

Williamson County Master Gardener Journal

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Dedicated to growing with Williamson County

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The President's Corner

Grace Bryce

Hi Master Gardeners!

I look forward to working with you for the rest of the year as WCMGA president. It is time for us to move forward and make some progress for the good of our organization.

Our Projects Committee is busy revising the Master Gardener Volunteer Project form and will be reviewing current projects. Hopefully, we will be adding more volunteer opportunities, which are also educational. This will not only be beneficial to us as Master Gardeners, but will be useful for Williamson County.

Our "virtual" Help Desk will begin soon, so watch for more information explaining the process.

We will no longer have sign-in sheets at our meetings or volunteer projects. It was determined that it really wasn't of benefit and created more work. Everyone is responsible for keeping track of their hours and reporting them each month. Please continue to report hours like you've been doing to Brenda McIndoo.

Nominations are open for 2012 Officers. If you are interested in running, please contact the chairperson, Lynn Stude. Officer duties can be found in the By-Laws & Standing Rules on our website under Chapter Information. While you are there, you can also see the minutes and financial reports from the WCMGA Board meetings. <http://txmg.org/williamson/>

The new Master Gardener class will begin soon, on August 9th. You can help to get the word out. Tell your friends and neighbors. Applications can be found on our website, along with the class schedule.

Thanks for all you do!
Keep Cool and Go Mulch Something!
Grace



Kale: A Veggie for All Seasons

Chuck McKelley

With over forty days of triple digit highs under our belts over the last couple of months, it seems like cool weather will never get here. It will, though, and sooner than we might expect. So for Central Texas gardeners this is the time to start thinking about what we will plant in the fall and winter gardens. One thing that folks always seem to like to plant in the fall is kale. A lot of people just use it for winter color because there are many colorful varieties of kale and, being a member of the cabbage family, it can take a hit. Frosts don't bother it. In fact kale thrives in our winter temperatures. It's really nutritious too. Kale contains large amounts of vitamins A, C and K.

I usually plant kale in the fall, and for many years I planted the kind that looks like colorful cabbage. This past year, however, I decided to plant Tuscan, aka dinosaur, kale (*brassica oleracea*). That's the sort of prehistoric looking plant in the photo. There are several things that I like about Tuscan kale. For one thing it is arguably the best tasting variety. It is also a longer-lasting variety than the types that form heads like cabbage. Tuscan kale grows in the form of long, curved leaves on a central stalk that make it look something like a palm tree. You can harvest the lower leaves as you need them, and the plant will just keep growing taller and producing more leaves at the top. Tuscan kale is said to be able to grow over two feet tall, although mine hasn't reached that height. The one quality that Tuscan kale has over other varieties that makes it my favorite, though, is the fact that, not only does it grow right through our central Texas winters, but it can deal with the heat too. Take a look at the date on that photo. I snapped that at the beginning of July after we had had nearly thirty 100 degree plus days. I've harvested the kale since that time, but the plants are still going strong. The summer heat doesn't bother them any more than the winter frosts. So you can grow Tuscan kale in our climate all through the year.



Despite the fact that the mature plants are heat-tolerant, the best time to plant Tuscan kale is in the early fall. You can sow seed directly in the garden if you give it some shade until it gets established. You can also start it in pots and transplant it into the garden or intercrop it with ornamentals. You can even grow Tuscan kale in pots on the patio. If they are not grown in pots, the plants should be spaced about eighteen inches apart to give them plenty of room to develop the leaves. Like all cabbages, kale is a heavy feeder so it needs to be fertilized periodically. You will also want to spray the leaves every so often with BT or some other organic fertilizer because caterpillars will be a problem in this area.

If you Google Tuscan kale you will find lots of recipes. However my wife and I usually use our standard greens recipe, often mixing the kale with chard or turnip greens. Here's the recipe we use.

Enough greens to fill a good-sized colander, washed and with the ribs trimmed out if they are thick
 About four cups of water
 1/4 tsp of mustard (we use Coleman's dry mustard)
 1/4 tsp of pepper (you can omit this if you use mustard greens)
 1/2 tsp of sea salt
 1 tsp of cider vinegar

If you're not a vegetarian you might want to alter the recipe a bit by adding ham, well-cooked bacon or ham hocks. Bring the water to a boil with the greens and other ingredients in the pot and then turn the heat down and simmer, covered for forty-five minutes to an hour. The greens will cook down to a much smaller volume than they were when they were fresh. Put a little Tabasco or Tiger Sauce on them when you dish them out and enjoy.

Gardening Tips for August

Winola VanArtsdalen

Planning/planting:

All of us would be happier in a cooler place this month, and so would most of our plants. Take note for your future plans as to which plants are survivors in this brutal drought.

