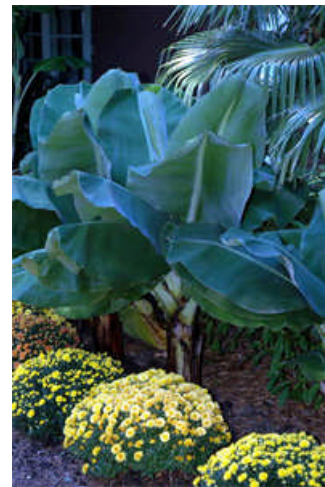
Water usage: medium

Sources: mail-order or local nurseries

Just in case you've been out of touch for the last couple of years, tropical-looking gardens are back in style. Bold foliage, bold color and bold containers are all the rage worldwide and, for once, it's a gardening trend that us Texans can not only attempt, but absolutely out-do anyone else! Our long, hot summers are ideally suited for this color and plant palette.

At the forefront of this garden trend is a wave of compact sub-tropical plants with bold foliage, such as bananas and elephant ears. Everyone is looking for plants that are striking and large, but will still fit into today's smaller gardens.

To me, and many other gardeners, the iconic plant for "tropical gardening" is the banana, but who has room for a 20-foot-tall monster plant? Even some of the supposedly dwarf forms still get more than 10 feet tall in our long Texas summers. So what are you to do if you are limited on space? Try this



incredible new plant, *Musa* 'Little Prince.'

A couple of years ago, one of my great gardening friends in Chicago sent me some tiny liners of a new dwarf banana to test. Typically, I was skeptical, but my friend promised me that I would absolutely love them. Those little 3-inch-tall liners I planted in early May never reached more than 3 feet tall and they looked awesome right up until our first frost in November. Needless to say, my friend has been quite effusive with the "I told you so's."

Little Prince banana is true garden royalty. This super-dwarf banana rapidly forms a stocky 8- to 10-inch-thick trunk crowned with upright leaves flecked with red. This plant is a perfect addition to summer containers or for mixing into a bold-colored border for an upright accent. I discovered by accident that the smaller the pot you use, the smaller the plant stays; it automatically sizes itself to the container. A couple of plants I was planning to use at home ended up staying in 2-gallon nursery pots all summer and the plants never got more than a foot tall! Banana bonsai, anyone?

Little Prince, like any other banana, easily stands up to full sun or light shade and has few pest or disease problems. It likes regular watering and fertilizer. Unfortunately, this banana doesn't really flower or make fruit, so don't be expecting to pick your very own bananas anytime soon. Little Prince is listed as hardy to Zone 7, but if you live north of this or don't want your banana to freeze to the ground, plant them in containers and move them inside the garage during periods of extended cold. They also make one of the coolest houseplants!

If you can't find banana Little Prince at your local nursery, shop for it online at Plant Delights Nursery (www.plantdelights.com)

About the author: Jimmy Turner is the Director of Horticulture Research at the Dallas Arboretum, visit www.dallasplanttrials.org for more information on his trials. For more plant profiles by Jimmy, [subscribe](#) to Neil Sperry's GARDENS Magazine.

Join us in the garden and let us grow your mind! For a full calendar of classes and descriptions, or to register for classes, go to www.dallasarboretum.org, and click on LEARN, or call (214) 515-6540. Join us this spring and let us bring nature to life for you!

Timely Tips

Plant: Landscape plants including trees, shrubs, vines and groundcovers can be planted now but make provision to hand-water them during hot summer weather. Sprinkler irrigation alone will not be adequate. Annuals and perennials can still be planted but do so as soon as possible and choose plants that have become acclimated to the sunlight and drying winds. Ideally they will be growing in conditions similar to what you will provide when you buy them at the garden center. Crape myrtles bought now will be in full flower so that you can get the exact shade that you want. We have a list of the best varieties at www.crapemyrtletrails.org, the Website of our Crape Myrtle Trails of McKinney.



