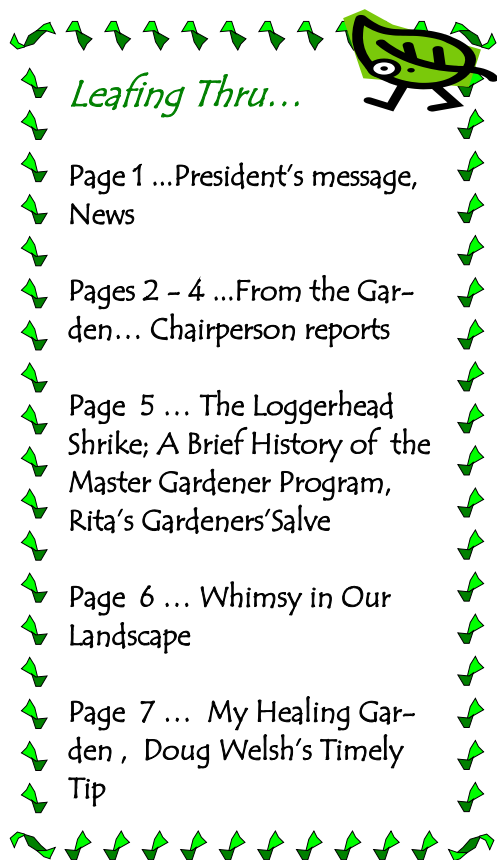


## President's Message *by Rhonda Hanks*

It looks like 2010 is going to be a great year and already it's off to a great start. The Executive committee has been hard at work and has completed the by-law changes. The policy and procedures manual is on its way to being completed. We have already participated in two community events, E-Waste and Tree Sale through a partnership with Walker County Proud Communities. Thanks to each Master Gardener who participated in these events.

The new intern class has begun. They are excited, energetic, enthusiastic and ready to pitch in. The Interns have started planning their class projects and will show off their stuff at the Celebration. We all begin with the idea of learning and becoming a better gardener but what we discover is a really wonderful group of people.

The greenhouse is full of tomatoes, peppers and other veggies in preparation for the Spring Plant Sale, March 13<sup>th</sup>. It is always an exciting time getting ready for the sale and I am always amazed how everything comes together in the end. The last week before the sale we look each other and at what needs to be done and think there is no way we can get this done before Satur-



*Leafing Thru...*

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## NEWS! WCMG Specialists

Five Master Gardeners have completed specialists training through the Texas Master Gardener training program. Duane Robinson, Leta Richards, Bernie Polega, Don Ko and Susan Moran completed the Plant Propagation Specialist training. This session was held in November in Montgomery County with Tom Leroy providing the training. Susan Moran completed the Vegetable Gardening Specialist training held June 29 and 30, 2009 in Glen Rose.

Presenters included Tom Leroy, Carlos Bogran, Patty Leander, Bill Adams and Joe Masabni as they covered many topics relating to vegetable gardening. In addition to the training sessions, Plant Propagation Specialists must complete 12 hours of volunteer service and Vegetable Specialists must complete 20 hours volunteer work.

Upon completion each member will receive Specialists Certification. Upcoming specialists training programs are shown on the Texas Master Gardener website [www.texasmastergardeners.com](http://www.texasmastergardeners.com) click on Specialists Training 2010. (contributed by Billie Lee)

### The Spring Sale

We are going full steam ahead for the 2010 Spring Sale. The committee members and many others are working hard to make the sale a success. Our Spring and Fall sale are our two main sources for operational funds for the whole year. We need everyone involved to be successful. As usual this is not a problem. The intern class has really rolled up their sleeves and worked hard potting all the vegetables, plus other plants including bulbs and cuttings. I would like to thank everyone that has brought a plant donation. This helps the profit margin quite a bit! Keep up the good work.

