



March 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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Number 8

Comal Master Gardeners Launch 'Ask a Master Gardener' Campaign

Thanks to Donna Welch's brilliant idea, we have a new campaign: **Ask a Master Gardener**. CMG has had a phone bank since the first class, but it now has a new name, creative energy and motivation and, most importantly, major promotion to get the word out that this service exists.

The phone bank provides a place where gardeners in our community can ask questions and receive "research-based" answers to their plant problems. The phone bank has a new email address and telephone number through the AgriLife Extension Office: askamastergardener@co.comal.tx.us, 830-620-3440.

The campaign starts on Monday, March 2. Class XII members are asked to work with their mentors for the first time at the phone/e-mail bank. Bumper stickers are on the way to advertise this new campaign. There will be advertisements in the newspapers to get this campaign off the ground. If you can think of other ideas to get the word out, please contact Karen Scherrer (kascherrer@yahoo.com, 512-581-2542) or Donna Welch (welch40@sbcglobal.net, 830-627-2824).

Major Changes Proposed in By-Laws

Catherine Hall, president-elect and By-Law Committee chair, presented her committee's proposed changes to the organization's by-laws at the February meeting. Members will decide on the changes at the March meeting. At that time, CMGs will vote item by item, either to adopt the change or to keep the current wording.

Several of the changes involve improving clarity, improving specificity or aligning the organization's by-laws to Robert's Rules of Order and other sources. The duties of the Treasurer are increased slightly, and the budgetary duties of volunteer and standing committees are clarified.

Besides these, there are three significant changes:

- the establishment of a new office of Membership Secretary whose responsibility will be to encourage class members to complete their certification and to promote the retention of current members.
- the establishment and definition of a new standing committee, the Website Committee.
- the redefinition of the Executive Board, limiting voting privileges to elected officials.

The By-Laws Committee, consisting of Richard Wackerbarth, Willie Hagen, Patty Godfrey and Nat Warner, spent countless hours on the proposed changes. Catherine encouraged CMGs to contact any member of the committee about any concerns or questions involving the proposed changes.

President's Corner

By Karen Scherrer

Our By-Laws Committee was chaired by our president-elect, Catherine Hall. Catherine presented the proposed changes to the by-laws at the February general meeting. We will vote on the proposed bylaws at the next general meeting on March 24, so **please plan on attending**.

We will ask for a motion, have discussion, and vote article by article at meeting. This will not be a time to rewrite any of the proposed by-laws. The vote will be taken to approve or disapprove each article. In order for a proposed change to take place, the motion will need to pass by a two-thirds vote. For example, if we have 60 members in attendance, 40 of the 60 members present must vote to pass the motion. You must be a member in good standing in order to vote. Since there are a specific required number of votes necessary in order to pass the motion, the presiding officer has elected to ask for a show of hands.

A big thank you goes out to our By-Laws Committee of Catherine Hall, Richard Wackerbarth, Willie Hagen, Patty Godfrey and Nat Warner for working numerous hours preparing the proposed changes to the by-laws. The By-Laws Committee welcomes all questions and suggestions. Please contact a committee member with any concerns or questions prior to the general meeting on March 24.

CMG March General Meeting

Tuesday, March 24 at 6 pm

Speaker to be announced

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•••Garden Posts•••

- **The position of chairperson for the Cactus Gardens** at the Extension Office is still open. If interested, please contact Karen Scherrer at kascherrer@yahoo.com or 512-581-2542.
- **The March Herb SIG** will be held at the Extension Office on Monday, March 9 at 10 am. Lois Ricci, Peggy Carmody and Marty Godfrey will present *Ginger and Other Spices*. Please RSVP to Marty Hopmann at chrishop@gvtc.com by Monday, March 2, if you plan to join the fun. Further details will be furnished to those attending.
- **The Bulverde Garden Club is sponsoring an Azalea & Garden Tour** March 27 – 29 in Tyler. Participants can visit seven private gardens with blooming azaleas and other beautiful features. A chartered bus will depart San Antonio on Friday, March 27 at 7:00 am, and will return on Sunday. The cost for the tour is \$265. A deposit of \$100 is needed by March 2. For more information, contact Donna Vickers, 830-980-8019; (dhowevick@yahoo.com)

- **The Herb Affair Earth Day** will take place on Saturday, April 25, from 10 am to 3 pm at Landa Park in New Braunfels. Contact Evelyn Nielson if you want to sign up but haven't yet done so. Bring seeds to the March general meeting for the event.
- **The Herb Affair** will be held on May 9 from 10 am to 3 pm at the Antique Rose Emporium. Mark your calendars! The theme this year is *Herbs in the Home*. Mary Moses and Ray Elizondo have agreed to co-chair the event this year. If you are interesting in helping this year, please notify Mary at marycm@satx.rr.com or 210-279-5748.
- **We need to all thank Cindy Burch** for stepping up to the plate and volunteering to be the new chairperson of the Herb Garden at the Extension Office. This position has been vacant for several months. The workday for the Herb Garden will be at 9:00 am on the fourth Tuesday of the month (the same day that we hold our general meeting.) Cindy is open to suggestions and is excited to learn more about herbs.

Classified Ad: Help Needed – Mentor Chairperson Class XIII

We are looking for a chairperson to be in charge of the Mentorship Program for Class XIII in 2010. Mentoring is one of the State Master Gardening Goals. Donna Welch took on the awesome responsibility this first year for Class XII. Donna has organized the Mentoring Program so that it will be easy for the new chairperson to step in for Class XIII.

