



*Williamson County
Master Gardener Newsletter
Spring 2015*

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President's Message

by Wayne Rhoden



I am writing this before our plant sale and hope to be able next month to tell you how successful it was. Right now we are apprehensive about the status of the plants we have to offer. With the lack of sunny days it is difficult for the growers to get the plants ready to sell. We do not always appreciate the weather factor for the growers that supply all of our plants especially locally grown plants. Even though they are in greenhouses it is still difficult getting the plants to grow without sunny days. We need the rain but need some sun in between.

You should visit our web site if you have not done so lately and look at the information available to our members and the community about the happenings in our association. You can check on the progress of the vegetable gardens and see the amount of produce that is donated to the local charities, The Caring Place, Annunciation Maternity Home and at times Round Rock Serving Center. There is also a calendar where you can see the monthly programs listed and tell all of your friends to come to the programs each month. For April, we have Rachael Butler giving a presentation on Backyard Chicken Flocks. In May, the program will be about Water Conservation, a topic that is always timely. Our monthly programs are always on the second Monday of each month. Check it out.

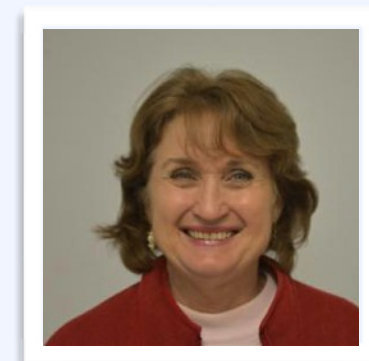
We will also have two more informational sessions for the fall class: April 14th, which is on a Tuesday from 6:30 to 7:30 PM, and June 6th, which is a Saturday from 9:00 – 10:00 AM. Both sessions will be in the training room at the extension office. Our first session held in March was well received with 23 prospective students attending. Three of those went immediately to pay their tuition for the class. So if you have any friends that are considering becoming a Master Gardener, you may want to encourage them to attend the first session. We are taking 35 students.

Lastly, I want to encourage you to report your volunteer hours in a timely manner especially near the end of the month because our CEA, Fred Hall, has to give monthly reports with the total number of hours our volunteers have served. These hours are converted into an hourly wage and the dollar figure is used to help Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Service procure funding to continue their valuable educational mission.

Thanks for all your volunteer efforts!

A Pot's Tale

By Valerie Clark



Are you environmentally inclined, like to save money, or perhaps you work with people who are economically disadvantaged? If so, Patsy Bredahl's presentation on "How to Make Pots" would be of interest to you. Using only newspaper, a soup can, a plastic nine ounce cup, and water Patsy showed how to make two different types of pots to the residents at the International Gardens last fall. This great presentation will make it easy for many of us to learn how to make our own biodegradable and very economical pots, and I hope to see it at a future WCMGA meeting.

For the first pot, Patsy used one page of newspaper and a soup can as a "form". Using a unique folding style, the newspaper goes around the can's side and bottom. After removing the can... presto, she had a pot ready to add soil and planted a seed! For the second pot, strips of newspaper are soaked over night in water. In class she demonstrated layering the strips around a plastic cup until it was thick enough. The final steps are to use a pencil to make a drainage hole, wait several days for the strips to dry, and then remove the plastic cup.

Doesn't this sound easy? Patsy will give us a short demonstration at WCMGA's January meeting as one segment of our NEW SHOW AND TELL show!

The WCMGA has many talented members who do not want to do a whole 30+ minute presentation, but would be delighted to do a shorter 2-15 minute presentation.

Possible subjects? Alicia says many members have asked about "how to sharpen tools."

(hint hint, low-hanging fruit!) Are you a specialist on some plant and would like to show a few pictures and give hints on how to make them prosper? Have you been somewhere and have pictures to show us? Perhaps a gardening "Mistake" or "Secret" that you would share with us, as a teachable moment? Is there a gardening process that you are particularly proud of?

Please consider doing a short talk on any subject at our SHOW AND TELL, or perhaps you know someone who could? Contact Alicia



Patsy Bredahl shows off a couple of the newspaper pots.

