

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 Everyone!

Finally, we have a little relief from the heat! Fall is in the air and we have several potential volunteer projects brewing. We will keep you posted once they are approved!

Don't forget to send in your RSVP for the Awards dinner. The deadline to RSVP is November 15th, and all payments must be made by December 1. Please contact Margaret Seals for more information.

You can now LIKE us on Facebook. Please visit the Williamson County Master Gardener Facebook page here and click LIKE:

<http://www.facebook.com/#!/pages/Williamson-County-Texas-Master-Gardeners-Association/181223821960417>

This page will be a good way for the public to become aware of what we offer to the community and get people to go to our website: <http://txmg.org/williamson/> Facebook will also be a great way to get the word out about our Master Gardener programs and events. More resources are also coming to the website for everyone to use.

Our By-Laws changes are coming up for an approval vote at the November 14th monthly meeting. One of the new provisions allows for a Leave of Absence. Many of the changes are technical updates to bring us into the 21st century with the use of email and internet.

Please take some time to read through the FAQ in this issue of the newsletter. We have had a confusing year with regard to hours, and many of those questions and others should be clarified with the Q & A list. Also mentioned in the list is something new, with regard to presentations that we give and the way we report them. The Speakers Bureau will be reporting additional information on the presentations you give, so please check it out and send Juanita James your information for each presentation you give. Also let her know if you are available to give presentations and the topic, so she can add you to her speaker list.

We have new Master Gardener Interns to get to know. Hopefully, you have met some of them and have gotten acquainted. Congratulations to our new Interns, we look forward to working with you! If you are not getting announcements through the Google group, please sign up.



This is the time of year, when I rearrange things at home and try to figure out where all of my plants are going for the winter. I also need to pull out the frost blankets and make sure they are in good shape. I'm sure you are all making preparations too, whether it is for your plants, for fire safety, or for the holidays.

I look forward to working with everyone next year. Thank you all for all you do!

Until next time.....

Grace

Fall Vegetable Gardening, *Texas Style*

Catherine Schmidt

My husband and I moved from Alaska to Georgetown almost 6 years ago. Alaska is the land of short summers, rich soil and gigantic vegetables. (The size of the vegetables due to the extremely long (20+ hours) of daylight.) There are few vegetables that will grow in Alaska and only in the summer. Hence the focus in Alaska is on glorious flower gardens. Cabbages have become ornamental and a desert delicacy for the urban moose along with the main course of blooming trees, which are regularly pruned by said moose.

While Texans are putting in fall vegetable gardens, Alaskans will be putting their flower beds to sleep for the winter with a deep blanket of birch leaves. Texas has such a wonderful variety of vegetables for the fall gardening season.

The point being that vegetable gardening here in Texas, while there are similarities, is a whole new experience. Patty Leander's lecture covered just about everything I needed to know about fall vegetable gardening in the land of 6' fences, voracious deer and at times too much heat.

All the important basics were addressed: where to get advice, moisture, soil health, what to compost, organics, mulch, how to pick transplants, knowing when to harvest, insects (the good, the bad and the beautiful). This lecture covered the what, where and when needed to produce healthy fall vegetables for those who want to eat nutritiously this winter.



The slide show was a pleasing and beautiful surprise.

I would recommend this presentation by Patty Leander and her husband, who likes beige, for anyone interested in a fall vegetable garden. It was an altogether delightful experience especially with a turnout of about 77 people. It is nice to see who many interested in gardening.

Please join us, Saturday, January 28, 2012, from 10:00 to noon, at the Georgetown Public Library for Patty Leander's talk on Spring Vegetable Gardening.

Gardening Tips for Fall

Winola VanArtsdalen

October

Fall Maintenance: Every fall we should spread 1-2" of compost in our flower beds with a layer of native hardwood mulch on top. If you only use mulch, you need 3-4" of mulch. For compost in beds, you can use home compost or Dillo dirt, but cotton burr compost gives the additional benefit of adding acidity to the soil. For lawn suggestions, see below in "Lawn" section.

