



July 2009

COMAL GARDENER

Promoting Knowledge and Volunteerism

A monthly publication of the Comal Master Gardeners Association through the Texas AgriLife Extension Service in Comal County, 325 Resource Drive, New Braunfels, TX 78132 (830-620-3440)

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June Meeting Time of Transition

Comal Master Gardeners elected and installed the 2009-2010 slate of officers during their June meeting. Catherine Hall is the new President. Larry Williamson is President-Elect. After leading an astoundingly successful Master Gardener class with her husband Michael, Donna Welch is Vice President in charge of CMG in Training. Linda Ray is Secretary. Donna Lehr is going to continue as Treasurer. They will serve from July 1, 2009 through June 30, 2010. Many thanks to out-going officers Vice President Michael Welch and Secretary Nancy Wackerbarth for their leadership and service.

Members also approved a series of housekeeping amendments to the by-laws. President Karen Scherrer presided over her last meeting, giving the new officers clever gifts and receiving a gift of appreciation from the organization.

CMG members in good standing after five years Karen Glisky, Marilyn Godwin, Meredith Nyman, Myles Peinemann and Melissa Skasik received pins during the June meeting. Peggy Carmody, Tom Carson, Jim Mosier, Mary Salmon and Harriet Aristeguieta received pins for ten years of active membership. President Scherrer congratulated the recipients and conveyed the organization's appreciation for their service.

The Treasurer's Reports

Starting this issue, Donna Lehr, CMG Treasurer will give members a snapshot of how your money is being spent and how much money is available, month-to-month. The report will include the checking account activity for the period, in this case, from May 26 to June 23, 2009. Because of the newsletter deadline, the report will also include the income for the period: \$320.63, the expenses: \$310.64 and the current balance: \$5654.26.

In addition, at the end of each fiscal year, the newsletter will give members a copy of the proposed budget for the next year. To see the 2009-2010 budget, go to page 8. We give special thanks to Donna for promoting this service to members in the interest of increased understanding and communications.

CMG July General Meeting

Tuesday, July 28 at 6 pm

Speaker: Bob Packard

Topic: *Earthworm Farming*

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•••Garden Posts•••

- The July Herb SIG will be all about Bay Laurel. It will be held on July 13, 2009 at 10 am. Come and learn about Bay and how it is used in culinary, medicine and crafting, presented by Sally Ann Hnatiuk. Please RSVP to Sally Ann at mustang_sally@msn.com or 830-980-5645 by Monday, July 6. Depending on the number of participants, it will be held either at the Extension office or at Sally Ann's house. (Info will be furnished to those who attend.)
- Congratulations to Judy Chantos and Joyce Stephens, Class 2009 Members, for attaining certification in June! There are already 19 Master Gardeners from the 2009 training class.
- Annual dues are payable in July; \$20 for individuals; \$35 for couples. Checks, payable to Comal Master Gardeners, can be mailed to the Extension Office, 325 Resource Drive, NB, 78132, ATTN: CMG Treasurer or turned in at the General Membership meeting.
- Attention Class of 2009: Your dues for 2009-2010 were included in your tuition so your membership is paid until July 2010!
- There will be a CMG Float Planning Meeting to plan the future float for the Comal County Fair Parade on Wednesday, July 8, from 10 am to noon, at the Extension Office Meeting Room. Hope to see you at the meeting. For further information, contact Evelyn Nielson at 830-629-2374 or evelynnielson@hotmail.com to become part of the committee and attend the summer planning session.
- Planning for the New Braunfels Public Library project is in full swing. If you are interested in identifying present plants, planning future beds and earning hours, contact Cindy Burch at 830-608-1219 or cynthia.burch@sbcglobal.net
- Mark Your Calendars for December 11. As Master Gardeners we know better than anyone else that the "*Early Bird Gets the Worm.*" We want to be the first ones to invite you to our 2009 Christmas Party, scheduled for Friday evening, December 11, at the Forke Store in the New Braunfels Conservation Plaza.
- While you're at it, mark your calendars for Gartenfest 2010! Gartenfest will be March 20, the third Saturday of the month. The Master Gardeners are going to have a plant sale, so start planting seeds and propagating plants. The theme is Green Gardening, to encourage green gardening practices.
- A pair of prescription glasses was found at one of the gardens. If these are yours, please contact Janet Sweet in the Extension Office.
- You organization needs a few strong leaders. Anyone interested in chairing the Phone Bank and Email Center or in being Public Relations Chair, contact President Catherine Hall, 830-625-2077 or cmh@satx.rr.com
- New transfer Susan Rench comes New Mexico, class of 2005. Susan spent many of her volunteer hours on the county Master Gardener hotline. The recently retired RN says she has "fallen in love with gardening." Welcome Susan!

Keep Up-to-Date on CE and Volunteer Hours!