My Backyard Project

By Wendy Odlum



Upon moving into my new house, I managed to inherit a nightmare in my backyard, so I quickly resolved to do some landscape renovations (ok, complete replacement of everything but the trees). The St. Augustine would be the first to go, all of it. I went through several steps and missteps before I was able to get it done. The first thing was to decide my design aesthetics. I personally hate straight lines and love curves. Next came function. Even though the area is relatively small I wanted a bit of it all. I wanted vegetables next to a bee garden. I wanted to see butterflies from my porch, with hummingbirds too. I wanted “hot” beds of orange yellow and magenta, and “cool” beds of purple and pinks. Yikes. Oh and drainage. Never ever underestimate a builder’s ability to grade a property badly.

Next I spent some time just watching how the sun fell both in winter when the neighbor’s trees were bare and into late spring when they were full. This directly affected how I would design the beds. Living west of I35 presents its challenges seeing that there is very little “soil”, so everything would have to be raised. There was also the joy of 5 large closely spaced live oaks, whose root mats were impenetrable. It was imperative to allow the roots of the trees to breathe to avoid root rot under new beds while still allowing me to install the hardscape. In addition, all those suckers from the live oaks were a nightmare.

Next came the hardest part, which was choosing a contractor. Wow. After interviewing a few, I finally decided, but by then it wouldn’t get done until August, which is not the ideal planting time in Texas. Ugh. Best advice, figure it out before March so that whatever work needs to be done can be done in a timely manner. By April the good contractors are booked out to, well, August. This does not apply if you are brave enough to tackle it all on your own of course. In the end, I got just about everything I wanted squeezed into a very small space. It was not without heartache, but well worth it. I now have my version of paradise that I can share with friends and neighbors, all of whom have decided they want my help. If the grass in the front yard doesn’t improve, I will be at it again next year.

Attached are several pictures of my hardscape and one of my “white” garden, which I have wanted forever. Unfortunately a lot of plants in my backyard are still asleep, and the live oak leaves cover everything anyway, so I can’t provide pictures of the (never) finished yard.



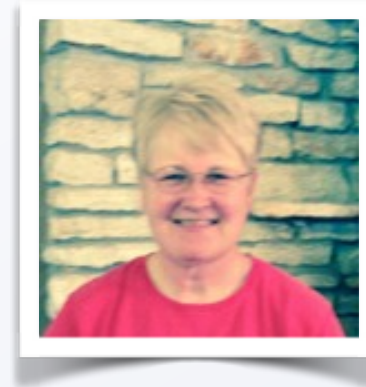
The White Garden





Interplanting

by Jean Legan



After downsizing my home two years ago, I was faced with the challenge of a smaller yard and garden! How could I grow my favorite organic herbs and vegetables in a tighter growing area? Central Texas climate is conducive to vegetable gardening during most of the calendar year. Many herbs and root vegetables are cold hardy and can be a nice start to a year round vegetable garden. I turned to an intensive gardening method called interplanting or intercropping. Interplanting is a gardening technique that involves planting two or more complementary crops in the same area. The goal is to maximize yield by pairing plants with similar soil, light, and nutrient requirements. Careful planning is essential to optimize veggie yield and space utilization!

Basic plant characteristics and seasonal features should be kept in mind when planning an intensive garden. Understanding light requirements, seasonality and mature plant heights are essential elements for successful intensive gardening. Spinach planted in between tomato plants will be harvested before the tomato plants grow tall enough to shade them. Similarly, shade-tolerant veggies such as greens and lettuce will grow in the shadow of taller plants. Plants belonging to the same family, for example the nightshade (tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, and potatoes), are targets for the same garden pests and interplanting should be avoided. Many veggies are suitable to relay interplanting—that is planting a new crop into a standing crop at a point in time when the standing crop is prepared to be harvested. Finally, interplants should have different root growth patterns to minimize space competition. Broccoli, spinach, lettuce and cabbage are considered to be shallow-rooted plants. Cukes, summer squash, carrots and peas are medium-rooted. Tomatoes and winter squash are deep-rooted. Pairing cool-weather crops such as broccoli and lettuce followed with a spring-weather pairing such as carrots or radishes might work well in a tight garden space.

This photo illustrates part of my intensive garden in June, 2014. I chose a mixed interplanting method coupled with a relay method. Flat leaf parsley, chives, thyme and marjoram herbs are planted at the leading edges of the irregular raised bed. A zucchini plant replaced harvested spinach earlier in the spring. A Cherokee Purple tomato plant sits next to the chives with a mini-pepper plant tucked in behind the tomato plant. Aphids made a brief appearance on the pepper plant but were fast to exit with some home-made insecticidal soap! Whatever you choose to inter crop, make sure the plants will coexist harmoniously to maximize your gardening efforts.





