



# As the Garden Grows



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## Take Time to Tend Your Own Garden

(Submitted by Gail Johnson)



Is it spring already? Sure feels like it. The grass is growing. Trees are budding out. But, hey—this is Texas. She's fooled us all before . . . But it has made for a very warm winter and so the Master Gardeners have been out in force, working hard on projects. In fact, Master Gardeners reported over 350 hours of volunteer time in January. A lot of effort has gone in to our most significant projects—the Eggleston Children's Garden, the WIC Garden and planning for the Fair Street Exploratorium. And we are justly proud of all of it. But in the midst of all of that, a word to each of you—don't forget to take time to tend your own garden.

As volunteers, we have many demands on our lives. We have children, grandchildren, churches, civic groups; some of us have ranches and farms, and even active careers to manage. Our Master Gardener group is so full of opportunities to be involved that you can't possibly do them all. Pick the ones that bring you joy. Missed a work day? Couldn't make that meeting? Everything will get done in its time. Our time as Master Gardeners doesn't just serve our community. It needs to feed our souls—and be fun. It's getting together with others who have similar interests and meeting a common goal. It's about sharing our knowledge of things we love and our plants we have nurtured. Don't let things get so hectic that it takes the joy out of it. You can only give as much as you have available. When I was working and things got to be too much, we used to say, "This is just my job. It's not my life." Well, the thing about volunteering is that it's not your job. It *is* your life. So take time for *all* the things in your life that also bring you joy. Take time to tend your own garden.



## Class is in Session!

This year's training classes have been very informative and have reinforced what some of us learned in the first MG training class. If you need continuing education hours you are missing out! Larry Stein (right), Texas AgriLife Extension Horticulturalist from Uvalde, gave a wonderful class on Fruit and Nut Production in January. Our next class was on Landscape and Residential Design by Mike Pecen from Austin, Texas. This was a very detailed discussion involving the visual order /unity of landscaping designs and how to do a landscape drawing and what it entails.



Next in line was our very own David Dement (left)! David covered some areas of importance such as Integrated Pest Management (IPM), the good bugs and the bad bugs, plant diseases and Oak Wilt. There was a lot of class interaction enjoyed by all.

You won't want to miss the following class speakers:

- Feb. 21- Vegetable Gardening -Dr. Jo Masabni,
- March 6-Plant Propagation-Susan Jung and Tommie Clayton
- March 20-Native Ecosystems-Barron Rector-at the M.O. Nesloney Wildlife Management Area
- March 27-Turf Grass-Dennis Hale
- April 10-Field trip to Antique Rose Emporium in San Antonio, TX-Bill Welch
- April 24-Native Superstars, Invasive Species, and Myths & Lies of Gardening-David Rodriguez
- May 8- Field Trip to Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center-Austin- to include native landscape design

## Projects and Committee Updates



In the Beginning

**WIC Garden Looking Great!!**  
**A lot of hard work and fun!**  
 (Submitted by Cindy Turner)

The WIC Demonstration Garden is now clearly identifiable as a garden in the making. Community feedback on the GMG project west of downtown Gonzales has been fantastic. Since early January when the Garden consisted of just the basics of a drip irrigation system, it has evolved to a site featuring five distinctly different above ground beds, balanced with a

sizable row planting area as well as container gardens. The variety of planting areas will demonstrate for WIC clients that healthy foods can be grown in many different ways and places. Garden beds made of tin, native rocks, timbers and reclaimed bricks vie for attention among the growing array of containers. Livestock feed tubs, salvaged tires, old wash basins, gutters, recycled tin cans, and baskets will show that almost anything can be used for growing vegetables.

Master Gardener volunteers, including Jim Mikulik, Jim Johnson, Fran Saliger, Lynette Jarrett, Gail Johnson, Joyce Soefje, John Whitt, Pam St. John, Alan Marek, Sherri Wagner, Larry Finch, Wayne Koch, Brenda Barnes and Cindy Turner, have already devoted many hours to turn the WIC Garden vision into reality. WIC's own visionary, registered dietician and nutritionist, Cynthia Green, has worked side by side with the Master Gardeners and is now busy ordering seeds and transplants. She will share those with her clients, as they learn how to grow their own fresh vegetables and improve the quality of their lives with healthier meals for their families.