Prune: Reshape shrubs gently to remove unwanted and erratic spring growth. Remove lower branches from shade trees if required to get grass to survive, but be doubly sure that you want to remove each limb. They can never be replaced. Blackberry canes that have just borne fruit completely to the ground (they will never bear again). Tip-prune the new blackberry stems at 3 to 4 feet to force them to produce side branches. Mow your lawn frequently (4- or 5-day intervals). It's less work as you do, plus it's better for the grass. Tidy up perennial beds to remove spent flower stalks and seedheads.

Fertilize: Almost all of your plants will benefit from a second feeding soon. Recent rains have depleted

nutrients from most Texas soils. If you live in a clay soil area you probably should apply a high-nitrogen or, even more likely, an all-nitrogen plant food to all of your plants, fruit, flowers and vegetables included. Add iron to chlorotic shrubs, vines and perennials. Trees that need supplemental iron, as in the Q&A section this issue, should probably be replaced if it's a chronic problem. Their root systems will continue to spread and grow and eventually the budget for iron supplement alone will eat you alive. Apply a water-soluble, complete-and-balanced plant food each time that you water your patio pots and hanging baskets.

On the Lookout: Fungal diseases of leaves, flowers and fruit abound after all of the repeated rainstorms. Watch for leaf spots, powdery mildew, fruit rot, stem rot and other common problems. Your local nurseryman can identify the issue and suggest the best remedy. Take generous samples in when you go for the most accurate diagnosis. Also know that many of these problems will abate when it turns hot and dry. Watch junipers, arborvitae and other evergreens for bagworms and treat immediately with Bt or other insecticide. Trim webworms out of pecans, walnuts and other trees. Sprays are difficult to administer and not especially effective unless you have high-pressure equipment. Spider mites will begin to show up on beans, tomatoes, violets, marigolds and other plants this month. Lace bugs will suck the color out of boxwood, Boston ivy, pyracantha, azalea, sycamore, bur oak and other plants' leaves. You'll see black droppings on the backs of the leaves. General-purpose insecticides will eliminate them.

June Events

Fort Worth, June 1-July 7 (see Web site for specific dates)

It's the best concert series yet at Fort Worth Botanic Garden. Bring the picnic basket and relax under the stars while enjoying music by the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra and friends. Gates open at 6:30 p.m., concerts begin at 8 p.m. Plus, fireworks after every performance. Visit www.fwbg.org for dates, ticket pricing and purchase information, along with musical lineups. Fort Worth Botanic Garden, 3220 Botanic Garden Blvd., Fort Worth. (817) 871-7686.

Corpus Christi, through Sept. 3

Quirky garden art at its best! Visit Flamingo Fandango, a fun exhibit of creatively designed pink plastic yard flamingos. In addition to custom exhibit, a flock of around 200 "naked" flamingos will be on site for visitor photo opportunities. South Texas Botanical Gardens & Nature Center, 8545 S. Staples, (361) 852-2100. www.stxbot.org

Dallas, every Thursday through Aug. 2

Enjoy a concert on the lawn each Thursday evening, from 7:30-9:30 p.m. Bring a blanket or lawn chairs, and either bring your own picnic or order a pre-made picnic basket or boxed dinner to enjoy at the concert. Visit www.dallasarboretum.org, and click on "events" for more information. Dallas Arboretum, 8525 Garland Road, Dallas. (214) 515-6500.

Dallas, June 2

Stock up on unique, butterfly-attracting plants that are well-suited to the Dallas-area climate at Texas Discovery Gardens' Butterfly Plant Sale. 10 a.m.-2 p.m. www.texasdiscoverygardens.org/events.html. Texas Discovery Gardens at Fair Park, 3601 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Dallas. (214) 428-7476.

