



March 2011

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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Community Service Project at New Braunfels Library

The CMG board has given approval to a one-day project to add native and adapted plants to the front of the New Braunfels Public library on Common Street. Lee Franzel outlined the project at the February 28 membership meeting. The workday will be Saturday, March 19 from 10 am to 1 pm at the library. Interested Comal Master Gardeners are asked to consider volunteering on that day.

Workers will move several rose bushes closer to the building to prevent continual deer damage. The spaces created will then be planted with more deer-resistant plants. A number of students from the 2011 class will be involved, while a handful of CMGs will mentor the students and provide plant information to visitors. Project leaders plan to prune and shape existing landscape plants, providing an opportunity for students to work with experienced CMG members.

The library is hosting an Edwards Aquifer program on that day. Attendees will be given a chance to view the work in progress and visit with CMG veterans regarding the existing plants and those being added to the landscape. All the new plants are as xeriscapic as possible, with emphasis on butterfly-attracting bloomers. In 2009 CMG participated in a project, headed by Donna Lehr, at the library that labeled landscape plants. Patrons could then identify plants they liked and achieve their own earth-friendly landscapes. That project also removed some ill-suited plants and aided in the development of the evolving landscape.

Library director Gretchen Pruett visualizes a landscape that resembles the butterfly gardens at Bulverde/Spring Branch Library and New Life. Salvias, bluemist flower, purple coneflower, blackfoot daisy, *gaura lindheimeri*, Mexican bush salvia and gulf muhly grass are some of the plants on the list. The library is furnishing funds for plants, compost and mulch. A small sign will indicate CMG's support of the gardens. Approximately 1100 people visit the library daily.

For more information, contact Lee Franzel at 830-885-7733 or lee Franzel@gvtc.com.

CMG March Meeting

6 pm Monday, March 28

Topic: *Growing Devine Avocados In Our Area*

Speaker: *Bill Schneider, Avocado Grower*

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•••Garden Posts•••

- Congratulations to Class of 2010 members Becky Jackson, Maria Brady and Carl Kaupp for becoming certified Comal Master Gardeners!
- Carol McWilliams reports that the Class of 2011 is now 28 strong.
- The hosts and hostesses for the March 28 general meeting are Willie Hagen, Joyce Stephens, Sharon Wright and Linda Valdez.
- Treasurer Marlene Ballard reports for February: Income, \$150 and expenses, \$1684.70. Balance as of February 28 was \$14,011.71.
- Great news! The Bulverde/Springbranch Library Butterfly Garden is featured on the North American Butterfly Association website http://nababutterfly.com/butterfly_garden_texas.html It is the only Texas Garden highlighted.
- Save the Date: In his report from TMGA, Don Tuff reminded members about the 2011 TMGA Annual Conference in Glenrose. See <http://2011tmgaconference.org/> for more information. Don and Germaine, CMG directors, represented us at the recent TMGA directors' meeting in College Station. Don also announced that next year's annual conference will be in Bexar County and encouraged all CMGs to go.
- Rosalie Meier reported on the Haus and Garten Show, held February 4, where CMG had a booth distributing seed packets and information on the organization and gardening. About 280 attended the first time event. She thanked Elizabeth Bowerman, Haskell Hart, Jodi Hawthorne, Dan Krueger, Kathy Nelson, Mikki Tharp, Mary Salmón and Kathleen Scott for their work.

Herb Affair Preparations Moving Along

The next planning meeting for the 2011 Herb Affair is Thursday, March 10 at 11 am at the Extension Office. All recipes and handouts for the Herb Affair Booklet are due to Marilyn Godwin on Thursday, March 17 (St. Patrick's Day!) There may be a planning meeting on Thursday, April 14, if needed.

Set up for the Herb Affair will be Friday, May 6 at 9 am at the Antique Rose Emporium. The hours for the Herb Affair are 9:30 am – 3 pm on Saturday, May 7. All volunteers need to arrive at 9 am. Cleanup is a group effort, and no one is finished until the room is cleared.

The 2011 Herb of the Year is horseradish. The Herb Affair will play with the "Horse" theme. The color scheme is denim blue and yellow, using blue and yellow bandanas, horseshoes, barbed wire, cowboy boots and rustic Texas stars. Contact Catherine Hall to donate decorative items that fit this year's theme. Patty Malek will be contacting the new class asking them to make herb cookies and herbal tea for volunteer hours.

Marilyn and Karen want to thank the Comal Master Gardeners for making this one of the most successful educational outreach programs of the year.

Report your CE and Volunteer Hours!

