

April 2023

On this cold, overcast April morning, garden club members trickled into the Scout House glad to have a hot cup of coffee ready for them. The rainy day was no deterrent for avid gardeners as the room filled up quickly. Inside, ladies from the **Ladybug Garden Club** set up their garden art and fairy gardens for sale as we are helping out with their club's annual fundraiser.



Rica laid out more T-shirts and aprons for sale.



Outside, a plethora of bulbs and tubers as well as tender vegetable and flower plants, grown from seeds, by **Marilyn** and **Becky**, were offered to the gardeners.



Hospitality

A delicious buffet was created by the hospitality committee, **Susan Busler, Zelma Mikolajczyk, Harolene Hatley, Carolyn Calvert** and **Jean Robinson**. The decoration was Easter themed with colored eggs, bunnies and spring flowers.





Garden friends enjoyed the good food and pleasant company. **Eleese** is happy.



The Easter Bunny joined the meeting



Meditation (recited by Mary Davis)



*It's April and once more I see
New leaf and bud on greening tree,
The flowers rising from the sod
And opening petaled eyes to God;
Again, the earth is sparkling clean
And dressed in Springtime's apple-green.*

*It's April and once more I hear
The robin's trill so sweet and clear,
The brooks' and streamlets' merry song
As freed from ice they roll along;
Again, young bleating lambs at play
Are heard in meadows cross the way.*



*It's April and once more I know
The warmth that comes from Springtime's glow,
Again, I know God's promise true...
To all things He gives life anew!*

*Lord God, let us have eyes that look upon Your grace and rejoice in our salvation.
Help us to walk in that mighty grace and tell Your good news to the world.
All for your glory do we pray, Lord,
Amen.*



Today, president **Harriett** started the meeting with reports from the various committees. **Sheila Anderson**, besides fulfilling her duties as recording secretary, also announced Federation business. Our club is asked to participate in hospitality at the next meeting and members were asked for contributions.

More information and news from the Federation can be found on our website.

Reports

Jean Robinson, corresponding secretary, reported on mail received and cards sent to ailing garden friends or their family.

From **Jean** we also learned that the **Daisy** is the flower of the month. This **flower** was already blooming in ancient Egyptian temple gardens. Its name is believed to come from the old English phrase: "daes eage" or "day's eye" as it blooms at the first sign of dawn.

This flower expresses happiness and cheerfulness. The colors of the daisy, white and yellow reflect its deeper meaning.

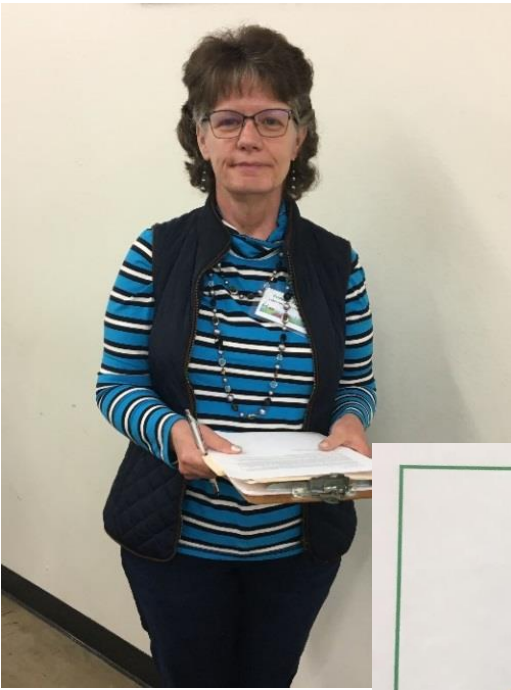
The white color stands for innocence, chastity and purity as referenced in the phrase: "fresh as a daisy".

The yellow in its center symbolizes vitality, radiance, alacrity, and creativity. Also, a sign for loyalty and love, given between friends as a promise to keep a secret, the daisy means "I'll never tell."

An arrangement of daisies, provided by Jean, decorated the president's table.



In spite of the cold and rainy day, **Tammy Delforge** reported that 38 members attended the meeting. Our newest member, **Jean Wilson** was welcomed by all.