It would be a tremendous advantage for the new chairperson to volunteer now and participate in the Class XII evaluations to learn more about the program. Please let Karen Scherrer or Donna Welch know if you are interested.

New Class Schedules March Topics

March 4, 1:30 - 5:00. Annuals, Biennials, Perennials and Bulbs. David Will, native plant specialist and landscaper. **3 CE**

March 11, 1:30 - 5:00. Organic Vegetable Gardening. Malcolm Beck, author and founder of Garden-Ville. **3 CE**

March 18, 1:30 – 3:10. Landscape Trees: Planting and Pruning. Dr. Tom Harris, master pruner and gardening columnist. **1 CE**

March 18, 3:20 – 5:00. Planning the Home Landscape. David Will, native plant specialist and landscaper. **1 CE**

March 25, 1:30-5:00. Compost, Drip Irrigation and Fertilization. Dr. Tom Harris, master pruner and gardening columnist. **3 CE**

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

Plant Your Own Victory Garden

By Lu Allen, Barbi Briney, Ray Elizondo, Viola Espinosa, Peggy Hamm, Mary T. Salmon, Julie Siliven and Marlene Skaggs

During World War I and World War II, the United States government asked citizens to plant gardens to support the war effort. In 1943, Americans planted more than 20 million Victory Gardens and the harvest accounted for nearly a third of all vegetables consumed that year.

With today's uncertain economy and increased awareness of the energy required to plant, process, package and transport our food, this is a great time to reconsider the Victory Garden philosophy. Here are some ideas and tips to help you get started on your own Victory Garden.

KITCHEN GARDENS

Kitchen gardeners are in tune with the natural world, the weather, and the seasons. They look for ways of working peacefully and harmoniously with nature, rather than fighting against her. They are stewards of the land, whether it be a farm or a window-box. (Quoted from www.kitchengardeners.org)

Don't you just hate it when you are in the middle of a fantastic soup or casserole project and you discover you need an herb? Darn! I forgot to buy that at the store. Well, this has happened many times to all of us. That is why a kitchen garden is so handy. It is what it is...for the kitchen.

Kitchen gardens have been an essential element of home cooking for centuries. France is famous for kitchen gardens (called potages) that have everything from herbs to vegetables. Unlike France, we don't have open-air markets to shop for the freshest vegetables needed if a fresh ingredient is forgotten at the store. This is the beauty of having kitchen gardens.

Due to the economy, many of us should turn to kitchen gardens. Large plots are not necessary to grow herbs and vegetables for our daily meals. Items for a family grow nicely in square-foot gardens, pots and any other small containers. A good amount of sunshine, proper soil and drainage is essential. Place your garden close to your kitchen. If you can view your garden from your kitchen window, you will be reminded of the treasures available for cooking. Walk your garden daily for meal planning and insect control -- not to mention stress relieving.

Kitchen gardens are planted with favorite plants you use often in your recipes. For example:

- For Italian food, think basil, parsley, oregano and marjoram.
- For Mexican food, consider cilantro, Serrano chile, epazote and Mexican mint marigold.
- For German dishes, try savory, dill, lemon balm, garden sage and fennel.
- For soups or stews, plant chives, garlic, onions, tarragon and thyme.
- For salads, try Swiss chard or other unusual lettuce varieties that can withstand cold and warm weather. Salad greens are perfect for small places and can be planted in spring or fall if planted in containers that can be moved for protection.
- And don't forget tomatoes, peas, radishes and rosemary.

Edible flowers are not only pretty in the garden, they are delicious in salads and other dishes. Try lemon marigold, nasturtium, rose, scented geranium, lavender, daylily and violets. There is no flavor that matches that of home-grown vegetables and herbs. A major problem may be supply -- produce is likely to be eaten on the spot and may not make it to the kitchen!

Start small and begin with your favorite herbs or veggies. For best results, use healthy soil, compost, mulch and natural fertilizers. Refer to the resources below. Of course, for a truly healthy kitchen garden, do not use pesticides. So, whether you have one pot, or several raised beds, plant your kitchen garden and spoil yourself! (M.T.S.)

References: *Designing the New Kitchen Garden: An American Potager Handbook* by Jennifer R. Bartley; Portland: Timber Press, 2006. http://marysnest.typepad.com/marys_nest/my-kitchen-garden/;
<http://www.gardeners.com/How-to-Plant-a-Kitchen-Garden/8013,default,pg.html>;
<http://www.squarefootgardening.com/>

RADICCHIO (*Cichorium intybus*, Asteraceae)

Radicchio is a member of the chicory family and several varieties are grown in Italy. The variety of radicchio usually seen in the United States is *radicchio di Chioggia*. It is about the size of a grapefruit and is maroon with white veins in the leaves. It adds color to salads and it can also be grilled, roasted or fried. The bitterness, due to intybin, mellows with cooking. Intybin has been touted to have medicinal properties since the days of Pliny, but scientific evidence is lacking. Radicchio is high in magnesium and potassium and low in calories (www.gourmetsleuth.com/radicchio.)

Radicchio is easy to grow in the spring or the fall garden. It has a shallow root system and requires frequent, shallow watering. Bitterness is more pronounced if it is not watered frequently. Radicchio will mature in about three months. If planted in the fall garden, it may be possible to harvest the head and leave the root to winter-over. Protect plants from frost by covering them with something like a pot turned upside down. They will grow again in the spring and may produce multiple crops. The root may also be eaten much like a radish or mixed with coffee like other chicories.

