

April, 2015

Notes:

Spring at our Secretary's Home!



If you know Carole Frascella, you know her back yard is home to birds, possum, squirrels, cats, raccoons and all kinds of creatures. She buys bird food by the ton and helps sick and injured animals on a regular basis. These fortunate whistling ducks are regular visitors to her backyard!

Next month will be the last before our annual summer break! Last year everyone enjoyed a program of members' favorite photos. Just in case Al Barr (newly retired) has the time to put a program of photos together, everyone needs to look for a maximum of six photos for May! To Al: Please, Al, help us with the May program!

April 21 Program
Discover John James Audubon
with Mary Anne Weber

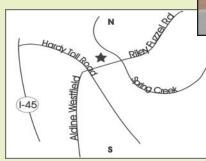


Mary Anne is the Education Director for Houston Audubon and will help us rediscover John James Audubon through his Ornithological Biography. She runs the Sims Bayou Urban Nature Center in southeast Houston. She has been working with raptors since 1983 and teaching about birds and with live birds since 1987. She has a degree in Wildlife Biology and Forestry from Virginia Tech and has taught and cared for wild birds in New Jersey, Montana, Virginia and Texas. She has been on staff with Houston Audubon since 1999. She was recently awarded the Garden Club of America's Elizabeth Abernathy Hull Award for Environmental Education.

Don't miss this wonderful program!









Big Stone Lodge Dennis Johnston Park709 Riley Fuzzel Road

by Carole Allen

Heart Happenings



Green Turtle, (Chelonia mydas)
Photo Credit: Andy Bruckner, NOAA

Nesting season is about to start and we hope it is better than last year and the year before. In the me antime, please read this news release about our dear neighbors to the east.

Conservation groups are taking a hard look at Gov. Bobby Jindal's environmental record in advance of his expected campaign announcement in June. Turtle Island Restoration Network published an op-ed on March 14 in the *Houston Chronicle* highlighting how Jindal has failed to protect the endangered sea turtles in his home state of Louisiana.

Jindal's state is currently the only one in the United States that refuses to enforce federal regulations that require shrimp fishermen to put Turtle Excluder Devices, known as TEDs on their nets. TEDs act as an escape hatch that allows trapped sea turtles to escape shrimp nets rather than drown entangled in nets. Jindal's lack of enforcement is not only irresponsible from an environmental standpoint; it has also caused Louisiana shrimp to be red-listed by the Seafood Watch Program.

"Governor Jindal needs to step up to save the smallest sea turtle in the world," said Carole Allen, the Director of the Gulf of Mexico Office of Turtle Island Restoration Network that delivered nearly 4,000 petitions to his office asking him to enforce TEDs in Louisiana waters. So far he has failed to take action.

Background on Turtle Excluder Devices: All but one coastal state where the endangered Kemp's ridley sea turtle swims make sure their shrimp industry uses Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs) on their trawls to allow turtles to escape. Additionally, fishermen in 20 other countries use TEDs. As pointed out in the op-ed by Homer Aridjis, the president of Mexico's foremost ecology organization, and Todd Steiner, founder and director of the Turtle Island Restoration Network with offices in Texas and California, Louisiana's Governor Bobby Jindal could save hundreds of Kemp's ridley sea turtles by enforcing a federal law of the Endangered Species Act in his own state waters, but thus far he has chosen to do nothing. Without the use of law enforced TEDs in Louisiana waters, it is likely that thousands of sea turtles of various species will drown again this year in U.S. waters (the majority in the Gulf of Mexico).

APRIL HORTICULTURE By Kathy Dodge, Texas Master Gardener



April brings spring gardening to a fever pitch, and nurseries are fully stocked with all kinds of plants and products for every purpose for the itchy green thumb. Here are a few gardening tasks for the month of April that you might find helpful.

Azaleas: A common azalea question is: "When do I prune my azaleas". Since they bloom on growth produced the previous year, you must wait until they finish blooming before pruning. The same holds true with spirea, forsythia, wisteria and any other early spring blooming plant. Azaleas don't have to be pruned every year, but you might find it desirable to remove long shoots sticking up above the rest of the bush to keep the growth more compact.

Camellias should be fertilized this month, and once azaleas finish blooming, fertilize them, too, to stimulate new growth. Roses have relatively high fertility requirements, so fertilization can begin now and continue every 4 to 6 weeks until September.

Lawns: April is the month to begin fertilizing lawns. The ideal time to apply fertilizer is after you have mowed actively growing grass once or twice. Early April is a good target date for St. Augustine. Water often (St. Augustine uses volumes of water), raise area if water stands after a rain (it can't tolerate wet feet) and mow often, twice weekly to force it to fill in dead or sparse areas.

Planting: Perennials for summer color include lantana, daylilies, verbena, hostas, salvia, sedums, ornamental grasses, purple coneflower, rudbeckia, ferns and summer phlox. Plant white, fragrant flowers in areas where you sit outside at night. White is not only cooling and elegant, it remains vivid as other colors fade and makes all surrounding colors, including green, look more vibrant. Try white angel's trumpet (datura), butterfly bush (Buddleia), clethra, crinum, dianthus, flowering tobacco, four o'clock, ginger, hyacinth, jasmine vine, mandevilla vine, mock orange, moonflower vine, plumeria, summer phlox, sweet olive, sweet pea, sweetspire, or wisteria.

