

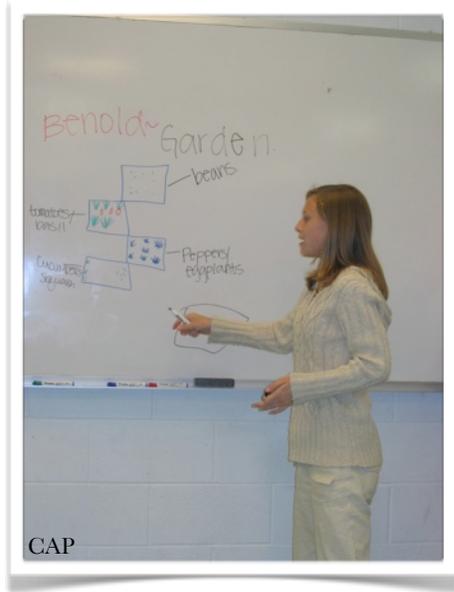
# Williamson County Master Gardener Journal

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## First Junior Master Gardeners in Williamson County Certified

Brittany Troyer, Lauren Long, Emma Lovejoy, Lilliana Perez, and Alex Rangel are the first certified Junior Master Gardeners in Williamson County. They have completed fifty-four individual lessons, fourteen group activities, and two Community Service projects. The program at Benold Middle school was the inaugural JMG program in Williamson County. Visitors from many different school districts came and observed this class. Patsy Bredahl and Juanita James were an integral part of the experience and next will operate JMG groups in Round Rock and Hutto. I ask all of our members to join in the JMG Mentor group we are forming to support new JMG groups in the County. The WCMG enjoy a wonderful reputation inside the Georgetown ISD. The same reputation can be cultivated throughout the county with help from our members. Please join us as we implement this program countywide.



CAP

*Above: Brittany Troyer explains the garden they created at Benold Middle School.*

*Below: The girls are, from left to right, Brittany Troyer, Lauren Long, Emma Lovejoy, Lilliana Perez, and Alex Rangel.*



CAP



**Master Gardener New Class  
Volunteer Opportunities**

The new MG class starts Aug. 19 and ends Nov. 18, and will be held from 1-5 PM at the extension center classroom. Most of the classes will be on Tuesday but there will be some classes on Monday or Wednesday. I would like to arrange a schedule for each class for members and interns to assist in the set-up and breakdown of the classroom, bringing the cooler and water, assisting in the kitchen with food and cleaning, and sign-in and homework check. You can sign up for any duty for any class at a time that works in your schedule. You need not stay for the entire class after your duty is complete but are welcome. This will be a good chance to earn volunteer time and get to know the new class members and get education hours if you stay for the lecture. I know there is great feedback when there are experienced people present to mingle and share with students.

Anyone that can help would be greatly appreciated. I will get a schedule made but for now I would like to know how many folks are interested in helping and what duties you can fulfill. The class schedule is attached to the application, so you can see the actual dates at <http://williamson-tx.tamu.edu/MasterGardener/MasterGardener3.html>. My e-mail address is [texasjapp@yahoo.com](mailto:texasjapp@yahoo.com).

Many thanks,  
John Papich

New Class/Membership Chairperson

**A visit to the Dell Diamond**

A group of the Williamson County Master Gardeners (see images at the bottom of the page) toured the playing field at Dell Diamond on May 29, 2008. They were treated to a look behind the scenes of the life of the maintenance crew that takes care of the field and some of the problems they encounter daily keeping the field in beautiful shape. The grass is Bermuda Tif 419 and is mowed daily. The biggest problem they face is drainage of water on the field and we were allowed to see the area where all of the water is funneled to be pumped out and the specialized mowers and rollers used maintaining the grass.

**Monthly Meetings—June 9th**

Flo Oxley will be our speaker for the June meeting. The topic is Plant Conservation and the Millennium Seed Bank.

Flo has a Bachelor of Science degree with an emphasis in botany and a Master of Science degree with an emphasis in mycology both from Southwest Texas State University. Flo has been a staff member of the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center for sixteen years, beginning her career with them as a research intern in her last year of graduate school. She was hired as the Clearinghouse Coordinator upon graduation and has held many positions at the Center including Publications Manager, Public Programs Manager, Acting Director of Education, and Senior Botanist.

Flo is now the Wildflower Center's director of conservation and education. She manages the Center's adult and chil-

dren and families education programs, on-site interpretation and exhibits, and docent training. She also oversees the seed bank and herbarium programs as well as writing for the Center's and other publications, and presenting numerous talks and workshops.