Try this leafy vegetable the Italian way by quartering a cleaned head and brushing it with olive oil. Then season the radicchio with salt and pepper and grill over moderately hot coals. Cover and turn every 10 minutes until the outer leaves are browned and the hearts are tender. It will take about 20 to 30 minutes. Check out other recipes on www.radicchio.com (P.H.)

ARUGULA (*Eruca sativa*)

Arugula has become a common salad vegetable in the United States in recent years. It is native to the Mediterranean region and has traditionally been a wild plant. Commercial growing in the past 20 years has made it more available and thus more popular.

Arugula is a green, loose leaved, open lettuce-type plant. The leaves are deeply pinnately lobed with four to ten small lateral lobes and a large terminal lobe. As a seedling, it looks similar to dandelion. Arugula is an annual plant and will reseed easily.

Since it does not need a great deal of water, Arugula does well in Hill Country gardens. Plant seed in the early spring and start harvesting leaves in about three weeks. Keep the larger leaves picked, and the plant will continue to produce for months. Allow a couple of plants to go to seed to have a new crop in warm spring days. Use this peppery green in salads, as a garnish on meat platters or on pizza.

Protect both Arugula and Radicchio from deer and other salad-loving critters. (P.H.)

GROWING COMPANION PLANTS FOR VEGETABLE GARDENS

“Plants are conscious of the company they keep. Some help other plants to grow, while others repel insects or even other plants. And there is no accounting for taste---plants prefer some strange bedfellows....”

This quote is from the Introduction to the book *A-Z of Companion Planting* by Pamela Allardice. It is the best book I have found for tips on growing all sorts of vegetables, fruits, flowers and herbs by using companion plants.

Although many of us think of companion planting as a relatively new concept, it has been practiced for centuries. According to Ms. Allardice, the ancient Roman agriculturist, Varro, declared “Large walnut trees close by make the border of the farm sterile.” One thousand and nine hundred years later, Canadians in Ontario reached the same conclusion.

Since many of you are getting ready to plant a vegetable garden, here are a few suggestions from Ms. Allardice on companion plants. Tomatoes like to grow near herbs such as parsley, onions, chives and particularly basil and sage. They are also compatible with asparagus, peas, celery and carrots. Companion-planting with marigold and nasturtiums will help keep the aphids away from young shoots.

All beans thrive near summer savory. This herb improves the beans’ flavor and size. In addition, beans and potatoes always do well together. The potatoes protect the beans against Mexican bean beetle and the beans return the favor by repelling Colorado potato beetle. Potatoes do well with peas because they thrive on the nitrogen secretions from the pea roots in the soil.

Pennyroyal is a useful companion plant, for cabbage because it deters cabbage maggots. Plant a crop of mustard close by Brussels sprouts to draw insects away. The carrot fly maggot often attacks young carrots, so plant onion, rosemary, wormwood or sage as a companion plant to repel this pest. Grow lavender near eggplant to help keep aphids away.

A good companion crop of marigolds will help cucumbers repel nematode attacks. Lettuce and radishes thrive when planted together since lettuce protects the radish from the radish beetle. Nasturtium is the idea companion plant for zucchini. It protects the zucchini from aphids and the bright orange and red flowers look terrific next to the glossy, green vegetable.

These are just a few examples of great companion plants. So separate your rows of vegetables with a strip of their specific companions and watch them grow. May your garden be a companionable one! (J.S.)

A DILLY OF A GARDEN

Many herbs can be grown with vegetables as companion plants. They provide a spicy additive to cooked vegetables or other dishes, and many provide food for butterfly larvae. Dill is an ideal choice for all of these reasons.

Ferny-leafed, quick-growing dill is a native to the Mediterranean region of Europe, the West Indies, southern Russia and central and southern Asia. It is also widely cultivated in Germany, North America and England.

This aromatic, flavorful plant thrives in a sunny location. It is quick to germinate from seed. Plant seeds after the last frost. For a continuous crop, sow seeds about every two weeks. Thin the plants to one every ten inches. Dill can reach three feet tall, having a rather “weedy,” fennel-like appearance. Try to plant in a sheltered area as the tall, hollow stems can be damaged by strong winds. About mid-summer, flat umbels of yellow flowers appear followed by the fruit/seeds.

For a compact cultivar that is regarded as the best for seed production, try Bouquet. Fernleaf is also a good plant as it is low-growing and slow to bolt.

The leaves can be picked for culinary use in the spring and early summer. In late summer, harvest the seeds. Use the fresh, tangy leaves in fish dishes -- dill is particularly tasty with poached or grilled salmon. Dill also gives potato salad extra zip. In Scandinavian and Polish countries, dill is used to flavor sour cream, sauces and vegetables. Dill can also season eggs, soups, vinegars, bread and potatoes. The seeds, with a taste similar to caraway, are used to pickle gherkins, cucumbers and sauerkraut.

Remember to plant enough dill to share with the butterflies. The larval or caterpillar stage of the black swallowtail loves to feed on this herb. For butterfly identification purposes, check this website for pictures of the black swallowtail in its adult and larval stages: <http://www.pbbase.com/rcm1840/lifecycleofblsw> (M.S.)

GROWING A SALSA GARDEN

I just love salsa and I love gardening! What better way to enjoy a fresh salsa than with ingredients grown in my own garden.

When buying canned salsa at the store, you get extra ingredients and preservatives you do not need or want, so making your own with fresh vegetables and herbs is very tasty and satisfying. You can vary the recipe to your liking – making smooth or chunky salsa from mild to very hot. It is your own combination of ingredients that will make it yours.