Planting: You should add soil amendments 4-6 weeks before planting, but most of us are not that organized and patient. Do try to at least amend the soil a week or two before planting to give the microorganisms time to do their job. Is your soil loose enough to give your plants oxygen, and is it easy for tiny roots to spread? If not, you may need to add some sands as well as compost. Add sands and compost separately, or get a dirt yard mix of sands and compost, my preference.

Plant container-grown landscape shrubs and perennials now. When planted in the fall, hardy plants have an opportunity to grow roots and gain strength to withstand next year's hot summer temperatures.

Divide and replant daylilies and other perennials now through November. (Only those of you with a deer fence will have day lilies left to divide!)

Begin moving foliage plants indoors. Before repotting, check for insects and disease and treat if necessary.

Dig and store caladium bulbs. Make cuttings of tender plants before frost. Propagation is easy and fun, and you will be glad to have those plants next spring.

Plant cyclamen in pots for vibrant winter color. Protect when temperatures dip below 22 degrees; discard in spring. If you plan to plant tulips for spring, select quality bulbs and chill in vegetable tray of refrigerator six to eight weeks before planting.

Consider planting some edibles in your flower beds. Parsley, cilantro, radishes, greens, garlic and onions can be inserted right into your beds. Swiss chard is a beautiful, color addition to your flowerbeds. I put the greens in center of bed where I can discretely cover with a chicken wire dome not visible from the street. Greens have such high nutritional value that they are worth the effort!

Consider adding solar-powered lighting to your landscaping for safety and beauty.

Lawn: To prevent spring weeds, it is time to put out pre-emergent. If you plan to use corn gluten, get it out right away if you have not already done so. Corn gluten is an organic pre-emergent, and timing is everything. Buy it from a reliable nursery and check with them about timing. Usually, corn gluten should be applied now and maybe the first two weeks or middle of March. Spread 40 lbs per 2,000 sq. ft. twice a year using a drop spreader at the lowest setting, walking briskly. Water it in. If you use a broadcaster, it must be a windless day. You do not want to spread fertilizer at the same time, as corn gluten has some nitrogen in it, (9-0-0). Corn gluten will not harm your pets.

Yes, you need to fertilize your grass in the fall, but be sure to consider nitrogen in organic sources as well as synthetic fertilizer. Both corn gluten and organic top dressing adds nitrogen, and you do not want to add too much.

Do not use weed and feed! It is a broadleaf weed killer that can damage your trees. It also can get into streams and harm plants and wildlife.

November

Fall Maintenance: This is the month to put plants "to bed" for a well-deserved rest after our severe drought. Preparations now will ensure enjoyment of your landscape next spring. First, add compost for healthy plants and lawn to resist future trouble. Add at least a 2" layer of native bark mulch to protect from temperature extremes, hold moisture, and breakdown into nutrients in time. Remember that strong fall winds dry plants.

The average first freeze in Williamson County is November 15th, but usually it will barely last past sunrise. To prepare, water the

day before.

Planting: Berried trees and shrubs begin to add beautiful fall color now. If you want more next year, consider planting pyracantha, possumhaw holly (deciduous), or yaupons (evergreen.)

This is the ideal time to plant trees, shrubs and vines. If you choose oak trees, plant oaks resistant to oak wilt: Monterey oak (Mexican white oak), Chinquapin, lacey oak, burr oak or post oak. Be sure to consider space required, as burr oak becomes a huge tree.

Transplanting: You can transplant now and deeper into winter. Any time you are transplanting, water the plant deeply the day before. Deeply pre-water the hole where it will be planted. This is especially important this year when we have had a severe drought. If you do not pre-water, the dry soil below will absorb the moisture away from the new transplant.

You can divide bulbs as soon as leaves have yellowed from top down, returning nutrients to the bulb. If you have not done so already, consider planting narcissus, jonquils, snowflakes, crinums, and rain lilies. Plant in full sun or part shade and put a handful of rock phosphate in bottom of hole and set bulb right on top of it. Be sure crown of bulb is above ground or it will rot. Do not overwater bulbs. Be sure to mark the area where you plant bulbs, so you do not accidentally dig them up next spring.