Send your CE hours to Don Tuff. Send to CERecorder@MasterGardener.Comal.TX.US Be sure to include title of talk, speaker's name, date and time of talk, location, CE hours and sponsoring organization. Chairs, send volunteer hours to Becky Pinkerton, CMGtime@gmail.com

Lest We Forget

The Extension Office Gardens, Part I: 2004-2007

by Lu Allen, Peggy Hamm, Bonnie Leitch and Mary T Salmón

From First Chair Eva FitzGerald's Account of the Extension Office Project

A group of Comal Master Gardeners interested in planning and developing a landscape for the public area at the new office for the Comal County Extension Service met in January 2004. Ray Elizondo, Volunteer Service Coordinator at the time, was in charge of the meeting. The county extension agent at that time was Bryan Davis. He took us for a tour of the property and explained ideas he had for developing several areas, including landscaping around the office and demonstrations of rainwater collection, turf selection and vegetable gardening.

The board asked me to chair the project for the Extension Office landscape. The landscape design was to be an example showing the public, our neighbors, friends and families, how to reduce excessive water usage and at the same time have an attractive landscape using native and adapted plants. Once established, this landscape would show how to have a beautiful, drought-tolerant landscape with minimal watering.

We had a great group of energetic, interested Comal Master Gardeners who met to discuss ideas for a design. Tim Barker was my co-chair for the project. He measured the area and drew a plat map so we could plan the garden. I took all the great suggestions and ideas from our meeting and started to put together a design incorporating as many native plants as possible. I then met with Bryan Davis and Skip Richter, from Travis County, who approved our landscape design. We were ready to implement the plan.

Bryan Davis brought in topsoil and spread and leveled it, thanks to inmates from the county detention center. The landscape committee then started to work. We hauled all of the native rocks that you see defining the areas from the back of the property. We had a great time going through all the large piles of rock and found several with fossils. There was also a large pile of decomposed horse manure left by the previous property owners that we added to the soil Bryan provided.

We found the large rock with the hole in it in one of the piles of rock, and Tim Barker suggested it might be the basis for a water feature. So we added the small pond using the little "island" bed surrounded by cement walks. Vasey Oak trees were already on the property, and a very large agave was in the middle of the front yard. Thanks to Bryan, a man with a bobcat moved the agave to the side bed for the beginning of the cactus garden.

Comal Master Gardeners, the Antique Rose Emporium and nurseries in the area donated most of the plants. We then mulched the garden, using the native mulch from our neighbors at the recycling center. The irrigation system was designed and added after the landscaping was done. Patty and Marty Godfrey built a cedar trellis to act as a screen for the air conditioning units.

The herb garden was added later. Patty Godfrey and a group of Comal Master Gardeners interested in herbs designed and built the beautiful garden. Again, CMG members and nurseries in the area donated plants. By October 2004 the landscape, including the herb garden, was in place. The transformation was amazing. Thanks to so many wonderful Comal Master Gardeners and their enthusiasm and hard work. PH

(A note from Ray Elizondo: Initially Bryan Davis suggested the possibility of a turf demonstration area. Ray envisioned Eva's front yard, which was a garden that used plants not grass. Anyone who had visited Eva's home was impressed by the beauty of what a front yard could look like without turf. This is the type of garden he proposed to the board. Because she was the logical choice, Eva became the chair. Marty Hopmann worked with labeling and nomenclature for the plants, so the gardens would be educational and a demonstration of a true local landscape.)

An Interview with Tim Barker

Tim, a Comal Master Gardener from Class 5, began planning the Extension Office gardens along with co-chair Eva FitzGerald in 2004. Before 2004, CMG classes and meetings were held in a facility just west of the Comal County jail. Bryan Davis was the County Extension Agent in charge of the Comal Master Gardeners, so he gave the organization the opportunity to plan and landscape the new office area between a horse barn and the County Recycling Center.

Tim and Eva sat on a hay bale at the horse barn drawing up plans and ideas for the new gardens. Tim said Eva was the brains behind the architecture and design. She wanted xeriscape plants and a cactus garden. While Eva was in charge of design, Tim was in charge of hardscaping. Eva, according to Tim, was really good at getting plants and materials donated from area nurseries, especially from Hill Country Gardens. The original design was drawn on January 6, 2004, and in the summer of that year, members started planting the gardens.

There were plenty of rocks near the horse barn because the area had just been cleared to make an arena. Tim and other members of the group marked rocks to be used in the design and the perimeters of the gardens. Through Bryan's association with the Comal County Road Department, some of their crew moved the rocks from the barn to the new garden site. The deputy sheriff in charge of the jail also got his crew in orange jumpsuits to help move rocks from the barn and materials from the recycling center to the new gardens.

When Myles Peinemann moved back to New Braunfels in 2004, he started working with Tim even before he became a fully certified CMG. Tim provided the Butterfly Vine that grows on the telephone pole beside the office. Jim Mosier built a bench for the front of the office, and Nancy Horne provided some of the irises and other plants for the gardens.

