



# Horti-Bull

## HORTICULTURAL BULLETIN

Published Monthly by the SAN ANTONIO MEN'S GARDEN CLUB  
A club for Men and WOMEN interested in all aspects of gardening

[WEBSITE: mensgardenclubofsa.org](http://www.mensgardenclubofsa.org)

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April

Number 04



**Alberto Del Rio**

### THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

At long last Spring has arrived - but lately, it seems that Summer is here too - complete with 90 degree weather. We may need to supplement watering until we're blessed with rain. A trip to your local nursery will show you a marvelous collection of new hybrid plants and lots of old favorites too. Shop early to get a special plant.

Our special thanks go to Mark Peterson for his comprehensive and very interesting talk on Fruit Trees especially recommended for San Antonio, at our March meeting. The membership asked many questions, and Mark did a great job providing additional detail on many aspects of growing a well-adapted tree with abundant fruit.

Thanks also go to the members who helped us at our annual plant sale at the SAWS 'Spring Bloom' event. Sales were extremely brisk and we could hardly keep up the pace. Next year, we need many more volunteers on our sales force.

It was indeed a pleasure to see Manuel Flores and his gracious wife at our March meeting. His native grape cuttings generated much discussion, and we anticipate some very interesting fruit production.

Remember our Hollywood Park plant sale is coming soon, 3-5 April. See you there! Alberto Del Rio

#### MEMBERSHIP

*From Vallerie Hartfield*

- Attendance: March 6, 2025: 40 Members, 6 Guests.
- To pay your dues or get information on you membership status, please contact Paul Huegel, our Treasurer.
- Happy Birthday to all April births.
- Healing and recovery to all who are sick.
- Strength, comfort, peace, and love to all who are coping with losses.

**April 3, 2025 Meeting**  
Will be at the  
**SAN ANTONIO GARDEN CENTER**  
adjacent to the  
**San Antonio Botanical Gardens**  
at the corner of  
**N. New Braunfels and Funston Place**  
**6:30 pm For Fellowship**  
**Meeting begins at 7PM**

**Guest Speaker: MS Suzy Crowley**  
and her crew from  
**Casa Verda Nursery See Page 6**

#### COMING EVENTS

**3, 4, 5 April– Hollywood Park 3 Day Plant Sale at Ida Santiago's home, at 222 Yosemite Dr., Hollywood Park See Page 5**

**5, 6 Apr-Nectar Bar Native Plant Center, 2nd Anniversary Celebration, 10am to 4pm**

**30 April-San Antonio Garden Center, 85th Anniversary Celebration, 1pm-3pm see page 4**

**24 May— Men's Garden Club picnic at MacArthur Park.**

**31 May –Festival of Flowers at the Shrine Auditorium**

The **NECTAR BAR Native Plant Nursery** will be celebrating the 2nd Anniversary of their opening at 7600 Eckhert Rd on 5 & 6 April from 10AM to 4PM. A ribbon cutting, Vendors, plant giveaway with purchase, book sale/signing by Monika Maeckle for her new book on Monarch Butterflies—are all on the schedule/agenda.





**Horti-Bull Gardening Calendar for  
April 2025  
From Dr. Calvin Finch**

You still have time to apply a preemergent herbicide to reduce the summer sand bur population in the lawn. Consider the products Crew, Dimension, or Barricade. Review the prices and application instructions to see which product would best meet your needs. Wait on applying fertilizer to the lawn until later in the month. A slow-release lawn fertilizer such as 19-05-09 works best. If you apply the fertilizer too early, it benefits the weeds more than the lawn grass. You have a tough decision to make on the lawn grass if you have not been watering it and if we continue to do without rain. It will only green-up when the water is available. Do not fertilize if we do not receive any rain and you decide not to irrigate every week.

April is the month to plant tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, summer squash, green beans, and okra in the vegetable garden. For tomatoes use one of the semi-determinant or determinant varieties such as Tycoon, Thunderbird, Ruby Crush, Celebrity, HM 8148, or Red Deuce if you want to get a fast crop before the summer heat and spider mites overcome the plants. I usually plant tatum squash rather than summer squash because they taste the same and the tatum squash is not susceptible to squash vine borers. If you can find Oscar okra it is a shorter plant, and the pods don't get stiff as quickly as other varieties. Check your nursery or the garden club plant exchange for Oscar okra seed.