Basically we are using the same plan we used at the last sale. There will be minor adjustments to some locations. We will have fifteen different sales areas including baked goods, Country Store, raffle, seeds, and all of our usual plants. We will be offering a large variety of heirloom vegetables again this year. That seemed to be a big hit last year. We always strive to offer the public good deals on plants that they wouldn't commonly find anywhere else. We are constantly seeking ways to better the sale for the public and the WCMG's. The 4-H members will also be assisting again. They are great help and certainly appreciated.

This year we will have a pre-sale seminar to showcase what we have at the sale on Saturday, Feb. 27 from 10-2 PM at the AgriLife office. We will cover heirloom vegetables, roses, natives and perennials. This will replace the two pre-sale seminars that we usually have the week prior to the sale. Make sure to get the word out and bring all your friends and neighbors. Flyers are available if you need any. Mark the date on your calendar and come give us a hand!

### The Greenhouse

The greenhouse is a beehive of activity these days. We have the new intern class getting active and involved. We have planted vegetable and herb seeds and are now starting to pot them for the sale. We have been starting lots of cuttings of annuals & perennials also. This week we worked on potting tomatoes, petunia's, Gerber daisies, marigolds, & impatiens. So the greenhouse is busting at the seams and we will start moving anything we can outside to make more room. Our main focus is getting plants ready for the spring sale. We will continue to pot up seedlings & cuttings. We are focusing on heirloom veggies and drought tolerant natives. ~ Sandra Syphrett

### Steering Committee Report

The 2010 Master Gardener training class began January 14 with twenty-four (24) Interns displaying unique personalities, diverse talents and lots of enthusiasm. Several classes have been completed and their enthusiasm continues to grow. They have logged many volunteer hours working in the greenhouse and demonstration gardens. Many Interns enjoyed working at the Tree Sale and look forward to other community projects. Several have volunteered to serve on various committees and are actively working with committee chairmen. The Steering Committee has enjoyed working with the 2010 Interns and look forward to the educational programs remaining. ~ Billie Lee

Spring  
makes its own  
statement, so loud and  
clear that the gardener  
seems to be only one of  
the instruments, not the  
composer. ~ Geoffrey B.  
Charlesworth



Demonstration Garden

As with many of you, our demonstration garden suffered from the extended freeze. As well as losing some plants, the pump to our water harvester cracked and some of the water lines from the tank also cracked. All of these have been repaired. So we can flush the toilets again. The pump in the fish pond also has to be replaced. The roses in the rose research garden have been transplanted to other areas of the demonstration garden. We are in the process of putting in a research vegetable garden where the roses were. Some of the beds will be raised beds and some will be in the ground. Ideas for the type of research to be done are welcome. Also in this area there will be a raised bed where Jenny Covington can do day lily propagation. Some of the other projects we hope to do this year are: raise the level of the Country Store, run electricity to the Country Store (after the level has been raised), rejuvenate the berm beds, move the water harvester currently by the Extension Office to the south side of the Country Store to catch the water from the new covered area in front of the Country Store (hopefully the weather will allow us to put the metal roof on soon), put ceramic tile on the bathroom floors, and put solar lights around the walkways. We seem have an eager group of interns this year as well as a nice group of "old faithfuls." So we should be able to accomplish all of this and more.~ Wes Sanders



In the spring, at the end of the day, you should smell like dirt. ~Margaret Atwood



I love spring anywhere, but if I could choose I would always greet it in a garden. ~Ruth Stout



\* Hospitality

Jean Mac said it was an easy job when she tapped me for it, but she lied! But I am feeling a little better now since we have a place reserved for the Celebration, and sign-ups are covered up to April. We have a very enthusiastic Hospitality Committee in place, made up of most of last year's committee and some members of the new intern class. Eight members have contacted me and five interns want to work with us also. So, it is obvious that we have a great group! Up until May we are covered for Saturday Work Day refreshments. The week before Spring Sale has two or three volunteers working Monday through Fri. And on the Saturday of the sale, we have lots of our committee bringing soup, cornbread and desserts for the day of the sale. And Mary Laurent has offered her special slicer for tomatoes, cheese and cold cuts. Special thanks to all who have volunteered - it looks like Master Gardeners will continue to eat well!! ~ Susan Sanders



Community Outreach

The Community Outreach Committee is busy arranging community educational programs and preparing programs to add to the Speaker's Bureau.

