



The Guadalupe Gardener



AgriLIFE EXTENSION
Texas A&M System

December 2009

A monthly publication of the Guadalupe County Master Gardeners in cooperation with the Texas AgriLIFE Extension, Guadalupe County



Gardening Conundrums

By Bob Grafe, President

I'm writing this final Conundrums column on Thanksgiving Day while I mentally recall all those Master Gardeners and Master Gardener Interns who pitched in and helped out making our community a little better from one end of Guadalupe County to the other during 2009.

When I think of the Master Gardener program, wherever that might be, I can't help but remember the story of the little boy finding himself on a beach where thousands of stranded star fish lay helpless. When asked what difference it made (in the bigger picture of life) when he would pick up one star fish at a time and throw it back into the ocean to save its life ... his answer was simple: "It makes a very big difference to that *one* star fish."

Our local Master Gardeners frequently find themselves in similar circumstances when asked to help someone or some organization with a gardening "conundrum." What do they do? They dig in and help out where they can—and often it's just one Master Gardener helping out and making a significant positive difference in someone else's life.

As we anxiously await those new seed catalogs for 2010 (many now available on-line), isn't it equally exciting to just contemplate all the new opportunities for true service that each one of us Master Gardeners and Interns will have during the coming year ... service directly related to our Master Gardener Association's mission.

As we travel into the year 2010, perhaps we can borrow the Boy Scouts of America motto and slogan: "Be prepared." And, "Do a good turn daily." Actually, through
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December Social

DECEMBER 10, 2009

Master Gardeners Holiday Party

6 PM - 10 PM

Mosaic Church (across from TLU)

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ELECTION OF OFFICERS - 2010

The following slate was elected by acclamation:

Open – President Elect
 Doug Biggs – Vice President
 Betty Hughes – Treasurer
 George Ammermann – Secretary

P L E A S E

REPORT YOUR HOURS NOW

Association News

Microorganisms in the Soil

by Stuart and Andrew Franke

Stuart and Andrew Franke presented the November Meeting program, Microorganisms in the Soil. Stuart's father, Arthur Franke, met a brilliant scientist by the name of James Martin at a cafe in Hondo, Texas. Mr. Martin introduced Arthur to a catalyst he had developed which would stimulate microbes and rejuvenate depleted farmland. This catalyst or microbe stimulator was so successful they began to market this product as a soil activator.

Plant productivity is directly related to the activity and level of the microorganisms in the soil. Without the army of microbes, the soil will soon become hard and compacted; water and oxygen will not be readily absorbed; the roots will be underdeveloped; the plant will be poorly fed; soon weeds and disease will take residence and rob the plant of its good health. Microbes, the invisible caretakers of all crops, are the key to healthy, profitable plant production.

Medina Agriculture Products Company began to develop a line of products based on increasing the microbial activity of the soil. This became a family business with Stuart succeeding his father, Arthur, and Stuart's son, Andrew, joining the family business. Andrew obtained an M.B.A. from St. Mary's University in San Antonio. He was a manager for a major business company but decided to return home and work in the family business.

Hurricane Carla deposited a lot of salt on rice fields in the coastal region of Texas. Microbes were used to remove the salt and again make the soil productive. This process called bioremediation created a big demand for products such as their soil activator. Further demand for their soil activator was generated by a farmer in California who found this product more than doubled his tomato productivity. He hauled truck loads of tomatoes to Texas and then loaded up his trucks with the soil activator on the return trip to California.

Medina Agriculture Products established in 1962 now offers a line of products for lawn and garden use. Most of these can be purchased at local nurseries and gardening stores.

Conundrums continued from page 1

our Master Gardener educational requirements, we are prepared to do those good turns daily through our community service activities.

Thank you one and all for demonstrating your excellence as Master Gardeners and Master Gardener Interns during 2009. I'll see ya out in the garden!

SCHERTZ COMMUNITY GARDEN UPDATE

The rain has hurt our progress but we have gotten the water lines in and tested and the trenches backfilled. The final fence posts are up and we are working on a date to get the last little bit of fence raised. We have volunteers spraying the Bermuda grass.

