



Horti-Bull

HORTICULTURAL BULLETIN

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The COVID scare is still with us and our schedule is still in shambles. There is no Christmas Banquet planned for 2020. But if the promising news that we are getting concerning a reliable vaccine is correct, and we don't go crazy over the holidays, we may get together sometime in the first quarter of 2021. [MGCSA Calendar](#)



Todd Mernin

From the President Happy Holidays. This one is supposed to be rough according to the CDC and Scientific folk. I normally have Thanksgiving with my adopted family and friends. However, this one, I will be cooking a ham and eating off it for several days while watching sports and occasional breaks watching plant stuff on Tic Toc. Please remember that this time of year is extremely hard for those feeling isolated and depressed. I know that seems the norm, but it is the time to reach out to these friends and family and just chat a bit. We are all in this together and it is through these acts of love and kindness that God shows his love.

As a reminder to all members, now is a good time to start thinking about club dues for 2021. Upon receipt of your dues, your membership card will be sent to you which allows you a 10% discount at various local nurseries. Your continued membership also means you will receive the Horti-Bull newsletter, a good resource for seasonal planting as found in "Calvin's Corner", and other articles. We need all members to support our Club in the coming year, so I am grateful for your attention to mailing in your dues.

It is my wish that all have a safe and happy holiday season. Be grateful for who is in our lives and the basics to survive and thrive. Better days are ahead. Keep planting and nourishing our gardens as we do with our relations. Love, Todd.

You will find a 2021 membership application form on page 4. Please fill it out legibly (or put the info on paper if you can't print) and send it and your check to the address shown. If you are unsure of your status, call the Treasurer **Phil Byrd at 210-497-8044** and he will help you. Those folks who joined in the second half of 2020 are automatically upgraded to 2021. We will mail you a membership card within a few business days. **From the Club bylaws: "All renewal of membership dues must be paid by the end of February or those persons who have not paid will be dropped from the membership."**



Letter to the Editor

We are starting a new monthly piece in the Horti-Bull—'Letter to the Board'. It will be similar to the traditional newspapers 'Letter to the Editor'. It can contain complaints, suggestions for change, your observation(s) and generally most anything, good-or-bad, that applies to the club. Forward your comments to the Editor's email address 'tcolmerc@sbcglobal.net', the same address that you receive your Horti-Bull from. You can also send correspondence to 'Larry Cromer, 8343 Willow Creek, SA, TX 78251. Those received by the 15th of the month will be replied to from someone on the Board in the next Horti-Bull.

Welcome again fellow gardeners. This month I will profile another fragrant plant from my garden, the **Osmanthus** or also known as **sweet olive**.

This plant originates from China. It is often used as a fence shrub between neighbors. Here in South Texas, I have had the best success in growing this plant in the partial shade of other trees or plantings. One place I have seen the largest examples of this plant is at the Spanish Governors Palace where they are trees! The fragrance is subtle and is emitted in the evenings and early mornings. It blooms in early spring and late fall. I have encountered the smell and taste of Osmanthus ranging from lotion to flavored aspirin. In China, this plant is strongly associated with the Moon as evidenced by this excerpt from the internet in 2015:

"In Chinese mythology, sweet **Osmanthus** was originally grown on the moon and it was the immortal tree. From this belief and the fact that sweet **Osmanthus** is blooming in the mid-autumn, the same time of the Moon Festival, many Chinese people honored sweet **Osmanthus** as the plant of the **Moon Festival**" Sep 26, 2015. *From Todd Mernin*

OSMANTHUS>>>>>>>





Calvin's Corner

By Dr. Calvin Finch, Retired Texas A&M Horticulturalist

Horti-Bull Gardening Calendar for December

December is an important time for the winter vegetable garden. Early in the month there is time to plant spinach transplants, one of the most popular vegetables. Plant spinach 12 to 18 inches apart in the garden bed that has been prepared by incorporating 2 inches of compost and 10 cups of slow release lawn fertilizer into every 100 sq. ft. of garden bed. It is also time to plant onion transplants. You can choose between mild versions of red, yellow, and white onions.