Flo is currently working on her Ph D in Aquatic Resources at Texas State University—San Marcos. **JC**

**Workshop—Last Chance**

Last chance to sign up for the Invaders of Texas workshop on June 7th, 2008 at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. I believe we can do a lot of good with this training. How I envisage the system working is not necessarily a rigid, scheduled event unless that is what you want. I see it more as small groups going out on a fun hike taking their cameras, GPS system, and data sheets with them. If they see an invasive species, they log it, if they don't, fair enough, they tried. After the hike breakfast, brunch, or even a beer with more socializing! Now, how hard is that? Doesn't that sound like a really civilized way to get volunteer hours? It is also an activity you can do alone if you feel safe, again, very civilized. No waiting for an event to be organized, you can operate as and when you want to. I think this program is one of the main ways to fight invasives. We can pull them up all we want but until the government says, "stop bringing them in," we are never going to win. At least this way, we can try and make those in power listen. Email me [xtinepowell@verizon.net](mailto:xtinepowell@verizon.net) to sign up. NOW! By the way, it's FREE!



Wayne Rhoden



Wayne Rhoden

**Master Gardener Volunteer News**  
**Berry Springs Park and Preserve**

**Duffy Banfield**

On Wednesday, April 23rd, a planting day was held at Berry Springs Park and Preserve on CR 152 in Georgetown. Susan Blackledge, the park manager, had solicited the help of the WCMGA to replace some plants that had not made it through the winter as well as to plant some wildflower transplants and some plants that the WCMGA had donated to the park.

Wayne Rhoden, Pat McAleenan, and I participated in this effort. Wayne replaced several of the native grasses that were looking “ill”. Wayne did the original design of the beds at Berry Springs. Susan’s park team had dug up many standing cypress (red) and skullcap. She had had them in dirt and water until we could get out to plant them in the ground. They transplanted amazingly well. We also replaced several lantana that were not looking like they were going to survive. We created a new bed at the Admiral Mann historical marker and planted a thornless cactus that Susan provided and added sedum, lantana, and Victoria blue sage...hens and chicks also got a spot.

We enjoyed the morning volunteering at Berry Springs, and afterwards, Wayne was nice enough to invite Pat and me to go to his home and see his garden. So many things were blooming and I saw plants that I had never been exposed to—he has so many beautiful and unusual plants. Have you ever seen “love in the mist”? I had not and they were just getting ready to bloom.

This is terrible to admit but I have Master Gardener dreams—I see each and every one of you doing a gardening thing...even asking questions and laughing and having so much fun...that’s what this is all about...peaceful, productive work. Maybe I need to have a glass of wine at night before I go to bed!

Hope to see you at the June monthly meeting...for those of you who haven’t picked up your T-shirt, I will be at the meeting and we can settle up.

**Volunteer at Berry Springs Park and Preserve**

*Get in at the early stages of this wonderful new Park and Preserve. Contact Wayne, Duffy, or Susan if you want to volunteer and really make a difference. This is just one of the many WCMGA projects that we can be very proud of. I know I will be there this fall volunteering and enjoying one of the most wonderful natural areas right on our doorstep.*



Images courtesy Wayne Rhoden

# S.I.N.S: Substitute for Invasive Non-Native Species

Who can resist a title like SINS? With that, Sue Wiseman—past president of both the Capitol Area Master Naturalists and the Williamson County Native Plant Society of Texas—had those gathered at the May meeting of the Williamson County Master Gardeners attentive from the first sentence. SINS stands for Substitutes for Invasive Non-Native Species. These SINS are good!

Invasives (much like weeds) are defined as plants that have spread to areas where we don't want them. Most of the spreading is done by birds eating and dispersing the seeds but water and wind, too, can carry seeds to new fertile ground. Some native plants, such as the Ashe Juniper (commonly called cedar), have the potential to spread when the natural balance is disturbed by human activity. However, these plants in their proper place have important functions in the ecology because so many other plants and animals depend on them. They help make Texas look like Texas.

Non-native or exotic plants can become invasive precisely because they have no function as food or habitat for native species that could keep them in check. Wildlife needs water, shelter, food, and space to raise their young. Non-native invasives interfere with all four of these. Even though the first generation of these plants in the garden may look lovely, they quickly begin to take over by displacing native plants and the wildlife ecosystem that depends on them. The damage can potentially spread for miles from the point of origin. This leads to habitat fragmentation until Texas no longer looks like Texas.

Gardeners can have a major role in preventing this by avoiding the use of invasive species and choosing native plants... or at least non-invasive exotics. That was the major thrust of Sue's talk. She provided both a list of major offenders—the most common non-native plants that have been escaping into the wild—and a list of alternatives that provide similar interest in the garden without risk to the environment. See below for the details.

Keeping SINS in mind, we can all help to keep Texas looking like Texas.