December is a tough month to work in due to the unpredictable weather and the holidays. But gardeners are a tough bunch and Master Gardeners are good at persevering. As long as our construction crew keeps pushing us ahead and our regular volunteers keep showing up, then we are confident of meeting our deadline.

H. W. Wahlers, Inc. made a \$300 donation for this garden. If you want to help or have garden items to donate, please let us know.

Email jlbruno@gvec.net if you want to be on the Garden update list to be notified when work days are scheduled.

November meeting refreshments were provided by Marilyn Anderson, Hughlene Micheli, Suzanne Brown, Doug and Virginia Biggs, and Pat Schultze. Jeff McKee won the \$18.50 raffle. Joey Halm won the \$10 Greengate Nursery gift certificate.

Master Gardeners Holiday Party

December 10, 2009 6 PM - 10 PM

Mosaic Church (across from TLU)

We have lots of people signed-up to bring dishes for the party. If you didn't, e-mail me at alschodows@aol.com. The meat will be provided.

Don't forget to also bring a can (Christian Cupboard) and/or an unwrapped present (Blue Santa).

Come enjoy the fun and conversation.

Questions? - Anna 830-303-3895

GROW LOCAL FESTIVAL 2010

The new website - www.growlocalfestival.com is up. We will be adding new events as we confirm with vendors and our own Master Gardeners who are working on special projects. We've just gotten word that the Grower's Market folks will be there.

We are still looking for information on Victory Gardens so if you think of anyone who might be willing to share pictures, please let us know.

Questions, suggestions or to volunteer, please email me at jlbruno@gvec.net

Please keep your calendar open for February 27th - we are going to need lots of help to make this a success.

AG FAIR - CIBOLO

Bob Davis, Buddy Nagel and David Love handled the Thursday and Friday, November 5th & 6th sessions at the Toby Connor Barn in Cibolo. Sessions were set up in twenty minute increments. They were well organized and the kids were well mannered.

Over the two days, 1000 4th graders came through the class. It was surprising to find out how many of them and their families have home gardens of vegetables and/or flowers.



THE EXECUTIVE BOARD IS STILL LOOKING FOR HOURS & DUES

New reporting requirements by the TMGA require a cutoff date of Dec 31st. Yes, we will still accept hours & dues after that time as per the schedule laid out in our By Laws but the number of members we report to the TMGA will be locked in to the Dec. 31st cutoff to determine the size of our organization for state-wide competition.

We have 118 certified members. We still need to collect hours and dues from 34 of those members and just dues from an additional 25 members who have reported at least their minimum requirement of 12 volunteer and 6 advanced education hours. So if you are in the 34 count, please turn in your hours so you can pay your dues. If you've turned in your hours, then please pay your dues. If you have a problem with any of this, please let a Board member know. Hours can be reported to: Dale Odvody, 4715 FM 2538, Marion TX 78124, or email to odvodyd@swbell.net

HOURS & DUES SHOULD BE TURNED IN BEFORE DEC 31st

2009 The City of Seguin Parks and Recreation Department CHRISTMAS TREE DECORATING CONTEST

GCMG participation in this project is chaired by Pat Schultze. Trees will be judged on the following three criteria: Originality, Theme, and Creativity. Contest winners will be announced following the Holiday Parade on Thursday evening. Ornaments will be awarded to the top four scoring entries. All trees and decorations must be removed by 5 p.m., Wednesday, January 2, 2010.

The GCMG tree will be decorated at 3:30 p.m. on December 2 behind the court house in Seguin in Central Park - it should be in the northeast corner. A ribbon with our name will be draped across the tree. The 2009 theme is Victory Gardens - everything will be decorated in red/white/blue, pictures of GCMG working in community gardens, etc.

Following are the themes and placements for the GCMG tree in prior years:

2000 1st Place Decorated with flowers and vegetables

2001 2nd Place

2002 1st Place Decorated with red, white and blue in honor of 9-11

2003 4th Place Decorated with Christmas legends, such candy canes, spiders, lady bugs, etc.

2004 3rd Place Decorated with white flowers

2005 1st Place Decorated with bird seed, bird nests, food for squirrels, etc.