Pansies, violas, and snap dragons are lovely with narcissus, snowflakes, and other spring-flowering bulbs.

Trimming: Remember to trim with a purpose. You may need to remove dead branches and limbs, as well as growth that is invading your patio, sidewalk, driveway, or hanging over the roof of the house. If you trim oaks, the best time is when the weather is miserably hot or miserably cold when you do not want to be out there. That is the time the beetles carrying oak wilt are most active. Notice I said most active. There is no time you can be guaranteed there is no beetle activity. You must paint all wounds to oak trees immediately, any time, any size, and any season! If you hire the work done, be sure this is specified in the contract and that you watch them the entire time!

Container plants: Plan for cold weather protection. Most are all right until temperature reaches 22 degrees and below, but some tropicals, ie. Crotons, must be brought inside when temperatures reaches below 50 degrees. Google plant name for specific information for your plant.

Plant cyclamen in pots for vibrant winter color. Protect when temperature dips below 22 degrees.

Indoors: Do not overwater! Use your finger to check and do not water if moist 1" deep. Keep most succulents and cactus dry until spring. Christmas cactus needs some moisture and liquid fertilizer.

You can start narcissus inside to force blooms to brighten winter days. Be aware that some people, me included, literally cry from the scent and may not be able to visit!

Lawn: Remove leaves promptly from lawn so sunlight can reach turf.

It is not too late to spread a thin layer of compost over lawn. Water moves it down into soil and it releases nutrients to promote spring growth.

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.

Botanical Garden of the Ozarks

Chuck McKelley

While there are many beautiful gardens within a short drive of Georgetown, my wife and I like to visit those that are somewhat further afield. Recently we spent a long weekend in the Fort Smith/Fayetteville, AR area, which is about 500 miles from Williamson county. While there we visited the Botanical Garden of the Ozarks (<http://www.bgozarks.org/location/map/>) in Fayetteville. Although the round trip requires a long weekend, the Ozarks are beautiful, especially in the fall, and there many things to see and do there.

The garden, which is on land owned by the city of Fayetteville, is the result of the effort of a group of volunteers and interested parties who formed the Botanical Garden Society of the Ozarks in 1974 with the purpose of establishing a garden that would feature plants that can be grown in northwestern Arkansas as well as those that are native to the area. It took a long time for the plan to come to fruition. Ground was not broken until the early 2000s but the result was certainly worth the wait.

Although the current garden fills only a fraction of the space available, it is well planned, planted and marked and is more handicap-accessible than many public gardens. The garden is laid out around a lawn encircled by a concrete walk and features nine themed garden areas as well as a chicken coop, butterfly garden, and children's railroad. The themed gardens extend from the circular walk like spokes on a wheel, making it easy to move from one to the other without walking a great distance. The garden staff consists of both paid professionals and volunteers, at least some of whom are Master Gardeners.



Since growing edible plants is one of my special interests I especially enjoyed the vegetable and herb garden. This garden mixes vegetables and herbs with ornamentals and decorative items such as the corn-shaped water feature at the end of the entrance aisle. Fayetteville gets a lot more rain and has a more temperate climate than does central Texas so the vegetable grow large and lush. When auxiliary watering is needed, it is done with drop hoses just as we do in our demonstration vegetable garden. I found it interesting that the botanical garden has its own chicken coop and run out behind the veggie garden. I wasn't able to determine whether the chickens are turned loose in the garden for insect control but I assume they are.

The children's garden is an enchanting place. It is filled not only with colorful plants, many of which are scented and of interesting shapes and textures, but also with plenty of nooks and crannies for children to explore. The artificial tree in this photo contains a hollow where a child can find a bit of seclusion or secret himself for a game of hide and seek. The children's garden also includes a fairy garden and a small pond.