The new facility consisted of an existing residence connected to a new building. Sidewalks connecting these structures crisscrossed each other and a cement bathtub was already in front of the new building. The bathtub was too interesting to fill with plants, so a water feature was devised. Fortunately for the landscape group, a very interesting rock located near the horse barn was the perfect size and shape to make a donut water feature. The tub had concrete sides and a coarse rock bottom. Gardeners used finely crushed glass from the recycling center to even the bottom and lined the tub.

The water feature was designed so that water pumped from underneath the stone came out through the center of the donut hole and flowed back into the pond. Workers added water plants, and, in order to keep mosquitoes at bay, Tim caught minnows from the Comal River at Landa Park and put them in the pond. The plants and the minnows have thrived and multiplied since then. Tim said that because of the very shallow nature of the pond, the water level must be monitored frequently because there is no automatic filling device. In 2008, Linda Hartwick took on the maintenance of the pond and monitoring of the water flow. As Tim notes, "Ponds are fun, but they do require care." LA

Extension Office Gardens and Volunteer Nancy Horne

As an indication of her future active involvement, Nancy volunteered to help build the gardens at the new extension office while still a Comal Master Gardener trainee. She had been working on the little gardens at the Water Street location, so the new location presented a challenge she could not refuse. When the plans were drawn and plants assigned to locations, Nancy was there to dig the holes and plant the garden. She laid soil, compost and mulch. When asked how she decided where certain plants were to go, she said, "They told me where to dig the hole, so I did and planted the plant."

Most of the plants were donated, but Nancy brought some from home. The vitex tree by the entrance is a cutting from Nancy's tree. The yellow Lady Banks rose by the rock house is from Nancy's house, as are the beautiful Iris in front of the extension office.

When asked about her ability and skill in moving rocks, Nancy tells the story of how she built the walkway. At one work session several volunteers were discussing how hard it was to get from the front to the back of the gardens. Someone jokingly said, "Why don't you build a walkway, Nancy." So, she did. Nancy says she has been building rock paths and walls all her life. I asked if she needed to draw a plan for the rock path. "I just winged it," replied Nancy. "Yeah, my blueprints are my Big Indian Chief tablet!"

Nancy feels that our extension office gardens are most impressive. She hopes that master gardeners will maintain them in the future as faithfully as they were developed in the past. MTS

The Extension Office Herb Garden

In early 2004, members asked interested Master Gardeners to establish an herb garden. Marty Hopmann and Patty and Marty Godfrey headed the development of the Extension Herb Garden. The location that had been selected for the garden was certainly less than ideal. There were significant drainage issues and a lot more shade than was desirable. The drainage issues were minimized by two techniques. The herb crew, made up of Marlene Skaggs, Nancy Kraft, Mary Clifford, Mary Salmón and Sara Bruner, created raised beds and established a pathway that served as a conduit for the large amounts of water that flowed through the area during heavy rains. The oak trees were pruned to allow more sunlight.



The first beds contained both culinary and ornamental herbs that included rosemary, thyme, sage, parsley, fennel, oregano, yarrow, garlic and Santolina. The herb group then developed adjacent demonstration beds. They included a drought-tolerant bed with sages, Artemisia, lavender, Santolina and lamb's ears. In addition, other beds featured herbs combined with perennials and annuals. The goal was to encourage homeowners to include herbs in their landscapes, not only for their culinary qualities but also for their beauty in the landscape. In October 2006, the Extension Herb Garden expanded to include the front area around to the sidewalk leading to the office. This expansion provided an area that had adequate sunlight and space for a larger, more comprehensive herb garden.

After October, some plants were relocated to more appropriate locations in the extension garden. New plants were placed in the front beds and work began on a new bed in the front area. In January 2007, cedar logs were placed to delineate the outline of the new bed. The next step involved purchasing organic soil for the new area. By March, the front garden area was ready for new plants.



The drought that Comal County had experienced for the previous two years had stressed the whole garden. The herb garden survived because of the dedication of Marty Hopmann, who hand watered the garden once or twice a week during the extended dry periods. The later system that featured drip emitters did not provide adequate water for the herbs. Most herbs require deep soaking and then a drying-out period. Comal Master Gardeners who consistently worked in the garden believed that a soaker system might be a better method of watering the garden, so they

approached the CMG board for the necessary equipment. The board approved the request, but despite their support, irrigation continued to be an issue. Patty Godfrey and Marty Godfrey remained until 2008. BL

Change in New Life Gardens Leadership Announced

After many years as chair of the New Life project, Peggy Carmody is stepping down. Lois Ricci, present co-chair, has agreed to take over the chair position. Patty Malek has agreed to become the new co-chair. The CMG Board voted to accept these changes and wish to thank Peggy for her many years of service. Many students have worked and learned in the butterfly garden at New Life and are grateful for the experience. Peggy will remain active in the garden to add her valuable input to the project.