Plant them close together so that the plants in between can be utilized as green onions as you wait for the bulbs to mature in May. The first broccoli should be ready to harvest early in the month if it was not ready in November. Greens such as kale, chard, and collards can also be harvested. Stay alert for the presence of cabbage loopers. Be ready to apply a Bt product at the first sign of caterpillar feeding on the foliage.

If we have not had a freeze or too much cold weather the tomatoes are continuing their march to maturity. I recommend that the individual tomatoes be harvested as soon as they show a color change to stay ahead of the interest of the birds and to be ready when the freeze shows up in December. Oftentimes the first freeze is a light one that can be survived if the plants are covered. If you survive the first freeze you may be granted another 3 or 4 weeks of tomato maturing weather.

The wildflower seed should be in place. For something different look for some of the red, white, and blue bluebonnet transplants. They are a treat for your gardening friends that visit.

Cyclamen are not overly sensitive to cold weather but the plants are so expensive and the flower buds do not recover after a hard freeze so it is reasonable to have a piece of Insulate fabric ready to cover them if temps of 30 degrees or less are predicted.

Mexican limes and Meyer lemons are wonderful backyard plants, but they are sensitive to cold temps. In addition to blankets or other fabric to use as a cover, protect the plants with a heat source such as a mechanic's light or poultry heat lamp. Make sure the light bulbs are not LED technology. The heat produced by old-fashioned bulbs is required. Of course, all the tropical and cold sensitive ornamental plants should be in shelter in December. The list to be protected in shelter includes bougainvillea, oriental hibiscus, plumeria, and Mandeville.

If the zinnias and other warm weather annuals have survived November, expect them to be taken out by cold weather in December. There is a long list of cool weather annuals to consider for planting in the month, including snapdragons, stock, dianthus, alysium, ornamental cabbage, calendula, primula, cyclamen, and pansies. The month is also a good time to plant shade trees and shrubs.

One of the best strategies to use to care for the winter lawn is to mow it and any weeds that invade every 2 weeks. At the same mowing height from the summer. Bermuda, zoysia and buffalo grass will go dormant in a cold winter and do not have to be watered more than once per month. St Augustine is less flexible and should be irrigated every 3 weeks during a dry winter period.

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| HB Advertising | Paul Huegel | |
| Historian | Paul Huegel | |
| Webmaster | Ivan Roman | |
| HB Editor | Larry Cromer | |
| Postmaster | Larry Cromer | |

JOKES BY VALLERIE

What did the beet say to the turnip?
I am sweeter and prettier than you.

What did the sweet potato say to the carrot?
I am bigger and sweeter than you.

What did the blackeye pea say to the green pea?
I may be small but I have an eye to see.

What is going on in Jane's garden?

From Jane McDaniel

Been doing some experimenting in the vegetable garden – putting down newspaper, weighted with topsoil between seedlings and seed line to prevent the growth of oxalis. Oxalis is very hard to get rid of and it suffocates new seedlings. After I was almost thrown out of Shades of Green last week for asking if they had a broadleaf weed killer, I had to think of an alternative. So this is what Robert and I are trying out.

Robert came home with a big, old pink bathtub the other week – found it out on the street when the city was picking up bulk trash in our neighborhood – I'm using it as a compost bin. Will see how fast the compost matures inside that. Also, we have tomatoes growing in two old stock tanks beside the fence, wind protected and getting morning sun. Always a learning curve in the garden.



Pictures from top right, counterclockwise.

1. Seed beds watered. 2. Vegetable patch watered—this is what happens when oxalis is allowed to grow—it suffocates almost all seedlings. 3. Vegetable Beds with newspaper between plants and weighted down with topsoil. 4. Pink compost tub and regular, one-year-old heap beside it. 5. Tomatoes growing in tanks. 6. Lemons are coming in early this year.



MORE JOKES BY VALLERIE

What did the onion say to the cook?

I make you happy, and I make you cry.

What did the bird say to the seed?

I don't know what I'm planting but I hope you aren't a weed.

What is long and holds water?

A water hose.



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Health Benefits of Pumpkin.