INVASIVE	ALTERNATIVE
Japanese Honeysuckle	Coral Honeysuckle, White Honeysuckle, Cross Vine, Snapdragon Vine, Yellow Passion Vine, Carolina Jessamine, Virginia Creeper
Ligustrum	Wax myrtle, Yaupon Holly, Possum Haw Holly, Elbow Bush, Rusty Black Haw Viburnum, Carolina Buckthorn, Texas Mountain Laurel
Chinese Privet and Chinese Photinia	Dwarf Yaupon Holly (non-native cultivar), Evergreen Sumac, Fragrant Sumac, Agarita
Pyracantha and Nandina (not so Heavenly Bamboo)	Yaupon Holly, Possum Haw Holly, Spicebush
Non-Native Mimosa	Fragrant (Pink) Mimosa, Desert Willow, Red Bud (Texas or Mexican)
Russian Olive	Texas Persimmon
Chinese Tallow	Texas Red Oak
Vitex or Chaste Tree	Mexican Buckeye
Chinese Pistache	Texas Pistache
Holly Fern	River Fern (Southern Shield Fern)
Andean Pampas Grass	Big Muhly, Lindheimer Muhly, Indian Grass (Yellow Indian Grass)
Bradford Pear, Crepe Myrtle	Mexican Plum

Master Gardener Finds  
Great Finds

Gaye Kriegel

Whether you're born to shop, an equal opportunity shopper (like me), or enjoy retail therapy, isn't there a bit of the hunter-gatherer instinct in all us gardeners? This column is for anyone to contribute to when you have found the hard-to-find and want to share the info. Annette and I start us off this month but we look forward to reading about your great finds, too.

We all know the heat tolerant, ever-green leaves, and bright color dependability of *salvia greggii*. This spring, for the first time ever, I found it with purple blooms at the Lowe's on 620 near 183. Hill Country Landscape on Pond Springs Road in Austin also had *salvia greggii* labeled purple but the blooms were more fuchsia.

I don't invest a lot in annuals but the potato vine (*Ipomoea*) is inexpensive and a fantastic complement to so many other plants, especially in pots. The more you pinch it, the fuller it becomes. The bright lime green 'Marguerite' and black/purple 'Blackie' are the most common. Last year I fell in love with the brown and the two-tone meadow green,



as well. Not nearly as vigorous is the daintier, variegated pear green with shots of pink/lavender and cream. Just discovered at Home Depot is the black heart (*Ipomoea batatas*). It is similar in color to 'Blackie' but the leaves have a beautiful heart shape. All these potato vines are thirsty and also propagate easily. Red Barn Nursery on Pond Springs Road probably has all of them.

Round Rock Nursery offered an oxalis that was new to me. It is not the familiar perky pink *oxalis crassipes* (going dormant now in the heat), nor the tem-

peramental *oxalis triangularis* (tried twice, died twice), but *oxalis hedyсарoides*. The burgundy foliage on delicate stems show off simple but vibrant gold flowers. Cuttings rooted in a heartbeat.

I was also drawn to the burgundy foliage of Gail's Choice *Alternanthera* found at Home Depot. The insignificant – if not useless – flowers look like cream-colored tufts found on clover. Ahh...but the burgundy (maroon, if you're an Aggie) leaves are stunning!

Is anyone else bored with gold Lantana? Then you've got to see the (new last year) Lantana 'Bandana Cherry' found at Countryside Nursery on Pond Springs Road. Bandana Cherry grows somewhat slower than other Lantanas (good; less pruning) but blooms profusely in magenta and gold on the same flowerets.



Above: *Oxalis hedyсарoides* has beautiful burgundy foliage with tiny gold flowers.

Left: Gail's Choice *Alternanthera* has deep burgundy foliage and is readily available at the Home Depot.

## New and Unusual Plants

## *Justicia Carnea*

### Annette Banks

Growing up I had fond memories of a beautiful flower that graced my grandmother's porch. She always called it a pine-bur begonia. After her death, I lost contact with the species until a move to Arkansas, where it was referred to as a Jacobina. Then, upon my relocation to Georgetown, I was delighted to find one at McIntire's Nursery. Fortunately, I snatched it and have kept it container-grown on my deck for years.

Since the flower is now sometimes available at local home improvement and grocery store venues, I decided to do some research on them.

The *Justicia* (genus) *carnea* (species) is a member of the *acanthaceae* family and is called by many names: pine-bur begonia, Jacobina, Brazilian plume, flamingo flower, pink tongues, king's crown and cardinal's guard.

The *Justicia carnea* was named for an 18th century Scottish gardener, James Justice. The plants are native to the tropics of South America, particularly Brazil. They are now being adopted into the temperate areas of North America. Northern gardeners use them as annuals, transplanting them into containers for the winter months.

The *Justicia carnea* blooms in the summer and fall, showing beautiful clusters that flare at the mouth and curve outwards from the center of the bloom's spike. My plants are a soft dominant pink,



but research shows that they range in a variety of shades of pinks and reds, plus white, orange, coral, and apricot. The dark green foliage with large leaves makes a bouquet-like contrast to the large, showy spikes of flowers. They cycle through a blooming cycle three or four times a year.

We can grow them in shaded or partial shaded areas in our locale. They offer a wonderful accent to those dark areas. However, the winter could bring real danger for the plant. I usually just cover my containered ones on frost-expected days. Even then, they have to get a fresh start each spring.

Propagation is easy and effective. Cut an 8 inch stem, strip leaves, leaving 2

A big thank you to Annette Banks and Gaye Kriegel who have stepped up to the plate to provide me with a monthly columns on unusual and new plants that are coming into the nurseries.

