

Williamson County Master Gardener

Journal

VOLUME 5, NO. 1

Dedicated to growing with Williamson County

JAN / FEB 2011

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Berry Springs Clean-up

Susan Blackledge



A wonderful cool and cloudy day was enjoyed at Berry Springs Park by Master and Jr. Master Gardeners, Master Naturalists, and Volunteers on Saturday, February 26th. Thirty enthusiastic folks came prepared to get their hands dirty to clean up the Park's flower beds in order to get ready for spring. The beds have had quite the season(s) of weather to endure. The devastating flood in Sept. 2010 and two snowfalls this winter have put some serious stress on the plants. With the masterful hands of the volunteers the plants received some much needed TLC which will hopefully help them to bloom and thrive as temperatures warm up. An abundant pot luck feast was enjoyed by all at noon.

We lost a lot of plants due to the snow days and are asking for donations to fill the vacancies. Suggestion of native plants of the following varieties would be a great help ; lantana (any color), Gregg's mistflower, salvias, sages, four nerve daisy, blackfoot daisy, copper canyon daisy, Mexican feather grass, mountain laurels, kidneywood, copper canyon daisy, butterfly bush, cactus or any drought tolerant plants for the cactus gardens.



The Park heavily relies on the assistance of volunteers to make sure the twenty plus flower beds and the 300 acres are cared for in ways that expand the labor force exponentially. On behalf of the Parks Department, the park staff, Susan Blackledge and Mark Pettigrew extend a much deserved "Thank You!"

If you have a plant you would like to donate or if you need volunteer hours, give us a call @ 512-930-0040. Come enjoy Spring in the Park!

Photos by Jack Grieder

Tool Care Presentation

Carole Buckner

Bill Boytim spent two hours enlightening us on the PROPER care and sharpening for garden tools. As a woodworker and Master Gardener, he has amassed 50 years experience using and caring for tools, so I'm inclined to follow his advice. He gave us handouts to enhance his explanations; see <http://txmg.org/williamson/> click on "staying connected" then "handouts". He brought various tools for demonstrations. One book he likes is *Sharpening Basics* by Patrick Spielman.

Care of tools: KEEP them clean, dry, and sharp. Use abrasive pads + oil (baby, machine, motor) to clean and remove rust (anti-rust sprays available). Wooden and metal handles need sanding and oiling to prolong life. When disinfecting tools, use disinfectant strength directions, not the weaker strength.

Sharpening tools: Sharpen while the blade is still sharp, not to recover sharpness. His handout shows different types of cutting edges and how to determine if the edge is sharp. One method is to shine light on the cutting edge, and if there is no reflection back, the edge is sharp. Try to maintain the original angle when sharpening. A protractor can help. Always consider safety when sharpening tools (use leather, cardboard, rubber from old flip-flops as a barrier to prevent cutting your fingers).



Bill demonstrates using Carnuba wax to refinish tool handles.



The shovel edge is being sharpened.

There are many tools for sharpening your blades:

- #1. Files are used on softer metals. Protect your hands from contacting the sharp edges during filing.
- #2. Stones come in a variety of materials (handout), coarse to fine abrasive grits, sizes, and can be used dry or wet (water/oil). Using a wet stone will float the metal particles away from the stone, thus less clogging and less frequent cleaning of the stone. If you choose oil as a lubricant, stay with oil only for that stone. A lapping plate (various kinds-even a concrete paver) is used to "true"/flatten your stone.
- #3. Sandpaper may be used dry or wet (read label). Start with coarse grit, and use successively finer grit. He showed us a homemade tool using glass and sandpaper: 1/4"+ thickness glass with various grades of sandpaper glued (3M adhesive) around it. Glass may be free from glass shop as "leftovers". The glass provides a stable base on which to sharpen blades. You can use a power belt sander too.
- #4. Grinding wheels or Dremels can be used dry or wet. Get familiar with the safety features and keep flammables (paint thinner, etc.) far away due to sparks.



Patty Hoenigman and Quenby Gartner watch as Bill creates a burr edge on Janet White's pruners.

Concepts for sharpening tools:

- #1. Maintain the original angle as much as possible—a protractor may help.
- #2. Chipper blades must be "filed" on both sides to keep balance and prevent vibration during use.
- #3. Pocket knives—maintain angle and thickness of blade—the whole blade may need filing eventually. There are areas on the knife to file/adjust to allow the knife to close properly.
- #4. Pruners/loppers—assess the surface for smoothness/pits (ask workshop attendees), then grind the surface smooth. Check for burrs—can feel them so keep "sanding" until gone. Check the edges for proper closure by holding it up to light, hopefully no (not much) light shines through

between the blades. BEFORE you dismantle your tool, use a system to assure you can properly get it back together—take a picture, remove each part on a paper where you label it/how it fits/step #x in assembly.

Some tools should go to a professional sharpener. Some tools you sharpen at home—decide on perfection vs. good enough for the job.