From Vallerie Hartfield

1. You will feel fuller. Pumpkin seeds contain up to 1.7 g of fiber, and mashed pumpkin has up to 3 g of fiber per cup, eating pumpkin increases satiation and helps you feel fuller longer, by slowing down digestion and regulating blood sugar levels.
2. You will sleep better. Pumpkin is rich in tryptophan, an amino acid which gets converted to serotonin, which also explains the post Thanksgiving sleepiness. Serotonin is the "feel good" neurotransmitter that helps you settle down, unwind and doze off to sleep.
3. You will have a healthy heart. Increased fiber intake can also help protect you from heart disease.
4. You'll increase your prostate health. Prostate cancer is the most common type of cancer in American men. One man in 7 are likely to get prostate cancer. Pumpkin is rich in Zinc; it contains more than 2 mg per ounce which can contribute to the prevention of prostate cancer, research shows.

5. You will get magnesium. Magnesium is an essential mineral that aids in many physiological functions like the creation of ATP (adenosine triphosphate, the energy molecules of your body), relaxation of the nervous system, muscle growth and regulating bowel movements. Just 1 oz. of pumpkin seeds deliver about 30% of your daily recommended magnesium requirements.
6. You'll feel the antioxidant benefits. Beta carotene, is a provitamin the body converts into vitamin A, which is a powerful antioxidant that has been associated with its ability to fend off cancer. Beta carotene is thought to play a role protecting cells, boosting the immune system and helping to keep the reproductive system healthy.
7. When you eat some pumpkin, you burn the fat. Pumpkin is a great high nutrient, low calorie food. With only 42 calories per cup and loaded with fiber, pumpkin will keep you full longer, and regulate your blood sugar levels to keep food cravings at bay which helps to eat fewer calories and burn more fat.
8. It'll keep your eyesight sharp. A cup of pumpkin will meet daily vitamin A re-

quirements that aid in the integrity of your vision, especially in dim light according to the **National Institute of Health.**

9. You will have to eat less bananas. A cup of cooked pumpkin has 564 mg of potassium compared to banana's 422 mg. Potassium deficiency can lead to fatigue, muscle weakness and inactive reflexes

10. It will boost your mood. The reason why serotonin is important to overall wellness is because it's a primary defense against depression and anxiety. A simple way to make sure you're producing natural serotonin is to include foods that contain the amino acid tryptophan which gets converted to serotonin in your body. Pumpkin seeds contain loads of tryptophan which will help keep your outlook on life bright.

This information was taken from **Lifestyle** by Brian McFadden.

Men's Garden Club of San Antonio (MGCSA)

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*Joint Membership is one individual and one additional residing in the same household. Both members may enjoy all the member benefits of MGCSA but do not individually receive the Horti-Bull, the monthly newsletter.

Please Circle (above) the type of membership. This will help us keep the MGCSA files straight. Use one form for each membership or joint membership. **Please print/write legibly!**

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To Seed or Not To Seed , That Is The Question

by Paul D Huegel

As gardeners we rely mostly on transplants that we buy at one of the nurseries in the San Antonio region. There are a few members in the Club like John Opiela who would rather plant seeds than buy transplants. It is certainly less expensive to plant seeds and you can produce more plants per dollars spent. However, planting from seeds has some challenges.

Wouldn't it be nice if you could just throw seeds in the dirt and they'd happily grow? Unfortunately it's not that easy and seed starting problems are common. From seeds not germinating, plants disappearing, mold on the soil or seedlings collapsing, there are many things gardeners have to deal with once you start sowing seeds. Common seedling problems include: (1) Seeds that do not sprout (2) Seedlings that are leggy (3) Seeds that rot (4) collapsed seedlings (5) Seeds that disappear (6) Mold on the soil (7) Damping off.