You may also have noticed that Sam Myers does a regular feature on entomology. Thank you Sam.

Of course Margaret does her wonderful cookery articles and Duffy sends me numerous items, as does Gaye. They are not alone. As you have seen in previous issues, many people are starting to turn on their computers to write really interesting things. Please don't leave it just for them. We can all form sentences, paragraphs, and short and long articles for the newsletter. We are all talented people with a shared passion, so come on and step up to the plate. We all have something to say about something we love in our gardens, so share your passion and love with us all.

to 4 leaves at the top. Dust with root hormone and place into a growing compound so that two of the leaf notches are below the soil.

I will always have a very soft spot in my heart for the "pine-bur" begonia.

## CLEVER GARDENING TECHNIQUE

### COMPANION PLANTING

- Plant French marigolds in between tomato plants to deter aphids.
- Grow carrots and leeks together. Both have strong scents that drive away each other's pests.
- Plant nasturtium with cabbages - they are a magnet for caterpillars that will then leave the cabbages alone.
- Garlic planted among roses will ward off aphids.
- Make sure companion plants are planted at the same time as your edible crops to prevent pests from getting a foothold.

Courtesy BBC Gardening

# Plant of the Month



*Scutellaria ovata* Heartleaf scullcap

The *Scutellaria ovata* or Heartleaf Scullcap is a beautiful member of the mint family and just like me it probably volunteers just a little too much! I actually love that it volunteers too much as I just dig them up and move them to another location. A perennial herb that reaches between one to three feet, it blooms from April through June. The flowers are a striking blue or violet and add color to any shady through sunny area of your garden. Widely distributed throughout the US it can be found in woodlands, along roads and on brushy slopes. It prefers a moist environment but I have found that it will grow in dry conditions. It is a very under-used plant. Its versatility alone makes it perfect for any garden. The showy blue flowers form on spikes similar in form to *Salvias*. It colonizes vigorously

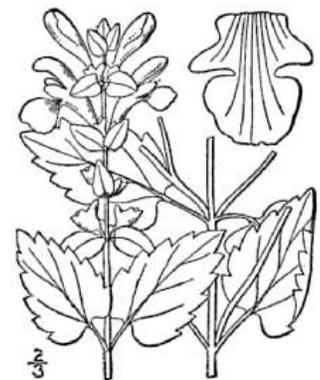


Images LBJWC.



underground with fleshy roots that almost look like small tubers. The beautiful grey-green leaves are “furry” and the oil glands could possibly make the plant deer resistant. Although it dies back in summer heartleaf scullcap forms evergreen rosettes over winter, thus providing much needed ground cover in the normally dormant period. The plant is also an excellent nectar source for adult butterflies and hummingbirds.

Most members of the mint (*Lamiaceae*) family make excellent teas, weather it is for refreshment or some herbal cure. However, this is not the case for members of the *Scutellaria* species, the bitter mints. Henry Burlage reports in the *Index of Plants of Texas with repudiated Medical and Poisonous Properties* that this species is toxic. However, don't be deterred —you would need to eat vast quantities and the bitter taste is prohibitive.



Britton, N.L., and A. Brown. 1913. *An illustrated flora of the northern United States, Canada and the British Possessions*. Vol. 3: 107. Courtesy of Kentucky Native Plant Society

## Bug of the Month

Seen any of these bugs lately? They are the same bug (yes, a bug - note the sucking mouthparts) in different stages of development. Why should you recognize the immature stages? Because it is easier to kill them when they are young - their shell is softer (simpler "pick and stomp") - or more effective use of contact insecticide. But, do you need to kill them? Maybe not. If there are a lot of them and they are ruining your tomatoes, peaches, beans, pecans, potatoes or plums, maybe so. Natural control: encourage lizards, birds (birdbaths), and snakes, or tachinid flies, assassin bugs, and wolf spiders. If a few bugs are on your ash trees or ornamental plantings they probably won't do too much damage - they suck juice from leaves, shoots, and buds but it takes a lot of them to do real damage. If you have to get out the big guns, try citrus oil for organic control.

Sam Myers  
Entomology Specialist

Top: Leaffooted bug nymph  
Center: Instar- immature leaffooted bug  
Bottom: Adult leaffooted bug



### Entomology Specialist Program

Sept 15-19, 2008

Austin, TX Hosted by Wizzie Brown, Extension Program Specialist, Travis County

- Registration fee of \$300.00 includes collecting kit with lots of goodies; lectures; Extension bulletins; 3 lunches, 1 dinner, snacks & drinks • Transportation and lodging is on your own • Course is limited to 20 applicants; deadline is July 18, 2008

Contact Wizzie Brown at [ebrown@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:ebrown@ag.tamu.edu) or

512.854.9600 with any questions.