Adjusting tools with rivets that cannot be disassembled: you can tap the pivot point with a ball peen hammer for tightening, but you have to figure out the correct side to tap.



Bill removes the burr edge as the final touch using the wet grinding stone.

Monthly Meetings

Williamson County Master Gardeners hold monthly meetings at the Williamson County Extension Office, 3151 SE Innerloop Road, Suite A, Georgetown on the second Monday of each month at 6:30pm. Master Gardeners and the public are welcome to attend.

Time for Tomatoes

Patty Hoenigman

It's only February, but March is the time to be planting tomatoes, so people are already talking about what varieties do well around here. There is a list of a varieties of vegetables on the Williamson County Web Site (<http://williamson-tx.tamu.edu>) check under publications/vegetable varieties, and you'll find varieties listed for Central Texas Gardening.

This year I'm going to try a cherry tomato called Juliet that I've heard is good. Local nurseries ought to be selling plants soon.

Remember to remove the bottom pair of leaves, and put the plant in loose soil that's been amended with compost. Sink the plant below where those bottom leaves came off and roots will sprout from those nodes giving the plant a healthy root system. Tomatoes like to be planted deeply. Put your tomatoes in a sunny location, and keep them watered regularly, and with any luck you'll have a crop before the heat sets in.

You may see the words 'Determinate' and 'Indeterminate' on the label of tomato plants. Determinate plants will grow to a certain point and stop, giving you a manageable size...like a little bush. While Indeterminate plants keep growing like vines and typically have to be caged and managed. I grew an indeterminate variety this year, and when it finally died, the remaining vine filled an entire trash can! You really can't compost tomato vines...they're just too fibrous and tough to break apart.

Don't make the mistake that I did last year of waiting until early May to plant...that's way too close to summer, and when the heat sets in the blossoms will simply drop off giving you no fruit! I had to wait until November to get tomatoes from the plants I'd put in the ground last May! But if you plant yours in mid-March and keep them protected from any frosts we have, you will get your crop before summer. You can leave them in the ground and keep them watered throughout the summer, and expect a second crop in the Fall!

I understand that tomatoes do best when you buy small plants rather than starting them from seed, but please let me know what your experience is. I'm going to try a seedling this year, but if y'all tell me that your seeds turn into productive plants, you might make a convert out of me!

Let me know what varieties you plant and how you like them!

It's Mesclun Time

Chuck McKelley

So here it is the end of winter, and all you can do is play around in the greenhouse and look at plant catalogs, right? Wrong! One of the great things about gardening in central Texas is being able to grow vegetables year round. This time of year is a great time to grow mesclun mix from seed.

There is a wide variety of mesclun seed available. Most pre-packaged mixes include several types of green and red leaf lettuce and usually one or more oak leaf varieties. Arugula, endive, chervil, cress, mustard and spinach are other typical mesclun veggies. The mix you choose depends upon what you like and the way in which you want to use the mesclun.

While mesclun can be grown in rows, I like to grow it in containers. One of the biggest advantages of growing mesclun in containers is that they can be easily moved to take advantage of the spots that receive winter sun or to move them closer to the kitchen door when harvest time rolls around.



Planting the mesclun mix in containers is easy. Mesclun veggies tend to be heavy feeders and grow best when they receive plenty of water but also have good drainage. So the first thing to do is to prepare the planting medium by mixing in a large quantity of nitrogen-rich compost.. Nitrogen promotes growth of the vegetative parts of the plants which, in the case of mesclun, is the part you eat.

The seeds for most of the mesclun veggies are very small. I broadcast the seed over the whole surface of the soil in the container and then sift some compost on top to cover the seeds so that they will germinate. I sow the seed thickly and let the plants crowd up against each other because I like to harvest mesclun as baby greens. I use a mister to water the seed until it has sprouted. After that I use drip line. If you plant the mesclun during the winter when there are few caterpillars or other insects that will attack them, you probably won't need to protect the seedlings. However, if it is still warm enough when you plant that there are pests about that might try to make a meal of your mesclun seedlings it is best to cover them until they are two or three inches high. I use window screen material supported by a couple of loops of stiff wire pressed into the ground to protect the seedlings in my containers.

Mesclun veggies like cool, sunny weather and will tolerate a light frost so they only need protection when a hard freeze is expected. In that case I cover the containers with heavy row cover or sheets.

You can pull the mesclun greens from the container to harvest them, but most of them will continue to produce if you simply cut no more than half of the leaves on any one plant. Mesclun can be used in a variety of ways. It is great in salads, wraps and sandwiches and can be used in soups or stir fry as well.

So put those plant catalogs away, pick up your trowel and enjoy some fresh mesclun this Texas winter garden season.