Extras you can do:

- Plant caladiums in slightly acidic soil with good drainage.
- Plant new shrubs before it gets any hotter and keep newly set-out plants well watered.
- Cut flowers to extend blooming season.
 Pinch tips from coleus, copper plants to make them

bushier.

 Feed all container plants. Feed hibiscus with hibiscus food or a low phosphorus fertilizer.

Mulch is an organic (or synthetic) material applied as insulation on top of soil over plant roots. Mulches keep soil and roots moist and cool in summer and warm in winter. Organic mulches breakdown, replenishing soil nutrients. The coarser a bark mulch, the slower it decomposes. Finer shredded barks decompose more quickly, but also allows more rainfall to penetrate through.

Among the Texas natives that love our clay soil and easily tolerate our heavy rains are Carolina jessamine, coreopsis, clasping leaf coneflowers, crinums, Gulf Coast penstemon, halbard leaf hibiscus, hymenocallis (big white spider lily), Louisiana iris, mayhaw, mistflower, parsley hawthorn, river birch, Southern blue flag iris, strawberry bush, Virginia sweetspire and yaupon holly. (Native Plant Societies — www.npsot.org — are wonderful resource.)

PESTS: (Watch new growth for insect pests. Aphids, also sometimes called plant lice, may get on the new growth of any type of plant. While a few aphids can be tolerated, large numbers can distort growth and should be controlled. A strong jet of water to knock them off can provide temporary control and insecticidal soap products will also help control them.

Great Don't-Do Tips:

- Don't panic over silky white webs on tree trunks. Bark lice - good bugs at work!
- Don't remove spent foliage from amaryllis, daffodils, irises, lilies. Let it die naturally.
- Don't overfertilize. Leaf spots, dark areas on older plants may result.
- Don't overwater. Leaf drop can result. (Also is a sign of underwatering!)

Enjoy this wonderful Springtime weather. We certainly deserve it. Summer is knocking on our doors along with the hot, hot humid temps! Happy Gardening to all of you !!!!

Caladiums By Kathy Dodge, Texas Master Gardener

Caladium leaves can be shaped like hearts, arrows, or lances in color combinations of red, pink, rose, white, chartreuse, and green. The brilliant foliage of this classic plant is often translucent, which makes them light up your garden. They've brightened shady spots for generations, but now you have the option of newer selections that can take some direct sun.

Always plant when the soil has warmed. If you plant too early, when the soil is still cool, your bulbs will rot. Caladiums are ideal for both new and experienced gardeners because they are so easy to grow.

For a big show of color, pick your favorite selection and plant a bunch. Try strap-leaf types (shorter plants with bunches of leaves)

or dwarf types (smaller, heart-shaped leaves) for pots and window boxes. Caladiums are great companions for impatiens, begonias, and ferns.

How to Grow Caladiums: (Caladiums originated in South America, so they thrive in warm weather. Like their larger cousins, elephant's ears, they're carefree once you cover their basic needs.



Light for Caladiums:

All caladiums love filtered sunlight and shade. Some newer selections can take more sun.

Best Soil for Caladiums: Caladiums need well-drained soil that's rich in organic matter, such as mushroom compost or chopped leaves.

How to Plant Caladiums: Buy potted caladiums ready to plant, or grow them from tubers. (Though they're sometimes called bulbs, they are really tubers.) Plant tubers point side up about 1 to 1 1D2 inches deep. Space them 8 to 14 inches apart, depending on the ultimate size of your plants as listed on the tag.

How to Water Caladiums: Always water caladiums regularly. Keep the soil slightly moist. Add mulch, such as pine straw, to help retain soil moisture and conserve water. If you have caladiums in full sun, don't let them dry out.

How to Feed Caladiums: Use a slow-release fertilizer such as Osmocote Outdoor & Indoor Smart-Release Plant Food 19-6-12 or a liquid feed such as Miracle-Gro Liquid All Purpose Plant Food 12-4-8.

Where to Buy Caladiums: You'll find a good selection of caladiums at your local nursery or box stores. For an even wider assortment of tubers, you can buy online. Visit Classic Caladiums, Caladium World or Caladiums Florida and there are more sites from which to choose.

WANTED: NEW VICE-PRESIDENT FOR PUBLICITY!

After an unknown number of years, Carole Allen is stepping aside from the Vice-President role. It's a fun job so give it some thought! Carole will continue writing HEART HAP-PENINGS but a new officer with new ideas and new energy is needed!



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The deadline for submissions is the 25th of the previous month, earlier if possible. Always add "PWWS" in the subject line. All emails will be responded to within 3 days. If you do not receive a response please call 832 717-3276. All articles are subject to approval by the PWWS Board.

Please send all new address changes and any corrections to cdmoore3@gmail.com (Claire Moore) and add PWWS to the subject line. Thank you.

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