Annual Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon

By CHUCK SCAFFIDI and CARRIE SHELBY, MGs

The 2007 Master Gardener Volunteer Recognition Luncheon was a delightful and enjoyable event. The large meeting room, usually set-up classroom style, was enchanting as a Mardi Gras banquet. Dozens of tables were dressed in green, purple and yellow tablecloths. Each table was adorned with colorful beads and brightly colored potted bougainvillea centerpieces that lucky attendees got to take home. Thanks to Carol Suggs for providing an attractive setting for our luncheon and for donating her collection of Mardi Gras beads. Also, thanks to the Horticultural Staff for supplying all kinds of tasty desserts that disappeared quickly from the buffet table!

Before eating an abundant delicious barbecue lunch of pulled pork sandwiches and potato salad, several VIPs had kind words to share with the group. County Commissioner Ronnie Duncan expressed appreciation for all that volunteers do to create a better community for future generations. Extension Director Mary Campbell heralded the incredible amount of volunteer hours and commended the group for their efforts. After the opening welcomes, Pam Brown, luncheon host, opened with an invocation, and followed with a President Clinton quote that is worth printing here. “Though government has an important role to play in meeting the many challenges that remain before us, we understand that no organization, including government, will fully succeed without the active participation of each of us.

Volunteers are vital to enabling this country to live up to the true promise of its heritage.” Pam then said “Volunteering is the ultimate exercise in democracy. You vote in elections once a year, but when you volunteer, you vote every day about the kind of community you want to live in.”

“I want to thank and pay tribute to all our volunteers who are dedicated people who believe in all work and no pay. They have contributed, 30,000 hours in total for 2006, equivalent to 15 full time employees.”

After eating lunch, and before the raffle, FBG
Foundation Chair Dianne Wheatley Giliotti handed out Recognition Awards: free FBG membership to Master Gardeners, class of 2006 for completing their 100 volunteer hours for certification, Wildlife, and other volunteers. Also, FBG membership discount certificates to over 100 MG volunteers who logged 100 hours or more for 2006 will receive the certificates. Pam Brown then presented a series of awards to individual MGs for reaching milestones in volunteer service. MG Bob Abben received Emeritus status for 10 years of service. Fourteen MGs crossed a 2000-hour milestone and many others will be honored on plaques mounted on our award wall for reaching 1000 and 500 hour levels.

A drawing was used to ensure that everyone attending received a gift, ranging from centerpieces, candies, assorted plants or gift certificates. Displayed along the front of the room, tabletops were laden with a variety of potted tropical trees and shrubs. Local wholesale and retail nurseries provided these wonderful gifts for our Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists. Amplex Nursery, Golden Rain Nursery, and Carroll Brothers generously contributed. Gift certificates came from Wilcox Nursery, Charlie & Millie’s Pizza, PJ’s Restaurant, Crabby Bills, Homeguard Pest Control, and Master Gardener Irene Costello. Various associations donated free passes to their attractions including Marie Selby Gardens, Sunken Gardens, MOSI, Lowry Park Zoo, Museum Of Fine Arts, and Historic Bok Sanctuary. A special thanks to Peggy Vincent, Jean Barnes and Wilma Holley for their energy spent in filling the room with gifts for everyone to enjoy.

Many wonderful people work behind the scenes, volunteers and staff, to ensure that this annual event is a success because what we do as volunteers deserves recognition.

Clockwise– Horticultural staff line up to give out raffle prizes. Cindy Peacock, Dianne Wheatley-Giliotti & Jean Barnes Bill Mielke & Bob Albanese James Stevenson, Jean Murphy, Ruth Reed & Bob Kay
Plant of the Month in our FBG

By JAMES STEVENSON, Public Education Specialist, FBG

Alternanthera brasiliana,
Brazilian Joyweed, Amaranthaceae

Botanical gardens world-wide strive to achieve nomenclatural accuracy in interpreting their living collections. This is an elusive goal, with plant names changing almost daily as scientists ponder and prove/disprove “accepted” assignations. For the novice trying to learn the correct name for a plant this can be extremely frustrating. But it can also be exciting, trying to keep up and abreast of changes as they occur.