The President's Corner

Janet Church

We've finally gotten the Chartering documentation pulled together for submission to the state and will document the process for future boards. Brenda McIndoo is taking John Papich's place as the Volunteer Coordinator and will be sending out reminders to submit your hours to her once she's back from vacation. Grace Bryce and Carol Parsonage have been working hard to tie down speakers for the monthly and special programs. If you've attended a program with a speaker you think our members would enjoy, please don't hesitate to tell them about it. Wayne and his team are busy in the Greenhouse getting ready for the Garden Fair Plant Sale. Kris Stanley and Ingrid Langdon are focusing on the Garden Fair, and Sally Todd is developing the Rainwater Harvesting Specialist Seminar.

We had a good start to the New Year with the Awards Dinner at Angel Springs, Patty Leander's presentation on Spring Vegetable Gardening in Texas and recently, Bill Boytim's demonstration on the Maintenance and Sharpening of your pruners and loppers. I know you enjoyed Dr. Laura Joseph's presentation on Purple Martins at our last meeting.

REPORTING YOUR VOLUNTEER HOURS

Janet Church

I want to clarify some of the confusion around reporting your volunteer hours.

If you participate in a project i.e.: St. Richard's Church, then you need to sign in on the Volunteer hours spreadsheet that Walt Kruger provides. You will find sign-in sheets at the monthly meetings and special programs. The Project Leaders will then turn in the sign-in sheets at the end of the month. If you participate in a program that doesn't provide a sign-in sheet i.e. Seed Cleaning at the Wildflower Center, the Taxonomy classes, etc you need to submit those hours to Brenda McIndoo at the end of every month. You need to include the date and use, for example, "Wildflower Center Seed Cleaning" as the description. Please include your number of Contacts when you report your hours. If you have already submitted hours without any description, please resubmit your hours with the proper descriptions. If you use a spreadsheet, you may simply attach it and email Brenda at aire-dale98@gmail.com. Or you may turn your hours in at the meetings if you do not wish to email them.

We need a description because we are trying to understand what projects you are interested in and what we need to do if a project is not drawing as much support from our members.

Here's a sample of my spreadsheet from last year.

DATE	DESCRIPTION	TIME	ED	VOL	CONTACTS
4/9/2010	Wildflower Plant Sale	1:00 - 7:00		6	30
4/10/2010	Wildflower Plant Sale	9:00 - 5:00		8	40
4/11/2010	Wildflower Plant Sale	11:00 - 5:00		6	15
4/15/2010	Spring Garden Fair Plant Labels	1:00 - 3:00		2	
4/16/2010	Spring Garden Fair Setup	3:00 - 6:30		3	
		10:30 - 12:00 & 1 -			
4/21/2010	San Antonio Botanical Garden Field Trip	2		2.5	
6/19/2010	Texas Bee Journal Seminar	1:00 - 5:00	4		
6/26/2010	Taxonomy Class #1	10:00 - 5:00	6.5		
7/10/2010	Taxonomy Class #2	10:00 - 5:00	6.5		

A Lilac Story

Mary Hargita

I was born and raised in the middle of Europe in Budapest, Hungary, where lilac bushes grow everywhere. The sweet scent of lilacs from my childhood kept tempting me to grow them here in Texas for the last 30 some years. I tried it for more times than I care to remember without any success. They always lived for a while, but never bloomed and finally, no matter what I did, they sadly withered away. I attempted to grow them in pots and in beds, in San Antonio, in Waco and on an island off the coast of Georgia - all the places we lived and everywhere, but without any success. I bought them from local nurseries, mail order and online; it became an obsession with me, an expensive one at that.

Than recently one day I went to a well known nursery in Austin purchasing veggies for my garden and saw a real battered, shriveled up little Persian Lilac bush, cast aside behind a building. I asked about it, and I was told, "It is not for sale, they are in the process of getting rid of it." My obsession took over, and I said, I wanted to buy it. "It will not grow here; all the others died," the sweet lady said to me, "But if you want to waste a couple of dollars, you can have it."

I took it home, gave it a new home in a very large pot with my own mix of potting soil, put it on my deck and loved on it. Before long, it became healthy and beautiful and loved me back with the wonderful scent of it's flowers.

What was even more astounding, it flowered through-out the hot Texas summer for several weeks. These photos taken in triple-digit weather are of my proudest possession: my very own Texas Lilac.



Vegetable Demonstration Garden

Liz Grieder

News from the garden: There is lots of activity in the garden now: clean-up and re-planting from the freeze devastation, soil amending and bed preparation for spring planting, and compost bin construction.

Mike Harper is sowing elbon rye as a cover crop for the "back forty." He also planted vetch, red clover, and English peas. The rye and less than half of the clover survived the freezes. The vetch and the peas are a total loss.



Mike Harper and Chuck McKelley are building a three-bin turning compost unit.



Purple Martins

Collene Sweeney

It was an honor to have Dr. Laura Joseph, the founder of the Virginia Avenue Purple Martin Sanctuary in Austin come and speak at our February meeting on her most beloved bird. Purple Martins are members of the swallow family and one of the best exterminators of flying insects.