Speaker's Bureau Report

The Speakers Bureau was active this month giving eight presentations. Michael and Donna Welch added a panel of master gardeners as part of their Vegetable Gardening presentation to the new CMG class. They also made a presentation on vegetable gardening at the Bulverde-Spring Branch Library. Fifty-one guests attended despite freezing temperatures.

Richard Bradley and Lee Franzel made a presentation to an audience of 28 on soil and compost at the Tye Preston Memorial Library. Lee also made presentations to two garden clubs. Linda Valdez also made a presentation on "Gardening for Butterflies" at a local garden club on another cold, blustery day. In all these presentations served a total of 147 guests and 29 Comal Master Gardeners who received CE hours.

This year 798 residents in the county, including Comal Master Gardeners, have attended CMG seminars. Presenters have volunteered approximately 252 hours of their time to help educate the public. These numbers reinforce the Master Gardener mission. As always a big thanks to all those who take time out of their busy days to meet with the public.

Anyone interested in giving a presentation or needing help with a Power Point presentation, contact Linda Valdez ldvaldez@satx.rr.com for help. She would particularly like to talk to anyone with in-depth knowledge of free-standing ponds.

Herb SIG Meeting Report

Alfred Stremmel was the February guest speaker. He really knows his worms. He explained worm composting: what they eat, how much they eat and how to get a worm house. If you are interested in worm composting and didn't get to hear Mr. Stremmel, go to www.wormhaus.com and peruse his web site.

In March the Herb SIG is planning a trip to Mary Dunford's Nature's Herb Farm. The group will be going on Saturday, March 12, not the usual second Monday of the month. Anyone interested in joining the Herb SIG for its April meeting, contact Sally Ann Hnatiuk (mustang_sally6@msn.com or 830-980-5645).

Bylaws Committee Readying Suggested Changes

The Bylaws Committee, Michael Welch, chair, Willie Hagen, Myles Peinemann, Elizabeth Bowerman, Patty Godfrey and Glenn Averitt (ex-officio) have been meeting twice a month to put together changes to the current bylaws. The group is working with samples of bylaws from other Master Gardener Associations in Texas and with members' suggestions. The committee is discussing changes for several sections, including membership, elections, officers and standing committees. The committee plans to have the suggested changes finalized by the April meeting, for a vote in May.

Ode to Spring

by Laura Paulson

This article is rooted in sorrow. When I dryly suggested that perhaps we needed a grief support column in the newsletter, my freeze-induced grief was fresh. Sleepless nights spent worrying about my "babies" seemed to have been a futile effort. The wind blew off plant covers, and rolling blackouts stopped the greenhouse heater. The color of my garden was brown and the texture of my plants was mush. My heart was broken.

Knowing I wasn't alone did help a bit. I heard several variations of "I don't know ... I can't look" from other gardeners when asked how their gardens fared in the freeze. One hibiscus lover even announced she was sending off all of her beloved hibiscus to live with a relative in milder climes – a drastic choice, for sure. But what really helped was the spring-like weather that followed the deep freeze and the magic that came with it, Garden Magic.

In the vegetable garden the cilantro bounced back from being smashed by ice and snow, looking as good as new. I don't know quite how it does that, but surely, it made me feel better. With just a little trimming of freeze-burned leaves, we had dinner with fresh garden spinach. I perked up some more. So the chard ended up in the compost bin, along with half the beets. I thanked the chard for the past year of feeding us and mourned the premature end of little beets. Then I planted seeds. And I knew that this column, rooted in grief, had sprouted into something else entirely. It had become a tale of renewal and promise, and an effort to capture in words the power and wonder of the garden.

You know what I'm talking about. You dig around the base of an apparently dead plant for signs of life and, lo and behold, find green leaves growing under the mulch. Or you break a twig and find moist green tissue inside, and you know that appearances deceive and life continues. I won't bore you with a list of what survived and what didn't in my yard and greenhouse.

Truthfully, the jury is still out on some of it. But my tale of wonder is embodied in the tomato plants in my little pop-up greenhouse. They were volunteers to start with, found growing in our raised bed stock tanks

last fall when we returned to Texas after spending the summer away. Last year I planted heirloom varieties, so I knew they were true-to-seed. I decided to see if they could make it through the winter to give us early tomatoes. I told myself that the outcome didn't matter. What would be, would be. I was going to heat the greenhouse anyway to keep some other things alive during the winter, so there would be no added expense to experiment with the tomatoes. Somewhere along the way – probably when the plants began to flower – my emotional investment grew beyond “*que sera, sera.*”

Just before our multi-day deep freeze, the plants looked great and the future seemed bright. Afterwards, they looked like goners, all wilted and burnt. I couldn't look too closely at first. I just couldn't bear to do it. With the warming sun, my resilience returned, and I delved into the greenhouse. One of the first things I saw was that the tomato plants had set fruit during the freeze. By the time I got around to trimming the dead leaves, I counted twelve tomatoes on the biggest plant. As I write this, a couple of them are beginning to blush. My husband joked, “They sell them in the grocery store when they're that ripe!”