In the flower garden you can plant the summer annuals in April. In the sun, plant zinnia transplants or seed. Plant the Cora variety of vinca transplants to greatly reduce the drought tolerant plant's susceptibility to aerial phytophthora fungus. Vinca is also the flower that is most resistant to deer. In the shade, plant wax leaf or Whopper begonia transplants. Penta is also another great choice for a shade bloomer. Instead of full shade however, penta does best if it receives 2 or 3 hours of sun along with the rest of the day in shade.

April is also the time when we can expect the migrating Monarch butterflies to move through San Antonio. Zinnia and pentas along with butterfly weed, mist flower, Porter weed, and blue curl are some of the best flowers to meet their needs for nectar. The Monarchs only lay their eggs on milkweed plants, so also try to have native milkweeds growing. Green milkweed, antelope horn, zizoti, showy, and swamp are the seeds that are available at local seed suppliers such as Douglas King Seed Co and Native American Seed Co. The Monarchs love the exotic Tropical milkweed for nectar and as an egg-laying site, but it is still uncertain if it is a good choice for the long term.

If you have live oaks in your landscape, they dropped their leaves in March. Let the leaves decompose on the lawn or put them in the compost pile. It is also important if you prune the oaks to paint the wounds immediately to protect them from oak wilt.

**Refreshments for April  
M thru Z**

**ITS YOUR TURN M thru Zs, we encourage you to stay after the meeting to help clean and straighten up so everyone can leave as soon as possible.**

| <b>MGCSA Officers for 2025</b> |                    |              |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|--------------|
| <b>President</b>               | Alberto Del Rio    | 210-518-5097 |
| <b>1st V.P</b>                 | John Opiela        | 210-532-5963 |
| <b>2nd V.P.</b>                | Vallerie Hartfield | 210-240-1466 |
| <b>3rd V.P</b>                 | Vacant             |              |
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| <b>2024-2026</b>               |                    |              |
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| Ken Wolfram                    |                    | 210-788-0177 |
| <b>2025-2027</b>               |                    |              |
| Gary Ross                      |                    | 210-836-4952 |
| Andrew Waring                  |                    | 210-307-9704 |
| <b>Other</b>                   |                    |              |
| <b>EX Officio</b>              | Elena Schriener    | 210-218-4155 |
| <b>HB Advertising</b>          | Paul Huegel        |              |
| <b>Historian</b>               | Paul Huegel        |              |
| <b>Webmaster</b>               | Ivan Roman         |              |
| <b>HB Editor</b>               | Larry Cromer       | 210-521-5350 |

**Volunteer Opportunities**

Volunteers are needed to support events and activities. Help is needed to set up and break down, sell, give information, sign up members, teach children how to plant and maintain a garden.

***Please contact Vallerie Hartfield at 210-240-1466.***

***Thanks to all who volunteered for the Spring Bloom on March 8.***

**We need volunteers for:**

Hollywood Park Yard Sale-Thursday thru Saturday, April 3, 4, & 5, 2025- 8am to 3pm.

Garden Club's annual summer picnic, Saturday May 24, 2025- 11am to 5pm

Festival of Flowers-Saturday May 31, 2025, 9am to 5pm

Oblate Project-Fountain Garden clean up-and rehab

Children's Vegetable Garden

# AN OLDIE, BUT GOODY

## Changsha – The Hardy Citrus From Charles Bartlett

For decades, members of the Men's Garden Club have grown prize winning citrus. 'Rio Red' Grapefruit, Ponderosa lemons, pomelo, and yes, the incredibly hardy 'Changsha' Mandarin 'tangerine' (*Citrus reticulata*). The names are often used interchangeably, but in the citrus trade, the name tangerine is used to describe fruit with a very red orange skin.

The 'Changsha' mandarin is native to Southeastern China. In that particular area, the limestone Changsha Mountains range in height from 4,000 to 6,000 feet. The Citrus grows in a wide range of soils at high elevations which no doubt has resulted in a Citrus that can survive temperatures as low as 4 degrees F. The tree is more tolerant of drought than most types of Citrus and is truly a child of that harsh, karst landscape. MGC members have long enjoyed this alkali resistance, and hardiness trait and now have trees more than 30 years old.