Humble, June 2

Mercer Arboretum's Plant Sale will offer a selection of Harris County natives, tropicals and gingers, and

experts will be available to answer question and offer suggestions. 9 a.m.- 4 p.m. Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine Westfield Road, Humble. (281) 443-8731. <http://www.hcp4.net/mercer/>

Dallas, June 2

Don't miss "Celebrate Succulent Day," Saturday, June 2, at North Haven Gardens. Attend a free program at 1:30 p.m. on Agaves, Yuccas and Succulents in the Garden, given by Peter Schaar of the Native Plant Society of Dallas. North Haven Gardens, 7700 Northaven Rd., Dallas. 363-5316. www.nhg.com

Nacogdoches, June 21

Listen in as Mike Schnelle of Oklahoma State University talks about Woody and Herbaceous Gems For The Landscape, as part of as part of the SFA Arboretum Les Reeves Lecture Series, 7-8:30 p.m., Room 110 of the Stephen F. Austin University Agriculture Building on Wilson Drive (between the Art building and the intramural fields. Free. (936) 468-1832. <http://arboretum.sfasu.edu/>

San Antonio, June 21 and every third Thursday each month during summer

Bring the family, lawn chairs and blankets for a Concert Under the Stars, held every third Thursday of the month this summer. \$5 per person, free for members. Gates open at 6 p.m., music starts at 7 p.m. No outside food and drink. Food and drinks will be available for purchase. San Antonio Botanic Garden, 555 Funston Ave., San Antonio. (210) 207-3250. www.sabot.org

Austin, June 26 and 28

Learn all about plant characteristics, uses, legends and more during "What's in a Name: Free Wildflowers Identification Tours," led by Stephen Brueggerhoff. Pre-register by calling (512) 232-0112. 4-7 p.m., Tuesday and Thursday, June 26 and 28. Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, Austin. www.wildflower.org

Pest Patrol

Photo: Asian tiger mosquito, *Aedes albopictus* (Skuse) (Diptera: Culicidae). Photo by Dr. Bart Drees, Professor and Extension Entomologist.



Virus to Kill Fire Ants?

Red imported fire ants are a major insect pest in Texas. They affect everyone from farmers to homeowners due to their aggressive nature and medically important sting. There were no natural enemies introduced with these ants, so their populations have exploded.

However, recently researchers have been able to detect another natural enemy to decrease the fire ant population, this time it is a virus. This virus was detected in 2002 by researchers at the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Florida. The virus causes a slow death of the colony, so once it is introduced it will take around 3 months for the colony to decline. The efforts are now to seek a commercial partner to develop the virus into a bait to control fire ants.

The virus is only one weapon against these ants. These fire ants are native of South America and there we find dozens of natural enemies. The trouble is introducing and having the natural enemy survive in North America. One successful natural enemy that has been released in the southern U.S. is the phorid fly. The female phorid fly lays its egg inside the fire ant worker and then uses the fire ant worker to complete its developmental cycle. As the fly develops, it moves into the head capsule of the fire ant,

which causes the ant to become decapitated. The fly then completes its final stages in the fire ant head, where it emerges as an adult phorid fly.

Remember that the fire ant is not all bad. They do aerate the soil and they feed on other urban pests such as our cockroaches, fleas and ticks.

For more information, please visit the fire ant webpage at

<http://fireant.tamu.edu>.

Elm Flea Weevils Attack Elm Trees

Elm flea weevils have been feasting on elm trees in North Texas. They are very small beetles about 1.6 mm long, which looks like a black speck to the naked eye. However, under magnification, one will see the prominent curving mouthpart which is distinctive of the weevil family. They also have large hindlegs, similar to fleas, hence the common name of this beetle.

If populations are large, then some beetles may fall onto the lawn or sidewalk or even onto the homeowner when they are under the tree.

The potential to defoliate elms can be a possibility, since these beetles leave tiny holes in the leaf as they feed. However the defoliation will not kill the tree directly, but the tree may weaken or become stressed. This could lead to other insects or pathogens to attack the stressed tree.

The good thing is these weevils will only feed on elm trees so there is no need to treat surrounding trees. Also their damage will not harm healthy trees, but stressed trees will be affected by these beetles. Since they feed on the leaves, they can be controlled with foliar sprays such as those containing acephate or permethrin. If the trees are large, then pest control professional may need to be contacted.