Pam Randall announced awards received by the club from the Texas Federation of Garden Clubs, District IV:

- First place for president's report.
- Honorable mention for our year book.



As a sign of our appreciation to the **Spring Fling** committee for a most excellent job in organizing a successful trip, president **Harriett** presented all three members with a gift certificate to 'Plants For All Seasons.'

Besides committee members **Sandra Mckeon** and **Yvonne Newsome**, **Donna Stephens** also received a gift card but she was not present at the meeting.



Adrienne announced what is new on the website and encouraged all to check it out.

<https://lakewoodforestgarden.club/>

Sandra complains about all the pictures that the Historian is trying to take of her.



Horticulture



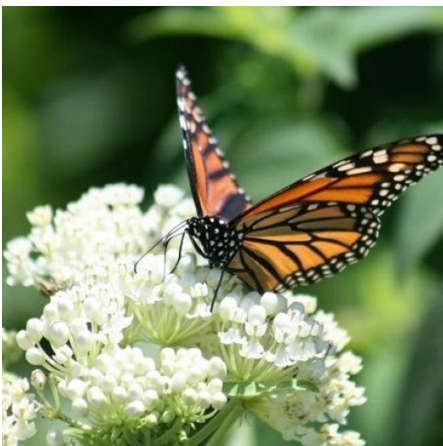
Bette Gerhold introduced us to a native but uncommon milkweed, the Shore Milkweed (*Asclepias perennis*). This white and purple colored specie can be found at the edge of swamps or at river deltas. It blooms from April to October. Even though it is native to the Texas coastal region, it is not easy to find anymore. Bette was able to procure seeds and is successful in growing this variety. She shared her experience with us and gave us a demonstration on the techniques she uses.

- Since the native environments are swampy areas, the seeds need to be started in damp soil.
- It develops a long tap root and the root must remain intact when transplanting the seedling.
- Once transplanted into a larger container, protect the plant from pests by covering it with an organza bag.



For more information on milkweed varieties you can go to the 'Texas Parks and Wildlife Department' website:

https://tpwd.texas.gov/publications/pwdpubs/media/pwd_rp_w7000_1803.pdf



Program



Barbara Crum, our program director, introduced us to today's speaker: Mr. **Alejandro Cárdenas González**.

Barbara met Alejandro when both attended the Montgomery Master Gardener program in 2018. He is the founder of the '**Plantonic Friends Nursery**', a backyard nursery in the Woodlands. His mission is to ...” build homes for Monarch butterflies and other pollinators”.

<https://www.facebook.com/PlantonicFriends/>

His presentation was titled:

“Creating healthy habitats”

Healthy habitats (for pollinators and butterflies) must include Shelter, food and water. He focused on food sources in his presentation today.

Most (75%) insects go through various stages in their life cycle; from egg, to larvae, pupae and adult. Nature (and gardeners) must provide food and shelter for each phase of their development; a safe place to lay their eggs, plants that will feed the caterpillars and nectar for the adult insect.

Mr. Alejandro gave examples of native host and nectar plants that will make pollinators happy in our gardens. Many of those plants he brought with him from his nursery and offered for sale to the membership. Some of his favorites are:

- **Blue Mist** (Caryopteris)



This woody shrub likes full sun and well-draining soil. It is drought tolerant and blooms from Summer to Fall. This plant is winter hardy and even if the stems die in a frost, it will come back in Spring.

A vigorous pruning in Spring will promote strong growth. It is resistant to serious disease or pest infestations.



- **Cat Whiskers** (*Orthosiphon aristatus*)

This evergreen member of the mint family has showy white blossoms with long, whisker like stamens, resembling white cat whiskers. The plant likes well draining soil with high organic content. It grows well in a sunny spot. The plant is easy to care for and the sweet nectar attracts butterflies, bees, and hummingbirds.



- **Salvia** (Lamiaceae)

Part of the mint family, salvia have colorful spikes of densely packed tubular blossoms atop square stems and velvety leaves. The flowers come in a range of colors, including purple, blue, red, pink, and white.