Send your CE hours to Don Tuff. **He needs to know when, where and how many CE hours were earned. Send to d_tuff@hotmail.com Be sure to include all of the following: title of talk, speaker's name, date and time of talk, location and organization sponsoring the lecture.**

Committee Chairs should submit all volunteer hours to **Richard Wackerbarth, gardener@dataplex.net**

Living La Vida Fresca

by Barbi Briney, Peggy Hamm, Judeen Randall, Mary T. Salmón, Julie Siliven and Marlene Skaggs

In our part of the country, people incorporate the outdoors in their lives, even in the winter. Although the summer heat is upon us, for the vast majority of the year life in the backyard and garden becomes an extension of our homes. This month the staff explores the various ways we gardeners can convert our garden space into living space.

Make Your Space an Oasis

Summer in south central Texas is not for the faint of heart. We strive to keep ourselves cool and to water our plants less. Patios and decks can be a pleasant place to find shade and an occasional cool breeze. However, trying to grow plants in pots can be a chore because the soil dries so quickly in the heat. So, what are the options? One solution is to divide your deck or patio into two areas: a sunny area and a shady space. Picking the right plants for these specific areas can give you a cool respite from the sun and a place to grow plants that do not require constant watering. As a bonus, you might also get some needed privacy.

For the shady area, a pergola or trellis for growing trailing vines is the ideal way to go. Many climbers love our near tropical climate. Mexican flame vine (*Senecio confusus*) with its abundance of orange, daisy-like flowers grows fast, loves the sun and has low-water requirements. The vividly colored flowers of Mexican flame vine will bloom spring through fall. Evergreen Confederate jasmine (*Trachelospermum jasminoides*) produces small, fragrant white flowers from spring to mid-summer. This vine tolerates semi-shade and can withstand our summer heat and winter temperatures as low as the mid-twenties, even north of Canyon Lake.

Many climbing roses are also antique roses and can take both heat and dry soil. These “old roses” are the kind you can find at abandoned cemeteries. Pink roses like ‘Old Blush’ and ‘Peggy Martin’ will thrive in the heat, and neither one is very particular about its soil. The story of the survival of the thornless ‘Peggy Martin’ rose will convince you that this rose can survive anything.

I have ‘Old Blush’ paired with purple Clematis Jackmanii. Clematis likes to have its “feet,” or root area, shaded and the rest of the plant in the sun. Together, the heady fragrance and visual appeal of the roses and clematis can offer a cool, relaxing retreat. Websites for clematis probably will tell you that they need more care than I give mine. I water the plants well about once a week when the weather is dry and feed twice them a year, and that seems to be all the care that my Clematis need.

Many cacti and *Euphorbia* offer easy care once they are established in pots. These are the plants for the sunny areas of a deck or patio. There are so many varieties of these plants that you should be able to find whatever you need for your space. You can even use the very thorny or spiky cactus or *Euphorbia* on a patio, if the potted plant is situated well away from human traffic.

Pencil cactus (*Euphorbia tirucalli*) can become a thornless cactus “tree,” reaching heights over 6 feet. These plants need a lot of sun, but, like most cacti in pots, they should be brought into a greenhouse, garage or the house for the winter. Pencil cactus is not winter hardy but will do well in a brightly lit room. Some people are allergic to the milky latex that drips from cuttings.

For that bright spot of color in the sunny area of your deck or patio, consider pots of *Bougainvillea*. These frost-tender perennials need occasional feeding after the blooms appear and once again late in the summer. They like to dry out between watering and seem to flower more under stress. These plants can grow quite large, so prune to keep them in bounds. *Bougainvilleas* also have thorns, so place the pots out of traffic areas. These plants come in shades of pink, magenta, red, orange, peach, yellow and white.

For a bold statement, try a potted sago palm (*Cycas revoluta*). Sagos are not true palms, but rather Cycads, a very old plant family. Sago palms need sunlight, but are very drought hardy, both in the ground and in pots.

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With a good plan, you can grow many easy-to-care-for plants on a deck or patio. The right plants can give you shade, a sense of privacy and eye appeal. They are easy to care for and can be arranged to section off different areas. Be creative and enjoy life outdoors. M.S.

For further information, see <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/SouthernGarden/PeggyMartinrose.html>
<http://plantanswers.tamu.edu/publications/cactus/growingcactus/index.html>
<http://www.junglemusic.net/cycadadvice/cycads-sago-palm.htm>

Topiaries and Garden Rooms

For centuries, topiaries have added elegance, grace and beauty to any garden party setting. According to *Martha Stewart Living*, "Topiary is any type of plant that is grown to provide a visual design that is different from its natural growth habits." In other words, a topiary is a plant shaped to appear in a different form. In true topiary, the plants are pruned on a regular basis to achieve the desired effect.