After choosing your plants, determine the size of your garden and place it where it will get at least six hours of sunlight and where it is close to a water source. Tomatoes are the most important part of any salsa. Plan on a couple of varieties in case one grows better than the other. If you have the space, the more tomatoes you plant, the better. Some of the most popular varieties include Celebrity, Better Boy, Early Girl and Roma tomatoes.

Another important part of salsa is the peppers. Choose easy-to-grow peppers like Jalapeños and/or Serranos. Cilantro is the accent that makes a salsa complete, and it is also very easy to grow. Onions are a must, and they do not take a lot of room in the garden.

You can start small with a four-or-five-foot-square, and expand the following season. Prepare the area by turning the soil and working in compost. Next, you need to decide whether to start with seeds, which you bury two to three times the depth of their diameter. If starting with seedlings or small plants, plant as deep as they are planted in the container. Be sure to have row covers handy until the threat of freeze has passed (usually March 15 in our area). You can also plant in containers if you do not have enough room in your yard. Remember to water more often, as moisture evaporates quickly in pots.

There are several websites that provide detailed information on selecting and growing tomatoes, tomatillos, onions, garlic, peppers, chilies and herbs. Plant Answers is probably the best.

With a little effort and planning, you can enjoy fresh homemade salsa all year. Mary Salmon and I will be featuring an ethnic herbs booth at the “Herb Affair” in May at the Rose Emporium. I hope you will come by our booth and taste our delicious home-grown salsas! (V.E.)

CULTIVATING GARLIC AND ONIONS

Both garlic and onions are members of the Lily family. They are on the stinky side of the family tree. Members of the *Alliums* species, garlic and onions are some of the oldest known herbs. Garlic dates back 4,000 years and onions were cultivated 3,500 years ago. A garlic hieroglyph was engraved on the big pyramid at Giza, Egypt, and the Pharaoh Tutankhamen was buried with garlic by his side. Onions probably originated in Asia and Egypt, where they were worshiped as a symbol of eternity because of their spherical shape and concentric rings.

There are many types of garlic (*Alliums sativum* and *Alliums scorodoprasum*). The supermarket usually sells the large “soft-neck type.” This garlic is easiest to grow in warm climates and can be stored for a longer time. The home gardener often prefers the “hard-neck type” with its large cloves, good flavor and ease of growing in cool climates. German and Italian purple garlic are also grown in cool climates. The largest type is the Elephant garlic, which has a milder flavor and giant bulbs that can weigh more than a pound.

Garlic has been known for its medicinal purposes through the ages. A recently discovered Egyptian papyrus dating from 1,500 B.C. listed 22 common ailments garlic was recommended to cure or ease, including lack of stamina, heart disease, tumors and even black magic. In November 2006, Italian researchers concluded that eating a lot of garlic and /or onions **may** help prevent some cancers.

Garlic is also used as a flea and tick deterrent. Spray pets’ beds with garlic juice and put a little juice in their drinking water. Warning! This will only make their doggie breath worse (if that is possible!). You can also put a clove of garlic in dried beans to prevent weevils. To make a garlic pesticide or fungicide, puree five or six cloves and a few jalapenos in a blender with two cups of water; strain; put in spray bottle, and use on your plants.

Garlic has been grown as a companion plant for hundreds of years. It is supposed to benefit growth and to repel some insects on several plants, but it has a negative effect on peas, beans and asparagus.

It is best to plant garlic in the fall to give the bulbs a chance to develop strong roots before winter. However, I have planted bulbs at other times and have produced healthy bulbs by the next year. Garlic crops should be rotated every two years to prevent soil-borne diseases. You can order garlic bulbs from a catalogue, buy them at a garden supply store, or even plant bulbs purchased at grocery stores.

Onions (*Alliums Lilaceae*) have been an important part of civilized man’s diet for ages. According to some accounts, onions were first used to cover the taste of less-than-fresh meat. Onions were once worshipped in Egypt and they were the only vegetables honored in gold images. The Egyptians also fed onions to their slaves to build their stamina. Ancient Greek athletes ate large quantities of onions to lighten the balance of their blood. In Rome, gladiators were rubbed down with onion juice to firm up their muscles. Onions traveled to the Americas with the Puritans. Who knows, maybe they were served the first Thanksgiving.

Onions have been cultivated for medicinal purposes since the Middle Ages when physicians used onions as an antibiotic and prescribed them for headaches and snakebites. Today, the National Cancer Institute reports that onions contain antioxidants that help block cancer; in addition, they appear to lower cholesterol.

There are many types of onions, ranging from small pretty chives and long green table onions to bulb onions in various colors of red, yellow and white. All enhance our foods, our taste buds and even our medicine cabinets. Eat and enjoy. Bon Appetit!

(B.B.)

References: *The Complete book of Herbs* by Lesley Bremness; *Readers Digest 1001 Hints and Tips for your Garden*; Magic Valley Growers.Com; GoogoBits.Com, the History of Garlic

GROWING EGGPLANT

Eggplant (*Solanum melongena*) is a cold-sensitive vegetable that requires a long warm growing season for best yields. It is a native to southern and eastern Asia, where it has been cultivated since remote antiquity for its fleshy fruit. The fruit is a large, egg-shaped berry, varying from dark purple to red, yellowish or white. The color and shape of the white variety is the source of the common name. It is sometimes striped and has a glossy surface.