What is the lesson here? I don't garden because it's economical, or because I'm particularly good at it. It's a lot of work, and sometimes it seems downright silly to bother, given deer and drought, freeze and scorching heat, not to mention summers spent elsewhere. So why do it? The answer: “how can I not?” Every plant that miraculously survives, every seed that magically sprouts, represents hope and promise. Every fresh vegetable that feeds my body, also feeds my soul. I know I'm preaching to the choir, so I'll change my pronoun. Why do we garden? How can we not? It's the best anti-depressant on the market.

March Gardening To-Do List

by Juleen Randall

This morning I pulled all my potted plants out of my greenhouse garden shed. I couldn't stand it anymore I had to hang my bromeliads and ferns. The first half of March is probably the most difficult time for gardeners in our area. The Farmer's Almanac says our last expected frost date is February 28, and *The Natural Gardener* in Austin says it is March 15. Whoever is right, the sun is shining and the temperatures are rising. My peach trees are budding, my chickens are laying more eggs and I am ready to plant something. So I've brought out my bromeliads and thrown back the tarp from my herbs and chili petins, aka pequins. Just in case, the bromeliads are not hanging very far from the greenhouse door, and my tarps are still at the ready for that last, and always somehow surprising, winter hurrah.

This is the month to start sowing seeds outdoors. Flower-lovers look for cleome, cypress (or hummingbird) vine, *gomphrena* (globe amaranth), marigolds, morning glories, sunflowers and the shade-loving nicotiana. Later in the month, start gourds and luffas. Herbalists, now is the time to sow basil and chives and either let your dill and cilantro go to seed or chop them up and freeze them in a little olive oil. Those of you with vegetable gardens, pull out your seeds for beans and endive the first couple of weeks, followed by cantaloupe, corn, cucumber, eggplant, black-eyed peas, pumpkin, New Zealand spinach, summer squash and watermelon the last two weeks.

As far as starter plants, or seedlings go, the latter half of March is the best time for planting all the other hot weather herbs like comfrey, scented geraniums, lemon grass, mints, oregano, rosemary, Santolina and thyme. Perennials like any of the cupheas (cigar plants, bat-face, or Mexican heather), plumbago and all the sedums will do well if planted now. Try the ornamental lion's tail or the delicate-looking torenia or wishbone plant. This beautiful plant looks fantastic in a hanging basket and will last through the heat of the summer when moved to a partially sunlit area.

This is the last month to safely plant trees and shrubs in this region. Planted later, these plants will be too stressed during the summer. On the other hand, wait until warmer soil temperatures the second half of

March to plant spring and summer bulbs like caladiums and elephant ears. If planted too early, the bulbs might rot in the cooler soil.

As much as I enjoy bringing seeds and plants to life, I also get a certain pleasure out of killing the weeds, grass and ants that try to take over my gardens. Below are three gardening recipes that will help with these menaces:

Vinegar Herbicide – this mixture will kill anything green, so spray accurately.

1 gal 10% Vinegar 1 oz orange oil
1 tsp liquid soap 1 tbsp molasses

Mix all ingredients in a gallon container and do not dilute when adding to your garden sprayers.

Ant Killer – good for drenching mounds

1 gal compost tea* ¼ c molasses 2 tbsp orange oil

Not only will this kill ants and insects, but it enriches your soil at the same time.

***Compost Tea** – can be used by itself to water and fertilize your containers or as a foliar spray for all your plants.

Five-gallon bucket of non-chlorinated water (Fill a bucket with tap water and let it sit for 24 to 48 hours to dissipate the chlorine.)

8 c aged compost (manure, vegetation or both)

Measure the compost into a straining bag, an old pair of nylons will do. Place in the bucket and cover. Keep the bucket sitting in the sun for one week and stir occasionally. A five-gallon bucket is usually enough tea to feed an average vegetable garden one time.

March 2011 Gardening Opportunities

Tuesday, March 1 thru Sunday, March 13, 9 am – 5:30 pm Tuesday thru Saturday, Noon to 5:30 pm Sunday, and closed on Mondays. “Flowers in Art.” McDermott Learning Center. This exhibit combines the charming flora of Stella Alesi’s paintings with Richard Reynolds’ photographic plant portraits. Alesi painted the 2011 Wildflower Days™ art print as well as the Wildflower Center’s 2010 holiday card. Richard Reynolds has devised his own technique for creating large and incredibly detailed photographs of flowers without the distortion that usually accompanies extreme close-ups. Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, 4801 La Crosse Avenue, Austin. For more information, call 512-232-0100.