There is still soil amending and planting to be completed at the WIC Garden. Master Gardeners will also assist Cynthia in teaching weekly classes about gardening practices and nutrition. If you are interested in joining the WIC Demonstration Garden effort, contact Cindy.



**And Along Came Jim & Jim**



**Irrigation Line installed**



**Fill dirt in place**



**Front retaining wall**





**Beginning of Brick Beds**



**Cleaning Cans to plant in**



**Lynette Jarret**



**Joyce Soefje--- Jim & Wayne work on Landscape timber bed**



**Jim Johnson and Wayne Koch**



**Laying the Rock Bed**



**John Whitt cleaning fence line**



**Jim Johnson and Jim Mikulik work on Tin Bed**





**Cynthia, Pam, Sherry W. and Alan laying Brick**



**Almost finished Brick Beds**



**Lunch after a hard day's work!**



**Container planting of Cilantro**

## **So Much Talent!**

### **Adult Education Series**

(Submitted by Carol Bond)

Plans are moving along for the Adult Education Talks to be held at the Gonzales City Hall. We are delighted to have City Manager, Alan Barnes, who is also a Master Gardener allow the Gonzales Master Gardener Association to use the City Hall as our venue. Our first speaker is scheduled for Thursday, March 29 starting at 6:30 PM. Kyle Harrell, a master at worm composting will be our speaker. Tentatively, additional educational meetings are scheduled June 28th, August 30th and October 18th from 6.30pm and lasting for one to one and a half hours. More details will follow as our plans develop. If you have any suggestions or recommendations, please don't hesitate to contact myself, Shirley or Colin. Hope to see all of you there.

## Eggleston Children's Garden

The children from East Avenue Elementary School will be planting potatoes on February 16 & 17. We now have 12 beds completed allowing six first grade classes to plant and learn this spring. Master Gardeners were out in January to build 12 beds adding to the 12 already in place. Thanks go to County Commissioner, Donald Brzozowski for delivery of the sandy loam soil, Kitchen Pride Mushroom for delivering mushroom compost and Wayne Koch for donating and delivering the telephone cross timbers. Thanks to all those who helped with the irrigation lines and preparing the beds. If you haven't volunteered on the days that the children come to the gardens you are missing out on a lot of fun and excitement.



## Fair Street Exploratorium Update

(Submitted by Gail Johnson)

The Master Gardeners are truly grateful for the generous gifts we received in January. GVEC and the LCRA each gave the association \$5,000 to kick off the renovations at the Fair Street Exploratorium. These funds will be used to level the building, paint the outside and repair the skirting on the building. We will be able to start that work soon since the City of Gonzales is preparing to bring in the utility drops to the building.

We are also grateful to three local families who have come forward to bring their special expertise to our project by plowing, fertilizing and planting the north section of the project for the crop demonstration plot. The Ehrigs, the Lusters and the Morgans have combined their talents and resources to plant corn and cotton so that area children can see where our food and fiber comes from. The Master Gardeners are excited about the support these families have provided.

The final specifications for the work to be done on the building have been completed and our own Sherri Wagner has completed drawings for us to use to share the vision with our community. The Fair Street project workgroup met and discussed the designs and the work to be done. Prices and quotes have been received on nearly all of the work from local contractors. The consensus of the project workgroup was that they would like to reserve the interior painting as a member project to be completed by the Master Gardeners. David plans to do the window repair work since he has the skill and equipment to make the missing pieces for the frames. The rest of the work will be done by contractors.

The building is already in demand. A local group hopes to work with the Gonzales Independent School District to hold a reading camp at the building in July for children who are at risk of not

completing high school because of poor reading skills. With today's advanced assessment techniques, children at risk can be identified at a very early age when intervention can make a difference. Everyone is hoping that the work on the building can be completed in time to meet this need.

On a sadder note, we received word that vandals broke into the building by breaking several windows and damaged the antique wooden floors extensively with skate boards. The vandals also broke two tables that had been donated to be used as work tables. We hope that when work begins on the building and it looks more occupied that members of the community will recognize it as the asset that it is and not just an abandoned building.