As she spoke to us, Purple Martins were somewhere in the New Braunfels area roosting and will continue northwards in the morning to their favorite nesting areas. I bet some of them are headed to her place. When the first ones show up, it is a cause for celebration, a cook-out and scheduling the volunteers for the season, which starts this month and will end sometime in July when the youngsters fledge. After all have fledged and the Martins have moved on, the nests are cleaned out and a clothespin is clipped in the entrance to keep trespassers out until next season.



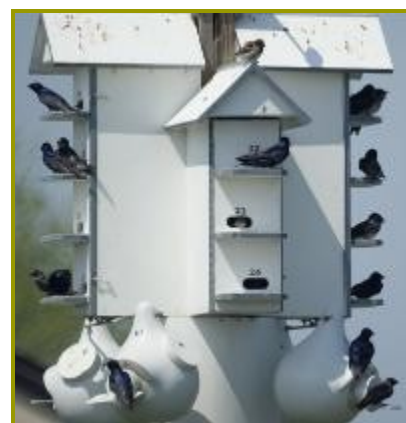
Male and female Purple Martin

When she moved to Austin 17 years ago, there was an open area in her neighborhood close to Lady Bird Lake that could not be built on, and she saw this as the perfect location to start putting up Martin houses. There are now 22 houses and gourd racks that provide about 165 nesting cavities for these lucky tenants. All nests have a state of the art crescent shaped opening to keep starlings out. Last season they had 150 nests and 400 babies by mid-May. She has both houses and gourds, since Martins raised in houses prefer houses, and Martins raised in gourds prefer gourds. She has help from neighbors and people who just knock on her door wanting to help. She has organized them with schedules, supplies on site to help with cleaning nests, detailed records for egg count, hatchlings and fledglings. With this group of about 34 people they manage the day to day tasks of being a landlord, from cleaning out sparrow and starling nests to replacing babies in their nest. A sparrow's nest is filled with grass and trash, pretty much anything they can carry and get through the opening. So don't litter, you are providing sparrows with nesting material. At times these nests need to be cleaned out twice a day, but after about 10 clean outs, the little birds take the hint and move on. A base of pine needles is put in the nests to attract the Martins. Their nest is small and neat, made of twigs, dried leaves and a few green leaves



Dr. Laura Joseph with a state of the art gourd that she recommends for Martins.

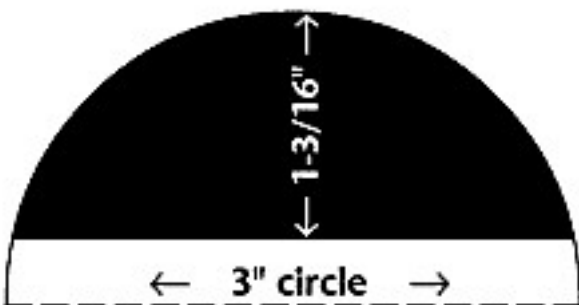
Dr. Laura Joseph grew up in a small east Texas town where her father ran the local feed store. She had an uncle, Calvin Earl Kay, that was known as 'the Purple Martin Man'. He built houses and gave them away to anyone interested, especially the children. Her small country school had Martin houses. The belief was that every farmer worth his salt had a Purple Martin house.



A popular combination of martin house with gourds attached

and hopefully about four small all-white eggs. The sparrow egg is brown and speckled. Human-made housing began hundreds or thousands of years ago, when Native Americans put up dried, hollowed-out gourds for the Martins. The birds slowly gave up their ancestral ways and now depend on us for their nesting cavities.

Ten of her birds were banded with computer chips that recorded flight information. Eight of them returned last year and when the data was collected, two of the eight had made the trip to Brazil in less than 3 weeks, about 500 miles a day. She encourages all who have an area agreeable to the Martins' specifications to put up a house or gourd rack and start enjoying these remarkable birds. For more information go to <http://purplemartin.org/>. This site is home to the Purple Martin Conservation Association and is loaded with great info and links to other sites. You may also try <http://www.birdhouseinfo.com/> which is the home site for Purple Martin Propagators.



This diagram shows the dimensions of a starling-resistant entrance hole (SHEH). The height dimension is extremely critical. If made a hair too big, starlings will get in; if made a hair too small, martins will not be able to. Also, hole placement is very important; the bottom of the entrance hole should be no more than 1/2" above the porch/floor, and is most effective in excluding starlings when placed flush with the porch and compartment floor.

San Gabriel Church Volunteer Project

Rebecca Caldwell

A volunteer project was held at San Gabriel Presbyterian Church on Wednesday, Feb. 16. Perennials were cut back and prepared for spring in all the beds next to the church. Four Master Gardeners and one Master Gardener Intern assisted, instructed and worked hard with thirteen church members. The difference, after two hours of steady work, was remarkable.