The eggplant was introduced to America by the Spaniards. In the United States, ornamental purple and white varieties were described as early as 1806. A mere fifty years ago, many varieties of eggplant grown in America were for ornamental use only.

One of the most popular varieties of eggplant in North America looks like a large purple, pear-shaped egg. People in other parts of the world, especially the Orient, prefer varieties with small elongated fruits that can be cooked whole. In Japan, eggplant is the third or fourth most important vegetable after the sweet potato, radish and perhaps the Chinese cabbage.

The culture of eggplant is similar to that of bell peppers, with transplants being set in the garden after all danger of frost is past. Eggplants are slightly larger than pepper plants and should be spaced farther apart. The plants require careful attention for a good harvest. Small-fruited, exotic-colored and ornamental varieties can be grown in containers and used for decorations.

Eggplants are available in a cornucopia of colors, including lavender, jade green, orange and yellow-white. They range in sizes and shapes from that of a small tomato to a large zucchini or squash.

While the different varieties vary slightly in taste and texture, eggplant generally has a pleasantly bitter taste and a spongy texture. In many recipes, eggplant is a complementary ingredient that balances the surrounding flavors of other pronounced ingredients.

Varieties of eggplant range from large oval fruit to elongated and ornamental specimens. Large oval fruits include Dusky, Epic, Black Bell, Black Magic, Classic, Black Beauty, Burpee Hybrid and Ghostbuster. Some elongated fruit varieties are Ichiban, Slim Jim and Little Fingers. One variety of the ornamental eggplant is called Easter Egg, which is a small white, egg-sized fruit that turns yellow at maturity.

Eggplant can be baked, grilled, steamed or sautéed. It is versatile and works well with tomatoes, onions, garlic and cheese. Eggplant is used in a wide variety of cuisines from Japanese to Spanish. It is often stewed in dishes such as French ratatouille, Italian melanzane alla parmigiana and Greek moussaka and is used in a number of Middle-Eastern and South Asian dishes. According to one source, the only way eggplant is unacceptable is raw. (L.A.)

References: plantanswers.tamu.edu/publications/vegetabletravelers/eggplant.html and University of Ill. Extension site Watch Your Garden Grow and wikipedia

SQUARE FOOT GARDENING

Square foot gardening is a great way to plant a vegetable garden for those who prefer to not have a large garden plot, in the familiar row plan. It is estimated that square foot gardening requires just twenty percent of the space of a traditional vegetable garden. The concept was developed/introduced by Mel Bartholomew. The beauty of square foot gardening is its simplicity and organization. You can plant as much or as little as you want with this concept.

The purpose of this article is to whet your appetite for getting the book and for reading and learning, and perhaps for planting; it is not intended to be a “how-to” article. For the “how-to,” purchase the book *All New Square Foot Gardening* by Bartholomew. (His original book was titled *Square Foot Gardening: A New Way to Garden in Less Space with Less Work*.) To find the book, check bookstores or Amazon online. A video demonstrating the concept is also available. Perhaps you might be able to learn the method from the information provided at Bartholomew’s website <http://www.squarefootgardening.com/>

As outlined in his website, there are certain basics to square foot gardening. The garden is arranged in squares using aboveground 4-foot by 4-foot boxes. Create and layout as many or as few boxes as you want. The boxes are spaced 3 feet apart. You fill the boxes with “Mel’s special soil mix” (one-third blended compost, one-third peat moss and one-third coarse vermiculite.) Create a “square foot grid” for each box and plant a different flower, vegetable or herb in each square foot. The “organization” of the plantings, so that one does not have too much of this or that, is one of the benefits of this plan. Plant only a pinch of seeds (2-3) per hole. You then water the plants in your boxes and harvest. After harvesting, add compost and replant with new and different crops.

The boxes make it easy to weed and to reach plants, as one can easily reach into the planting box from the four sides; remember the boxes have 3-foot aisles. One of the concepts includes placing these square boxes close to the house, thus making them readily accessible. These boxes allow for easy assimilation into the present garden scheme.

Square foot gardening is great for kids, the elderly and the handicapped. It can be used by “first time” gardeners, aka novices.

A “warning” about the book: Bartholomew writes simply so that his concept can be understood even by non-gardeners. It is somewhat repetitive (a teaching principle we might be acquainted with.) The book is neither fancy nor glossy, but it covers the subject quite well thanks to his careful explanations and drawings.

A couple of years ago, Germaine Tuff arranged for a guest lecturer to present a session on square foot gardening to Comal Master Gardeners and the community. The learning session was a great success, and the meeting room was filled to capacity. The interest level for such a concept is an indication that square foot gardening is an idea waiting to happen. It is especially of value today, when we might be interested in our own veggie crops but perhaps have never had a vegetable garden before. It is a great introduction! But most importantly, it works! (RE)

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)

March Gardening Opportunities

Saturday March 7, 9:00 am – 3:00 pm. Austin Organic Gardeners' Spring Plant Sale. Zilker Botanical Garden, Austin. See <http://www.zilker garden.org/>

Saturday & Sunday, March 21-22, 10:00 am – 4:30 pm, Saturday; 1:00 pm – 5:00 pm, Sunday. First Austin African Violet Show and Sale. Zilker Botanical Garden, 2220 Barton Springs Rd., Austin. 512-477-8672 or see <http://www.zilker garden.org/index.html>.

Saturday & Sunday, March 21-22, 9:00 am – 5:00 pm Saturday; noon – 5:00 pm Sunday. Annual Wildflower Days begins with the Art and Artisans Festival devoted to arts, crafts and nature. Event features work of local artists working with a nature theme. See <http://www.wildflower.org/events/> for more information or call 512-232-0100.

