

*Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service — Galveston County Office*



PHOTO BY Dr. William M. Johnson

**If you have a rose with severe symptoms of rapid stem elongation, leaf reddening, unusual leaf distortions including abnormally narrow and abnormally long leaves or the flowers do not form properly, your plants may have a disease known as rose rosette.**

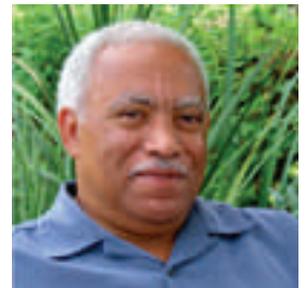
As a County Extension Agent I am obliged to varying degrees to attend numerous training programs or meetings annually. Earlier during the month of May, I attended the Extension Horticulture Annual Professional Development and Planning Conference. This meeting is the one meeting that I have looked forward to attending each year since assuming my position as Extension Horticulturist

with the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. I have held my position here in Galveston County for almost 24 years. Surprisingly or perhaps even amazingly, attendance at this conference is neither required nor compulsory for Extension Horticulture personnel across the state but nearly all of my horticultural colleagues make plans to do so. The very few who do not attend

cannot do so typically because of program and other schedule commitments that preclude their doing so. I am always amazed that even though this is not a compulsory meeting so many of my compatriots show up. County Extension Agents are "extended" many other opportunities to attend compulsory meetings/trainings. In the interest of continuing employment, I should also state these non-elective



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meetings have also added to my growth as a County Extension Agent, even if I occasionally grumble about them.

I digress . . . as I was discussing, I enjoy interacting with my horticultural colleagues at these settings. We eagerly exchange information and experiences that enhance our respective skills and competencies as horticulturists. A lot of what we gain is surprisingly through informal exchanges. So what new knowledge did I gain at this year's Conference conducted in Galveston County?

I was sitting at the breakfast table on the second day of the meeting and listened in (a.k.a. openly "eavesdropped" as we all do) on some of my colleagues' conversations as they were enjoying their meal.

Dr. Ed Hellman, Professor of Viticulture and Extension Specialist located at the Texas A&M AgriLife Research & Extension Center in Lubbock, was discussing the impact of, and his concern about, this spring's multiple freezes on the grape production on the High Plains.

He reported that the Texas High Plains wine growing region in the Lubbock area experienced an unprecedented series of four successive freeze events this spring spaced a week apart from April 10 to May 3. Grape varieties like Chardonnay and Muscat blanc, which break bud early, had already begun growth in early April. The first freeze event on April 10 killed young primary shoots and flower clusters of these early varieties.

Closed primary buds of later varieties generally escaped damage from this freeze, only to be killed by one

of the later freezes that also killed secondary buds of early varieties that had started to grow after the first frost. Consequently, 2013 will be a very lean year for grape production on the High Plains, which is the largest provider of grapes for wineries throughout Texas.

Later during the evening, Keith Hansen, my counterpart in Smith County, commented on a new cultivar of crape myrtle. He was speaking about Black Diamond Crape Myrtles which are a new series of hybrid crape myrtles with distinctive burgundy-black leaves and bright blooms. The Black Diamond series include five varieties that would add color and enjoyment to the home landscape as an accent bed or a shrub or a small (10-12 ft tall) tree.

Yet another conversation with Dr. Steve George, Professor of Horticulture headquartered at the Texas A&M Research and Extension Center in north Dallas, would prove quite apropos. Dr. George also serves as National Coordinator of the Earth-Kind Rose Program.

Dr. George commented on an epidemic in the Dallas metroplex of a disease on roses known as rose rosette. As circumstance would have it, a homeowner in Galveston submitted an unusual sample of roses that had severe symptoms of rapid stem elongation, leaf reddening, and leaf distortion including abnormally narrow and abnormally long leaves. The disease agent has not been absolutely identified but is most likely a virus or an organism known as a phytoplasma.

Just happens that the gardener's roses fits many of the symptoms of rose rosette disease. I discussed this with Dr. Kevin Ong (Associate

Professor of Plant Pathology and Director of the Texas Plant Disease Diagnostic Laboratory in College Station) who requested that I send him a tissue sample for testing and possible confirmation if this disease is now present in Galveston County. Stay tuned for updates on this problem.

County horticulture agents from the Valley to El Paso to Tyler as well as State Specialists from across the state attended this annual meeting which was held on Galveston Island at Moody Gardens. As with many budgets, over the years their travel budgets have been substantially diminished, making it difficult for them to attend trainings such as this.

I extend gratitude to the following local donors, as well as a few anonymous donors, whose generous support helped to make this year's conference possible: Recie Kraemer of Galveston; Kempner Capital of Galveston; Dr. Marty and Bobbie Ivey of Galveston; Malloy & Son Funeral Home of Galveston; Mary Lou Kelso of Galveston; Rick Benson & Susan Walker-Benson of Galveston; Carol Jean Hebert of Galveston; Jan and John Brick of Jamaica Beach; Jay and Sara Gober of Galveston; Terry and Velda Cuclis of Alvin; and Susan G. Antonelli of Galveston.

I definitely have to put a firm reservation on my calendar for the 2014 Extension Horticulture Annual Professional Development and Planning Conference . . . despite its arduous title, it's sure to be another must-attend event.