Friday, March 11, & Friday, March 25, 10 am. “Native Plant Walks.” Explore an 11-acre Texas Native Trail with a Master Naturalist at the San Antonio Botanical Garden. Stroll along the Hill Country Trail in search of Texas snowbells, mountain laurel and other plants adapted to the rocky, alkaline soils. On the shaded walk around the lake in the East Texas Pineywoods demonstration, you’ll observe acid-loving woodland species such as magnolia, sweetgum and sassafras. The South Texas Trail showcases dry land trees and shrubs like mesquite, huisache, cenizo, ebony and sotol. Come take a “walk across Texas”! San Antonio Botanical Garden, 555 Funston. For information, call 210- 207-3250.

Monday, March 14 - Tuesday, May 31, 9 am – 5:30 pm. “Wildflower Days Begin.” Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, 4801 La Crosse Ave. Austin. For information, go to www.wildflower.org

Saturday, March 19, 10 am to Noon. “Soapberries and Friends: Investigating Plants!” by Peggy Spring, Education Coordinator for the San Antonio’s Natural Areas. Investigate soapberries, agave fibers, oak galls and cactus. Activities include making some soapy suds, twisting some string, making ink and writing with a quill pen and making some “bug juice.” Free family program. Mitchell Lake Audubon Center, 10750 Pleasanton Rd. San Antonio. Space is limited. RSVP required. For more information or to rsvp, go to mlac@audubon.org

Saturday, March 19, 10 am – 4 pm. 5th Annual “A Passion For Plants: An East Austin Garden Fair.” This free public gardening event will feature hands-on demonstrations of how to dig a garden bed, harvest rainwater, grow fruits and vegetables organically, start plants from cuttings and seeds and cut back on chemicals that harm the environment and us. Come for free advice from on-site experts who will answer all your gardening questions, tips on living healthier and happier, and fun, educational activities for kids to get them out in nature in your own backyard. The fair is sponsored by Texas AgriLife Extension Service, Travis County MGA, the Sustainable Food Center and the Holistic Education and Health Network. At the New Covenant Fellowship of Austin Church, 1507 Wilshire Blvd.

Saturday, March 26, 10 am – 2 pm. “Native San Antonio” by the Native Plant Society of Texas. This year’s special event will be held at the beautiful, historic Land Heritage Institute on the Medina River. Learn more about and appreciate San Antonio’s rich cultural and environmental heritage. The day will include exhibits, speakers, a free native tree give-away, plant identification walks, a native plant sale, hayrides, longhorn viewing and more. Land Heritage Institute, 349 Neal Road. Free. For information, go to www.npsot.org/sanantonio or www.landheritageinstitute.org

Saturday, March 26 & Sunday, March 27, 10 am – 5 pm. 54th Zilker Garden Festival. A family-friendly event, the garden festival offers something for everyone: the annual flower show in the garden center, featuring judged designs and an array of horticultural specimens; live music from the Soundstage in the Rose Garden, with a variety of musical offerings both afternoons; gardening talks under the big white tent next to the garden center from local gardening experts; the always fun and interactive Kids’ Corner in the rose garden where children can build a birdhouse, have their faces painted, make dinosaur masks and butterfly wings; and tasty food offerings at the food court in the oak grove on the Escarpment Trail. \$7 Adults (\$5 presale), Children (3–12) Parking \$3. Zilker Botanical Garden, 2220 Barton Springs Rd, Austin. Free. For Information, go to <http://www.zilker garden.org/about/events/ZGF2011/zgf.html> or call 512-477-8672.

Saturdays and Sundays, Ongoing, 8 am – 4 pm. Mitchell Lake Audubon Center. Closed Holidays. Weekdays by appointment. Explore a place just minutes from downtown San Antonio. 10750 Pleasanton Rd. The entrance gate to the center is located 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. Call 800-848-0078 for more information.

Saturdays, Ongoing, 9:00 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.