The four seasons garden is filled with plants that bloom throughout the year. This garden is dominated by a large, organic structure which is surrounded by a winding path through the blooms. One of the paths leads to a butterfly house which is home to many butterflies and the plants that attract them in the Ozark area.



It was interesting to see the indigenous Ozark plants in the native plant garden. While some of them are the same plants that grow in Central Texas, many of them are unique to the northwestern part of Arkansas. This garden attracts many native species of birds, some of which fed on the plants while we sat and watched.

If you visit the Botanical Garden of the Ozarks be aware that there are often events scheduled in the gardens, especially on the weekends. So it is less crowded and easier to take photos during the week. Also, Fayetteville is home to the University of Arkansas so the traffic can be heavy when a home game is on the schedule. The Botanical Garden of the Ozarks charges a fee of five dollars for each adult and \$2.50 for children five to thirteen years old. Children four and under are free. The garden is every day open year round from 9 AM to 5 PM.

Accessing Facebook

Chuck McKelley

The page can be accessed from outside of Facebook by linking to www.facebook.com/wctxmga. That will take the user to their Facebook login page and as soon as they log in they will be at the WCMGA page. If the user is already logged into Facebook and wants to find the page, he can use the "search" box at the top of the Facebook newsfeed page. A search argument of "williamson county" will produce a list of pages that will include our page. The user can click on the entry for our page to get to it. A search argument of "williamson county texas master gardeners association" should return only our page.

The page is up and running now, and we are asking all MGs who have FB IDs to access it and "like" it, by clicking on the "Like" button near the top of the page, and to share it with their Facebook friends. Once the user "likes" the page, he will automatically see any new posts in his own FB newsfeed. Once or twice a week we will post public information such as notices about upcoming classes, tips on gardening that are relevant to the current season and other things of interest to local gardeners.

Rainwater Demonstration at Community Montessori

Master Gardeners Liz and Jack Grieder and Carol Parsonage escorted the Association's Rainwater Simulator to Georgetown's Community Montessori for a demonstration at their annual International Serendipity Festival on October 15. Kids and their parents saw the impact surface materials – including native grasses, lawns, rocky roadside, and city concrete and buildings – have on the amount of rainfall that soaks into the ground versus runs off into drainage systems. Thanks to a healthy group of self-appointed “rain barrels” who assisted in the demonstration we were able to significantly reduce the amount of runoff associated with the cityscape.



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.

San Gabriel Presbyterian Update

Rebecca Caldwell

As the new Intern year began there were few places to attain the necessary hours for accreditation. This was fortunate for us at San Gabriel Presbyterian Church. We have strived to NOT BE a maintenance project, utilizing the expertise, skill, and knowledge of our Master Gardeners and Interns to direct, explain, and demonstrate trimming, winterizing, and planting garden beds. But the drought this year put a halt to all projects and put us in survival mode. Our church sits on 7 acres and the majority of our trees, (60+) are less than two years old. Being part of the Chisholm Trail Water District meant that severe restrictions became mandatory months before current restrictions. Hand watering in 100+ temperatures, before 8 a.m. and after 6 p, (two days and then one day) became the only way to try and save our investment in our trees. San Gabriel Presbyterian Church acknowledges and thanks the Williamson County Master Gardeners for allowing interns and Master Gardeners to help our church with this tremendous task. Judy Curtis, who because of a serious back issue, also assisted with making over 20 cages to fit over rose bushes to protect them from the deer. These rose bushes were purchased from the Master Gardeners two years ago and for the first time; they finally have enough leafing to begin to bloom. Although this was indeed a 'maintenance' project, it was also a blessing that an exception was made. Some trees have been lost but the majority will make it! Thank you.



Above, two of our interns who helped at SGPC—Cathy Schmidt and Judy Curtis. Not pictured is Cathy Sariego.
Thanks Master Gardeners!

I'm Confused! Frequently Asked Questions

Grace Bryce

1. What are recertification hours?

We all need 50 volunteer hours (from approved projects) and 15 advanced educational hours to become certified Master Gardeners. Each year after our initial certification, we must complete recertification hours to continue as certified Master Gardeners and to be eligible to pay dues to WCMGA.