2006 2nd Place "Seeds of Hope" (decorated seed packets)

2007 2nd Place Decorated tree with butterflies, flowers, lady bugs, etc.

2008 Did not place - Mother Nature and Christmas (all ornaments were natural, (lotus pods, okra pods, cotton bolls)

Specialist Propagation Class by Sandy Foss

I don't know how many of you look at the specialist classes. I have wanted to do this class for a couple of years, but I learned if you want to do it you must move quickly as classes are limited to two participants per county. This year Kathy Carroll and I signed up early and headed to Conroe, Texas November 6 for a 2 day class . This was a new experience for both of us.

We had a wonderful time. If you are interested in a special area of gardening and have not gone to one of these classes I would encourage you to sign up, it is well worth it. This class was put on by the Montgomery County Master Gardeners . The classes were well organized, speakers were experts and the facility was excellent. We had hands on experience propagating plants for 2 days. (And the food was good too!)

We cleft grafted a satsumas tangerine to a flying dragon orange tree, did a variety of cuttings, simple layering, air layering, learned how to collect seeds and store them, and divided day lilies and paper whites,(bulb chipping).

We propagated a Peggy Martin antique climbing rose, an African violet and black velvet begonia leaf.

We grafted an heirloom tomato to a hardy big boy (can you believe that), it makes the heirloom tougher and less susceptible to disease and insects, and increases the production by 50%.

We came home with our treasures and a CD with the slides from all the lessons, and a bag of goodies too.

Now to be a certified specialist, Kathy and I have to do 12 hours this next year of education and service. We plan to put together a couple of classes sometime next year and hope you will come.





Pecan Fest Heritage Days....in a Nutshell

by Randee Malmsten

For the second year, Seguin's Main Street Program, the Texas Agricultural Education & Heritage Center (known around town as the Big Red Barn), and many other area historical sites and museums came together to honor the pecan.

On October 24th and 25th, the Big Red Barn opened all the doors and grounds in celebration of our community's rural heritage. The family friendly venue hosted a significant increase in traffic from the previous year. Because the

event is admission free, there is no exact head count. However, during the two days, nearly 1,000 meals were purchased and nearly 1,000 scoops of HEB's new Texas Vanilla Seguin Pecan ice cream were sold.

The wonderful fall weather enticed Big Red Barn visitors to explore all areas of the complex, including the stellar vegetable garden nurtured and maintained by the Guadalupe County Master Gardener organization. Kudos to MG Stan Wieding who managed during this drought year to make the garden a showcase of what some training, due diligence, and a passion for growing things can produce.

When event organizers realized, much to their dismay, that they had not addressed staffing for the vegetable garden, one of the features of the Big Red Barn, the Master Gardeners responded. Thanks go out to Bill Ermel, Suzanne White, and Dave Love, who served as docents in the garden during Pecan Fest. Bill Ermel reported that the visitor interest level was high, he fielded lots of questions, and recommended that the event be included on the Master Gardeners annual volunteer event list.

FUTURE PROGRAMS

- Jan 21 – Dwight Sitta - Hydroponics Growing Systems
- Feb 18 – Sherri Anderson Kilman, Omni Farms, Herbs
- Mar 18 – Police Chief Steve Star - Poisonous Snakes
- Apr 15 – Mark Fanick - Fruit Trees for Home Landscapes
- May 20 – Liz Palfini, Texas Parks and Wildlife - Plants and Human Affairs
- Jun 17 – Summer Social

EDUCATION - CLASSES - SEMINARS

Guadalupe County Master Gardeners Class 21

This class started August 12th and is on Wednesday evenings in Schertz from 6:15 to 9:15 p.m. (plus two Saturday mornings). Graduation is December 9th. The remaining speakers are:

*December 2 – Why Organics? **John Dromgoole**, has the oldest continuous organic radio show on KLBJ, Owner of The Natural Gardener Inc., Manufacturer of Lady Bug products.

*December 9 (Ch 3) Graduation – David Rodriguez, Bexar County Agri-Life Extension Agent will speak.