Agenda/Registration Form >>

## Congratulations to the new fully certified Master Gardeners!

Jeanne Barker, Pat McAleenan, Charles Dieterich

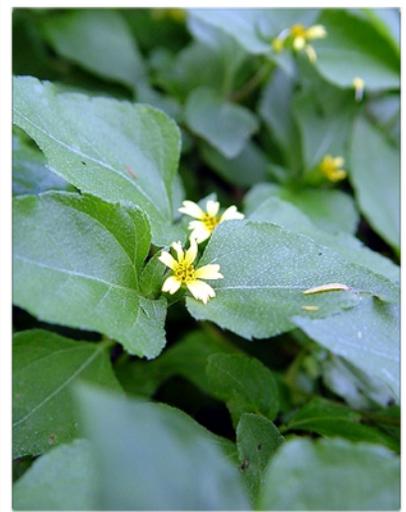
**Well done and welcome. We know you are going to enjoy your time as certified Master gardeners. This is truly a wonderful organization to be part of.**

## Weed Watching

I seem to be fixated on little yellow flowers. I know everyone has seen this and I bet all of you have pulled it up. I first noticed this tiny plant a few years ago when I purchased a small piece of land behind my house. It was growing where nothing else would, not even the mix of grasses that were in the same general area. It was providing much needed ground-cover and erosion control. Eventually I found out its name, shared some with other people, and on a couple occasions found it for sale. I was then told it was a weed. "It can't be," I thought since it was unobtrusive and really fills in bare patches where nothing wants to grow.

Talking to people, I have found you either love *Calyptocarpus vialis* (Horse herb, Straggler daisy, Prostrate Lawnflower) or hate it. I personally think it would be great in an area where you want green but your grass won't grow. It will take some foot traffic and can be mowed. On the down side, it is dormant in winter. So mix it with spring wildflowers like baby blue-eyes and widows tears which are green in winter. It is present in much of the south of the US and it is unsure if it is a native species or introduced. It is not classed as a weed by the US Department of Agriculture Natural Resources and Conservation Service. The yellow flower heads are only about a quarter inch or so in diameter with a flattened horn-like fruit. The toothed leaves reach one and a quarter inches in length and grow opposite from each other. The stems root at the nodes, allowing it to form large areas. It doesn't need much water and is happy in sun right through to shade. Sources say it is "somewhat deer resistant" but my deer seem to leave it alone. It's little yellow flowers persist from Spring to Fall and attract pollinators, especially bees and butterflies.

I think I will leave my Horse herb alone as it looks pretty, feeds the insects, and covers a few unsightly bare spots. That is all I ever ask of any plant!



Christine Powell

Images courtesy of the LBJWC



### Beautiful Display

Some of you may remember that a couple of weeks ago I sent an email to you all to go and see the wonderful display of wildflowers at Camp Tejas near Lake Georgetown. Several of you decided to go and see the display for yourselves and I don't think a single one of you was disappointed. Christiane Alexander sent this beautiful image to share with you all. This display actually has an interesting story and is probably the result of the flooding last year. The whole area was underwater for some considerable time and it was the flooding that has killed many of the Ashe Juniper in the area. Apparently the *Monarda Citradora* (Horsemint or Lemon Mint) and Brown-eyed Susans loved the conditions and decided to make 2008 their year!

## Green Master Gardening

**Green Gardening****Christine Powell**

“Like winds and sunsets, wild things were taken for granted until progress began to do away with them. Now we face the question whether a still higher ‘standard of living’ is worth its cost in things natural, wild, and free. For us of the minority, the opportunity to see geese is more important than television, and the chance to find a pasque-flower is a right as inalienable as free speech.”

Aldo Leopold

This was written, when? This year, last year, five years ago? No, it was written in 1948 in his book *The Sand County Almanac*. We think we have just discovered that there are more important things than a ‘standard of living’ but this is a conundrum that many have pondered.

**Change mowers**

A 2006 gas-operated lawn mower releases 93 times more emissions into the environment than a 2006 car. When you think about it, that is an horrific figure but it doesn’t stop there. A gas lawn mower also contributes to the smog and ozone problems just like a car does—carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons, and nitrogen oxide all get added to the atmosphere. What can we do? Lots of things. If you must use a gas mower then mow less often. Switch to an electric or, better yet, a push mower. OK, so your yard is large, why not put more of it to flower beds or shrubberies. The wildlife will thank you. Why not plan to remove a given percentage of grass each year to new plantings.

If you must have a mechanical mower consider getting an electric mower since it roughly uses around three dollars a year in electricity and doesn’t need refueling. You can get corded and cordless varieties and they are often cheaper than most gas guzzling mowers. There are other benefits—they are quieter. Think how happy this will make the neighbors!

Clearly the best option for a “green” mower is the manual push type. Since we are all getting older I guess we are going to have to bribe the kids and grandkids on this one. I also don’t see any of the gardening services using this option but it might be worthwhile asking them to convert to electric. Maybe that is one way to make a difference.