Saturday & Sunday, March 28-29, 10:00 am – 5:00 pm. \$5 adults/\$3 kids. Zilker Garden Festival. 52nd annual Zilker Garden Festival. This family-friendly event includes a great variety of musical entertainment, guest speakers, children's activities, plus more than a hundred vendors of plants, crafts, and unique items. See <http://www.zilker garden.org/about/events/ZGF2009/zgf.html> to buy tickets on-line or more information.

Ongoing, 9:30 am – 6:00 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 3 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 into graceful Adults. Call 800-848-0078 for more information.

Saturdays, Ongoing, 9:05 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.

Art in the Garden through June 2009, Icelandic sculptor Steinunn Thóraninsdóttir's exhibit "Horizons" is on display at the garden. Steinunn's freestanding cast iron and glass sculptures will grace the Texas Native Trail area of the Garden through June 2009. Susan Budge's exhibit, "Myths and Mysteries" which opened in July remains on display. Free with admission to the Garden. San Antonio Botanical Garden, 555 Funston, San Antonio. 210-829-5100.

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; 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. 210-628-1639.

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

March 2009 CE Opportunities

Sunday, March 1, 2:00 pm. Free. "Tomato Growing 101 Seminar." Taught by Cindy Meredith of The Herb Cottage. The Antique Rose Emporium, 7561 E Evans Rd San Antonio. Call 210- 651-4565 for more information. **1 CE or length of seminar.**

Monday, March 2, 1:30 pm - 3:30 pm. \$19. Pruning to Protect Your Investment. Learn the right way to prune to get more flowers, what not to do, and how to sharpen your shears. Boerne Community Center, 820 Adler St., Boerne. To register, go to www.clubed.net or call 830-895 4386 **2CE**

Saturday, March 7, 9:45 am. Coffee ready at 9:00. Free. "Homegrown Vegetables Seminar." Homegrown veggies cannot be beat for taste and texture. Growing them organically ensures high nutrition and healthy eating. Shades of Green, 334 West Sunset Road San Antonio. Call 210-824-3772 or for directions, www.shadesofgreensa.com **1 CE**

Saturday, March 14, 9:45 am. Coffee ready at 9:00. Free. "The Benefits of Compost Tea." Learn how actively aerated compost tea can lessen insect and disease problems and greatly improve soil and plant health. Shades of Green, 334 West Sunset Road, San Antonio. Call 210-824-3772 or for directions, www.shadesofgreensa.com **1 CE**

Saturday, March 14, 10:00 am – Noon. Free. "How to Grow a Great Lawn," presented by Travis County MG Susan Decker and Denise Delaney of City of Austin's GrowGreen program. Topics will include choosing the right turf for your site, irrigation, fertilization, proper mowing technique, and disease diagnosis and treatment. Zilker Botanical Garden, 2220 Barton Springs Rd., Austin. Call 512-477-8672 or go to <http://www.zilker garden.org/index.html> for more information. **2 CE**

Saturday, March 14, 9:00 am – Noon. Member \$20/non-member \$30. Rainwater Harvest Workshop. John Kight, engineer and rainwater catchment owner gives the latest technological information and the most practical advice. The Kight home with no well or outside water source is in a traditional development. Their system comfortably supplies delicious water for all household and landscape needs. CNC Auditorium and visit to Kight installation. Cibolo Nature Center, 140 City Park Rd., Boerne. Call 830-249-4616 to register or see <http://www.cibolo.org/calendar> **3 CE**

Sunday, March 15, 2:00 pm - 4:00 pm. Free. San Antonio Daylily Society meeting and presentation (topic TBA). San Antonio Botanical Garden, Ed. Bldg., 555 Funston Ave., San Antonio. Contact JoNelle Zager, 830-393-5233 or <http://store.jd2ranch.com/>. **1 CE for presentation.**

Tuesday, March 17, 7:00 pm. Free. The Lindheimer Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas meeting and lecture (TBA). GVTC Auditorium, 36101 Smithson Valley, New Braunfels. Meetings have "Grower's Tip," "Plant of the Month," "Seed Exchange" and "What's in Bloom." Call John Siemssen at 830-643-0004. **1 CE for lecture.**

Wednesday, March 18, 7:00 pm – 9:00 pm. Free. "Growing a Spring Vegetable Garden," presented by Travis County MG, Patty Leander. Learn how to plant and maintain a spring vegetable garden and what varieties perform well in Central Texas, recommended planting times, and composting. Please arrive early as this is one of our most popular seminars. Zilker Botanical Gardens, 2220 Barton Springs Rd., Austin. 512-477-8672 or go to <http://www.zilker garden.org/> **2 CE**

Saturday, March 21, 9:45 am. Coffee ready at 9:00. Free. "Dealing With Problem Areas of the Landscape." You will learn to create visual screens, cover unsightly structures, design people and pet

friendly walkways and much more. Shades of Green, 334 West Sunset Road San Antonio. Call 210-824-3772 or for directions, www.shadesofgreensa.com **1 CE**

Saturday, March 21, 11:00 am or 2:00 pm. Free. "Container Gardening 101 Demonstration," taught by Cindy Lawrey. The Antique Rose Emporium, 7561 E. Evans Rd., San Antonio. Call 210-651-4565 for more information. **1 CE**