The 'Changsha' is a prolific producer of seedy, but very juicy, thin-skinned, easy-to-peel fruit. The parentage isn't totally confirmed, but it could be a cross between *C. reticulata* and *C. ichangensi*. The 'Changsha' is first recorded in the U.S. sometime after 1840, and was first planted in New Orleans. From here it was carried to Florida, and later reached California. In Texas, it's well documented since the 1950's. 75 years and still going strong!

Cold resistance is an important goal of citrus breeders. Recent studies in China, at Huazhong University, showed that cold tolerance is controlled by multigenes. Mandarins as a group, and especially the 'Changsha' mandarin and 'Owari' satsuma, are especially cold tolerant and tend to produce tolerant progenies. In China, the 'Changsha' has routinely survived temperatures in the 4-6 degree range.

In the mid-1990's, at the San Antonio Botanical Gardens, Dr. Ying Doon Moy used 'Changsha' to produce citrus hybrids that are much more cold tolerant. 'Arctic Frost' was the most cold tolerant, routinely surviving 9 degrees F., and 'Orange Frost' has survived 12 degrees F. at the Texas A&M research

station at Overton, Tx., east of Dallas.

Seed grown plants tend to be more cold hardy than vegetatively produced specimens. Container grown trees are slightly smaller at 10' -12' tall, but have survived ice storms and 9 degree weather in Dallas, Tx., Oregon, Washington state, and many areas on the East Coast. Trees seem to gain cold tolerance as they age, so it's wise to give young trees some winter protection for the first two years.

In recent years, we've seen more severe winters, dryer conditions, and a wider fluctuation of temperatures. Perhaps now is the time to look again at the 'Changsha' mandarin, a tried and true citrus that we've grown in Texas for decades. It can be seedy, but is also delicious, drought and alkaline tolerant, disease resistant, requires much less maintenance, and is incredibly cold tolerant. Unfortunately, like so many of our heirloom favorites, it's also extremely hard to find in local nurseries, but fear not, seed-grown 'Changsha' citrus specimen plants will soon be available at our Men's Garden Club summer meetings.



**SPRING HOURS**  
Tuesday - Sunday  
9:30-6:00



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**Garden Spotlight**

Every month I will be interviewing members to ask them to share information about their garden interest and experience. *Vallerie Hartfield*

# SAGC 85th Anniversary Celebration

This year, 2025, is a very special time for the SAN ANTONIO GARDEN CENTER, we will be celebrating our 85th Anniversary. The main event for the 85th Anniversary will be held during our Annual Flower Show on April 29-30. The theme this year is "Looking Back Moving Forward. On April 30, from 1 pm - 3 pm, a "tea and open house" will be held to allow visitors to come celebrate with us.



## VISITORS AT THE MARCH MEETING



Marshall Fairbanks on the right, with his friend, **Harold Kubicek**.



Mary Martinez in the center, with friends **Mary Helen** and **Cris Vasquez**.



Sylvia Tamez on the right, with her friend **Sam Ruiz**.

## March Speaker's Program

MGCSA long-time member and arborist, **Mark Peterson**, spoke on "My Favorite Fruit Trees" at the March meeting. The "Big Three" for the San Antonio area are the citrus, figs, and pears. For each of his choices, he covered planting, maintenance and expectations for his favorite trees. For citrus, he talked about the Satsuma mandarin, either Arctic or Orange Frost. He said the Lemon Meyer's was much improved and the Key or Mexican Lime was another citrus recommended for our area. Citrus is grafted and so production is the soonest either the next year or in three years. By comparison, if planted from seed, it would be thirteen to fifteen years before fruit was available. For figs, he said the Celeste was the sweetest, but he also liked the Alma with larger, rounder fruit. Pear trees that he liked are the Ayers, Kieffer, and others for our area; Bartletts do not grow well in San Antonio. Apple trees require longer chilling hours than our area provides; the apple industry continues in the Lubbock area in Texas. Mark also distinguished between the different pruning techniques for the different species of fruit trees. There was much enthusiasm and interest from the members for Mark's presentation on his favorite fruit trees.