There are a few reasons that your seeds didn't sprout. The most common reasons: **The seeds were too old.** You can germinate old seeds, but often they have less plant vigor. Just because they are old, doesn't mean they won't sprout, however in general older seeds have lower germination rates over time, which means if you sowed 30 seeds, maybe only 10 germinated if they are older than a few years. This depends on how they were stored and the type of plant. **The seeds were sown too deeply into the soil.** This is a very common mistake, people sow seeds too deeply. Be sure to carefully read the seed packets and make sure you're sowing at the right depth. Tiny seeds like carrots or lettuce only barely need to be covered with dirt. **Someone stole the seeds.** If you sowed your seeds outside, it's possible that a critter stole the seeds. Seeds like sprouted peas or corn are often taken by birds or squirrels. **Washed away.** Seeds sown outside right before heavy rains might have been washed away. If the soil in your garden beds looks disturbed after heavy rainfalls that might be cause of seeds not germinating. The most common reason why seeds rot is over-watering. This is a problem both inside and outside. Your seedlings need water, but let the soil dry out in between watering and make sure you have a fan going for air circulation. There are also some seed starting trays where you water from the bottom instead of the top. Some people just use a spray bottle and mist the plants, but that's a lot of work. Because so many seedling problems are related water saturated soil, it can really help to water from the bottom. **Leggy seedlings** are when the plant is long and thin and not growing straight up. This is really easy to happen for the following reasons: **The light source is too far away and the plant is reaching for light.** If you have grow lights it's better to have them a few inches above the plants and raise them as the plant grows **The plants are overcrowded.** Although growing densely is great for indoor microgreens , the plants become stressed and compete for light and re-sources creating leggy plants. Be sure to thin out your seedlings. **They need wind for strength.** Plants grown outside are faced with windy days which in turn create a stronger thicker stem. When you grow in-

side you need to 'create wind' by adding a fan. A fan is not only great for air circulation, it also helps with preventing leggy seedlings. Some people also swear by 'brushing' the seedlings to simulate wind too. If you have leggy seedlings you can save them! The trick is to re-pot your seedlings so that most of the thin leggy part is in the soil. Gnats are similar to fruit flies and love to lay eggs in your soggy wet soil. These fungus gnats will feed on your seedling and cause it to collapse, creating '**damping off**' which is where you'll see your seedling bent in the middle. Damping off will kill your seedlings and can spread to your other plants within a day or two destroying your precious seedlings. Here are few ways to prevent fungus gnats: **Don't over water!** They love wet soil so over watering is a major preventative step. **Sprinkle cinnamon and disinfect seeding trays.** To prevent fungus and soil problems make sure you clean and disinfect old seeding trays. **Air Flow.** Just as a fan is important to prevent leggy seedlings, having good air flow is important for preventing fungal problems. Mold on the soil is caused from over watering, not having air flow and not disinfecting your pots. If your seeds or roots are rotting that's also caused from over watering and not enough drainage. Be sure to use seed starter soil because it's nice and loose and allows for root expansion.

I would like to see the Club plant from seed in the Grotto greenhouse so that we can maximize our profits on fund raisers.



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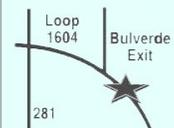


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Jeff Brown – Volunteer Extraordinaire

By Paul D. Huegel

After serving as Editor-in-Chief for the Horti-Bull for eight years, Jeff Brown is passing his editorship responsibilities to his “understudy”, Larry Cromer. I do not think many members of the MGCSA realize how difficult and complex a job being the editor of the Horti-Bull is. Jeff Brown took on this responsibility while serving as President of the Club in 2012. He did it when his predecessor resigned from a paid position recognizing the Club had budget shortfalls and we needed to fill this important position immediately to avoid a break in publication of our award winning monthly newsletter which was first published in 1969. Jeff had to learn how to gather and format the articles on his computer, edit, work with the Club postmaster to ensure proper distribution while serving as President and Club Secretary for most of the eight years. Jeff managed this tremendous workload including taking photos at most of the Club events without complaining or being compensated for the many hours he spent every month without missing a deadline. Jeff had to put his editorship responsibilities on hold this year for medical reasons and Larry became the unofficial editor for most of this year. Fortunately, Larry worked closely as Postmaster with Jeff over the years, so the transition was a smooth one. Hopefully, more members will submit articles to help Larry. Knowing Jeff, he will contribute articles as well because it is in his DNA to be a volunteer extraordinaire. **Thanks, Jeff, for your many years of service to the Club.**