Multiplying Mosquitoes

Due to all of the recent rains, we have another flying insect joining us outside: the mosquito. Mosquitoes are a diverse group of flies, and there are more than 85 species in Texas.

Mosquitoes develop through a complete lifecycle with an egg, larva, pupa and adult stage. Mosquito eggs may be laid individually or in clusters on the surface of water or in dry locations that will flood periodically. The eggs hatch into larvae that eat microscopic plants, animals and other organic material in the water. The larvae will then develop into pupae, which do not feed. Then the adult stage will emerge from the water and take flight.

Adult male and female mosquitoes will feed on nectar, honeydew and fruit juices. Male mosquitoes will have hairy antennae that they use to locate females. The female mosquito will also consume blood in order to develop her eggs. This causes the female mosquito to be considered one of the biggest medical threats to humans, since they are capable of transmitting many diseases, such as West Nile Virus, Malaria, Eastern Equine Encephalitis, and Yellow Fever.

Some Options For Controlling Mosquito Populations Outdoors:

- 1) The **number one way to reduce mosquito populations** in your yard is **source reduction!!!** Mosquitoes need as little as a bottle cap full of water in order to complete their lifecycle. If standing water is eliminated in your backyard, then the overall mosquito population in your area will be reduced.
- 2) Areas containing water should be changed once a week or emptied, such as wading pools buckets, bird baths, pet dishes, ponds, boat covers, and irrigation systems.
- 3) Holes or depressions in trees should be filled with sand or mortar.
- 4) Leaky pipes should be repaired.
- 5) If standing water can not be drained, then mosquito dunks containing *Bacillus thuringiensis israelensis (Bti)* can be used.
- 6) Mow tall grass and reduce the amount of foliage to reduce the resting sites for adult mosquitoes.
- 7) Insecticides can be applied to trees and shrubs, such as those containing pyrethrins, to kill adult mosquitoes.

Some options to prevent mosquito bites:

- 1) Avoid wearing dark colors, since mosquitoes rely on visual cues to locate hosts.
- 2) Avoid exercising or yard work in the heat of the day, since mosquitoes are attracted to carbon dioxide and perspiration.
- 3) Avoid wearing fruity or floral fragrances in perfumes, hair products, or sunscreens, since these scents are more attractive to mosquitoes.
- 4) Wear long, loose-fitting clothing to avoid mosquito bites.
- 5) Chemicals can be applied to the skin and clothes to prevent bites. There are many mosquito repellents on the market such as those containing DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, oil of eucalyptus, and soybean oil-based repellents.

Mention of commercial products is for educational purposes only and does not represent endorsement by Texas Cooperative Extension or The Texas A&M University System. Insecticide label registrations are subject to change, and changes may have occurred since this publication was printed. The pesticide user is always responsible for applying products in accordance with label directions. Always read and carefully follow the instructions on the container label.

Membership Information

Our club's roots began to grow in 1992 in the gardening chat rooms of the Internet. Two local gardeners found each other and agreed that gay and lesbian gardeners should organize and utilize their talents to aid not only one another, but also our community. The organization grew and today our members represent all levels of gardening skill and knowledge and enjoy sharing their gardening skills with each other.

All gardeners, from novice to master, are invited to join Rainbow Garden Club of North Texas. Annual membership dues are \$15 per household, renewable at the beginning of each new year. Dues help to pay for the printing and distribution of the newsletter. Other fund raising events, including annual plant sales and plant raffles, help to fund community beautification projects. All current paid members have the right to vote at meetings.

Benefits of membership include:

- Monthly Meetings
- Field Trips
- Educational Programs
- Community Projects
- Monthly Newsletter
- Networking
- Discounts
- Food and Fellowship

To join the club, please print and complete the form below. All fields, except "comments", are required.

Name	
Address	
City, State, Zip Code	
Email Address	
Phone Number	
Comments	

Please send the completed form and your check for \$15, payable to "Rainbow Garden Club," to:

Rainbow Garden Club
P.O. Box 226811
Dallas, Texas 75222-6811