By **Mary Martinez**



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*Welcomed*

## Hollywood Park Plant Sale

222 Yosemite Dr

From Larry Cromer

It's here- the annual Hollywood Park Plant Sale- this coming **Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, from 8am to 3pm**. That's 3 days of 7-hour coverage needed to support this event. If you haven't already, please call Vallerie at 210-240-1466 and volunteer your time and talent. Plants and equipment will be moved from the Greenhouse/storage shed on Wednesday afternoon, stored securely overnight and set up for business bright and early on Thursday morning. Because of the LARGE Deer population in Hollywood Park, the plants must be stored in the fenced area when we are not with them. This means they must be moved out and set up each morning and then

secured before we go home in the evening. If you are donating plants or other items for the sale, please bring them Thursday morning at your earliest convenience.

Thursday afternoon will be a little tricky as that is also our meeting night. We will close down and secure everything in plenty of time for you to get home, freshen up, and make the meeting at 7Pm. We have had to do this on several occasions, it worked, and we can make it work again.



## HEARTFELT THANKS

From Charles Bartlett

As Paul Huegel has so eloquently stated, this year the MGCSA again fielded a sterling judging panel for the 69th Annual Regional Science and Engineering Fair held recently at St. Mary's University. This was our 39th time to honor all of the young, bright students who have won top awards in their Middle School and High School science fairs. Some 350 students from 35 counties in South and Southwest Texas put their research talents on display at St. Mary's in San Antonio. Our judging panel did a magnificent job of interviewing these gifted students.

After the judging on Saturday afternoon, I was able to speak to several of our chosen Senior Division winners. They were looking forward to the upcoming Awards Ceremony on Sunday evening, with excitement, uncertainty, and some sadness since this was their last Science Fair. On to College was their next stop.

As with so many young people leaving high school and

starting out in higher education, they were hoping to make a positive impact in the world and were full of questions. They regarded the Science Fair as a step up and were so grateful for the attention they got from our judging panel. They wanted to know what they might do to be successful. The first thing that I told them was to be a generalist and get exposure to many different ideas. Then, follow your passion and become an expert in something that you care about. I told them we need experts and that their expertise would allow them to stand out.

These young students were thankful and made more confident as a result of the effort of our MGC judges, and I was so pleased to be a part of that effort. The MGCSA has made a difference in the life of such students every year for the last 39 years. Perhaps an unparalleled record.



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## COMMENTS ON THE HORTI-BULL

We want to hear from you!

We want your comments. Please go to the website and make comments.

What do you like?  
What would you like to see added or deleted?

**RAINBOW GARDENS also at 8516 Bandera Road**

April 2025

## April Guest Speakers

By Paul Huegel

Our April guest speakers are from Casa Verde Nursery now located in Schertz Texas, and will include owner Suzy Crowley and her key nurserymen. The MGCSA has been doing business with wholesaler Casa Verde for many of the 35 years they have been in business. A few years ago they moved their nursery business from San Antonio to the Schertz

location. This will be an excellent opportunity for us to look behind the scene of the wholesale nursery operation. There is a whole lot of work and challenges to getting plants from seed to salable plants. Joining Suzy will be Esteban Aguilar who has been with Casa Verde for 35 years working in plant propagation. He will be joined by Danny Maldonado and James Briskey who will talk about plant health as well as plant propagation. Danny is Casa Verde's Production Man-

ager and James is a former Landscaper who joined the Casa Verde management team. Suzy indicated that they will bring several showy fun plants to the meeting.



## SPRING BLOOM IS A SPRING BOOM

by Paul D Huegel

The SAWS Spring Bloom (March 8, 2025) was successful with almost \$1,700 in sales thanks to those volunteers who supported MGCSA with their time and gardening talent. It was a picture perfect day that had been predicted to be very windy and inclement. For once I was glad the weather forecasts were wrong.

Spring Bloom has been one of our primary fund raisers. The 2025 Spring Bloom was basically the same format and venue as last year at the SAWS headquarters front parking lot. We were situated in an ideal location near the free plant giveaway where droves of people filed in, got their freebie and ended up at our line of tables which had a backdrop of a large presentation show tent in a spacious area where the Herb Society was situated in past years. Thus, we had plenty

of space to spread out. We were busy all three hours selling purchased plants of mostly various varieties of tomato, pepper and herb plants and other donated plants from our "master donators", Charles Bartlett, President Alberto Del Rio and Ken Wolfgram, as well as some I moved from the Grotto greenhouse. We sold almost all our flowering plants and most of our vegetable and herb plants. The leftover plants will be sold at the upcoming Hollywood Park Yard Sale on 3-5 April 2025. Thanks to all who volunteered including Charles Bartlett, Alberto Del Rio, John Opiela, John and Mary Garcia, Larry Cromer, Mary Martinez, Adrienne Hacker, Pat Schieffer, Mark and Mary Weigand, Sylvia Tamez, Joe Shinnors, Sharon and Brenda Hughes, and yours truly.