Some of the earliest topiaries date back to ancient Rome, when gardeners trained plants to grow into decorative forms by directed, intensive pruning. Roman gardens were the showcases for these topiaries, but when Rome fell in the fifth century AD, the art of topiary was neglected until the twelfth or thirteenth century. By the Italian Renaissance, gardeners were shaping yew trees into topiaries resembling oversized animals. Cones, globes, and other geometric shapes soon became popular, and topiaries eventually formed an integral part of French and English gardens. The art of the topiary was later brought to the Americas by European settlers.

Topiaries come in all sizes and shapes. Floral mini-topiaries can be turned into stylish place card holders or can decorate tabletops for a garden party. Whimsical topiary forms are available in almost every shape that imaginable. I've seen everything from big dancing bears to dogs, cats, turtles and bunnies. I've even seen giraffes, clowns, an organ grinder with his monkey, Alice in Wonderland's croquet lawn and a lawn-sized chess set.

What a fun way to decorate an outdoor space. Spruce up your living area outside with a cast of topiary characters. Imagine a topiary deer or turtle greeting everyone who walks outside. In addition, topiary can also be used to accent water features.

Another wonderful way to include the whimsical in your outer sanctum is with a succulent topiary. Succulents create living sculptures and can be used as focal points or centerpieces. Succulent topiary is somewhat different from other topiary. To achieve the correct shape, succulents are planted into special topiary forms. The forms are then covered with moss and the succulents are tucked into the moss. After the succulents grow, the topiary form becomes completely covered with them. So, all you see is the overall shape. Be sure and select low-growing plants like hen-and-chicks, spreading stonecrops, and Echeverias. Then use a variety of colors, shapes, and leaf types.

Your topiaries will be the hit of your outdoor space, and you will enjoy them for many years. J.S.

Garden Party Room

Traditional garden parties were elegant events where ladies wore beautiful hats and guests played croquet. The setting for a traditional Victorian garden party was a large, perfectly-kept lawn surrounded by shady trees and hordes of flowers in full bloom. Cold dishes, served by servants, were displayed on tables in a tent. Linens and centerpieces were elegant and extravagant.

We, however, live in the informal Hill Country. Large, immaculate lawns are inconsistent with drought, watering restrictions, rocky soil and the thousand other reasons most of us either do not have lawns at all or have very small ones. So we need to make some changes to tradition to define our Garden Party Rooms.

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I love the idea of a place for afternoon teas, morning coffees, bridal and baby showers, and other special occasions with twenty or more guests, and I am working toward just such a garden room.

A patio or deck with room for tables and sitting areas is the basis for this garden room. Shade is important and can be provided by trees, umbrellas, trellises, or other structural elements. Walkways to other areas of the garden will provide roaming room for guests and places for quiet conversations. Access to the house to replenish the food and beverage tables and for a guest powder room is important. We built a patio down a curved walkway away from the house. It is shaded in the mornings by a medium-sized oak tree and in the afternoon by a large cedar tree and smaller oaks. I am in the process of planting the surrounding area and building a walkway away from the patio to an area where I plan to place a fire pit for the grill and barbeques.

Once the stage has been established, the garden plants will provide a variety of textures, colors and scents. Soft, smooth textures and gentle colors are consistent with the elegant concept of a traditional garden party. Guests should be tempted to touch the foliage and smell the flowers. Pots plants, including grasses, can augment a landscape that might not be as developed as you would like for a party. If nothing is blooming, place some pots of blooming plants or colorful grasses around the area. Topiaries in pots can add interest to the décor. I am choosing border plantings of butterfly irises, several varieties of salvias, lantanas, Turks cap, rosemary, lavender, lambs ear and feather grass. Copper canyon daisies are already in place, and it will stay for now. Its odor might be a reason to move it away from the border and replace it with something with a broad colorful, preferably purple, leaf. Pots of ferns, mint and gardenias will complete my room. The gardenias live on the porch out of the reach of deer and will be moved to the patio for parties.

Furniture should be plentiful enough to allow guests to sit but not so crowded as to prohibit strolling around. Furniture from the house can be carried out for the party to fill in where needed. You might even try placing a Turkish rug in a seating area. Table linens, centerpieces, glassware, dishes and food are critical to a party, and anyone who wants a Garden Party Room will delight in making those decisions. Have a ball! P.H.

A Child's Place in the Garden

Our gardens have color, space, favorite plants, and the right mixture of sun, moisture and compost. But does our garden have wonder, excitement and wildness? Does our garden tickle all our senses? Most likely, we are choosing plants that stimulate memories of culinary, visual and medicinal purposes. Memories of discovery and wonderment often find their way into our gardens unconsciously. The child in all of us is manifested by our choices. So, to start this exciting journey for children we just need to teach what we are doing in our own gardens.

The First Cardinal Rule is No Rules! Correct ratios and timetables, “shoulds” and “should-nots” are too structured for kids in nature’s classroom. Kids have no rules. Kids will be attracted to plants that arouse their curiosity. Of course, they need instruction on what will work and what will not but not in grown-up terms. They need to know what parts of a plant will make them sick if ingested. Like their own body, they need to learn what a plant needs to thrive. Just like they often get sick after too much of a good thing, plants too will not produce without a balance of water, light and nutrients.