Carpenter Bees

by Wizzie Brown



Carpenter bees are one of those insects that can be viewed by people in two varying ways- as a beneficial or a pest. If they are in your garden and helping to pollinate plants it's great, but things can be put into a negative light when these insects burrow into wood and cause damage.

Carpenter bees look similar to bumble bees, but they have a shiny, hairless abdomen. They are ½- 1 inch in length and are typically black and yellow. Male carpenter bees have a whitish spot on the front of their face. Only females have a stinger, but usually do not sting unless very agitated or held in someone's hand. Males cannot sting, but can be territorial and harass insect or other animals (including humans) that enter their space.

Carpenter bees get their name because they use their mandibles to chew galleries in wood creating round, ½ inch diameter holes. Holes often have coarse sawdust near the opening. Holes may have yellowish-brown staining below them from where the bees defecate before entering the nest.

Galleries are rounded and may sometimes cause damage to structures. The galleries are provisioned with pollen/ nectar loaves. An egg is laid on the loaf and the section is portioned off with a mixture of saliva and sawdust. Adults feed on nectar.

Nests may be created in exposed wood on structures, wooden decks or wood shingles or siding. Painted and treated woods are less preferred, but are not unsusceptible to attack. These bees do not eat the wood, but instead excavate it for nesting purposes.

Carpenter bees overwinter as adults, often in old nesting tunnels. Adults emerge in spring with males usually appearing before females. The females will excavate new tunnels in wood and create the pollen ball to lay an egg on. The eggs hatch within a few days and



development to adult takes 5-7 weeks. Adults generally emerge in the summer, but they do not create new galleries. They will clean out old galleries to serve as overwintering sites.

Carpenter bees are similar to Bumble bees in that they are generalists and visit many types of flowers as well as having “buzz pollination.” “Buzz pollination” is where the bee grabs onto the flower, moves its wings rapidly and vibrates the anther which dislodges pollen. Some plants are more efficiently pollinated with buzz pollination.

For more information or help with identification, contact Wizzie Brown, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist at 512.854.9600.

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Extension programs serve people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, disability, or national origin.

Monthly Gardening Tips
April and May 2015
by Winola VanArtsdalen



• **April 2015 Gardening Tips**

• **General:**

- Do not prune oaks February through June or any time of mild weather, as the beetles that spread the disease are most active then. **Paint wounds on oak trees any size any season!**
- Plant summer and fall pollinators like four-o'clocks and cosmos, and warm season bulbs such as rain lilies and spider lilies. If you plan to set out vinca, waiting until after mid to late April reduces problems with fungal disease.
- Thin out weakest stems of clump-forming plants like bee balm, and trim tips of plants you want to be bushy. Remove spent blossoms if you want to prevent self-seeding.
- Watch for aphids using hard water spray, or insecticidal soap, if necessary.

• **Turf:**

- If you did not aerate turf last month, do so now. After aeration, $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch of compost spread as top dressing will enrich soil and aid soil retention. Do not, however, aerate your lawn during a drought, as it will cause undue stress to the root zone. Never spread compost in hot weather, as it is high nitrogen and could burn turf.
- Bermuda and St. Augustine should be fertilized in late March to early April, Buffalo and Zoysia in late April to early May.
- If you used top dressing, skip this fertilization, as would be too much nitrogen.

- **May 2015 Gardening Tips**

- **General:**

- Find space in your garden for herbs! They attract beneficial insects and have been used through history to keep away harmful insects, as well as adding flavor and nutrition to our food. With their wide choice for contrasts of color, shape and texture, herbs are extremely versatile in landscaping. In addition to all this, with only a few exceptions, they are deer resistant!
- http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/organic/files/2011/03/E-561_growing_herbs_texas.pdf
- Check your irrigation system monthly to be sure all is working properly, especially now with summer heat approaching.
- Water thoroughly, but only when needed. Thorough soaking, yes; light sprinkling, no!
- Mulch, mulch, mulch!
- Pinch back growth to encourage branching. Always dig weeds as soon as you see them.
- Unless you are willing to hand water, limit new plantings.