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

March 2011 CE Opportunities

Tuesdays, March 1 - March 22, 6:30 – 9:30 pm. “Introduction to Landscape Design” by Mike Pecen. Learn landscape designer’s tools and materials to realize your own concepts. Understand theoretical background and develop one well-formed landscape concept for your own implementation. Southwest School Of Art, Ellison Lecture Hall, Navarro St. Fee for 6 class sessions: \$150 (members); \$165 (non-members). Registration Office Hrs: 9 am – 5 pm. Phone 210-224-1848, ext. 317 or 334. For more information, contact@swschool.org **3 CE per class**

Wednesday, March 2, 1:30 – 5 pm. Comal Master Gardener Class 7: “Compost and Organic Fertilizers,” by Jason Sanders from Organics by Gosh. Class will be held at New Braunfels Public Library, 700 E. Common St. **3 CE**

Thursday, March 3, 10 am - Noon. Gardening Series Lecture. Bulverde/Spring Branch Library. **2 CE**

Friday March 4 & Saturday, March 19, 10 – 11 am. “Watersaver Walk.” Information about planning, planting and maintaining low water use landscape year-round. San Antonio Botanical Garden Guides, 555 Funston. Free with admission to SABOT. For information call 210-207-3261. **1 CE**

Sunday, March 6, 1 pm. “Vegetable Gardening: From the Ground Up” by Farmer John Peterson. What does it take to have a great vegetable garden? From soil preparation to harvest, John will show what it takes to bring delicious fresh vegetables to the table. Free. Antique Rose Emporium, San Antonio Display Gardens, 7561 East Evans Rd. For information, call 210-651-4565. **CE based on length of seminar.**

Wednesday, March 9, 1:30 – 5 pm. Comal Master Gardener Class 8: “Integrated Pest Management; Pesticides “ by Dr. Don Tuff. Comal County Ext. Off. For information, call 830-620-3440. **3 CE**

Saturday, March 12, 11 am – 1 pm. “Organic Gardening Basics” by Ladybug. Learn all about the principals of organic gardening in this informative seminar. Fanick’s Garden Center, 1025 Holmgreen Rd., San Antonio. Cost: one can of non-perishable food for the food bank. For information, go to <http://www.fanicknursery.com/Seminars.htm> or call 210-648-1303. **2 CE**

Wednesday, March 16, 1:30 – 3:30 pm. Comal Master Gardener Class 9a: “Planning the Home Landscape” and 4 – 5 pm. Comal Master Gardener Class 9b: “Home Landscape Drawing Lab” by Lee Franzel. Comal County Ext. Off., 325 Resource Drive. For more information, call 830-620-3440. **2 and 1 CE, respectively**

Friday, March 18 & Saturday, March 19, Fri: 9 am – 6 pm, Sat: 8 am – 4 pm. “Celebration of Horseradish, Herb of the Year.” 16th Annual Herbal Forum workshops (Friday) and seminars. (Saturday). Festival Hill, 248 Jaster Rd., Round Top. For fees and registration, go to <http://festivalhill.org/schedule-of-events/august-to-april-series/herbal-forum-at-round-top/> **CE based on length of seminars.**

Saturday, March 19, 9 am – Noon. “Rainwater Harvest Workshop” by John Kight, engineer and rainwater catchment owner. Learn the latest technological information and the most practical advice. Learn about design and materials from someone who has done it himself. Cibolo Nature Center, Boerne. Auditorium. Members, \$25/person; non-members, \$35/person. Limited to 30. Pre-registration required. Call 830-249-4616 and visit the Kight installation. **3 CE**

Saturday, March 19, 9 am – 1 pm. “Natural Landscape Design Class” by Judit Green, urban biologist. The class will focus on using native and adapted plants. Speaker 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 a demonstration tour of Cibolo Nature Center’s new and established native landscape. Cost: members \$20 per person; non-members \$25 per person. Limited to 30. Pre-registration required. Cibolo Nature Center Aud., Boerne. Call 830-249-4616. **4 CE**

Saturday, March 19, 10 am. “Square Foot Gardening” by Linda Reed, with Ladybug Natural Brand Products. See how to get the maximum yield for your home garden. You can learn how to make your own frame or buy one of our beautiful kits. Come see what square foot gardening is all about. Antique Rose Emporium, San Antonio Display Gardens, 7561 East Evans Rd., San Antonio. Contact: 210-651-4565. **CE based on length of seminar.**

Sunday, March 20, 1 – 3 pm. “Tomato Talk” by Cindy Meredith, owner of The Herb Cottage and frequent contributor to *The Herb Companion*, will be talkin’ tomatoes, heirloom tomatoes, of course. Antique Rose Emporium, San Antonio Display Gardens, 7561 East Evans Rd., San Antonio. Contact: 210-651-4565. **2 CE**

Wednesday, March 23, 1:30 – 5 pm. Comal Master Gardener Class 10: “Fruit and Nut Production at Home” by Dr. Larry Stein, Texas AgriLife Extension Service – Uvalde. Comal County Ext. Off., 325 Resource Drive. For information, call 830-620-3440. **3 CE**