Saturday, March 21, 9:00 am – 1:00 pm. \$15 members; \$20 non-members. "Natural Landscape Design Workshop." Judit Green, TPWD urban biologist, will focus on using native and adapted plants in her 3-hour landscape design program. It will offer design, installation, and maintenance tips, as well as ideas about plants to incorporate in your design, especially with "deer in the garden" challenges. Then, we will tour CNC's new and established native landscape to see some of these plants in the ground. Go home with a list of drought-tolerant plants that are attractive to humans, butterflies and birds. CNC Auditorium and Park. Cibolo Nature Center, 140 City Park Rd., Boerne. Call 830-249-4616 to register or see <http://www.cibolo.org/calendar> **4 CE**

Monday, March 23, 7:00 pm. Free. "Painting Butterfly Life Cycles" by Nan Wilson. Austin Butterfly Forum. The Austin Butterfly Forum meets at the Zilker Botanical Garden Center on the 4th Monday of every month except for December. Meetings are free and open to the public. Each meeting features an educational program. Sometimes members will bring caterpillars or collections for display, and sometimes we have special opportunities such as plant giveaways. The meetings are also a good place to hear special announcements and learn about new events. Go to <http://www.austinbutterflies.org/home> or e-mail Mike Quinn at entomike@gmail.com for more information. **1 CE or length of lecture.**

Saturday, March 28, 1:00 – 3:00 pm. Government Canyon, "Wildflowers of the Canyon," with Dr. Paul Jurena, professor of Environmental Science at UTSA. View photos and preserved specimens of common Central Texas wildflowers; learn ways to identify them; then go in search of them on a short, exploratory hike. Sorry, picking flowers are not allowed, but photography welcome. Open to ages 8 and up; children must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. Participants must be able to walk over rocky ground for short to moderate distances. Wear sturdy shoes, hats, sunscreen, and bring at least one liter of water per person; no pets please. Registration required and will be accepted beginning at noon February 28, 2009 and ending at noon March 27, 2009. For reservations and more information, e-mail reservations@friendsofgc.org. Include name, age if under 18, e-mail address and telephone number for each reservation. (210) 688-9055, ext. 291 **2 CE**

Saturday, March 28, 9:45 am. Coffee ready at 9:00. Free. "Annuals for the Season." Make your landscape the talk of the neighborhood with fabulous annual color. Shades of Green, 334 West Sunset Road San Antonio. Call 210-824-3772 or for directions, www.shadesofgreensa.com **1 CE**

Sunday, March 29, 1:00 pm. Free. "Iris for Your Garden Seminar," taught by JoNelle Zagar. The Antique Rose Emporium, 7561 E. Evans Rd., San Antonio. Call 210-651-4565 for more information. **1 CE**

Monday, March 30, 7:00 pm. Free. RSVP. Seating is limited. Organic Living Club, Topic TBA. Usually two speakers present information. For Goodness Sake, 1306 Common St., NB. There are no dues and everyone is welcome. Call Susan Hall at 830-626-1963 or go to <http://www.organiclivingclub.org/> for more information. **1 CE or length of lectures.**

First and Third Wednesday, 9:00 am - 12:30 pm. Hays County Master Gardeners Training Class. Hays County Extension Office, 1253 Civic Center Loop in San Marcos. The course completion date will be May 20, 2009. RSVP and more information at 512-393-2120. **1 CE for each hour of lecture.**

Monday-Friday, 9:00 am – 5:00 pm. The Earthkind Demonstration Garden. Free. The garden serves to demonstrate recommended native and adapted plants and growing techniques. Sponsored by the Travis County AgriLife Extension Service, 1600-B Smith Rd, Austin, 512-854-9600. Pick up a brochure of plant names for self-guided tour or if available, a MG will give a personalized tour. One block west of Hwy 183, two blocks north of Bolm Road near Austin-Bergstrom Airport. **1 CE**

ON-LINE CEU OFFERINGS:

Go Native University. Lady Bird Wildflower Center, Austin. Go Native U is an informal education program designed to teach adults about the sustainable use and conservation of native wildflowers, plants and landscapes. In our spring and fall series of native plant gardening classes, students learn about the benefits of native plants in a fun and interactive environment. Most classes are held at the Wildflower Center's beautiful campus in south Austin. Registration for Go Native U is arranged through the University of Texas at Austin Informal Classes. On their website, select View Courses and agree to the Account Guidelines. Go Native U Classes and prices are listed under the category House and Garden. If you are a Wildflower Center member, you are eligible for the UT Informal Classes resident rate. Please contact UT Informal Classes at 512.232.5277 for this discount. This is only required for your first registration. Go to <http://www.wildflower.org/gonativeu/> for complete schedule. **CE based on class description.**

Green Industries Institute is an educational partnership between North Florida Community College, Florida A & M University, University of Florida, and the Green Industry. Distance learning opportunities offered as 1-, 2-, 4- and 8-credit hour courses (costs vary with # credit hours): Landscape Plans/Scale; Design Outdoor Rooms; Environmental Horticulture; Garden Therapy; Horticultural Awareness; Lush Landscape Returns; Pruning Trees; Aromatherapy & Plants; Butterfly Gardens; Color in the Garden; Designing for Birds; Designing with Container Gardens; Container Gardens; English Gardens; Healing Garden Design; Landscape Design Elements; Landscape Design Principles; Mediterranean Gardens; Oriental Gardens; Turf Maintenance; Water Wise Irrigation; Design for Outdoor Rooms/active Living; Landscape Workshop; Tree Care.