Note: Although Dr. Doug Welsh, who was originally scheduled to speak at the Dec 9th Graduation, will be unable to attend, a copy of his "Texas Garden Almanac" can be ordered. The price will be less than \$24.95 and will be determined by the number we sell. Contact George Ammermann at 830-491-1246.

Bob Teweles has agreed to chair Class #22. It will be in Seguin August 2010 at night.

Guadalupe County (Schertz/Seguin) Chapter Native Plant Society of Texas

The Guadalupe County (Schertz/Seguin) Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas (NPSOT) will celebrate Christmas on Tuesday, December 8, 2009 with a pot-luck supper and an evening of fellowship.

Come join us at 6.30 pm at The Library, 798 Schertz Parkway, Schertz and meet our members. Bring your favorite dish! Visitors are always most welcome.

For more information or an application to join NPSOT contact: www.npsot.org/GuadalupeCounty/

Members in Service

Texas Master Gardener Board of Directors

Doug Biggs – One Year Term
Kay Wolverton – Two Year Term
Sandy Foss – Alternate, Two Year Term
Deedy Wright – Alternate, One Year Term

GARDENING EVENTS

David Rogers' Big Bugs at the San Antonio Botanical Garden

9/05/2009 - 12/06/2009

The Garden is buzzing with the local opening of David Rogers' Big Bugs exhibit! Displayed at gardens throughout the country, David Rogers' Big Bugs is a nationally-prominent exhibit, featuring a friendly swarm of larger-than-life insects. Constructed entirely of natural materials, these tree-sized insects turn the tables on humans, providing a "bugs-eye-view" of the important role crawly critters play in both the plant and human worlds.

Volunteer Opportunities

To help you fulfill your volunteer obligation, here is a list of Guadalupe County Master Gardener volunteer projects. Some have no chair or coordinator (you are welcome to take the project over); others have a chair or coordinator listed so that you can ask questions or volunteer. Remember, all of these projects need you to help. Even if you do not want to be the chair, you can still volunteer and help make Guadalupe County a better place.

Refreshment Coordinator (finds volunteers to bring refreshments to meetings): **OPEN**

Social Coordinators for June and Christmas socials: **OPEN**

KWED Garden Show: George Ammerman/Bob Grafe/Ryla Cottingham (call to be a guest)

MG Library/Office/Support Staff (Monday mornings at MG office): Betty Hughes/ Esther Pinter (helpers always needed)

MG Scrapbook: Gloria Saenz

Newsletter - Elaine McIntyre

Speakers Bureau: Marcia Richardson

Christmas Tree Decorating Contest, Seguin, 2010: **OPEN**

Ag Education and Heritage Center Garden: Stan Wieding

Gutierrez Park in Schertz: **OPEN**

Landscape at Extension Building: Liz Romero

Schertz Community Garden: Linda Bruno

Seguin Administration Building on Court Street: **OPEN**

Silver Center Landscaping: **OPEN**

Ag Fair at Big Red Barn in October: Clara Mae Marcotte

Cibolo Ag Days in November: **OPEN**

San Antonio Stock Show and Rodeo Jan/Feb.: Joe Bruno, Construction chair/ Dale Odvody, Volunteer chair

Schertz Grow Local Festival in February: Linda Bruno

Earth Day in Seguin: **OPEN**

Pecan Festival in October: **OPEN**

Showcase Seguin (Seguin COC) in March: **OPEN**

Wilson County Gardening Day in May: **OPEN**

Education Chairman and committee members: **OPEN**

Awards Chairman - **OPEN**

Education Class 22: Robert Teweles

New Member Support: Sandy Foss

For those of you who take care of particular gardens, please notify Clara Mae Marcotte (830-379-3485) or Linda Bruno (210-363-8380) if you decide to have a work-day and need extra help.

The Master Gardener Association
is a **volunteer organization**
We need **YOU**
to help with our projects.

Seeds Needed

We still need seeds for our events. Just drop them by the Extension Office, labeled with the name (common name & Latin if you know it) & the year they were harvested. If there is a specific color, mention that too. No Mountain Laurel, please. If it is rare or an heirloom, add that to the description.