The "Vegetable Group" consisting of Mark Short, Bill Dawson, Butch Maywald and Susan Moran have been busy with their presentations as everyone looks forward to planting their spring garden. They have presented programs in Madisonville and Cold Spring and have several other engagements on their calendar. Darnell Schreiber will join the group as she presents "World's Healthiest Vegetables" and "Cooking with Herbs" in February and March. Also in March, the group will present a program for the children's reading club at the Huntsville City Library promoting planting vegetables. A presentation "Gardening with Kids" is scheduled for the SHSU future teachers demonstrating various techniques to involve children in gardening and environmental awareness.

The committee is constantly working on new programs and updating existing presentations. We encourage all members to participate in developing and presenting these programs.

~ Billie Lee



Gardening Tips to Use...

\*\*A shade tree can help save 15% to 50% on air conditioning. Plant a shade tree near the southwest corner of your home for shading on a hot summer's afternoon.

\*\* NASA scientists found that certain indoor plants filter contaminants out of the air better than others. It takes 15 to 20 plants to clean a 1500 sq ft area. Three of the best are Boston fern, Dracaena and Rubber plant.

\*\* Want your compost to break down quickly? Try heating it up! Hot compost breaks down faster and kills weed seeds and many disease pathogens. Cover the compost pile with a large plastic tarp to keep in heat. Add branches to the middle to provide oxygen, an important ingredient for quick-cooking compost.

(Garden Gate Magazine - Issue 79)

Awards and Grants

This committee stays under the radar for most of the year but, I would like to thank Betty Baber and Deborah Wright for volunteering to help out. We do not have any grants identified this year so far. If anyone has any ideas or has heard of something we might be able to use, please let one of us know. We are planning ahead on the Master Gardener awards. We have some ideas for some categories, but you all may be able to help us with ideas. The categories are; Individual Master Gardener, Outstanding Association, Publications, Graphics presentation, Mass media, educational programs, projects, and newsletter. All nominations should be promoting education and the Master Gardener organization. All of this information and previous winners can be found on the Texas Master Gardener website. We are looking forward to the award ceremony at the state convention and also any opportunities to receive grants. Thank you.

~ Mark Short



### The Loggerhead Shrike by *Marian Czaja*

The loggerhead shrike, also known as the “butcher-bird,” is commonly found through most of the United States. The practice of catching and then impaling insects (particularly grasshoppers), snakes, rodents, and sometimes small birds on thorns or barbed wire helps the male to declare his territory and attract a mate. The hooked beak is used to grip the flesh of the prey and a “tooth” or projection at the tip of the beak helps to sever the spinal cord of its prey.

The bird has contrasting black and white colors on the wings, tail and face that stand out on a background of a gray body. This set of colors yields a striking appearance. A mask of black, lined with white, runs from the beak through the eye to the side of the head. Overall, the bird is approximately seven inches in length.

The habitat of the loggerhead shrike is open woodlands. Unfortunately, this beautiful bird, helpful to gardeners, is declining in numbers. We still have loggerhead shrikes nesting in our area of Huntsville, but we do not see them as frequently as we have in the past. The nest is built in a tree where the female lays one to nine grayish buff-colored eggs with dark spots. These are incubated for 16 – 17 days. Fledging takes place from 17 to 21 days of age. Two to three broods may be produced, especially in southern areas.

### A Brief History of the Master Gardener Program submitted by *Billie Lee*

During the early 1970's a Washington State extension agent found himself overwhelmed by community requests for horticulture information and education. Realizing the importance of this information and education to his community, he and a Washington State plant pathologist devised a plan to train “master” volunteers to assist in providing horticultural information and education to the public. The first Master Gardener class was trained in 1973.