**Stop all chemicals**

To be really green you really must do away with unnecessary gardening pesticides and chemicals. My father was a paid gardener for seventy years—yes he did start young but he kept working until a heart attack stopped at the age of eighty-five—and in all that time I never saw him use any pesticides or chemicals of any type. Believe me, his gardens were beautiful, not insect free but in balance. I have never used chemicals on my garden since I arrived and the only time I have had a bug problem is when the neighbors had their yard sprayed and it drifted over to my garden to kill the beneficial insects. Notice the word usage here—yard versus garden—there alone it tells you a lot.

It has been reported that gardeners are the greatest polluters of our rivers and ground water because of fertilizers and pesticides. Let’s break the cycle.

So what can we do? Well, first take all your bottles, jars, cans etc. to the recycle center. Then it is easy, just wait for Mother Nature to step in. She can’t do her job if we don’t let her. For every bad insect there is either another insect to counter it or an animal who will help out. Help the birds by putting up nesting boxes and feeder. Feeders you say, isn’t that defeating the object? Not really, for example, a hummingbird may drink nectar but the majority of its food comes from insects. They only feed insects to their young! Other birds love snails and slugs.

In areas where you mulch, set a small amount to one side for ground beetles. Soon they will move in and nest. They will eat many of your gardening pests.

Always plant more vegetables than you need so you won’t be upset if some get eaten. Let a few go to flower so bumblebees can carry out the pollination process. Bees need to eat too.

If you can, let an area away from the house “go wild” so insects and animals can take up residence. Allow flowers to go to seed for the birds. Also plant late-blooming flowers so there is plenty to keep the insects hanging around as late as possible plus plenty for overwintering insects.

Most importantly, we need the insects to pollinate and chemicals have no bias, they kill everything.

**Harness the Sun**

One thing we have in Texas is plenty of sun so why not use it? If you want lighting along your path why not try some of the new solar powered lamps now available. They are easy to install and can be placed wherever you want them in your garden. Solar power not only saves you money, it also reduces your dependency on traditional energy sources... and the national dependence on imported energy.

*Rare Plants of Texas*

A Field Guide

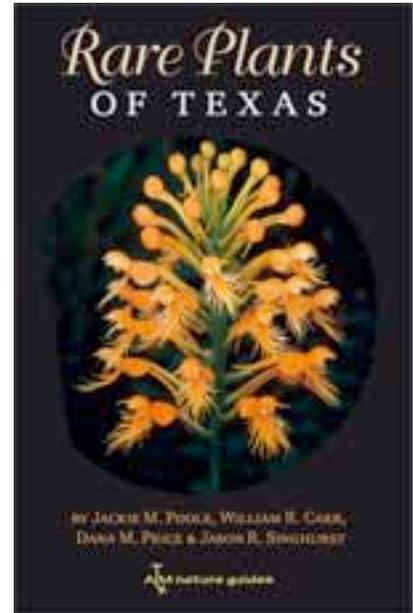
Jackie M. Poole, William R. Carr, Dana M. Price, and  
Jason R. Singhurst

I was recently on a nature walk with Bill Carr on Shield Ranch south of Austin. We started off down the trail while he pointed out various plants of interest along the path. There was hardly a question about anything we saw that he could not answer with popular and scientific name and a story. Over two hours later, when the scheduled time for the walk was over, we turned around and strolled less than ten minutes back to our starting point. We had learned an incredible amount of information in a very short distance... as in *Rare Plants of Texas*. Since few people interested in plants or gardening can have Bill Carr or one of his equally passionate coauthors at their disposal, their book is a partial substitute.

Jackie M. Poole is a botanist in the Wildlife Diversity Program of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. She has been working with the rare plants of Texas since 1982. William R. Carr, a botanist with The Nature Conservancy of Texas, conducts numerous field surveys and inventories for the conservation of threatened habitat. Dana M. Price is a botanist at the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department with experience in prairie ecology and economic botany. Jason A. Singhurst, a botanist and phytogeographer at the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, manages GIS and remote sensing land cover classification projects and conducts status surveys of rare plants in Texas.

For anyone who loves native plants, *Rare Plants of Texas* is a must-have. Because of their focus on common plants, the standard field guides do not include many of the 225 species currently described as endangered, imperiled, or declining (or other species that are considered species-of-concern or candidates for listing). The only sources of information have been the in-house summaries for Texas Parks and Wildlife botanists, and even those date back only to 1987.

Members of the general public have found it almost impossible to identify rare plants that might occur on their land. That doesn't mean that they didn't encounter them. A number of the plants in the book were discovered by ordinary people who were unusually observant. One example is Enquist's Sandmint (*brazoria enquistii*), found in the Llano Uplift and identified by Matt Turner (a member of the Native Plant Society in Austin). Because most of these species weren't identified in the field guides to native plants, the natural



Rare Plants of Texas  
978-1-58544-557-8  
flexbound with flaps  
\$35.00  
LC 2006039150.  
5 3/4x9 1/4. 656 pp.  
247 color photos.  
234 color maps.  
215 drawings.  
Bib. Index.  
Natural History.  
Reference.



inclination was to regard them as invasive weeds and destroy them. This has had a significantly adverse effect on the natural diversity of Texas. *Rare Plants of Texas* provides a vital resource for preventing this from happening.