Springs Hill Demonstration Garden

Springs Hill Water Corporation, a non-profit water provider with 7,000 customers in Guadalupe County, requested the assistance of the Guadalupe Master Gardeners to advise, design and participate in the planting of an educational demonstration garden at their headquarters at 5510 S. 123 Bypass, Seguin. The demonstration garden is intended to show the public a colorful Xeriscape of recommended plants for low water use in home landscaping. It is 2442 sq. feet in size and at the southeast corner of their customer parking lot.

Springs Hill has mapped the location and is marking all underground utilities. They will do the site preparation and purchase all plant materials, soil amendments, mulches, and hardscape materials according to the agreed-upon Garden Plan. They will irrigate and maintain the garden as directed by Master Gardeners. Springs Hill will also purchase all educational signage for the plants, create informational links on their website, and install signage crediting Guadalupe County Master Gardeners for the garden.

Our role as Master Gardeners will be to create the plan and a budget for the garden and rainwater collection system. We will also coordinate volunteers for a planting day in early spring 2010. We should also promote the demonstration garden as an educational resource for low-water-use landscaping.

So far, more than twenty people have volunteered to plan and plant the Springs Hill Demonstration Garden. To join the team, contact Nancy Masterson at nmasterson@earthlink.net or call 830-303-0332.

San Antonio Stock Show and Rodeo Volunteer Opportunities

We need volunteers Feb 4th thru Feb 22nd, 2010, to help operate the Master Gardener Booth. What is expected of you? You can operate the Master Gardener booth and answer questions about gardening. If you don't know the answer, there is usually someone around who does or you can take a name and phone number so the asker can get the answer. Ann and I have been working the MG booth for over 6 years and have not been embarrassed yet. In fact, the hardest question I've been asked working any MG booth was when is going to be the last frost day this year. I have to admit that one left me with my mouth open drawing flies.

The other volunteer opportunity is being a Docent. Docents have a very complex job that Ann is reluctant to allow me to do. They count the people entering the building using a mechanical clicker and give directions to the restrooms. The point is, you do not have to be a Master Gardener to be a Docent. If you, the member, intern, or student want to work the SASS&R Master Gardener booth, your non-member spouse, child, mother, father - you get the point - can be a Docent.

Why volunteer? Why not? Where can you volunteer and be inside with a heater during the winter? Yeah, when we have bad weather it is a little cold with those big doors open and when the weather changes to the typical 95 degree February it is hot inside. So what? Here are the advantages:

You are working inside for your volunteer hours. You have free lighted secure parking. You have free shuttle service to and from the grounds. You have free admission to the SASS&R grounds. You have free refreshments while you are working. And you can come early or stay late and walk the SASS&R grounds, sample the free samples, watch the pig races, etc. Just don't miss the last shuttle.

Don't want to work the MG booth or be a Docent? There are other volunteer opportunities from Bexar Co., which I'll provide at a later date.

Dale Odvody

San Antonio Stock Show and Rodeo Construction Volunteer Opportunities

From Jan 15th to Feb 3rd, 2010, we will have volunteer opportunities to help Bexar County Master Gardeners build the display booths for the San Antonio Stock Show and Rodeo. Joe Bruno is our representative on the BCMG planning committee. We start off with a big barn like structure called the "Texas Experience Building" and we end up with, while not a work of art, something pretty darn good to look at.



We'll talk needed tools later. But if you don't have any, don't sweat it. There are plenty around. Tools we'll find, willing workers we need. Shoot, someone asked me if I was sure about something and I said I was positive and they made me an electrician. I suppose the come back, "shocking isn't it?" would not be appropriate would it? Seriously, the construction phase involves all aspects of work. Shoveling mulch, hauling rocks and posts, screwing screws, nailing nails, wrenching bolts, stapling paper, hanging flyers, decorating walls, stringing wire and rope, building benches, moving built benches, going for tools, going for parts, keeping Joe from maiming me for mouthing off at him, keeping me or someone else from falling off a ladder, or holding us all up from lagging so hard from having a good time. We work, we gritch, we find solutions that meet safety standards. We are inspected for compliance before the show starts. "We always do it that way," is not always the final answer and new ideas, while smirked at by some, are appreciated when they work. Oh! Did I mention you get fed lunch for your work. And work hours are normally 8:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m., Monday – Friday, so we can get out of there before the daily traffic gets congested. Tools, you ask? Joe and I bring one each of about all the common tools we own. So, hammers, mauls, pliers, knives, screwdrivers, drills (battery powered are usually best – less cords to trip over), ladders, step stools, knee pads, gloves, etc. Water and ice is provided by BCMG.

