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Get professional garden advice at the Bulbs to Blooms Conference and Sale

By Katy Barone, Smith County Master Gardeners 11 hrs ago

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Katy Barone, Smith County Master Gardners

As the hot, lazy days of summer turn to fall, it is time once again for the Smith County Master Gardener Association's annual From Bulbs to Blooms Conference and Sale. Slated for Oct. 13 at Harvey Convention Center, this event will offer over 45 bulb varieties, including heirloom, hardy and hard-to-find bulbs well suited for the South. Both seasoned and novice gardeners will find old and new favorites, including narcissus, daffodils, jonquils, Byzantine gladiolus, crinum lilies, rain lilies, snowflakes, wood hyacinth, spider lilies and more. A limited selection of special trees and shrubs will also be available for sale.

Highlighting the conference will be featured speakers Keith Kridler and Greg Grant, Smith County horticulture Extension agent.

Kridler will speak on "Proven Spring Bulbs for Texas." He is president of the Texas Daffodil Society and he and his wife, Sandy, have been members of the American Daffodil Society and the Texas group since the mid 1980s. He is currently on the board of directors of the ADS and is an ADS flower judge and a judges instructor for ADS. He is considered an expert on historic daffodils, which are any daffodils that were registered before 1940.

Kridler and family are growing about 1,000 different varieties/species of bulbs scattered across their 20-acre "bulb farm" inside the city limits of Mount Pleasant. He has been a Texas Master Gardener since 1998 and has been presenting photo slide programs on birds, bees, flowers and trees since the late 1970s. Mr. Kridler will speak on "Proven Spring bulbs for Texas."

Grant was born and raised in East Texas and is a noted horticulturist, author, conservationist and bulb expert. He holds floriculture and horticulture degrees from Texas A&M University and has served as an instructor at Louisiana State and Stephen F. Austin State universities. He is a graduate of the Benz School of Floral Design, member of the Garden Writers Association of America, lifetime member of the Native Plant Society of Texas and of the Southern Garden History Society. A gifted and animated speaker, his topic, "Earth-Kind Fall Bulbs," will cover bulbs and their use in the landscape,

with particular attention to bulbs featured during the event. As an added treat, Grant's books will be available for purchase. They include "The Rose Rustlers," authored by Grant and Dr. William C. Welch; and "Texas Fruit and Vegetable Gardening and Heirloom Gardening for the South: Yesterday's Plants for Today's Gardens." A book signing will follow.

Door prizes will be given away and a vendor area set up just outside the conference will host garden-related businesses providing information about local services as well as East Texas artists selling items for home and garden including stained glass, art glass pieces, jewelry, wind chimes, gardening baskets, gardening aprons and more.

There also will be a special silent auction for a bulb from Grant's private collection, a rare hot pink spider lily – *Lycoris x rosea* "Sam Caldwell" (formerly *Lycoris x jacksoniana*) – bulb that is very rare and not available in the trade anywhere in the world. It looks like a red spider lily except that it is magenta pink with blue highlights. The winner will be announced at the end of the conference before the public sale begins.

From Bulbs to Blooms Conference and Sale is free and open to the public. Registration begins at 8:30 a.m., with the program starting at 9 a.m. and bulb sale following at 11:30 a.m. For more information, call the Smith County AgriLife Extension office at 903-590-2980, or visit the Smith County Master Gardeners Facebook site or go to the website <http://scmg.tamu.edu>.