## Master Gardener's and Students Attend Seminar

(Submitted by Fran Saliger)



The Comal county Master Gardeners held a very informative "Backyard Vegetable Gardening" seminar in New Braunfels on Saturday, February 11. Attending from Gonzales were Shirley Fraizer, Carol Bond, Joyce Soefje, Cindy Turner, Fran Saliger, Lori Behlen, Alan Marek and John Whit. There were a lot of questions and comments from the audience making it a very relaxing event for the novice as well as the "old timers". Every time I attend a Master Gardener talk, I always come away with new information. We heard a very informative lecture on Bed Preparation, Soil and Composting by Daphne Richards, Travis County Extension Agent. This was

followed by two sessions on Spring Vegetables by Patty Leander, Travis County Master Gardener and Vegetable Specialist, with emphasis on crop selection, planting, cultivation, harvesting and crop rotation. She had a quote from a very good friend who once said "If you like gardening, you better like vegetables and vice versa". How true this is! Another good tip she had is to purchase a hand held bug zapper to take with you on your inspection of your vegetable plants! Of course, there go the "good bugs"! Our last speaker was Gaylon Lee, Comal MG, who gave a talk on drip irrigation. He stressed the need for everyone to think about water conservation efforts. In 2007 The Texas Water Board published a water demand projections chart indicating that the water demands for Texas exceeded the water supply! Drip irrigation is one way to conserve some of our water! Carol and Joyce came away with door prizes and all of us came home with planted vegetables to start a basic garden: tomato, cucumber, pepper and onion!





## Spring Plant Sale –SAVE THE DATE!



The Spring Plant Sale will be held **Saturday, March 31, 2012** from 8:30 am to 1:00 pm or until sold out. It will take place on Texas Heroes Square. We will purchase some plants from local nurseries but **we still need all of you to propagate plants too!** These can be houseplants, flowers or vegetables started from seed or transplants from your garden or your neighbors, friends and relatives! **PLEASE** let us know what you think you may be bringing so that we will know how much to purchase and how to price it. A form was sent by email to you, but if you need another one please call Fran. **Please return these by March 7.** There are recycled plastic pots and flats for propagation at the Extension Office. Potting soil for plant propagation is available at Carol and Colin's home. We are planning on another big Silent Auction. If you have any item to donate contact Cindy Turner or Arline Rinehart. Our MG Booth will be set up to recruit new members, answer questions about gardening and horticulture and demonstrate drip irrigation techniques. We are still working on some ideas to bring children and families out for the event. Other organizations such as the Odd Fellows, Boy scouts, Girl scouts, 4-H groups and Lions clubs are being asked to participate by providing food and drinks. Everyone will be needed to help out with this event. We will be setting up on the Friday before the sale on Saturday. **Remember, volunteer hours are awarded for every hour spent propagating and one hour for every ten plants brought to the sale. What a great opportunity!**

### Last Year's Event





## MEET THE STUDENTS

The Gonzales Master Gardeners are proud of the members of their new class, Class 2. So we thought we would brag on them a little bit. Each month we will be introducing two of our students and here we go, in alphabetical order. . . .(Continued from January 2012 issue)



Jim Mikulik and his wife live in Shiner. Jim is a retired facilities maintenance engineer and lucky for us, he's very handy!!! His gardening experience includes an apple orchard his family ran in California for twenty years. Jim joined the Gonzales Master Gardeners because he was looking for an organization where he could volunteer in an active setting. But plants just rub off on you. He's building a greenhouse at home!!!!



Maureen Paulk lives just out of town in the Luling area. She and her husband own a landscaping franchise. Maureen has lots of gardening experience including gardens in Florida, growing vegetables in California and houseplants everywhere. Maureen enjoys interior decorating and has been an active volunteer with a number of organizations

## Request for Newsletter Articles



Are you in need of volunteer hours? Do you like to research information? Did you always aspire to be a writer but were afraid to? Now is your chance! The editors of this newsletter need YOU. If you would like to submit an article for the Newsletter we will gladly accept them. Pick a topic of interest and submit it for review. There is a wealth of information out there that we would like to share with others. So let us hear from you!!