However, the appreciation for the help of the Master Gardeners was heartfelt and is still talked about. A very special thank you to Charlie Dieterich, (all the senior ladies wanted HIS help!), Teresa Robinson, (yep, she brought cookies and sweet bread!), Grace Bulgerin, (this gal can work everyone under the table-WOW!), and Intern Paula Gardner, (what a great addition Paula is to our group!) I could have busted buttons I was so proud to be a WCMG that day!

Wildflowers|Seeds of History

Janet Church

Discover the facts and legends behind the wildflowers that captivate us every spring. Why do we always see picturesque cattle among bluebonnets? Where did Indian blanket get its name? How did Native Americans and settling pioneers use wildflowers for food, medicinal cures, and to create distinctive tattoos? How are they being used today to cure cancer? Why are some years better than others?

Go beyond the pretty faces to explore how wildflowers impact our food chain and their symbiosis to a healthy economy and ecological security.

Interviews include horticulturists and botanists from the Wildflower Center, Matt Turner (author of *Remarkable Plants of Texas*), and tales from Luci Johnson about her mother's futuristic revelation to Go Green. Meet Lady Bird Johnson's granddaughter, Jennifer Robb, to learn why she champions her grandmother's goal for the next generation. Footage includes Lady Bird Johnson's home movies at the ranch in 1966, along with segments from her speeches about the importance of this commitment to our native plant culture.

Shot in absolutely breath-taking high definition in the stellar wildflower season of spring 2010, travel the back roads of history that forecast the seeds of the future.

The web site, www.klru.org/wildflowers (still in process; live by March 10) will include thumbnails of the over 60 wildflowers we shot to identify them by their common and botanical names.

Music was composed by outstanding musician, John Mills. Asleep at the Wheel's Ray Benson narrates.

Wildflowers|Seeds of History premieres on KLRU March 10 at 7 p.m. and will be re-broadcast many times. It makes its national premiere in April.

Master Gardener Meetings and Events for 2011

Grace Bryce

Monthly Meetings:

We will have a little change in the meeting time and format for the new year. The monthly meetings will still be at the AgriLIFE Extension Office Training Room as usual, but the doors will open at 6:30pm for social time, and the meeting will start at 7:00pm. We will have a brief business meeting to start with, and then the speaker will follow. This will allow the speaker more time to speak and answer questions at the end. Starting a little later will also allow people who work to make it to the meetings. After all, these meetings are open to the public, and educating the public is what we do. Tell a neighbor or bring a friend!

Check out the Master Gardener calendar for future meetings (second Monday of each month.) <http://txmg.org/williamson/calendar/>

Special Events:

We will sponsor several special programs on Saturday mornings for the year:

January 15th, Patty Leander presented "*Spring Vegetable Gardening*" at the Georgetown Public Library. She will be back sometime in July for a presentation on Fall Vegetable Gardening.

March 5th, Wizzie Brown will present “*Good Bugs, Bad Bugs in Your Veggie Garden*” at the Georgetown Public Library, from 10:00 am to Noon.

The Georgetown Public Library is located one and one-half blocks west of the Williamson County Courthouse, between Rock and Martin Luther King Jr. Streets. The address is 402 W. 8th Street, Georgetown, TX 78626. We will be upstairs in the Hewlett room.

April 2nd- Second Annual Spring Garden Fair- 8:00 am to 4:00 pm at the Extension Office

Save the Date! We need you!

Check out the Master Gardener Special Events webpage for details and updates and additional programs: <http://txmg.org/williamson/special-events/>

Anyone who would like to help with meeting room set-up/clean-up, projection and sound, or copying/collating handouts, please contact Carol Parsonage: parsonage_hc@verizon.net or Grace Bryce bryce.grace84@gmail.com

Gardening Tips

Winola VanArtsdalen

Planning/beds prep:

Prepare new beds for planting by adding compost. Soil test info is available at the following website: <http://soiltesting.tx.tamu.edu>. Also, check this website (<http://williamson-tx.tamu.edu/>) for suggested vegetable planting dates and varieties.

To preserve good soil structure, it is important that soil be only slightly moist when you dig. To determine, turn over a spade full of soil, and break up a clod. If it can be formed into a ball in your hand, it's too wet. Be patient and wait. Check winter mulch in flower beds and replenish if needed. I first scatter Dillo Dirt lightly, then cotton burr compost, and finally cover with mulch. The compost “feeds the soil to feed the plants,” and the mulch insulates. Cotton burr compost and pine bark mulch add acidity to our alkaline soil. (Though the Extension Service tells us tests have shown Dillo Dirt to have no metal residues left in it, you may choose not to use it where edibles are to be planted due to concern that residues from discarded medicines could still remain.)

Keep looking for areas of yard you might convert from grass to an earth friendly plant bed, and find places in flowerbeds to add some edibles, i.e. Swiss chard, chives, oregano and salad burnette in shady areas or peppers and basil in the sun.) If you have not yet added 1-2” compost to beds and insulated with mulch on top, do so as soon as possible, but be sure to keep mulch away from stems of plants, including shrubs and trees!