Go to <http://www.greenindustries.org/Default.aspx?pid=p1> **Note: Website is under construction. CE based on credit earned.**

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.**

Iowa State University. Gardening is one of the most popular leisure activities in the United States. Whether you're a homeowner, Master Gardener, or an employee working in a gardening retail section, learn

more about one or more aspects of gardening in on-line courses from ISU. Learn the basics of horticulture science including plant anatomy, plant identification, plant growth and development, and plant establishment and care. The on-line course uses WebCT and includes written content, images, on-line assignments, practice quizzes, and a final exam. This course is being offered for one credit during Spring of 2009, February 2 – March 13. To take this course for college credit, please click on the link "Register (ISU-Credit)" link and indicate the appropriate section when registering. Go to <http://www.ucs.iastate.edu/mnet/hort193f/home.html>. For more information on credit offerings, go to www.distance.iastate.edu and click on "Browse Courses" on the left panel. You can also call Carrie Brus, Instructional Support Specialist, Brenton Center & Distance Education, at 515-294-1862 if you have problems registering. **CE based on proof of course completion.**

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>. **CE credit based on Honor System. Please read and agree to the privacy and terms of use.**

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 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. \$25. 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>
- **1 CE with proof of completion of course.**

Oregon State University Extension Service. Basic Botany refresher. The content of this module is based on the Basic Botany chapter in the Master Gardener Handbook. This online module is being used for Web-based delivery of instruction in conjunction with the annual Master Gardener training program. <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/mg/botany/>. Self-study. **No CE.**

CMG Committee Reports

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Executive Committee will have its monthly meeting on Wednesday, March 4, at 9:00 am.

SCHOOL GARDENS

If you would like to help or to sign up to be a liaison for one of the school gardens, please contact Nancy Pappas at 830-885-6016 or azop@gvtc.com

BUTTERFLY GARDENS AT THE BULVERDE/SPRING BRANCH LIBRARY

On Thursday, March 5 at 10 am we will put compost and mulch in the beds. A committee meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 10 at 10:30 am to plan out the next workdays. If you are interested in joining this committee, please contact Peggy Hamm at 830-438-9023 or khamma@gvtc.com

LINDHEIMER GARDENS

Lindheimer Gardens workday will be Tuesday, March 10 at 9 am. Bring gloves and hand tools. We plan to mulch. I will have a wheelbarrow and pitchforks. We will not be dumping mulch on the beds, but putting on a little at a time in all the right places! A BIG THANKS for all the help in the garden at our February workday. Contact Germaine Tuff at 830-629-1127 or germainetuff@hotmail.com for details.

NEWSLETTER

Contact Editor Bonnie Leitch at 830-660-2335 or bleitch@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 Mary Salmon at 830-627-8174 or ldylatuna@satx.rr.com

HOSPICE NEW BRAUNFELS

We welcome any member who would like to put in a few hours of effort once, or on a continuing basis. If interested, please contact Tom Carson at 830-606-5890 or tom.carson@us.fujitsu.com. When sending to this email address, please include the following comment in the subject line "Community Services – Hospice."

NEW LIFE BUTTERFLY GARDENS

We enjoyed having so many members of the new class at our last workday and that we hope that we will be seeing some of you again during the year. Our next workday is March 16 at 9:00 am. The gardens are located on Scarborough, accessed from the Dam Access Rd. out of Sattler. For more information, contact Peggy Carmody at 830-226-5216 or carmody@gvtc.com or co-chair Lois Ricci at 830-899-5362 or poepjr@aol.com

HERITAGE ROSE GARDEN

The rose garden workdays will be March 11 and 25 at 9 am. We will do mulch one of those days depending on the weather and if I find someone to get the mulch. For more info, contact Harriet Aristeguieta at 830-609-1311 or haintx@att.net Just a reminder, anyone desiring to work on a non-scheduled workday should contact Harriet first for proper pruning techniques.

COMAL COUNTY FAIR GROUNDS

The Fairgrounds Committee will be meeting at 9 am Thursday, March 19 at the Comal County Fairgrounds. Enter via the Grant Street exit (next to the animal barn) and park in that area. We will definitely be raking leaves out of the beds, watering, and perhaps a little pruning. Elizabeth Bowerman may be bringing some lama dung to spread and Jane Langley may bring supplies for foliar feeding. Supplies to bring are: rakes, pruning shears, gloves, shovels, recycle bags for the leaves. I will bring a couple of water hoses but it would help if someone would bring 1 more. We have a mulch pile with large items that will not degrade, so if someone has a truck and would be willing to haul that away, that would be great. Snacks will be provided.

EXTENSION OFFICE GARDENS

The Extension Garden Committee will meet on Monday, March 2 at 9 am. All Master Gardeners are welcome to join us at the Extension Office for the workday. It's a great opportunity to get both educational hours and volunteer hours. If you have any questions, you can contact Sharon Deeny at (830) 935-4209 or dendeeny@msn.com or Linda Hardwick at 830-625-8311 or usnb@aol.com. The Extension Herb Garden Committee will hold its workday on Tuesday, March 24 at 9 am. Contact Cindy Burch for more information, cynthia.burch@sbcglobal.net

WEBSITE

Check added resources for next Master Gardener class, including links to web resources for each chapter; also added map to the new work site, Bulverde Spring Branch Library.

Five forms that you might need are on-line at the website <http://grovesite.com/mg/comal> under CMG Forms. The class application form is under CMG Class Training. All forms are interactive and can be filled out on-line.

Comal Gardener

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



Radicchio



Summer Savory



Arugula



Pennyroyal