There are other volunteer opportunities from Bexar Co.- like feeding the work crew. But please, if you decide to feed the work crews, don't bring beans. The first year I worked the construction crew, the first week they brought in beans four out of five days for lunch. The fifth day Betty Hughes brought in Spaghetti and meat sauce and after work I went home and Ann had fixed beans for supper. Boy!! That was a long weekend, most of it spent outside standing up wind of myself.

Dale Odvody

CHAIRMAN FOR THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE NEEDED FOR 2010

What does the Chairman do? Plans and coordinates educational opportunities for both members and the public on established gardening topics and also on current issues related to organics and the environment. Put another way, if you have ideas about classes and workshops that you would like to see us doing for both the public and our membership and you are interested in putting those ideas into action, we want to talk with you. Being organized and able to meet schedules is an important part of this, but there is a whole team of people already in place who are ready to work with you. Want to know more? Call Linda Bruno at 210-363-8380

Fairbanks , Alaska

Of all the cities in Alaska that we visited, I enjoyed Fairbanks the most. It is the second largest city in Alaska and serves as the regional hub and gateway to Alaska 's interior and Arctic area. There is much to see and do. We stayed there 10 days and still left areas unseen. There is the Riverboat Discovery, a sternwheeler that takes you down the Chena and Tanana rivers with a visit to Susan Butcher's Iditarod champion sled dog training camp and a guided tour of the Chena Indian Village; El Dorado Gold Mine where you can pan for gold; Creamer's Field where you can watch migrating fowl summer over; attend the weekly farmers market; go to several museums; or stay up late to see the Auorora borealis if you do not visit in the summer.

The University of Alaska at Fairbanks museum has much to see and takes several hours to see the art galleries, native artifacts, wildlife, history on all regions of Alaska and much more. Also on the university grounds there is the Large Animal Research Station and Georgeson Botanical Garden . This garden adds new plants every year and has more than 1,000 trees, shrubs and other perennials. It also has vegetable, fruit and flowering plants. The garden began in 1905 as a demonstration garden to test vegetable plants for growing in Alaska climate and has developed more each year. It now includes areas for children, a 2 acre hedge maze, a pond, peony beds and areas for quiet reflection and wildlife viewing. Many of the plants in the garden have come from China , Russia and Iceland .



December 2009

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2 Master Gardener Class 21 ○ Full Moon	3	4	5 KWED Radio 1580 AM Lawn & Garden Show 9:05 A.M.
6	7 Master Gardener Office/Library Open 8:30-NOON	8	9 Master Gardener Class 21 GRADUATION	10 DECEMBER SOCIAL	11	12 KWED Radio 1580 AM Lawn & Garden Show 9:05 A.M.
13	14 Master Gardener Office/Library Open 8:30-NOON	15	16 ● New Moon	17	18	19 KWED Radio 1580 AM Lawn & Garden Show 9:05 A.M.
20	21 Master Gardener Office/Library Open 8:30-NOON	22	23	24	25 	26 KWED Radio 1580 AM Lawn & Garden Show 9:05 A.M. Newsletter Deadline
27	28 Master Gardener Office/Library CLOSED	29	30	31 ○ Full Moon		



Guadalupe County Master Gardeners, Inc.
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	Master Gardener Coordinator

December Social
Thursday, December 10, 2009
Time – 6 PM to 10 PM
Mosaic Church (across from TLU)

Reference to commercial products or trade names is made with the understanding that no discrimination by the Master Gardeners is implied, and no endorsement by the Master Gardeners is implied. Educational programs conducted by the Guadalupe County Master Gardeners serve people of all ages, regardless of socioeconomic level, color, sex, religion, handicap, or national origin.

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P L E A S E

REPORT YOUR HOURS NOW