Pruning:

Following the big freeze, do not be in a rush to cut back damaged plants. You can always cut back totally dead brown parts, but stop when you come to green. If you can be patient, that dead part may give a bit of protection should we have another freeze. (Average last frost date is March 15th.) Do not dig up plants you think are dead. It may be too early for them to have sent out their new growth.

Do finish pruning trees, evergreens, repeat blooming roses and hardy perennials. Wait to cut back tropicals or perennials that are frost-tender like shrimp plant. (Of course, wait to cut back any spring-blooming plants until after you have enjoyed the show!)

Wait to prune spring blooming plants after bloom, but finish late winter pruning as soon as possible. You do not want to cut off fresh spring growth after the plant has used up energy to produce it

Planting/maintenance:

February is the end of bare root planting. Plant container grown roses, trees, shrubs, groundcovers and vines.

You can plant hardy annuals and perennials for summer bloom now, but be prepared to cover. It is risky to plant heat-loving plants like peppers or summer-flowering bulbs yet, as they can rot while it's still cool. Do not plant basil until low temps are above 50 degrees.

Divide and transplant perennial herbs and summer and fall blooming perennial flowers.

March is the end of optimum time for planting shrubs and trees, as they will experience much stress later. Yes, you can plant container plants any time of the year, but be prepared to watch carefully to keep consistently moist, not waterlogged, but moist!

You can still divide and transplant perennials, but you may miss spring and even some summer blooms.

Watch the temperatures and remember that the last average frost date in our area is March 15th. That is the average! It could be later. Heat loving plants like peppers should be planted very late this month or wait until next. Basil cannot tolerate temperatures below 50 degrees, so best to wait.

Plant seeds for summer and fall blooms. Prepare soil and rake until no clods. Best procedure would be to let soil rest at least a couple of weeks after adding amendments. Follow directions on packet for time and depth. Keep moist until germination and well established.

Thin seedlings for specimen plants, (with annuals, you can just clip close to ground), and, for more blooms, deadhead flowers as they fade to encourage more blooms.

Lawn care:

Dig weeds and get the lawn mower ready! Tool suggestion: We find our "Weed Hound," (long handled tool for digging weeds without bending over), to be a great help with this job!

Top dressing your lawn now will mean less water and healthier, green grass this summer!

Do not fertilize grass until after you have had to mow twice. Wait until after grass is actively growing to fertilize. If you fertilize earlier, you are only feeding the weeds.

Aerate the lawn after mid-March when there is less chance of a freeze damage. It will help your grass even more if you spread compost before and after, and you get more benefit from deeper holes, closer together.

Top dress lawn with quality compost. This can be done any time of year, except for mid-summer. If the lawn is top dressed in spring, (1/2" inch compost max), it can help save water in the summer.

Diseases/pests:

Watch for pests, so you can pick and stomp early. Knock off into a bowl of soapy water or squish.

Invest in a good insect identification book to learn what beneficial insects look like. Remember, those "good bugs" are on your side for this battle.

Keep watching for aphids and other pests and have a nozzle on your water hose ready to blast them!

If you see evidence of plant damage, cut off a small branch and put it on top a white paper towel in a sealed bag. You can better see something tiny moving around and may be able to identify it yourself with the help of a good identification book or the Texas A&M website, insects.tamu.edu/imagegallery.

Happy gardening!

Frequently Asked Questions - Communications

Grace Bryce

1. I can't log in to the Master Gardener website, do I have the wrong password?

You can see most everything without being logged in.

2. I can't log in to Grovesite anymore. What do I need to do?

That website is no longer functioning as our Master Gardener website, instead go to <http://txmg.org/williamson/>, which is our current website and don't worry about logging in. Bookmark it or store as a favorite for the next time you need it and remove the one for Grovesite.

3. I want to start a project. I need a project form, where do I get one?

Go to above website and click on the Chapter Information tab or go directly to <http://txmg.org/williamson/chapter/>. This page has the project forms, reimbursement forms and other documents on it.

4. Now where does the project form go?

For church volunteer projects, turn in your form/information to John Papich: other projects go to the WCMGA Board. Board members are listed on the Chapter Information page.

5. How is the Master Gardener website related to the Google Group?

When Grovesite was in use as our website, there was a broadcast feature, that allowed a few people to make all of the announcements. Since A & M moved away from Grovesite and set up our new website, there is no broadcast feature on our website. For this reason, a Google group was created to give us that capability. The two are not physically connected in any way. The Google group allows any group member to send a message to the group.

6. How do I send my announcement out to WCMGA?

Go to: <https://groups.google.com/group/williamson-county-master-gardeners>

Log in to have access to the group. Either click "+post" at the top of the page (if no attachments will be sent) or go to the bottom of the page where it says: "click here to send email to the group: williamson-county-master-gardeners@googlegroups.com

Using the last method allows attachments to email, but they won't show up on the Google page where the announcements are listed, because they no longer store documents on Google groups.