To capture kids and keep them hooked on gardening, stimulating plants and hands-on instruction should address all five senses. One of the first things to introduce is texture, smell and color. Here are some good starter plants to awaken a child’s senses: pumpkin (variety), sunflowers (huge), gourds (unusual shapes), corn (amazement), berries (almost instant gratification), hollyhocks (summer-long supply), carrots (small

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spaces big surprises), mimosa (plant moves in response to touch), poppies (crafts), tomatoes (snacking while in garden), trees (stability), alliums (magnet for butterflies), woolly lamb's ear (irresistible), four-o'clocks ("How does it know it's 4 o'clock?"), evening primroses (observation), radishes (fast), nasturtiums (easy and taste good), moon plant (self-sows) and lemon verbena (many uses and smells good).

Kids love to eat and snack time is any time kids are in the garden. Radish sandwiches, sun tea, strawberries wrapped in leaves of chocolate mint, Johnny jump-ups in ice and freeze, nibbling on corn when a few inches long, cherry tomatoes for on-the-go instant snack and other snacks that kids will discover for you. You are probably aware of the fun Sunflower House that kids plant, water and then use as a secret room. Also, the Pizza Garden is always an enjoyable learning and eating experience. Another great adventure is creating an Herbal Pathway that will tease the senses and teach herbal remedies.

Here is a fun, simple plan for an Herbal Pathway taken from *Roots Shoots Buckets and Boots* that will both educate and excite young gardeners. Create a simple meandering herbal path in nine easy steps. Start with dill. Stop and taste the foliage, flower buds or seeds. Dill has been used to calm an upset stomach. Next on the path, pick the seedpods from cilantro, called coriander. This has been used as a breath-freshener. Next stop, find some catnip. Collect leaves to make a cat toy. Next along the path find lemon balm. Crush the leaves and smell the sharp odor, then taste its flavor. Now half way down the herbal path, sit and close your eyes. Listen for the whir of flapping hummingbird wings, the buzz of bees and the musical call of birds. Walk a little more and come to the aloe plant. Split a leaf with your fingernail and spread a small amount onto your skin. This cool gel has been used to ease the pain of burns. Next on your herbal trail, come to peppermint. Rub these pungent leaves on your skin to discourage bugs. Along comes fennel. Nibble on this wispy, licorice-flavored plant. This herb has been said to suppress appetite. The final stop in your herbal path brings you to woolly lamb's ear. Touch and see why this soft plant has been used as a bandage.

Children really care deeply about nature. To help children capture their intrinsic wonder, make gardening and nature part of their lives. Nature creates in children a lasting attachment to the earth, and connects with them purpose, self-esteem, curiosity and love for growing things. The cycle of life that children learn by making nature and gardening their playground and classroom will last an entire lifetime. Soon, they too will be grown-ups stretching their curiosity by planting memories from some long ago lessons of nature. To further pique your curiosity and create lasting learning in kids, read *The Geography of Childhood, Why Children Need Wild Places*, by Gary Paul Nabhan and Stephen Trimble, Beacon Press, 1994 and *Roots Shoots Buckets & Boots*, by Sharon Lovejoy, Workman Publishing Co., 1999. M.T.S.

A Grilling Room

Hill Country lifestyles and weather almost require anyone who cooks to own some sort of outdoor cooking apparatus. Whether it is a simple smoker or tabletop grill to the coveted three-burner stainless steel grill with 48" of cooking space and overhead rotisserie, Texans love to cook outside. Combine our love of grilling with the resurgence of families growing their own vegetables and herbs, and we come extremely close to the perfect meal.

What if your grill is on a deck, 15 feet off the ground? Homegrown vegetables can still be at arms' reach. Space is no longer an issue. Try filling an old wheelbarrow with several varieties of lettuce and chard; grow tomatoes, cucumbers or peppers in a hanging basket upside down. Plant one whiskey barrel with eggplant, zucchini and pole beans and another with peppery nasturtiums, trailing rosemary, Greek oregano and cilantro. Add a Mexican lime bush to squeeze over your chicken while it smokes in fresh rosemary stems.

This garden room is perfect for those who have less time to tend their gardens and the beginner who wants to start simple before buying a tiller. Fresh food from the grill and a glass of local wine make July and August temperatures barely noticeable! J.R.

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A Rock, Not Rec, Room

I realize that some of you in the Hill Country would prefer to do more rock-less gardening. To those of you whose land was born full of rocks, maybe we can give you an idea or two on some ways both to use the rocks and to grow some pretty plants to develop a rock-garden area.