Enter this month’s plant profile. The lovely Brazilian Joyweed. With its purple leaves and creamy spheres of button-sized inflorescences, this tender perennial has proven to be a charming addition to several areas at the Florida Botanical Gardens.

At first glance (to the long-trained eye) the inflorescences scream GOMPHORENA or Globe Amaranth. The leaves however don’t quite fit, nor does the low-growing and shrubby habit.

We originally accessioned this plant as Bloodleaf, or Iresine. Nope. Did not fit the description. A plant without a proper name is useless in a collection, just as a book without a title would be useless to a library. If someone were to read the book and try to remember if they had ever read it before then try to determine what it may be called, the trail may be followed. This is what happened with our Joyweed.

Drawing on the talents of the staff of horticulturists at Extension, we were able to determine this plant was in fact an Alternanthera (al-ter-NAN-ther-a). A quick check through the literature revealed this to be a very uncommonly-grown species of Alternanthera called A. brasiliensis.

Locally, very locally, as in only to the gardeners at FBG, this plant was given the common name of “popcorn plant” due to the size and color of the flowers—about ½” spheres. This is how common names originate. If we left it to the gardeners to promote, propagate and distribute the plant, this name would eventually stick, despite the fact that another garden or nursery could be doing the same thing with another common name. Confusion ensues. Value diminishes.

To properly identify this plant we can search the literature to find out what stories it has to tell. It turns out that Alternanthera brasiliensis belongs to a group of plants in the family Amaranthaceae. This new-world family contains economically and medicinally important plants and has the unique ability to function at very high temperatures.

Native to Central and South America, plants in the Genus Alternanthera practice an incredibly efficient style of photosynthesis which operates best at higher temperatures. This makes them very good landscape plants in our climate. Requiring little additional water, and able to thrive in poor, well-drained soils, they are consummate xeriscape species.

While exotic, this plant has not been shown to be an invasive exotic in our area despite the fact that it will produce viable seed. Care should still be taken if one chooses to site this plant nearby sensitive wild areas.

The seeds of Alternanthera and other members of the Amaranth Family have long been used as a grain in Central and Southern America. Perhaps you have heard of quinoa? This is a grain which is digestively
Baby Lettuce

There are many different varieties of lettuce that are especially delicious when used young and tender. Some of these include Red and Green Salad Bowl, Endive, Frisée, Arugula, Oak Leaf, Radicchio and Chicories. When these are mixed in different combinations it is called Mesclun, a French word literally meaning tender, young lettuce.

A perfect time to grow Mesclun mix in Florida is in our cool yet mild winters. Seed packs can be purchased at nurseries and hardware stores or try seed catalogs for heirloom varieties. To sow seeds, start with a sunny, well-prepared 2-3 square foot seed-bed area or 15-18 inch planters filled with good potting soil. Make sure the soil is moist before sowing. Broadcast the seeds evenly over the soil surface about a half an inch apart. After sowing, sift fine soil over the seeds about a quarter inch deep and sprinkle with a fine spray of water wetting the medium thoroughly. Keep evenly moist while awaiting germination which occurs in 1-2 weeks. Your crop of Mesclun salad mix will grow rapidly and in about a month will be ready for harvest. To harvest, cut the leaves off at 1-2 inches above the soil. If kept well watered and fertilized, the crowns of the lettuce should be appreciated by all. What great fun we can have with this reminiscing and it will give others a good idea of what to look forward to. Put an address label on the back of your photos if you’d like them returned. Also mark “when and where” on another label or piece of paper and attach it to the back of the photo. I will have a file folder labeled “Field Trip Memory Book” in which you may leave your photos, literature or brochures. Photos may be left with Chuck and I’ll pick them up. I encourage any Field Trippers to write a little essay if you’d like us to consider it for another section of the binder or newsletter. Let’s all help and watch our memories grow!
re-grow 1 to 2 more times. This is called the “cut and come again” method. Gently wash picked leaves and enjoy!