Always cc yourself, because it won't send it to you, if you are sending it. Anyone who hits reply will reply to you, the person sending the email.

You can try just pasting williamson-county-master-gardeners@googlegroups.com

into the "to" line on your email, it will show up as [WCMGA], if you have more than one email address, be sure you are sending it from the one associated with the Google group, or you will get a note saying you are not authorized to send it.

Furthermore, if you want to "reply all" to the person or couple of persons sending an announcement, that is fine, but delete the rest of the group [WCMGA] from your "reply all", otherwise Everyone (all 113 people) gets your reply to help.

7. How do I find a volunteer opportunity for my hours or educational opportunities?

Volunteer projects which are on-going are listed on the Volunteering tab on our website, many other opportunities can be found by clicking the Calendar tab on our website and checking on the days you are available, to see what is happening. The Special

Events tab on the website will have more details on other opportunities. Other opportunities are sent out through the Google group email list.

8. *I have a gmail account I never use, but it was set up for the Google group, but I can never remember to check it and I'm not getting the announcements. I don't like checking two email accounts. Can I get announcements at my regular email address?*

Yes. Follow these instructions:

You are a registered member of the Google Group (also known as Williamson County (Texas) Master Gardeners). Your Google id is the name portion of your email address before “@gmail”.

If you can log into your Google account, you can set it up to send email from the list to your regular address (instead of the gmail account). IF you don't remember the password, there's usually a “forgot my password” option. It will probably send an email to your other address with a link to change the password. IF you can't retrieve your password to that account, you can set up a new Google id and configure the email as described below. If that is the case, let Clyde know, so he can delete the other address.

Assuming you can get into your Google account, here's how you set it up to send email from the WCMGA list to your regular email address- there are a few steps:

Sign into Google (or gmail), and go to your Google settings (link is on the top right of the page in gmail) and select Edit your email addresses. Enter your regular non-Google address in as your alternate address. An email will be sent to your other email account verifying the address, and once you click the link and sign back in, it will be associated with your Google account.

Then go to the Google group for WCMGA, and select 'Edit my membership'. There should be a drop down list for email addresses, and select your other email address. That way messages should go to your alternate and be accepted from there.

<http://groups.google.com/group/williamson-county-master-gardeners/>

9. *Where do I find the newsletters?*

Newsletters can be downloaded by going to the Staying Connected tab on the website and click on newsletters.

10. *I missed one of the presentations, is there any way to get one of the handouts?*

When possible, the handout materials will be posted on the website. Go to the Staying Connected tab on the website and click on handouts.

Newsletter Submissions

Thank you to those Master Gardeners who submitted articles, pictures, and ideas for this newsletter issue. If you would like to contribute to the *Williamson County Master Gardener Journal*, please send your submissions to Jane Williamson at jawilliamson516@yahoo.com by the 25th of the month. As you garden, volunteer and learn, take a moment to share with other gardeners.

Archeology Day Volunteers Needed



Volunteers serve lunch to visitors at 2010 Archeology Days.

**6th Annual Archeology Days
Fri. Mar. 25th & Sat. 26th, 2011
Berry Springs Park & Preserve
1801 CR 152, Georgetown**

Educating the Public to how things used to be through fun activities.

Need Volunteers to Help Man Booths and Lunch Servers

Shifts to fill: Fri. Mar. 25th 8:30a.m. till 1:30 working with Grade School Students

Sat. Mar. 26th Shift 8:30a.m. to 12:30p.m. Booth workers

11a.m. to 2p.m. Lunch Servers

Noon to 4p.m. Booth Workers

If interested in helping please call Susan Blackledge @ 512-930-0040. Please RSVP as soon as possible if interested.

For more information about the event go to www.williamsonmuseum.org or

call 943-1670 and ask for Miria or Mickie Ross.

ARCHEOLOGY DAY

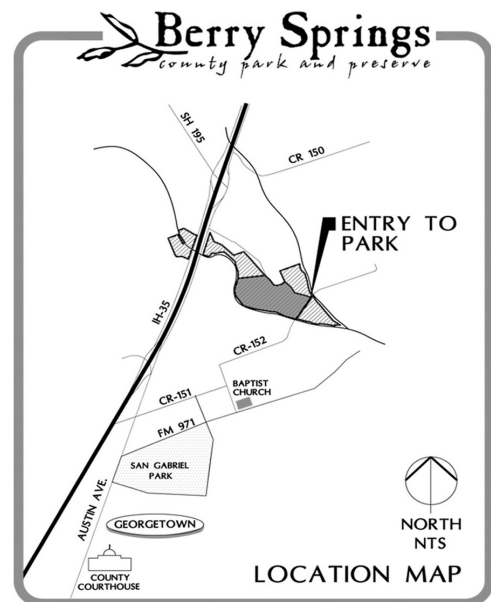
SATURDAY, MARCH 26
10AM TO 3PM

BERRY SPRINGS PARK & PRESERVE
1801 COUNTY ROAD 152
GEORGETOWN



HANDS-ON ACTIVITIES FOR EVERYONE!