Wednesday, March 23, 3 – 5 pm. “Rainwater Harvesting 101” by Billy Kniffen, Texas Agrilife Extension Service Water Resource Specialist. Class focuses on basic methods of rainwater catchment and its importance for the Texas homeowner. Monthly Gardening Series at the New Braunfels Public Library, 700 E. Common St. Free and open to the public. Contact: 830-964-4494. **2 CE**

Wednesday, March 30, 1:30 – 5 pm. Comal Master Gardener Class 11: “Propagation Lab” by Richard and Nancy Wackerbarth, Comal Master Gardener Propagation Specialists. Wear old clothes; you’ll be working with dirt and plants. Comal County Ext. Off., 325 Resource Drive. 830-620-3440. **3 CE**

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. **CE based on completion of course.**

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> **CE based on completion of course.**

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 & 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 BOARD

The Executive Board will have its monthly meeting on Wednesday, March 2 at 10 am.

EXTENSION OFFICE GARDENS

The Comal County AgriLife Extension Gardens will meet on Tuesday, March 1 at 10 am and Tuesday, March 15 at 10 am. Committee members will receive an email memo. Anyone wishing to volunteer to work in the gardens and to obtain first hand emails about on-going projects, contact Linda ldvaldez@satx.rr.com or co-chair Sally Ann Hnatiuk mustang_sally6@msn.com.

NEW BRAUNFELS CONSERVATION PLAZA GARDENS

The Conservation Plaza Rose Garden workdays will be on Wednesday, March 9 and 23 at 9 am. The committee will be pulling weeds and performing other maintenance work. Contact Germaine Tuff germainetuff@hotmail.com or 830-629-1127 if you have questions or plan to bring a wheelbarrow.

BUTTERFLY GARDENS AT THE BULVERDE/SPRING BRANCH LIBRARY

Bulverde/Spring Branch Library Butterfly Garden workday is the fourth Thursday of each month. The next workday will be Thursday, March 24 at 10 am. Contact Peggy Hamm khamma@gvtc.com or Lee Franzel lee Franzel@gvtc.com for more information.

NEW LIFE BUTTERFLY GARDEN

The Butterfly Garden workday is the third Monday, March 21 at 9 am. For more information, contact Lois Ricci poepjr@aol.com or 830-899-5362.

HOSPICE NEW BRAUNFELS

Hope Hospice workday will be Wednesday, March 16th at 9:45 am. For information, contact Harlan Kraft at 210-846-5643 or harlankraft@gmail.com.

KIDS IN BLOOM

Anyone who would like to participate in the training class or become active in the school gardens program contact Nancy Pappas azop@gvtc.com/ or 210-385-5981 or Alba Johannessen 2Johans@sbcglobal.net to coordinate with a school near you.

COMAL COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS GARDEN

The Fairgrounds Committee will meet Thursday, March 17 at 9 am at the Grant Street Gardens. Committee members will receive an email memo. For more information, contact Aleta Meyer at 830-629-2929 or aleta_meyer@hotmail.com or Jane Langley at 830-620-4264.

LINDHEIMER GARDENS

The Lindheimer Garden workday will be Tuesday, March 8 at 9:30 am. Workers will probably be putting in some new plants after the freeze. Contact Germaine Tuff germainetuff@hotmail.com or at 830-629-1127 if you have questions.

NEWSLETTER

The planning meeting for the March issue will be 11 am, Friday, March 4 at EnJoy Café, 20630 Highway 46 West, Spring Branch. Contact Editor Bonnie Leitch at 830-660-2335 or bleitch@earthlink.net for information about the meeting or contributing to the newsletter. Anyone having information about gardening activities that should be in the newsletter should contact Julie Siliven rejhs@gvtc.com or 830-885-2665.

WEBSITE

Check the website on-line at the website <http://mastergardener.comal.tx.us/> for new “how to” videos.

Comal Gardener

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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)

Post the following calendar for easy reference to March CMG activities.

MARCH 2011

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 10 am Ext Office Gardens	2 10 am Exec Board Mtg Class 7 Compost and Organic Fertilizers	3 10 – 11:30 am Bulverde/SB Library Gardening Series	4 11 am Newsletter Mtg Enjoy Café – Spring Branch	5
6	7	8 9:30 am Lindheimer Gardens	9 9 am Conservation Plaza Rose Gardens Class 8 Integrated Pest Management	10 11-Noon Herb Affair Mtg Ext Office	11	12
13	14	15 10 am Ext Office Gardens	16 9:45 am Hope Hospice Gardens Class 9 Planning the Home Landscape	17 9 am Comal County Fairgrounds Garden	18	19
20	21 9 am New Life Butterfly Garden	22	23 9 am Conservation Gardens Class 10 Fruit and Nut Production	24 10 am Bulverde/SB Library Butterfly Garden	25	26
27	28 6 pm CMG Meeting At GVTC	29	30 Class 11 Propagation Lab	31		