Recipe for Mesclun with Pine Nuts and Pears

Several large handfulls Mesclun mix of choice
Half a large ripe pear, sliced thin
¼ cup toasted pine nuts
Bleu cheese crumbles

Vinaigrette:
4 Tbl. Extra virgin olive oil
1 1/2 Tbl. Balsamic vinegar
1 tsp. Dijon mustard
Salt and pepper to taste

Combine oil, vinegar, mustard, salt and pepper in a large salad bowl. Wisk thoroughly until an emulsion is achieved. Add in the lettuce and pear and gently toss, preferably using your hands so as not to bruise the delicate greens. Top with the pine nuts and a few Bleu cheese crumbles. Serve immediately.

Safety Net

By PAM BROWN,
Urban Horticulture Extension Agent

Spring gardening is almost upon us! However, the excitement and pleasure can be quickly spoiled by accidents and bad backs. Taking an ergonomic approach to gardening can help ensure that it is a safe and enjoyable hobby. It is important to make your own ‘risk assessment’ – sizing up the dangers and taking steps to avoid them.

According to statistics the biggest threats to people actually gardening are cuts, then falls and being struck by things. Knowing how to avoid these problems is important! We all need to be aware of how to bend when working at ground level and NOT bending unless absolutely necessary, by working at table height when repotting, etc. Also, to use long-handled garden tools such as hoes, spades and rakes.

Tips for safe gardening:

- Don’t overdo a gardening session. Take plenty of breaks, especially if digging, bending, stretching, carrying, etc.
- Be aware of the dangers from gardening equipment. Don’t leave tools or hoses in places where they are likely to cause an accident.
- Do some research before buying garden tools and equipment. Knowing exactly what you want and how often you will use the tool should influence your purchase.
- Get the feel of tools before you buy. Handle size, weight, length, etc. are all key when it comes to using a tool.
- Think about who uses the garden when designing features such as steps, paths or ponds. Will it include elderly people or young children? For example, a steep drop from one level to another can be an accident waiting to happen.

Some garden dangers to consider: lawnmowers, flowerpots, secateurs and pruners, spades, shears, garden forks, and hoses and sprinklers.

We wish you happy and safe spring gardening!
Way to go Sam!!

By CHUCK SCAFFIDI, MG

Master Gardener Sam Skemp is volunteering in his 21st year at Extension. Besides being curator of the FBG Rose garden, his volunteer teaching activity is one of his proudest.

Sam volunteers on a regular basis at North Ward Elementary School in Clearwater. Sam teaches two first grade classes and two second grade classes about gardening. The youngsters do the work of planting seeds and seedlings, weeding, cultivating, fertilizing and harvesting. They successfully grow Fall and Spring gardens and particularly enjoy the harvesting. Shown here is a picture of one of the second grade classes that was given to Sam just before Valentine’s Day.

Way to go Irene!!

Remember to thank Irene Costello. You may not know she contributed 4-$25 gift certificates that were raffled at the volunteer luncheon. She has been a Master Gardener volunteer at Extension for 15 years and after 10 years of service her biography was written in the June 2002 issue of The Green Leaf. Be sure to read about this talented and generous MG.

Eagle Lake Park

By CARRIE SHELBY, MG

Jean Field’s native plant crew started their Valentine’s Day morning embarking on an educational walk through Eagle Lake Park in Largo. Steve Robinson, biologist with the Pinellas County Department of Environmental Management, guided the inquisitive group.

The park was an orange grove and is located in mid Pinellas. The county acquired the acres with future plans of turning the land over for recreational use. About a dozen Master Gardeners, most of them toting binoculars, explored the old grove site, harvested fruit and observed and learned about the native plants and animals.
I Need Your Help to Keep Our Gardens Growing
MARY ELLEN WARNER, Membership Chair

We need your membership in The Florida Botanical Gardens. You can get into other gardens free or at discounted prices, and that alone pays for your FBG membership. Discounts are offered at most gift shops. Membership offers prior notice and invitations to special FBG events. FBG membership makes a good gift for friends or family. FBG membership allows early admittance to the MG plant sales. Individual membership is $30; Family is $50; a supporting garden friend is $250. If you'd like a leaf on the tree with your name on it, $1,000 will help grow the gardens. See me or stop in at the Botanical Bounty gift shop.