- LEARN TO USE AN ATLATL
- MAKE YOUR OWN ROCK ART
- TALK WITH REAL ARCHEOLOGISTS
- MAKE YOUR OWN NATIVE CRAFTS
- WATCH NATIVE AMERICAN DANCES
- AND MORE!



FOR MORE INFORMATION:
512-943-1670
WWW.WILLIAMSONMUSEUM.ORG

CONCESSION STANDS WILL BE ON SITE

Master Gardeners Honored



Master Gardeners who completed 100 volunteer hours for 2010



Carol Parsonage and Lynn Stude recognized.



Awards dinner at Angel Springs

The Holistic Garden—Texas A&M

Collene Sweeney



If a chance to tour this garden comes up again, don't miss it, even if the weather does not cooperate. It was cold and wet the day we went, and everyone still had a great time. After an introduction by Dr. Novak, it was off to see these wonderful gardens which are totally accessible to wheelchairs.

Rainwater is collected in about a 5,000 gallon tank for the garden. The wetland area purifies any runoff water before entering the creek, and has a deck with citrus trees. There are pinecones with peanut butter in them to attract birds. Other areas are the Maroon and White garden, Xeric ecosystems, Herbs of the world, Kitchen garden, Heritage garden, butterfly and hummingbird gardens, along with a purple martin garden. They have also had good luck growing bananas. There are many ornamentals throughout the garden and many of them native.

The compost area was most impressive. An aerobic method is used to make their compost with layering of new material with compost, addition of molasses, manure and wetting down to start the process. This type of composting can produce some very strong odors though, so be careful where you start it. Be sure you do not use cat manure as it has pathogens that can be transferred to humans.

The variety of plants seemed to be endless with several that I have never seen, such as the butterfly vine and a huge Dutchman's pipe. There is a native Dutchman's pipe, which was news to me. He told us that all parts of the canna plant are edible and when they cut back after a freeze; larkspur and poppies are planted among them. When the larkspur and poppies are through blooming, the cannas are coming back. In the Heritage Garden a very small house serves as their storage shed. In early Texas days it would have been the home for a family of ten. The glass in the windows is very old to give the structure a bit of history. This garden represents our Texas gardening heritage by plantings of fruits, vegetables, herbs, ornamental and medicinal plants. It also has various plants brought to Texas by the ethnic groups that settled here.

Every available patch of earth is planted with something in these gardens. From true crops, to helping build the soil for the next planting, or trying a new variety.

It was then over to the Horticulture garden. Bob Whitney took over here and what wonderful gardens they are. There was something new to learn around every corner. We were fortunate to come upon a young teacher who gave us more information and encouraged us to take seed pods and plant starts, since the gardens will be moving. There were beautiful specimens of the Candelabra bush and some provided us with seed pods. A beautiful Eve's necklace tree also provided seeds to all interested. A century plant had lots of pups up for adoption, and I noticed many pockets with small plants peeking out.

Lunch was at an Italian restaurant with a magnificent Rangoon vine greeting us at the entrance. Great food also. It was a wonderful trip, and I look forward to another trip, maybe in the spring.

For all the details of this garden go to aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/holisticgarden/



Photos by Mary Hargita

Williamson County Master Gardener Officers for 2010

Officers:

Janet Church, President	churchjanet362mg@gmail.com	(512) 585-0996
Ed Myatt, Vice-President	emtatt@suddenlink.net	(512) 240-4493
Linda Zazula, Secretary	mgzazula@gmail.com	(512) 240-5139
Janet White, Treasurer	phillipsjs@sbcglobal.net	(512) 255-7672
Winola Van Artsdalen, Past President	jimwin@verizon.net	(512) 863-4923

Standing Committees/Chairpersons:

Programs/Education	Grace Bryce	bryce.grace84@gmail.com	(512) 868-9191
Communications	Clyde Adley	cadley+mg@gmail.com	
Membership/Volunteer Opportunities	Brenda McIndoo	airedale98@gmail.com	(512) 868-9212
Awards	Norma Beissner	norma@beissner.org	(512) 535-6584
Class Training/Facilitation	JoAnne Dieterich	rdieterich@yahoo.com	(512) 778-6690
JMG Coordinator	Carol Hoke	carolhoke@gmail.com	(512) 869-1948
Fund Raising	Kris Stanley	kstanley16@austin.rr.com	(512) 258-9078
	Ingrid Langdon	ingridlangdon@hotmail.com	(512) 863-6143
Greenhouse Manager	Wayne Rhoden	mgardener@suddenlink.net	512-869-8016