The first Master Gardener program was initiated in Texas in 1979 in Montgomery County by County Extension Horticultural Agent, Tom Leroy. Today the Texas Master Gardener Program can be found in counties across the State of Texas and this program is known to be the largest in the nation. Walker County Master Gardeners have been providing information and education to the community since training their first class in 2000.

### Rita's Gardener's Hand Salve by *Professor Rita Heikenfeld, CCP, CMH*

As an herbalist, I love this simple salve for garden-weary hands. Fun to make with kids. Double or triple this if you want. Melt together:

6 tablespoons almond oil            1 tablespoon cocoa butter            1 tablespoon beeswax.

Stir, let mixture cool. Stir in several drops of peppermint oil or your favorite essential oil. If using fresh herbs, let them dry first. You'll want about 2 tablespoons chopped dried herb. The reason for using dried vs fresh is once in a great while, the moisture in fresh herbs may cause the oil to get moldy after a time. This has never happened to me (I usually let the fresh herbs wilt a bit), but professionally, I need to tell you this - add them to the almond oil and warm it. Let the herbs cool in the oil and then strain and proceed with your recipe, adding more oil if necessary.

Even easier:

Thanks to a loyal reader who sent this tip in anonymously: To each cup of herbal infused oil, add 1/4 cup beeswax. Melt on low until wax is melted. You can always add more beeswax, or more oil to your liking. Remove from heat and pour into container. Store in a cool, dark place.

Salves last several months at least.

## Whimsy in Our Landscapes! By Bek Akın



Do you ever drive through small country towns and see unique and creative objects decorating the landscapes? Sometimes the artwork is delightful, whimsical and wonderful; other times we find objects where we might breathe a sigh of relief that it's not in our next door neighbor's yard. But in many of the green landscapes this spring, not only do we see flowers, plants and trees, we also enjoy the added color and shapes of yard art, and our faces smile with delight and amusement.

Yard art takes on many forms working from the ground up and into the trees. From the cute signs announcing "Grandpa's Workshop" to colorful gazing balls to variety in our bird feeders to the very pots we plant in, we can create in our own landscapes a specific theme, or go eclectic. Flags and windsocks, antique chairs, wrought iron fencing, swings, shepherd's hooks, Texas star emblems -- homemade or store-bought -- the possibilities are limitless. It's fun and it's as much or as little as you want. Done aesthetically, it's whimsy in the landscape and entertainment for the eyes.

Old wagon wheels and rusty wheelbarrows leaning against aging trees add nostalgia, reminding us of grandparents and history books. Add flower vines such as Passion flowers or Carolina jasmine to that wheel and it pops with added beauty and fragrance. To the old wheelbarrow plants such as impatiens or Vinca make something old and useless into a lovely focal point.

Birdbaths and concrete sculptures are fun and beautiful. From cute critters such as birds, bunnies and squirrels to graceful poetic bowls where birds can bath, these pretties enhance a garden like no other work of art. Placed in rock gardens or among flowers, or standing alone in the landscape, they add a lovely dimension of character. Indeed, unlike those resin pieces that are truly destroyed when chipped or broken, concrete takes on personality with its nicks and dings. Estate and garage sales are ideal for finding concrete art at a great price.

Occasionally we might see bathroom fixtures that some people hate to dispose in a dump. Some of us think tacky, but if we are "lucky," the owner might have planted ivy in the toilet, or herbs in the bathtub. An old claw foot tub is particularly fun as yard art. After all, function is key, and multi-functioning these used items becomes recycling. However, for many, these objects might be best enjoyed in the privacy of the backyard.

Stepping stones make statements in any landscape. The flat stones entice one to walk through a garden or to the lake; certainly they are what they are. Whether homemade with inlaid stones or porcelain or store-bought flagstones or concrete Texas stones -- all enable us to put beauty into our landscapes at our feet. So have a little fun with your function!

From pebbles to large rocks, either can enable us to partake of our landscape in specific ways. Don't want to mow, or desire an authentic-looking cactus garden? Go for the pebbles spread thick over a prepared bed of layered newspaper or garden cloth. Want to sit on a large rock and gaze at the lake or garden? Invest in a large rock with the perfect "seat" for that purpose. Or perhaps a good friend can help you find one. Be prepared to sweat a bit when it's do-it-yourself with a ton of stone.