Traditionally, a rock garden is a naturalistic pile of rocks that features alpine plants. Rock gardening began to become successful in the West in the early 1900's when Reginald Farrer, a gardener, plant collector and writer from England, discovered the secret to growing alpine plants: very good drainage. In our area, forget the alpine plants and go with the naturalistic pile of rocks, probably because you HAVE a natural pile of rocks. You still need the very good drainage part, however.

As usual, start with a good plan. A good plan might mean using the natural rocks in your area and planning around them. The plan can also involve drawing your area, buying the rocks and arranging them in a natural and pleasing way. You should not plop the rocks on top of the soil, but rather dig out crevices and insert the rocks. Try to have the back buried more deeply than the front. If your land has a natural slope, that is even better for drainage.

Plants need soil, so be sure you have some deep pockets of soil for your plants. If you have no pockets of soil, deep or otherwise, stack smaller rocks around an area so you can add soil. Most rock garden plants like relatively poor soil. If the soil is too rich, the soil might grow lush beautiful plants, but the plant will be subject to freezing. If the soil is too compacted, it might suffocate the roots and prove hard for the plants to retain water. The recommended soil mix is coarse sand, compost and fine gravel.

Most of the plants native to the Hill Country will do well in a rock garden. The larger the rock, the larger the plants that can be used, provided there is enough soil for the plants roots.

Plants that drape over part of the rock add a softening touch to the garden room. To conserve water and discourage weeds, mulch heavily between plants. Experiment a little. Who knows what will do well for you?

A flowing stream or a dry, rocky streambed that meanders through the garden can be an added feature to a rock garden room. A flowing stream probably involves installing a circulation system and replacing the water lost through evaporation. A dry streambed involves buying "stream" rocks and laying them in sand or pea gravel.

Remember a Rock Room can be a garden spot that uses rocks as accent pieces to compliment and complement the plants you love. B.B.

July Gardening To-Do List

July is the beginning of downtime in our gardens. Water all planted areas deeply but infrequently during dry periods. Container plants need daily watering. Turn compost pile, continue adding new ingredients and keep moist. A lot of planning can be done sitting by the fan and sketching out a new bed. If you have always wanted a wildflower meadow, July is the month to solarize that unwanted patch of grass or weeds. The technique involves placing transparent polyethylene plastic over damp soil in the summer and is explained in more detail in one of the end citations. Solarize now and by October, you will be ready to plant your wildflowers.

Plant the following flowers: Ageratum, Ajuga, Alpine Aster, Purslane, Mexican Bush Sage, Vinca, and Zinnia.

Plant the following flower seeds: Castor Bean, Cosmos, morning glory, Gaillardia, Moonflower.

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Plant the following vegetable seeds: chard, sweet corn, cucumber, okra, black-eyed peas, summer and winter squash, eggplant in early July, beans and cantaloupe in late July.

Plant the following vegetables: Pumpkin, Sweet Potato, Eggplant, Peppers, okra varieties such as Emerald, Clemson Spineless, Cajun Delight, Dwarf Green, or Lee.

Large, healthy tomato and pepper transplants should be planted now through the first of August. The earlier the plants are planted and established, the greater chance of production before an early frost. Plant perennials like Black-eyed Susan, ornamental grasses and Mexican bush sage and desert plants like agaves, nolina, sotol and yucca.

To maintain fruit trees: Remove suckers from the base of fruit trees. They grow from the root system, or stock, and are a different variety from the top, which is called the scion. Suckers will quickly dominate the scion if left uncut. Figs are especially sensitive to dry soil. Fruit trees planted in containers need fertilizing, preferably organic, once a month.

To maintain other perennials: Prune dead limbs. Deadhead roses and perennials. Fertilize roses for fall blooms and continue to spray with liquid seaweed in morning.

Fertilizing activities: Give annuals a complete fertilizer. Water well before and after you apply. Fertilize bougainvillea, hibiscus and plumeria to keep them blooming through summer. Fertilize young fruit trees, but not pears, with a 3-1-2 ratio product at 1-2 cups per inch of trunk diameter. Continue with seaweed spray in the morning. Spray over and under leaves.

Two Comal Master Gardeners share their tips for July. Cliff Fleming suggests planting fall tomatoes by July 10 and spraying with liquid seaweed. If planting rows of beans, soak the row well the night before and the next morning. Do this until you are ready to plant. The seeds will propagate much sooner. Cliff follows the Old Farmer's Almanac for planting dates.

Harold Vogues said soil preparation is most important in July, along with cleaning up the garden beds. Harold suggests pulling out dead plants. Rotate plants. Do not plant tomatoes in the same plot you did in the spring. Spider mites are a big problem, and Harold controls these pests with Kelthane, taking care not to spray close to cultivation date. Mr. Vogues strongly recommends drip systems. M.T.S.

Credits: Garden Guide for Austin and Vicinity, published by the Travis County MG Association; Mr. Cliff Fleming and Mr. Harold Vogues of Comal Master Gardeners; http://www.ehow.com/how_4037_solarize-soil.html; <http://www.klru.org/ctg/tips/july.php>; <http://bexar-tx.tamu.edu>; www.plantanswers.com; www.naturalgardeners.com.