Health Benefits of Turkey *From Vallerie Hartfield*

1. Turkey is a rich source of protein,
 2. Skinless turkey is low in fat. White meat is lower in kilojoules and has less fat than the dark meat. A typical turkey consists of 70 percent white meat and 30 percent dark meat.
 3. Turkey meat is a source of iron, zinc, potassium and phosphorus.
 4. It is also a source of vitamin B6 and niacin, which are both essential for the body's energy production.
 5. Regular turkey consumption can help lower cholesterol levels. The meat is low -GI and can help keep insulin levels stable.
 6. Turkey contains the amino acid tryptophan, which produces serotonin and plays an important role in strengthening the immune system.
 7. It is also a source of selenium, which is essential for thyroid hormone metabolism.
 8. It also boosts immunity and acts as an antioxidant.
- The cons of turkey is it can be high in fat. Turkey skin is high in fat. Large amounts of tryptophan can make you sleepy.

This information was taken from **bodyandsoul** by Tatyana Leonov

Questions and Answers by Dr Calvin Finch

Should we try to remove the mistletoe from our mesquite tree? Mistletoe is a parasite that adds some stress to the tree it parasitizes, but it is not a major problem. It can be cut off the branches but will return. There are no effective spray programs.

What are our choices for shrubs in the shade? Which are deer proof? The viburnums grow in the shade and are not eaten by deer. Some have attractive blooms. They come in large to small sizes and are evergreen. Pittosporum also meets the requirement for growing in the shade. The deer in my neighborhood do not eat it. Dwarf Chinese holly does well in the shade, as does dwarf yaupon holly. Again, the deer in my neighborhood do not eat them. Primrose jasmine is another deer-proof plant that grows in the shade.



From the Milberger Nursery Website



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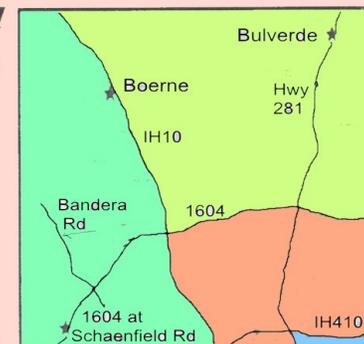
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MGCSA

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HORTI-BULL



Can anyone that was there that evening forget the December 7th, 2017 Christmas party when it began to snow? In total disbelief, we all ran outside to see for ourselves—and it was snowing! How beautiful. Some people just had to play in the snow and bring it back inside.

MGCSA Christmas Tree

Sorry Santa, but we had to cancel your 2nd Annual MGCSA Christmas Gig. And Mrs. Claus said you have been practicing your **HO-HO-HOing** so diligently all year long. Sorry!



Memories From Past MGCSA Christmas Banquets



A favorite with the Banquet crowd is **Wine Master Paul Huegel** and his extraordinary variety of Wines. He has become even more popular since he introduced Moscato, America's favorite wine.



Is **RED** the official color of Christmas? Is the **Poinsettia** the official flower of Christmas? At the MGCSA Christmas Banquet they are. And who better to show these off than the folks who make sure we have fresh red poinsettias every year—The General and Mrs. Charles Elia.



Master of Ceremony **Joe Shinnars** has just the right blend of humor and sincerity as he entertains the crowd and swears in the new officers for the upcoming year. But sometimes he dose ask the real hard questions such as 'What's so great about Windsor Park at **Christmas Time**'?.



The Oblate ladies work very hard in building this magnificent Bethlehem Scene which is the center piece of the Oblates Christmas decorations. Paul builds the waterfall. The club's Christmas event would not be the same without it.



Food is a big part of any Christmas Party. Our party food selections are always delicious and plentiful. You can judge the quality by the expression on their faces.



We have beautifully decorated tables at which to sit and eat, and tables full of Christmas sweets, enough to mess up any diet.



Vallerie's beautiful Interpretive Dances, great food and snackables, and poinsettias and gifts for almost everyone—they are all to be remembered. But remember also, **Christmas 2021** is only 13 months away.