Rare and endangered species form an integral part of each of the major natural ecosystems in Texas. Because Williamson County is at the confluence of several regions, we could see many of these plants. Their existence or disappearance is a bellwether for the health of the entire vegetation region. Today's threats to rare plants almost inevitably represent tomorrow's threats to the more common native plants as well. With the state rapidly approaching a water crisis, the preservation of the native plant inventory that has adapted to survive without supplemental watering—and the elimination of imported species that crowd out the natives while wasting water—must be a critical part of any conservation strategy.

Biodiversity is no longer just an obsession for “tree huggers,” but should concern anyone who wants their taps to produce water when they want it. It should also be a concern for anyone who wants Texas to look like Texas and not some other state or country. These rare plants often serve as hosts for beneficial or attractive insects and other wildlife. In many parts of the state, hunting and tourism are critical to the local economy; everywhere, we are dependent on a healthy natural environment. The rare native plants are an important sign of health or its decline. This book responds to the critical need to recognize such plants before their preservation can even be contemplated.

*Rare Plants of Texas* includes maps down to the county level to show where these species may be located, along with photographs and line drawings that supplement the written information on each plant. This includes a description and data on distribution, habitat, and related issues. Introductory chapters deal more generally with the threats to native plants and the methods being used for recovery. All this information makes *Rare Plants of Texas* a must have for anyone owning property in Texas and who wants to preserve our native flora.



Not listed as endangered but rarely seen, this beautiful little pearl milkweed vine *Matelea reticulata* was just one of the many gems revealed on my recent hike with Bill Carr.

## 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 6:00pm. Master Gardeners and the public are welcome to attend.**

Treats from the Master Garden

## Are you “tard” of Chard? Margaret Seals

With the nice cool spring weather we have been having, a current topic of conversation at our community garden is whether the chard in one’s garden plot is still producing (most of it is) and, if so, has this vegetable worn out its welcome at the table? Someone said we should make sure our cars are locked in the parking lot while we are gardening, so that there won’t be a sack of chard left on the seat by a gardener who over planted! I, among many others, have not gotten “tard” of chard yet, and wish it would continue to produce for many more weeks. It is one of my favorite greens. Besides containing dietary fiber, Swiss chard is packed full of vitamins A, E, C and K along with manganese, magnesium and potassium, essential minerals for good health. A member of the same family as beets and spinach, it combines the taste of those two vegetables, giving the mildly salty flavor of spinach and the slightly bitter taste of greens. There are many good ways to cook chard, a few of which I will share with you.

Swiss Chard is easy to grow, especially if you don’t mind keeping

it watered well, but it usually will stop producing when the weather gets hot. I have successfully grown chard in several varieties (Bright Lights was the tastiest) in both our fall and early spring seasons, but not in our full summer heat. Late last spring, I tried planting some on the east side of the okra for afternoon shade, but it stopped producing before the okra got tall enough to shade it.

As with most greens, washing thoroughly is a must. Some varieties of Swiss chard have very wrinkly leaves, and will hold dirt long after you think you have rinsed them well. I rinse the leaves several times, and wrap them in paper towels for storage in the refrigerator overnight if that is necessary. Most of the time, they go from garden to stove as soon as they are rinsed.



### Margaret’s Swiss chard

My favorite way to fix chard is to sauté a chopped sweet onion in a little bacon grease (or sauté the onion with a handful of chopped ham in about 1 T olive oil) and deglaze the pan with a little Vermouth, an herb-laced white wine. Rinse, destem and slice the chard in half-inch pieces and add to the pan, covering the chard. Cook on med/low heat and check every 3-5 minutes as the chard steams. Turn the top pieces of chard under as the bottom cooks down. As soon as all the chard has cooked down, add salt and pepper to taste and sprinkle with grated Parmesan cheese. Serve immediately. Paired with a big slice of cornbread, this makes a great meal.

Chard makes a great addition to vegetable or bean soups. I add cooked chard to canned soups sometimes to give them extra nutrition and flavor. Below is a quick soup that is good any time chard is on hand. It can be made in less than an hour. The recipe comes from Everyday Food Magazine.

### Lentil and Swiss chard Soup

1 T olive oil  
 1 medium sweet onion, chopped (1 C)  
 1 T tomato paste  
 1 t dried oregano  
 1 t dried thyme  
 1 C lentils, picked over and rinsed  
 5 C water  
 1 can (14.5 oz) diced tomatoes in juice  
 1 ½ lb Swiss chard, destemmed and cut crosswise into 1 inch pieces  
 Salt and pepper to taste  
 Juice of ½ lemon

In a large saucepan with a lid, heat oil over med high heat. Add onion and cook, stirring until softened and browned, 3-5 minutes. Add tomato paste, oregano and thyme, and stir to combine. Add lentils, 5 C water and tomato juice, and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer, covered about 20 minutes. Add chard and cook until they soften, about 15-20 minutes. Stir in lemon juice and ladle into bowls for serving.