Attention Master Gardeners!!
STACEY ZIDI, Manager, Botanical Bounty

To all the Master Gardeners,

I wanted to offer a sincere and heartfelt ‘Thank you’ to all of you for supporting me and the Botanical Gardens Foundation in the Gift Shop over the last year. Thank you for your valuable suggestions as far as books and other items you’d like to see in the shop. I look forward to your continued business, as well as the many ways our two volunteer organizations can coordinate our successful efforts for the Gardens.

Anyone interested in fulfilling their volunteer hour requirements should speak to Stacey Zidi about volunteering at the Botanical Bounty gift shop.

The shop is open **Tuesday - Saturday from 10am-5pm**. Each day is split into two 3 ½ hour shifts, **mornings (from 10-1:30pm)** or **afternoons (from 1:30-5pm)**. She’s looking for a minimum commitment of one shift a week. No previous retail experience is necessary.

Important Announcements!

VSP5, the new county computer program for logging volunteer hours is in the volunteer office. You must log your hours the day you volunteer. Those that can not be at Extension when they volunteer should log hours on a standard form so your hours can be entered by an assistant volunteer coordinator. If you have been sending your hours by e-mail, use the form as a guide. Send to: **MGEDU@co.pinellas.fl.us**.

Training is on-going and we will provide forms in the volunteer office. Remember enter travel & GEU time twice.

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**MG Advisory Association**
By CHUCK SCAFFIDI, Chair

The MGAA documents are available for all MGAA members on request. They detail how MGAA operates and is organized, as well as the duties of committees.

The next MGAA meeting will be announced later by separate mail.

**Letters of thank you from:**

“4-H Special Thank You….we would like to thank the Master Gardener Advisory Association for their $1000 donation to the scholarship fund. Not only does this organization help with funds, but many of the master gardeners are part of the Ochs Garden and Pizza Garden.”

“But because of caring friends like you, families around the world now have the chance for a bright, healthy future. Thank you for your $1000 gift to Heifer International.”

From ECHO, Networking Global Hunger Solution where we donated $1000. “Thank you for such a generous gift! We’ll put it to good and careful use.”

**Message From Compost Happens**

Save all green cuttings, etc. from around the Extension and put them in the containers in the composting area. Compost made from them will be sold to benefit the MG association.

**Please no weed seeds, nut grass, torpedo grass, etc.**
Plant Sale News
By LINDA CULHANE, MG

Mark your calendar - Saturday, March 31st

One month to go before the big event. We look to be in good shape for the upcoming sale with the exception of a little frost damage that occurred this month. We will begin moving the shade house and greenhouse plants to the new sale area after all threat of future frost has passed.

A change I would like to institute for this sale is a presentation on “Selling our Goods” for those working in the Customer Support and sales areas. This would be assistance to the MG who is working on the plant sale floor, to have knowledge of the plants we have available, and how to help the customer. The class will be held a week or two prior to the sale. I feel this would enhance our chances to move the merchandise out the door and assist the customer in making the decision of what to purchase.

Areas for the plant sale that need workers are:

Security: Be available at 7:45am at the gates to let the FBG members and MG in to purchase between 8-9am. Then throughout the sale day, to be outside the cashier area and the gate to insure that customers actually have purchased their plants.

Cashiers: Collect the money for the purchases, work in teams of two.

Expeditors: List the plants and their prices that the customer has chosen. Work in holding are and near the cashiers.

Holding Area: Store plants the customer has selected so they can continue to shop without having to carry around the plants. This encourages the customer to purchase more plants.

Customer Assistance: On the plant sale floor the various areas will have an MG to assist the customer to select the plants. What plants go together, where it is planted, what it looks like after it grows up.

Column By MARY CAMPBELL, Extension Director

Are you aware of what the Penny for Pinellas has done for our community? The Penny is a one-cent sales tax that funds new capital projects all across Pinellas County. Ever since voters first approved the Penny in 1989, it has added value to our county with projects like the Bayside Bridge and Pinellas Trail.