Author All About Herbs

The Comal Master Gardener's Herb SIG and The Antique Rose Emporium hosted Judy Barrett speaking about herbs and her book *What Can I Do With My Herbs?* on June 8 at ARE's Hacienda House. Judy took the group on a casual talking stroll through her herb garden and gave them many hints on how to use herbs. She delved into site selection, planting, companion planting, planting in shade, sun and water requirements. Reflecting the playful spirit of the talk, in the Q&A a participant asked why a particular herb was wasn't doing well in her garden. Judy inquired if it had full sun and enough water. When the reply was "Yes," Judy said, "Then move it to shade and don't water it as much."

Her newest book *What Can I Do With My Herbs?* offers many uses for each of the forty herbs she explores plus a final chapter on other good things to do with herbs. Judy also produces a bimonthly magazine *Home Grown* and has written two other books: *Tomatillos: A Gardener's Dream*, *A Cook's Delight* and *How to Become an Organic Gardener in Seven Easy Steps*. She resides in Taylor, Texas.

July Gardening Opportunities

Wednesday, July 1 – Friday, July 3, 8:30 am – 4:30 pm. **Native Wonders**, RavenStar Outdoor Education Center in Torrey Park in New Braunfels (intersection of Torrey Street and Gruene Road.) Learn about the species that make the ecosystems of Central Texas so amazing and search for native plants and animals as we visit Honey Creek Natural Area. For registration information, please email us at camp@ravenstaroutdoors.org or call 830-626-1776.

Monday, July 13, 7:30 pm. San Antonio Rose Society Member Meeting at the San Antonio Garden Center. This meeting is the Annual Ice Cream Social & Birthday Bash with a “Bring & Buy” silent auction of rose-related treasures. Contact Eddie Garcia 654-1263 for information.

Saturday, July 18, 10 am – 11 am. **Watersaver Walk**. Information about planning, planting and maintaining a low water use landscape year-round. San Antonio Botanical Garden Guides, San Antonio Botanical Garden 555 Funston.

Saturday, July 18, 6 pm. Government Canyon SNA. **Explore the Canyon**. Knowledgeable guides discuss the flora, fauna, natural and cultural history of this awesome natural area on this exploration. Length of walk and interpretive topic will vary, depending on the group. Open to all ages; group size limited to the first 15 people. Dress appropriately, sunscreen and hat recommended, and wear sturdy footwear appropriate for rough trails; bring a liter of water and a snack. Meet at the Visitors Center by the rainwater-harvesting tower. No pets please; Subject to cancellation. For more information and to confirm program, call 210-688-9055, ext 291.

Mitchell Lake Audubon Center. Explore a place where nature is continually renewing itself, where birds, insects, and wild plants surprise you with a new spectacle around every corner. Visit a place where families, school groups and individuals can reflect and learn about the natural world just minutes from downtown San Antonio. 10750 Pleasanton Rd. in San Antonio, Texas. The entrance gate to the Center is located in south San Antonio, on Moursund Blvd. Take Loop 410, exit 46, Moursund Blvd and go south 0.7 mile. The gate is on the left. Call 210-628-1639 or email mlac@audubon.org

Ongoing, 9:30 am – 6 pm. **Butterfly Haus at Wildseed Farms**, Fredericksburg. Hundreds of native Texas butterflies inhabit the 3,000-square-foot Butterfly Haus. Open 7 days a week. Butterflies are wondrous, brightly colored insects with two pairs of large, beautiful wings that are covered with iridescent scales. Like all insects, butterflies have three body parts, six jointed legs, compound eyes, an exoskeleton and a pair of antennae. The Lone Star State is home to more than 400 species of butterflies. Explore the magnificent beauty of these incredible creatures in the Butterfly Haus at Wildseed Farms. Share the wonder and awe of their amazing life cycle from tiny eggs, to caterpillars, to chrysalises and then to graceful adults. Call 800-848-0078 for more information.

Saturdays, Ongoing, 9 am. **Lawn and Garden Show**, KWED Radio, 1580 AM. Call the Show and get your gardening question answered on the air: 830-372-1580 or 1-800-361-1580.