Prepare beds this month to be ready for fall planting. If you are new to the South, this may seem strange. In the North, you planted in the spring to give plants time to strengthen before stress of cold in winter. In the South, we plant in the fall, so our plants are strong to handle the stress of the summer heat. Remove weeds, work in compost with a spading fork and cover with mulch. When it is fall and time to plant, you will be ready to pull back mulch and plant.

Plan for planting wildflower seeds the first of October. Most wildflowers need full sun. Soil must be loose and free of dirt clods.

Follow instructions on seed packets carefully, and remember to press in gently, as seeds must make contact with the soil.

Maintenance:

Maintain mulch for insulation against temperature extremes, to deter weeds, and to hold moisture. Organic mulch also adds nutrients as it decomposes. Do be careful to not have mulch touching stems. With trees, there should be six to twelve inches between trunk and mulch.

Continue watering deeply, especially shrubs and trees. Your grass will almost always come back after drought, but shrubs and trees are more vulnerable. They are a valuable part of your landscape, and you need to protect your investment by watering deeply. Consider drip water systems and/or a rainwater collection system for water savings and clean, healthy water for your plants.

Be responsible and do not water more than necessary. In the afternoon, many plants look wilted when they do not need water.

The time to observe is in the morning. If they are wilted in the morning, then they definitely need water.

Are you watering enough? Go down five to six inches with a screwdriver or spade the next day after watering. This way you can tell how deep the water is going and if there is too little or too much moisture. Plants become stressed with too much water as well as too little.

Be sure to keep rose beds clean of fallen leaf and flower litter to reduce leaf spot.

Late season fertilizing is not recommended for only marginally hardy plants, as it may encourage late-season growth which could cause damage in an early freeze. Do not prune spring-blooming woody plants now, as they are setting their blooms for next season.

Lawns:

Remember to soak the soil deeply. Winter weeds will begin germinating in September, so maintain dense turf cover now to reduce cool-season weed problems.

Take All Patch is most common in St. Augustine, but can also affect zoysia and Bermuda grass and did in our area last year. The chances of onset of this problem are highest in areas stressed by drought or broadleaf weed control products. Follow directions exactly if applying any such products to your lawn. The best time for control measures for Take All Patch is fall or spring. Now, just keep soil adequately moist.

One last tip: On these hot summer days, get out there early for gardening and drink plenty of water! Health authorities tell us to keep our skin protected to avoid skin cancer and our eyes shaded to delay onset of cataracts and macular degeneration.

Questions: Contact Winola VanArtsdalen, Williamson County Master Gardener, jimwin@verizon.net

or Williamson County Agri-life: <http://williamson-tx.tamu.edu> Phone 512-943-3300.

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.

Visitors Welcomed at the Demonstration Gardens

Liz Grieder

On July 14, at the request of Dustin Coufal, the veggie garden committee hosted six visiting professors from Iraq and their sponsors from Texas A&M. The group started their day in College Station, traveled to Milam County where they visited an Angus beef ranch, continued on to visit Stiles farm, had lunch at the Georgetown home of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Whitney, and were served dessert in the Williamson County Master Gardeners' demonstration vegetable garden after their tour of the garden. They had many questions about Master Gardeners and volunteering and were well received by WCMGA veggie garden committee members and Wayne Rhoden.



Gardening Therapy For Cancer Patients

Grace Bryce

In June, I visited my cousin, Becky, at the Cancer Treatment Centers of America in Tulsa, Oklahoma. This is an amazing facility that takes a holistic approach to cancer treatment. I was happy to hear that they use herbs along with chemo treatments. I was impressed that they have laughter therapy on the schedule, as well as a patient garden. Gardening time is at 8:00 am each morning. The patients take care of the garden and can harvest any of the produce for their use. My cousin spends time taking care of the vegetable garden and the roses that are next to it. From time to time, the hospital provides additional plants for the patients to plant in the raised beds. Becky is really grateful to have the garden for the four months she's been there and she misses her garden at home. It has been very therapeutic for her.

This could be such a neat Master Gardener project with the appropriate place and cooperation of the facility. Just sayin'.....I'm planting some seeds here for the idea. :)

For more information about Cancer Treatment Centers of America, visit: www.cancercenter.com



My cousin, Becky, is checking on the tomatoes.



This is the herb bed and there are three vegetable beds.



The sidewalk between the raised beds is level and wide enough for wheelchair access.

Williamson County Master Gardener Officers for 2011

Officers:

Grace Bryce, President	bryce.grace84@gmail.com	(512) 868-9191
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Standing Committees/Chairpersons:

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