Creamed vegetables seem to have fallen out of favor in the past few years, partly due to the extra calories creaming adds to a dish, but mostly due to convenience of preparation. It only takes a little more time to make creamed chard, yet this preparation method really makes chard delicious. I hope you will try some. You will need a big bunch of chard, remembering that a big pot (18 C) of fresh chard will cook down to a few cupfuls.

### Creamed Fresh Chard

- Swiss chard, destemmed and cut crosswise into 1" pieces, about 18 C
- 6 T butter
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 6 T all-purpose flour
- 2 3/4 C milk
- 1/4 t nutmeg
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1/4 C heavy cream

Cook onion and garlic in 2 T butter until both are soft, and add chard. Cover the pan, and cook on med heat as chard cooks down. Fold uncooked top chard under every 3-4 minutes until all is cooked, about 15 minutes. Remove from heat, but keep cover on the pan while (in a separate pan) adding 4 T butter. Let butter melt over low heat, and then whisk flour into butter. Stir, removing any lumps. Whisk in milk, nutmeg and salt and pepper. Cook, raising heat to med until mixture is just below a boil. Stirring constantly let mixture cook 2 minutes more. Whisk in cream. Pour cream mixture over cooked chard. Stir to combine, and serve immediately.

**Check out the new website for the Texas Master Gardener Association:**  
<http://grovesite.com/page.asp?o=mg&s=mga&p=266862>



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Note: MG members use the Member Login in the blue items bar on the left to access the "Members Only" pages.



**The Texas Master Gardener Association** is an organization composed of Master Gardeners Associations and/or individual certified Master Gardeners, Interns or Trainees from around the State of Texas. The Purpose of our web site is to provide Texas Master Gardeners with information beneficial to all Associations. If you need information that you can't find through our site, please click on " Write the Editor" and we will get the information to you or put you in touch with someone who can help.

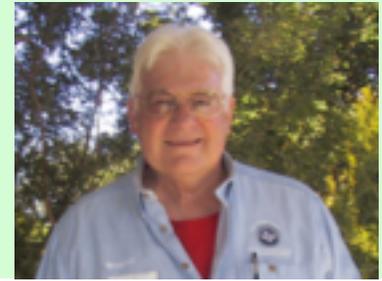
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- Write the Editor
- Junior Master Gardeners

## President's Column

## Good News

### Wayne Rhoden



Here we are starting June and it seems like July or August because of the heat we have this time of the year. I have been here in Georgetown for a little over three years and each year has started off differently. The first year we had a drought, the second year a flood and this year it is already hot but we have had some rain. What next?

This year we have several opportunities to volunteer that we did not have last year because the Williamson County Master Gardeners are finally getting some recognition for the volunteering work that we do on behalf of Texas Agrilife Extension. We have been asked to participate in the field day at Stiles Farm on Highway 79, hosting a vegetable show. John Womack will be the chairman of the show and will be calling on volunteers to help with signing in the participants who will be bringing in their vegetables for the show and generally helping move the show along. We will not be judging but will help in other ways and will be contributing the rosettes and ribbons for the winners. Watch for the email in your inbox.

We will also be participating in a water pilot program with the City of Georgetown that will be conducted in Sun City. We will be working with select homes in Sun City helping them with their irrigation systems and evaluating their plants and turf to see if we can recommend using less water or rescheduling their irrigation controllers to better distribute the water and plan days and times to water. We will be asking many of the Sun City residents that are Master Gardeners to help monitor the program after it starts. It should start sometime in June. A meeting with all of the residents that are to participate is scheduled for June 9th at 8:30 am at the Sun City Park Pavilion.

Our next monthly program is on June 9th and we look forward to seeing you there.

Wayne



- 2008 Menard, Texas - June 17-19,
- 2008 Kaufman, Texas - July 16-18,
- 2008 Conroe, Texas - Sept 11-12

The purpose of this course is to provide advanced training whereby Master Gardeners can obtain specialization in rainwater harvesting. For more information visit: [http://rainwaterharvesting.tamu.edu/training\\_gardener.html](http://rainwaterharvesting.tamu.edu/training_gardener.html)  
Taylor Blackburn coordinates the MG trainings in rainwater harvesting. [TABlackburn@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:TABlackburn@ag.tamu.edu)

## June 11-14, 2008 - Junior Master Gardener Specialist Training



Williamson County Extension  
Williamson County Master Gardeners

## A Date to Remember

Please save the date of June 11-14, 2008. Junior Master Gardener Specialty Training will be held at the Williamson County Extension Office in Georgetown, Texas. Costs are being calculated and an application will be available soon.

Contact: Neil Cochran, JMG Coordinator Williamson County

# Williamson County Master Gardener Association Officers for 2008

## Officers:

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## Ad Hoc Committees:

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Webmaster:	Christine Powell	<a href="mailto:xtinepowell@verizon.net">xtinepowell@verizon.net</a>	(512) 863-8250

## Quote of the Month

““We can complain because rose bushes have thorns, or rejoice because thorn bushes have roses.”

Abraham Lincoln