On March 13, 2007, voters will be asked to renew the Penny for another ten years. It’s important to remember that this is not a new tax – it is a renewal of a one-cent sales tax paid by all who spend money in the County, including tourists and other visitors who contribute approximately one third of the Penny revenue. The Penny for Pinellas funds these projects without relying on higher property taxes to make Pinellas County a better place to live, work and visit.

A renewal of the Penny would provide funding for some exciting future projects like a new expressway linking US 19 to I-275 without any stops, land for affordable housing, a coordinated emergency radio system, more hurricane shelter space and increased public access to our beaches.

Please visit www.pinellascounty.org/penny to find out more information about past and future projects and see what our citizens have to say about the Penny for Pinellas. And don’t forget to vote on March 13, 2007.

Special Help Request

On June 16 and 17, the Pinellas Living Green Expo will be held at the Coliseum in St. Petersburg. Pinellas County is a sponsor and Extension will be providing several programs. The Extension Sustainability Program Area will have a booth – Check Your Green Commitment! We need volunteers both days to ask visitors to fill out a pledge. We will handout a magnet prompt and hopefully another give-away. We will be asking for e-mail addresses to do some follow-up surveys.

We need about 20 volunteers (2 hours each from 9 am – 5 pm) to talk to visitors and help them do the pledge. I will provide T-shirts to the volunteers and an orientation. Hopefully a few volunteers may want to continue to work with us on sustainability and do some follow up for the pledge.

Please let me know. Mary Campbell http://www.pinellaslivinggreenexpo.org/
Volunteer Opportunities and Events for March–April

Spring is always our busiest time. Please look at the opportunities and let Carol Suggs (582-2124 or csuggs@pinellascounty.org) know if you are willing to help out with any of these activities. You may also look for sign up sheets on the back hall bulletin board for the large events. Activities are really fun and informative.

Master Gardener Update Training

March 8 from 10am to 11:30am, Magnolia Room

The MG Update meeting will feature speaker Bill Koen, a Horticultural Specialist with the City of Lakeland, Parks & Recreation for over 35 years. Bill is associated with Hollis Gardens in Lakeland. Recently Hollis Gardens was voted one of the Best of Class Gardens by the Gulfcoast Research and Education Center, (GCREC), a research station of University of Florida. GCREC collaborates with four central Florida public gardens in an effort to show the public cultivars determined to be the best performers in the gulf coast climatic zone. Along with Hollis Gardens the other sites are the Florida Botanical Gardens, Selby Botanical Garden, and Historic Bok Sanctuary. Hollis Garden is a formal 1.2-acre botanical garden. The garden is located on historic Lake Mirror in Lakeland. The garden contains several water features and displays thousands of flowering plants, ornamental shrubs, historic trees, herbs and vegetables. Please plan on attending a fascinating and instructive session with Bill Koen.

March Events at the Pinellas County Extension

Workshops to spread the word about composting, garden containers and rain barrels. Registration is required. Call 727- 582-2673.

- On Saturday, March 10, from 10am to noon, a free Compost Happens Workshop shows how easy it is to create compost. Pinellas County residents will receive a free 7.5 cubic feet plastic compost bin.
- On Saturday, March 17, from 10 to 11am, a free Flowers In Your Shoes Workshop will highlight how to create gardens of delight by adding color to unusual containers around the home.

• March 17, 9:00 to 5:00 p.m., Country in the Park, Pinellas Park, two exhibit volunteers needed for am and two for pm. working with Wilma Holley. 582-2672
• On Saturday, March 24, from 10:30am to noon, a free Rain Barrel Workshop will demonstrate how to collect rainwater from a roof. rain barrel. Painting demonstration and instructions to follow. Barrels available for purchase after the workshop.

Find out more about Pinellas County Extension and its events by calling 727- 582-2100 or by visiting its Web site at: www.pinellascounty.org/extension

Attention North County MGs!

March 17 – 9:00 am to 3:00pm
Safety Harbor – Bloomin Flower Festival
Need two or three volunteers to set up and man a booth for Extension literature. You will need to pick up the literature and FY&N display

April 21 – 9:00 am to 5:30 pm.
Honeymoon Island State Park
Earth Day 2007 – Celebrate with Friends
Need two volunteers to work booth with Pam
One shift 9 – 1:30 and a shift 1:00 – 5:30
Please let Pam (582-2112) or Carol (582-2124) know.