Boggy Creek Farm, Open Year-Round, Wednesday and Saturday, 9 am - 1 pm. For more information, go to <http://www.boggycreekfarm.com/>

July 2009 CE Opportunities

Saturday, July 11, 10 – 11 am. **Becoming a Garden Detective: Diagnosing Plant Problems**. Zilker Botanical Garden, Austin. Just when you think you’ve done everything right by your plants, one of them starts to go downhill. One of the biggest challenges for gardeners is correctly diagnosing plant problems and finding effective, safe solutions. Is your plant dying because of an insect, environmental or disease problem? Join us to learn the causes of plant problems, the process for diagnosing plant problems and preventive garden management techniques. **1 CE**

Saturday, July 11, 9 am – Noon. **Rainwater Harvest Workshop** presented by John Kight, engineer and rainwater catchment owner. Meet at Cibolo Nature Center parking lot and caravan to Kight installation. Seating is limited. 140 City Park Rd., Boerne, TX. \$20 members/\$30 non-members of the Center. Call 830-249-4616 to register. **3 CE**

Monday, July 20, Noon – 3 pm. “**Essentials of Gardening**,” GVST Essentials Class Series. San Antonio Garden Center, 3310 N. New Braunfels Ave., San Antonio. Series continues every 3rd Monday of every month to December 2009. Each class covers 2 topics that coincide with the GVST's Almanac of Gardening, presented by leading South Texas horticulture experts. Each class will focus on a gardening topic of the month. The classes are fun and interactive. Bring your hand-pruning tools and have them sharpened by Dr. Phix-It for an additional \$2 donation per tool. Bring your brown bag lunch; light refreshments served \$5 donation. Call 210-251-8101 or e-mail info@GardeningVolunteers.org for more information. **3 CE**

Saturday, July 11, 9:30 am. **Herbs for the Garden, Kitchen, and Bath**. Savor the joys of an edible and useful landscape! Herbalist, horticulturalist and designer Diane Lewis will discuss the herbs best suited to this area and show you how to incorporate them into your everyday life. You'll find out how to cultivate, harvest and store them and you will have fun learning how to make a relaxing tea blend and bath salts to take home. You will also tour the herb garden at the Botanical Garden. Fee: \$43. A \$10 food fee payable to the instructor covers cost of herbal tea, bath salts and an herbal-based snack lunch. To register, visit www.communityed.neisd.net. **CE=Length of course.**

ON-LINE CEU OFFERINGS:

Ohio State University Plant Pathology Training Course. It is labeled “New Non-Credit Course: Sick Plants in a Hungry World.” What is this course? It is a ten module (not highly technical) information course you take at your own pace, within a ten week time limit after starting, at a cost of \$35. Time spent on your computer taking the modules, reading the supplied reading assignments, and taking the self-tests, can count as Master Gardener Advanced Training hours. To learn more about the class, go to: Online Plant Pathology Training Course Info. To register for the class, visit: Online Plant Pathology Training Course Registration.

National Gardening Association's horticulturists created the Learning Garden, a series of online courses on plants and gardening for every gardener. The course fees range from \$14.95 (for Perennials, Vegetables & Annual Flowers) to \$35 (for Botany I, Botany II). Go to <http://store.yahoo.com/nga-gardenshop/lg.html> CE base on credit earned.

Cornell University, Department of Horticulture, offers Organic Gardening, an on-line 8-week course. The course covers one topic during each of the 8 weeks. With a strong foundation in soil health and its impact on plant health, students then explore tried-and-true and cutting-edge techniques for all different kinds of garden plants – annuals and perennials, food plants and ornamentals. Be prepared to spend 2-4 hours a week completing the course. Being an active participant in the discussion boards brings the subject to life, and enriches the learning for all. This course is aimed at those with some basic gardening experience. It includes a number of hands-on activities as well as a group discussion board, quizzes, and readings. Through on-line discussion students share their experiences and contribute to everyone's learning experience. Cost: \$300. The course is non-credit. Certificate of completion to all who participate and finish the course. <http://hort.cals.cornell.edu/cals/hort/teaching/distance-learning/organic-gardening.cfm> **CE based on completion of course.**

TAMU AgriLife Extension's Earth Kind program has on-line curriculum presenting core information on environmental stewardship with 12 on-line training modules. Progress is tracked automatically, and results are forwarded to the MG Coordinator. Go to <http://earthkind.tamu.edu/MGtraining.html>. **CE based on class hours, unless otherwise specified by course.**

Horticulture Gardening Institute at Michigan State University in partnership with **Learn 2Grow**. Fees range from \$19.99 to \$29.99 per course. On-line courses of the titles range from specialty topics and general gardening how-to's. Go to <http://www.gardeninginstitute.com>. **CE credit based on proof of completion of course.**

Irrigation Tutorials. Free. Tutorials provide information on sprinkler/drip irrigation design, installation, filters, pumping systems & scheduling. Go to <http://www.irrigationtutorials.com>

University of Vermont, non-credit course, "**Herbaceous Garden Plants On-line,**" which covers common annual & perennial flowers of temperate climates and herbaceous garden plant groups (ornamental grasses, roses, aquatics, ferns, bulbs, & wildflowers). Self-paced and available for one year following receipt of access codes. Course fee: \$99; notes and CD: \$10. <http://pss.uvm.edu/ppp/hgpo/hgpo.htm>. **CE credit based on proof of completion of course.**

Virginia Tech. Annuals and Perennials. Diane Relf, Professor. The course is self-paced and is available for one year following registration. This lesson provides an introduction to annuals and perennials. Successful completion of the lesson requires no prior knowledge of the subject area. This course is a collection of resources categorized by annuals, bulbs, perennials, and monthly gardening tips. Upon completion of this lesson you should be able to:

- Understand the specific needs of annuals, perennials, and bulbs.
- Cultivate healthy gardens by properly sowing, handling, and propagating plants.
- Utilize each month of the year to foster attractive, blooming flowers.
- Creatively design flower beds using color, a variety of gardening techniques, and proper care for specific plant needs. <http://alumni.iddl.vt.edu/course.php?id=325>

\$25. 1 CE with proof of completion of course.