Salvia grow in full sun, are drought tolerant, adapted to cold climates and will survive even in poor soil. Hummingbirds, bees and butterflies love salvias' tubular flowers.



- **Purple-Leaf Honeysuckle** (*Lonicera japonica* 'Purpurea')

This climbing vine has rounded leaves with a purple hue. The delicate flowers bloom in the spring. The blossoms are white and yellow with tinges of red and pink. Regular pruning promotes a healthy growth. It does well in full sun or partial shade and does not require much water. It is hardy in our zone but will die back in the winter.



- **Shrimp plant** (*Justicia brandegeana*)

The Shrimp plant is a tropical evergreen shrub native to Mexico. Its flowers attract hummingbirds and butterflies. This plant's long bloom cycle begins in early Spring and lasts until winter. The perennial Shrimp plant is hardy in zones 9-11. Not a heavy feeder it likes well drained, acid soil and prefers partial shade to full sun. Removing spent flowers at the end of the growing season will encourage new growth in Spring.



- **Bronze Fennel** (*Foeniculum vulgare*)

This evergreen, herbaceous perennial, blooms in summer. Its flowers and leaves have a sweet, licorice-like taste. It can grow 3 to 5 feet tall. The flowers are very attractive to butterflies and fennel is a larval plant for the Swallowtail Butterfly. Fennel is grown across all hardiness zones and does best in moist, organically rich, well-drained soil and in full sun. It will tolerate clay and sandy soils and, once established, is drought tolerant. It has no particular disease, insect or pest problems.



- **Golden Globe** (*Lysimachia congestiflora*)

This herbaceous perennial in the primrose family is native to China. Only 6 inches tall, it has creeping stems which root at the nodes to form a dense groundcover. In late spring to summer it is covered in cup-shaped yellow flowers. It prefers well drained, rich soil. Golden Globes grow in sunny to shady areas and are hardy in zones 7-9. With a layer of mulch to protect its roots it can survive a frost.



- **Plumbago** (*plumbago auriculata*)

This native of South Africa, thrives in the heat of Texas and Florida. It is a sprawling shrub that can grow 6-10 feet tall and rewards the gardener with an abundance of blue, phlox-like flowers for a long period of time. Left on its own, it will grow leggy and occasional pruning is recommended. This easy-care plant flourishes in fertile soil and full sun but will adjust to less optimal conditions. Once established it is drought and cold tolerant.



- **Passion Flower** (*Passiflora incarnata*)

This colorful vine, native of South America, grows well in our climate. Although it will die back in the winter, with a layer of mulch to protect the roots, it has a good chance to come back in the Spring. In most favorable conditions, it can grow 10-30 feet tall and 3-6 feet wide. Occasional pruning may be necessary.



The vine tolerates full sun to partial shade and likes fertile, pH neutral to acid soil. It requires regular, moderate watering. In warmer and more humid climates, pests may attack the passionflower plant, including scale, spider mites, and whiteflies. The passion vine blooms in many different colors. The flowers attract hummingbirds and butterflies (host plant for the Gulf fritillary butterfly) in the summer and fall. For other wildlife, the foliage provides dense cover year-round.

All plants that Mr. Alejandro introduced to us provide shelter, food and water for insects and contribute to a healthy eco system. As we incorporate these plants in our gardens, we help these critters to survive and thrive. As Mr. Alejandro put it: “we work for the caterpillars”.

The presentation ended with a Q & A session. Members had many questions and were interested in examining and purchasing his plants.



Additional Information and references can be found at:

<https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/ornamental/shrubs/plumbago/growing-plumbago-plants.htm>

<https://www.allaboutgardening.com/salvia/>

<https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/ornamental/flowers/cat-whiskers/growing-cat-whiskers.htm>

<https://conservationgardenpark.org/plants/1009/purple-leaf-japanese-honeysuckle/>

<https://www.masterclass.com/articles/shrimp-plant-care-guide>

<https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/foeniculum-vulgare/>

<https://www.thespruce.com/passion-flowers-1403114>