For more information please see flyer in the volunteer office or visit www.islandparks.org

Family EarthFest!
Come Celebrate Mother Earth
April 21 from 10am to 4pm.

The FREE family-friendly event offers a full day of fun and excitement at the Pinellas County Extension and Florida Botanical Gardens. Come dig in a fossil pit, build your own birdhouse, pick up a free tree or shrub for your yard or play with the Monarchs and Zebra Swallowtails in the butterfly tent. Stories for kids, food, music and lots more will round out a perfect day in a beautiful setting.

Volunteers Needed:
12 to staff the Extension tent
8 for children’s area recycling craft table
4 for caterpillar petting zoo
4 for butterfly parade

Help also needed for set up and take down.
The Green Leaf is published by Pinellas County Extension for the County Master Gardeners and depends on submission of articles from Master Gardeners, Extension Staff and other authors.

Managing Editor:
Pam Brown, Urban Horticulture Extension Agent

Production Editor:
Chuck Scaffidi, Master Gardener, 727-582-2117
Assistant Editor: Carrie Shelby, Master Gardener

Please send articles to Pam or e-mail directly to Chuck cascaffidi@juno.com or Pam at pwbrown@co.pinellas.fl.us

The newsletter is available on the Internet at http://www.flbg.org/
Click on “Master Gardener Program”, click on “MG Newsletter”
MASTER GARDENER COLLEGE 2007

MARCH 20TH, APRIL 3RD, & April 17th
UF/IFAS PINELLAS CO. EXTENSION
12520 ULMERTON RD, LARGO, FL 33774

Contact person: Pam Brown
727 582-2112
pwbrown@ufl.edu

DATE & TIME – Registration, drinks & snacks 9 – 9:30 each day
Please Note: you will need to bring a bag lunch each day

March 20, 2007 – 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. General Horticulture Topics
April 3, 2007 – 9:30 a.m. – 2 p.m. Pest Management Update
April 17, 2007 – 9:30 – 2 p.m. New or Underutilized Plants

(Program details and driving directions on other side)

Registration:
Name: ____________________________________________

Address: ____________________________________________

City, ZIP ____________________________________________

Please check the dates you plant to attend:

___ March 20 ___ April 3 ___ April 17

Registration form is due by: March 15, 2007
Return to Carol Suggs, MG College
Pinellas Extension
Largo, FL 33774-3602

OR: You may call 582-2247 and leave your name, phone and dates you wish to attend.
Master Gardener College 2007 – Pinellas County
Registration and snacks – 9 – 9:30 each day

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<td>Dr. Juanita Popanoe</td>
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<td>Lunch – Bring a bag lunch</td>
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<td>Hybridization – creating new</td>
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<td>Sudden Oak Death –</td>
<td>Dr. Phil Harmon</td>
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<th>April 17 – 9:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.</th>
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Directions

Heading west on Ulmerton Rd.,
(toward Indian Rocks Beach) turn left
onto 125th St. Continue straight through
the double gates

Look for flag pole to enter at the
main entrance.

12520 Ulmerton Road
Largo, Florida 33774-3695
Ph. 727-582-2100
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<td>Master Gardener College 9am – 2pm Call 582-2247 to register</td>
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<td>Plant Sale Meeting 10am – Everyone Welcome to Attend! Note date change!</td>
<td>Rain Barrel workshop 9am Rain Barrel Painting Demo 10:30-noon</td>
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<td>8 a.m. Plant Sale setup 10 am. and again at 6:30pm Snow Bird Landscaping</td>
<td>8 a.m. Plant Sale setup</td>
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<td>8 a.m. Plant Sale setup</td>
<td>Plant Sale 9a.m. – 2 p.m.</td>
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Good Work Pinellas County
Master Gardener Volunteers !!!

Master Gardener Update Training

March 8 from 10am to 11:30am.
Magnolia Room

Speaker Bill Koen, a Horticultural Specialist with the City of Lakeland, Parks & Recreation