Dept of Horticulture at Cornell University offers on-line lectures, virtual field trips, discussion, & quizzes to engage you in history, botanical principles, & horticultural applications. <http://hosts.cce.cornell.edu/hortdl/> **CE based on completion of course.**

Online Botany Module offered by Oregon State University Extension Service; excellent Basic Botany refresher. <http://irrigationtutorials.com/> Free Irrigation Tutorials provide information on sprinkler/drip irrigation design, installation, filters, pumping systems & scheduling. <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/mg/botany/> **CE based on completion of course.**

Iowa State University offers an online, non-credit course Horticultural Series; see website for dates. <http://www.lifelearner.iastate.edu/learners/hortOnline.htm> **CE based on completion of course.**

CMG Committee Reports

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Executive Committee will have its monthly meeting on Wednesday, July 1, at 10 am.

HERITAGE ROSE GARDEN

Rose garden workdays will be July 8 and 22, at 8 am. Deadheading and weeding. For more info, especially proper pruning techniques, contact Harriet Aristeguieta at 830-609-1311 or haintx@att.net.

KIDS IN BLOOM

We will be having a Planning Committee Meeting on July 23 at the Extension Office from 9 am to noon. Everyone is welcome to join in planning and strategy for the upcoming Fall School Gardens and Teacher Training Class. If you would like to help or to sign up to be a liaison for one of the school gardens, please come or contact Nancy Pappas at azop@gvtc.com or 830-885-6016.

BUTTERFLY GARDENS AT THE BULVERDE/SPRING BRANCH LIBRARY

The workday for the Bulverde/Spring Branch Library Butterfly Garden is the fourth Wednesday, July 22 from 8 to 10 am. We welcome your participation. Contact Peggy Hamm at khamma@gvtc.com or 830-438-9023 if you would like to join this group.

NEW LIFE BUTTERFLY GARDENS

The Butterfly Garden workday will be June 15 at 9 am. For more information, contact Peggy Carmody at 830-226-5216 or carmody@gvtc.com or co-chair Lois Ricci at poepjr@aol.com or 830-899-5362.

COMAL COUNTY FAIR GROUNDS

The Fairgrounds committee will be meeting at 8 am on Thursday, June 18. Again, we will be meeting at the Grant Street garden area. We will be pruning. Bring water as summer has arrived! You can RSVP Aleta. If you have any questions, email Aleta Meyer at aleta_meyer@hotmail.com or call her at 830-629-2929.

LINDHEIMER GARDENS

Lindheimer Garden workday will be July 14 at 8:30 am. Please join us. Park across from the Lindheimer Haus on Comal Street, unless you are early enough to get one of the few parking permits. Contact Germaine Tuff at 830-629-1127 or germainetuff@hotmail.com for details.

NEWSLETTER

Contact Editor Bonnie Leitch at 830-660-2335 or bleach@earthlink.net for information about contributing to the newsletter. If you have any information about other gardening activities that should be in the newsletter, please contact Julie Siliven at rejh@gvtc.com or 830-885-2665.

HOSPICE NEW BRAUNFELS

The Hospice committee might have a workday on July 18, from 9 to 11 am, weather permitting. We will weed and prune as needed. Tom will call regular workers about working. If interested in working with Hospice, please contact Tom Carson at tom.carson@us.fujitsu.com or 830-606-5890. If communicating by email, use the subject line "Community Services – Hospice"

EXTENSION OFFICE GARDENS

The Extension Committee will have its regular workday on Monday, July 6, at 9 am. We will be weeding and deadheading. The Herb Garden will meet at 9 am on Tuesday, July 28. If you have any questions, contact Sharon Deeny at dendeeny@msn.com or 830-935-4209, or Linda Hardwick at usnb@aol.com or 830-625-8311.

WEBSITE

Check the website on-line at the website <http://grovesite.com/mg/comal> for new "how to" videos.

Comal Gardener

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Deadline for submission is the 20th of the month preceding publication.

Comal Master Gardeners Association Bylaws

"Members must complete recertification once every year. Recertification will include 12 hours of training, 12 hours of approved volunteer work and attendance at a minimum of two general membership meetings." (Article III, Section 4)