- **Turf:**

- For healthy turf, keep blades sharp, never mow more than 1/3 the height, and minimize fertilizer.
- Bermuda was fertilized earlier. Buffalo and zoysia can be fertilized late April to early May. If you spread top dressing, skip this fertilization, as it would be too much nitrogen.
- **Source:** Texas A&M AgriLIFE Extension Service

***Williamson County Master Gardener Association
2015 Board of Directors and Sub-Committee Chairs
County Extension Agent – Fred M. Hall***

President – Wayne Rhoden

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Drought Tolerant Garden – Janet White

Water Conservation – Sandra Roberson

Vegetable Gardens – Teresa Wilts

Keyhole Garden – Roseanne Martine

Projects – Steve Echols

Awards – Dana Blair

Training – John Papich and Brenda McIndoo

Membership – Jeanne Barker

Plant Sale – Brenda McIndoo

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Communications – Catherine Nickle

Publicity – Viki Strauss

Help desk – Kaye Davidson

Speakers' bureau – Val Black

Online Presence – Gary Bowman

Newsletter – Open

Membership - Jeanne Barker

TMGA Directors

- Wayne Rhoden
- Jeanne Barker

Alternates

- Jane Bowman
- Open

A Note from Wayne:

Our opening for members of the board and subcommittee chairs are filled. We do have some openings for members on the sub-committees. If you are interested in one of the sub-committees, please email me at mgardener@suddenlink.net or give me a call at 512-869-8016. If you wish to see the responsibilities for each committee and sub-committee, visit our web site where the standing rules are posted. The link is <http://txmg.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/williamson/files/WCMGASstandingRules.pdf>. Scroll down to Article IX: Committees.



Save the Date

Williamson County Master Gardener Meetings

Monthly meetings are held at the Williamson County Extension Office, 3151 SE Innerloop Road, Suite A, Georgetown, Texas. Meetings are held on the second Monday of the month from 6:30 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. Social time is held from 6:30 p.m. until 7:00 p.m. The program (usually an educational speaker) is from 7:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m.

Monday, May 11, 2015, 6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

7:00 p.m.: Emily Button from Hill Country Water gardens will discuss fairy gardens. One hour educational credit.

Monday, June 8, 2015, 6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

7:00 p.m.: Charles Flatten, from Hill Country Alliance will talk about water consumption in the past, present and future and what steps to take to preserve our most precious resource. One hour educational credit.

Monday, July 13, 2015, 6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

7:00 p.m.: Steve Reynolds will speak about bromeliads. One hour educational credit.

Monday, August 10, 2015, 6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

7:00 p.m.: Theresa Wilts will discuss starting seeds for fall. One hour educational credit.

Monday, September 14, 2015, 6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

7:00 p.m.: Betsy Ross will teach us about building better soil . Betsy Ross raises beef on grass. She in turn has learned the benefits of compost teas and worm composting to improve the soil structure which leads to improved forage which leads to improved cows and the resulting beef. She will be talking about improving soil structure, and how we as homeowners can accomplish that and reap the benefits. One hour educational credit.

Monday, October 12, 2015, 6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

7:00 p.m.: Wild Organics. One hour educational credit.

Educational Opportunities for Master Gardeners

Williamson County Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Webinars and Patio Series

Webinars and patio lectures are held at the Williamson County Extension Office, Extension Training Room, 3151 SE Innerloop Road, Suite A, Georgetown, Texas. Webinars and patio lectures are free. Call 512-943-3300 to register by noon on the Thursday before the class. For more information, see <http://williamson.agrilife.org/>.

Williamson County Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Classes

Unless otherwise indicated, classes are held at Williamson County Extension Office, Extension Training Room, 3151 SE Innerloop Road, Suite A, Georgetown, Texas. Call 512-943-3300 or register online at <http://williamson.agrilife.org/program-registration/>.

Travis County Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Master Gardener Classes

Seminars held at Zilker Botanical Garden are free. Zilker Park entrance fee is \$2 per adult (\$3 for non-Austin-residents), \$1 per child or senior. For more information, call (512) 477-8672. Zilker Park is at 2100 Barton Springs Road, Austin, Texas.

You must register for seminars held at Travis County Extension Office online by phone 979-845-2604. Location and fee for classes is noted in description. Class sizes are limited. The Extension Office is at 1600 Smith Road, Austin, Texas.

May 9, 2015, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

"Butterflies in the Garden." Wanting to start a butterfly garden for your school or even your own backyard? Maybe, you have a small garden and just want to help encourage pollinators to pay your plants a visit. In this talk we will focus on butterflies and how you can invite them into your space. Kellyn Smith has been a Master Gardener since 2013. A lover of all insects she has a specialty in entomology and founded the butterfly garden at her school, a place she and her students treasure. Held at Zilker Park.