## Tip of the Month

(Submitted by Carol Bond)

There are lots of signs that spring is on the way, along with the rain come those nasty little mounds of biting ants rising to the surface. Did you know that beneficial nematodes do a wonderful job of controlling fleas and fire ants around your yard? You can buy beneficial nematodes at garden centers. Nematodes are supplied in a concentrated form, often on a wet sponge that you'll mix in water and apply using a pump sprayer. Beneficial nematodes are most effective in soil temperatures above 60 deg. F. Some tips for use:

- When you buy them, use them as soon as possible, and store them in a refrigerator if you can't use them right away
- Apply them in the early morning or evening to give them the best possible chance of survival. Remember that ultraviolet light and heat will kill them
- Water them into the soil after application. This helps move them into the soil, gets them away from harmful sunlight, and gives them moisture necessary for survival
- Do not use other chemical pesticides at the same time, or one shortly after the other. Some pesticides will kill nematodes.
- Spray the ground close to your house first, nematodes will start to form a barrier against fleas and ants.

Love those beneficial nematodes!

## Plant of the Month

(Submitted by Fran Saliger)

**Common Name:** Turk's Cap or Red Mallow

**Botanical Name:** *Malvastrum arboreum* var. "Drummondii"

**Plant Form or Habit:** upright and spreading

**Blooms:** Red blooms in summer

**Height:** 2.5- 3.5 feet

**Width:** 3-5 feet

**Light:** low

**Water:** Medium; tolerant of drought and seasonal poor drainage

**Propagation:** division

**Notes:** By January its leaves and branches have thinned to long green spindles, but still blooms if the weather is mild enough. A close relative of hibiscus, it's called the "lazy mallow" because the turban-like flowers never fully open. The thin stems can be cut back in early spring. Can withstand shade; attracts butterflies and hummingbirds



### When is the best time to prune perennials and shrubs?

When the sun is shining everyone wants to get outdoors, but right now is not a good time to prune back your perennials. Early pruning may encourage new growth that is susceptible to late freezes.



Birds and animals also depend on the food and cover they provide. Pruning is done in late February at the earliest.

Water-wise, evergreen and long-blooming, Salvia Greggii is a stalwart of southwestern landscapes. Like many sages, over time it may become leggy and shapeless. Late winter is a good time to carefully tip-prune some branches (by no more than a third) and thin out older, woody stems



Resource: SAWS Watersaver newsletter

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**Registration is now open-Don't Delay**

**TEXAS STATE MASTER GARDENER CONVENTION**

**River Walk & Garden Talk**

**May 3-5, 2012**

Go to [www.bexarcounnymastergardener.org](http://www.bexarcounnymastergardener.org)  
For more information on the big event

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**Events in the Area**

(Submitted by Juliana Hennig)

**Austin: “Rose Care and Pruning”** will be presented Thursday, **February 16**, from 10 a.m. – Noon, at Travis County AgriLife Extension Office . Discover the varieties of roses available and care requirements. Learn how to plant a rose, fertilizer requirements, disease identification, general care, and pruning. Bring pruning shears for hands-on lesson. The Travis County AgriLife Extension Office is located at 1600-B Smith Road, Austin, TX. For more information, please call 512-854-9600.

**San Antonio: “Designing Herbal Landscapes”**, will be held **February 18** (Saturday) from 9 a.m. – Noon at the San Antonio Botanical Garden. Learn how to design beautiful, fragrant and useful herbs into your existing landscapes or new herbal spaces. Herbalist and designer Diane Lewis will discuss history, design basics and planning, the roles different herbs play in the landscape, how to select the right herbs for specific spaces, compatible hardscape elements such as paths and boulders, and theme gardens. You will design your herb garden on graph paper and take a short tour of the herb

gardens and other notable garden spaces at the San Antonio Botanical Garden. Fee: \$41. A \$5 supply fee payable to the instructor covers materials and herbal snack and beverage. Admission to the Garden included in the cost of tuition.

**Austin: “Organic Vegetable Gardening 101”** will be presented by Rosina Newton, Horticulturist and Education Coordinator at the Natural Gardener, Saturday, **February 18**, from 9 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Learn about site selection, soil preparation and fertilization, planting methods, pest control and other essentials for successful organic vegetable gardening in Central Texas. Class is held outdoors. Dress appropriately and bring a chair. The Natural Gardener is located at 8648 Old Bee Cave Road, Austin. For information call 512-288-6113.