Beautiful hanging baskets across the front of one's covered porch cozy up that area like nothing else. Add a few old rockers or metal chairs, invite some folks to come sit and drink glasses of iced tea, and you have created the art of front porch neighborliness. A lot of history and amusement can take place on the front porch, and with plants and people there is plenty of live entertainment. Art!

Hummingbird feeders and birdhouses add that artful dimension which invites the little neighbors for a visit. Cedar and redwood, with or without color make any tree look like home, and what fun it is to sit outdoors and watch the birds flit around. Hummers may fight over the feeders on your deck or porch but their antics are art in itself. Indeed the bird watching is engaging when you have unique birdhouse designs in your own landscape.

For some great ideas, take a drive around the countryside and observe. Shall we end with a quote? Poe said, "It seemed to my friend that the creation of a landscape-garden offered to the proper muse the most magnificent of opportunities. Here indeed was the fairest field for the display of the imagination, in the endless combining of forms of novel beauty." So, why not have some fun?



Thoughts from a Master Gardener Intern...



My Healing Garden by Kathlyn Black

Gardening is my redeemer. Without conscious thought, during many times of my life, it cradled me, fed me, comforted me, lifted me, and saved me.

In a unorthodox home, my teenage mother placed me as a newborn, in a pen in the great outdoors. There I was at one month old, two months old, three months old; spending my days confined, it was thought, to a world without response. Yet... I looked upon the swaying trees overhead and the blue skies that reached beyond - the freedom of space, the love of nature, and the breath of fresh air - and it cradled me.

As a toddler, I escaped the indoors to play outside. There was no fear in me, of the pasture behind the house nor the woods beyond its field. My young college-age, Ag-major Dad, led me by the hand to the knowledge of the wild and its wild edible plants. It became my peace amongst the chaos of dysfunction. Body, mind and soul, it fed me.

As a child, my gift was a strip of grass; nearly three feet wide between the fence and drive! I tilled and toiled and planted seed. Daily, I sat upon a tree stump in the middle of the garden and gave love to my flowers and vegetables. They loved me back. They inspired me to write poetry. The garden was my consoling world. It comforted me.

As an out of the ordinary teenager, I befriended all the grandmas in the neighborhood, especially my own great grandmother down the street. I was blessed to have her so near by. The grandmas' gardens were fabulous... meandering trails, plush grass and plantings, hidden worlds within worlds! I never left their domain without a gift - the gift of a living beauty today and most definitely, an inspired anticipation for tomorrow.

As an adult, I took refuge in my garden. When there was continuous pain and sickness in my fight with Breast Cancer, it gave me the emotional strength and the physical ability to fight off the disease. It caused my body to respond to the anticipation for tomorrow. How could I die when I needed to wait for the bloom?

My garden cradled me in its beauty and it fed my soul. It comforted me when I felt alone in my ordeal. And most of all, it gave me something to look forward to and it inspired me. My garden is my best friend and therapist, and it has saved me... all of my life.

Doug Welsh's Timely Tip for March ...

"Don't be too quick to turn on the water irrigation system. Winter rains build up soil moisture levels. In the eastern half of Texas, irrigation systems should probably not be turned on until April." (Texas Garden Almanac, TX A&M Press, 2007)

# Walker County Master Gardener Association

## 2010 Executive Board

President — Rhonda Hanks  
President-Elect--Rowe Creager  
Vice President — Jenny Covington  
Secretary — Betty Baber  
Treasurer — Duane Robinson  
Past President -- Mark Short  
Advisor -- Reggie Lepley

Newsletter Editor — Rebecca Akin  
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**Providing Guidance**  
**Encouraging Creativity**  
**Teaching Methods**  
**Always Available**  
**Learning New Techniques**  
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**Walker County  
Master Gardeners**



County Master Gardeners  
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