Thanks again to all those volunteers and donors who made this event a great success and we look forward to an even more successful 2026 Spring Bloom or as we call it,

**"Spring Boom".**



## MEMBERSHIP SPOTLIGHT

Adrienne Hacker has been a member of the club since December 2024, and her first volunteering was at the club Christmas Party. She likes garden clubs, and is looking for more information on xeriscaping. She likes plant swapping. Her garden interests are vegetables and flowers, and she plants and maintains her own vegetable garden.



## AT THE SPRING BLOOM

**TOP LEFT:** Close to closing time, but the crew is ready for the next wave of shoppers. They are Pat Schieffer, Paul Huegel, Larry Cromer, Adrienne Hacker, Sylvia Tamez, Mark Weigand, and Charles Bartlett. **TOP RIGHT:** At opening, plenty tomatoes and peppers for sale. A customer looks over the selection as Paul Huegel and Sylvia Tamez straighten up the plants, and Charles Bartlett consults with President Alberto Del Rio on a Botany related subject..

## Herbs Make Sense *From Jane McDaniel*

### Lemongrass

Cymbopogon citratus—By Susan Gail Wood

Lemongrass is found widely cultivated in the tropics, but of unknown origin. The essential oil, used in soaps and perfumes, is chiefly produced in Guatemala and to a lesser extent in India. Lemongrass oil contains 10-62% geranial, 3-35% neral and up to 10% geranyl acetate according to Dr. Art Tucker in The Big Book of Herbs. Cut lemongrass close to the ground to treat the succulent base as a scallion, dicing it to impart a pungent lemon flavor for Asian cuisine. The leaves are used for teas and potpourris.

Fresh lemongrass leaves are harvested commercially up to four times a year, but here in Houston it is possible to harvest even more frequently. I measured growth of 18" just ten days after harvesting last July. Our sun and high humidity are perfect growing conditions given adequate water. In winter the tops will die back at 28 degrees and the entire plant may die during extended below freezing weather.

You can harvest the leaves before an extended hard freeze if desired, then mulch the base. The clump will normally return once the weather warms as you continue to water during dry winter conditions. I have not lost any lemongrass planted in the ground due to freezing. Divisions may be made throughout the year to expand your inventory of this fragrant grass. It prefers planting in the ground as pots will stunt the growth. The arching blades add a tropical flavor to your landscape and are not bothered with pests or diseases. Lemongrass blooms during winter in our area with a loose panicle if left uncut in late fall.

**For Teas:** Cut lemongrass into 1" pieces, taking care if handled fresh to dry for tea blends. Or use it fresh by twisting a handful of long blades into a circle to fit in your teapot. Use three times as much fresh as dried. Steep for 15 minutes or longer as it doesn't become bitter like black tea, Camellia sinensis. Lemongrass has a saw tooth edge on leaves which can easily give you a paper cut. It is easier to cut once dry without risking a cut finger.

**To Harvest:** Lemongrass grows rapidly, especially during summertime heat, so you may harvest it often. Harvest only what you can process at a time. I spray the entire plant with water the night before harvesting to eliminate the need to rinse once cut. This preserves the most essential oils and saves time.



Article taken from The HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA, VOL XL VII Number 2, South Texas Unit February 2025,

**THE CHILDREN'S VEGETABLE GARDEN** The children have finished planting tomatoes, beans, broccoli, cauliflower, peppers, squash, potatoes, green onions, carrots, radish, and nasturtiums. They are doing the everyday gardening tasks of looking for weeds and bugs, fertilizing, and watering. There is still a need for volunteers—call me **Vallerie Hartfield, at 210-240-1466**, or go to [sabot.org](http://sabot.org) on your computer for more information.

One of the new garden beds at the vegetable garden.



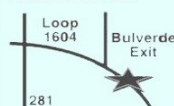
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April 2025

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