May 14, 2015, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

"Dealing with Drought – Alternative Methods of Gardening." If you have limited garden space or time, yet still have a desire to nurture your green thumb, Master Gardener Pat Mokry will teach you how to raise carefree veggies, herbs and flowers using self-sufficient grow boxes. Then, for some more 'new' gardening techniques, Master Gardener Marian Stasney will describe the ancient practices of both keyhole gardening and hugelkultur. Registration: \$10 through 5/10, \$15 starting 5/11 and onsite. For more information, see <https://agriliferegister.tamu.edu/TravisCounty>.

Monument Cafe Market Gardening Classes, 500 S Austin Ave, Georgetown, Texas

No information available on May classes at this time. For more information, call 512-240-4715.

Saturday April 25, 2015, 10:30 a.m.

“Drip Irrigation for the Home Garden” with Michelle. Save water and grow happy plants using drip irrigation! Learn about all the bits and pieces here.

Saturday May 2, 2015, 9:00 a.m.

“Building Wicking Beds” with Joe Schram from JoLi Farms. Wicking beds are self watering beds that will save you time and water. This will be a hands-on workshop where you will build a wicking bed from the ground up. \$30 per person or \$50 for two people. Register by calling 512-240-4715 or email michelle@themonumentcafe.com.

Saturday May 9, 2015, 10:30 a.m.

“Nervine Herbs: Time to Relax” with Gracie Bryce of Gracie’s Gardens. Learn how to grow and use medicinal herbs to relieve stress, calm anxiety and promote sleep.

Saturday May 16, 2015, 10:30 a.m.

“Organic Pest Control” with Michelle. Learn how to control pests in your garden without the use of harsh chemicals.

Saturday May 23, 2015, 10:30 a.m.

“Beneficial Insects” with Michelle. Learn how to identify the good guys in the garden.

Saturday May 30, 2015, 10:30 a.m.

“Edible Landscaping” with Michelle. Fill your yard with beautiful AND edible plants!

Hill Country Water Gardens and Nursery, 1407 North Bell Blvd, (Hwy 183), Cedar Park, Texas

- Call 512-260-5050 for more information.

Natural Gardener Gardening Classes, 8648 Old Bee Caves Rd, Austin, Texas

Classes are subject to change so please call first to confirm. Classes are held outdoors under an open air canopy – be sure to dress for the weather. Arrive early for best seating. You are welcome to bring your own chair. Classes last about an hour. For more information, call 512-288-6113 or see <http://www.naturalgardeneraustin.com>.

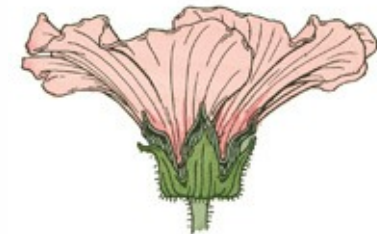
Online Classes

The state Texas Master Gardener Association allows only three recorded (static) online educational hours per year from the 12 different free online EarthKind Modules. The link for these classes is: <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/earthkind/training/>.

WCMGA also has approved the webinars from the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, <http://www.wildflower.org>. There is a small fee associated with their webinars.

A total of three online educational hours per year is allowed towards certification, whether they are all through A&M or a combination of EarthKind and Wildflower.

There is no limit on live online educational hours per year allowed for certification through Texas A&M AgriLife Extension.



Events of Interest to Master Gardeners

Tuesday, September 22, 2015 thru Friday, September 25, 2015

International Master Gardener Conference - Horticultural Horizons in the Heartland

Mid-America Center, 1 Arena Way, Council Bluffs Iowa 51501

See http://calendar.tamu.edu/?calendar_id=771&y=2015&m=09&d=22&eventdatetime_id=20836&.

This issue of the *Williamson County Master Gardener Newsletter* was made possible because of the contributions of the following Williamson County Master Gardeners and Interns: Wayne Rhoden (president), Jinna MacLaurin (editor and layout), Valerie Clark, Jean Legan, Mira MacLaurin, Jinna's 12 year old granddaughter (cover photo), Wizzie Brown, Catherine Nickle (proofreader), Wendy Odlum (proofreader and article), and Winola VanArtsdalen.

If you would like to contribute to the Summer 2015 *Williamson County Master Gardener Newsletter*, please send your submission to Catherine Nickle at cathnickle@gmail.com by June 16, 2015. As you garden, volunteer and learn, please take a moment to share your experiences with other gardeners. Thank you!



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