**College Station: Landscape Design Study Course IV, February 20-21** (Monday & Tuesday). This course is an opportunity for more in-depth training in landscape design than is normally included in the Master Gardener curriculum. Each series is offered in four separate schools, approximately six months apart, each with ten hours of instruction. Registration for the course will be \$125 (two lunches and a local bus tour are included). View and download the registration form and information at: <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu>

**Austin: “What it Means to be an Organic Gardener”** will be presented by John Dromgoole, founder and owner of The Natural Gardener and Lady Bug Brand, and host of *Gardening Naturally* on Saturday, **February 25**, from Noon – 1 p.m. at the Natural Gardener located at 8648 Old Bee Cave Road, Austin. For information call 512-288-6113.

**Austin: “2012 Native Plant Spring Symposium: The State of Water in Texas”** will be held Saturday, **February 25** through Sunday, **February 26**, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. Saturday and 9 a.m. – Noon Sunday. Leading experts discuss the current and forecast weather conditions in Texas. Drought is expected to persist through at least the summer of 2012. Come learn what you can do to prepare for water shortages now and in the future. \$75 registration at the door. Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, 4801 La Crosse Ave., Austin. For more information and early registration, go to [www.wildflower.org/springsymposium/](http://www.wildflower.org/springsymposium/).

**Victoria:** Gerald Bludau, Victoria County Master Gardener, will be giving a presentation on “**Spring Vegetable Gardening**” at their Lunch and Learn on **February 27** from Noon – 1 p.m. at the Pattie Dodson Health Center, 2805 N. Navarro, Victoria. Free to the public. Bring your lunch and drink.

**San Antonio: “Understanding Your Wild Neighbors”** will be presented by Judit Green, Wildlife Biologist with Texas Parks and Wildlife Department on Tuesday, **February 28** from 2 p.m. – 4 p.m. at the Agrilife Extension Conference Room, 3355 Cherry Ridge, Suite 208, San Antonio. This educational seminar will teach you how to identify, prevent, and manage urban wildlife. Please RSVP to Molly Keck at [mekeck@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:mekeck@ag.tamu.edu). Free to the public.

**Austin: “Austin Organic Gardeners’ Annual Plant Sale”** will be held Saturday, **March 3**, from 9 a.m. – 2 p.m. at Zilker Botanical Garden.

**San Antonio: Plant Propagation**, Thursday, **March 8** from 9:00 am – 11:00 am. Learn the techniques our horticulturists and volunteers use to propagate plants in the Garden. Participants will



make their own cuttings to take home and have the opportunity to explore the greenhouse and purchase some of the beautiful plants expertly cultivated by the San Antonio Botanical Society Plant Sale Volunteers (exact cash or check only). Most plants are \$8/gallon. Limit 20 participants. Fee: \$20/class. To register, please contact Sasha Kodet at (210) 207-3270 or [sasha.kodet@sanantonio.gov](mailto:sasha.kodet@sanantonio.gov).

**Victoria:** Dick Nolen, Victoria County Master Gardener, will be giving a presentation on “**Plant Propagation**” at their Lunch and Learn on **March 12** from Noon – 1 p.m. at the Pattie Dodson Health Center, 2805 N. Navarro, Victoria. Free to the public. Bring your lunch and drink.

**Austin:** The **First Austin African Violet Society** will host its 44th annual judged show “African Violets and Other Wonders of the World” and sale on **Saturday, March 17** from 11 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. and **Sunday, March 18** from 11 a.m. – 4 p.m. at Zilker Botanical Garden in Austin. African violets and other gesneriad plants and growing supplies will be for sale. Admission is free with paid admission to the Garden. For more information, go to [www.faavs.org](http://www.faavs.org) or contact **Susan Kautz** at 512/365-1818 or [gizzmo@austin.rr.com](mailto:gizzmo@austin.rr.com).

**Austin:** The “**55th Annual Zilker Garden Festival**” will be held Saturday, **March 31** & Sunday, **April 1** at the Zilker Botanical Garden from 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. For over 50 years, the annual Zilker Garden Festival has been a one-stop, garden shopping destination when spring arrives in Austin and Central Texas. A family-friendly event, the garden festival offers something for everyone. Stay tuned for details. Proceeds from Zilker Garden Festival benefit the activities of the Austin Area Garden Council and Zilker Botanical Garden.

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### **Congratulations to MG Students**

**Cindy Turner and Jim Mikulik**

have completed their 50 hours of volunteer work toward their MG Certification!

**It's never too late to turn in your Volunteer Hours**

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Could this be our new greenhouse?

OK-I'm just dreaming!!

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