2. If I didn't complete my hours this year, what does that mean?

It means you are not eligible to pay dues, vote, or hold an office or chair a committee. You can serve on a committee and work on approved projects for hours for the next year, you just won't be "certified" while you are working on it. You can always come to the monthly educational meetings, which are open to the public. Once you have completed your recertification hours, you are once again considered a certified Master Gardener. Please turn these hours in monthly, along with number of contacts.

3. Why do I have to turn in my hours each month instead of once a year?

Monthly reporting is done to the state through AgriLIFE extension. Dustin reports these hours to the state from what you report each month. Reporting these hours and contacts helps to justify our Master Gardener program, our county extension office and our county extension agent. Since hours are tracked monthly, reporting them monthly gives a more accurate account of what is being done when. Developing the habit of reporting your volunteer and educational hours and number of contacts each month also takes some of the stress off of the membership person. How would you feel if you got bombarded with all hours from everyone in the same month?

4. What is a contact?

In the world of reporting hours and contacts, "contact" does not refer to a person's name and contact information. A contact is a person who has learned something from you in your role as a Master Gardener. Examples are 1) You are in the store buying a plant and the person in line next to you starts asking you questions about the plant or growing it etc. This person is a contact to report. You don't report their name, just the number, one contact. 2) You give a presentation, all of the people attending your presentation are contacts, if 50 people are present, you report 50 contacts. 3) Your neighbor wants you to come over and look at a tree and two other neighbors show up to look too, you would report 3 contacts. 4) If you write an article for our newsletter, or you have contacts from a MG event, the newsletter editor and the event organizer would report all contacts associated with Master Gardener organized events. 5) If you are the organizer of such an event, you are responsible for reporting the total in attendance at the event with your hours or the total number of people who came to your booth, if you are participating in a non MG event. 6) If you write an article for another newsletter (not our WCMGA newsletter) or the newspaper, find out what the circulation is and report that number as the number of contacts.

5. How do I earn an award at the award dinner?

Awards are currently given each year to people who have completed 100 volunteer hours for the year. (Educational hours are not included in this 100 and remain separate as educational hours.) **This year volunteer hours must be turned in no later than November 1, to get an award at the dinner on December 12.** If you complete 100 hours by the end of the year, you are still eligible for an award, but you will get it sometime after the dinner. Prizes have to be ordered and need time for processing.

6. I am an intern and just finished the MG class, but I don't have all of my hours yet. How long do I have to finish my 50 hours of volunteer service and 15 educational hours?

Interns basically have a year to complete their hours and become certified. Once certified, you have membership in WCMGA for the first year, without paying dues. You will have to complete hours each year to maintain your certification. If you complete an additional 50 hours by the annual deadline, then you are eligible for the 100 hours award at the awards dinner.

7. I've just moved here from another county, what do I need to do to transfer into WCMGA?

We will need some documentation that you are currently certified in your previous county. Whomever you reported hours to, would have that information. We will need your address, email and phone information along with a check for \$25 for dues made out to WCMGA. If

the climate is very different between your old home and new home, we suggest you audit some of the Master Gardener classes to get acquainted with gardening in Williamson County. You will need to complete volunteer hours and educational hours to maintain your certification each year and pay dues each year. You will also want to join the Google group, so you get all email announcements.

8. I do a lot of presentations, do I just report the information in my monthly hours?

You report the information in your monthly hours along with the number of contacts attending your presentation. Preparation time is also included on your volunteer log sheet. In addition to this, please send an email to Juanita with the Speaker's Bureau and give her the following information. Your name, date, city where you gave the presentation, title of the presentation, the length of your presentation and the number of contacts attending. This will help with our Speaker's Bureau reports and with state reporting also. If your presentation is scheduled through the Speaker's Bureau, it is easier to keep track of it, however, we don't want to miss tracking other presentations, so please report them to Juanita.

9. I've had an illness or family catastrophe and will not be able to participate to the extent that I have been. Are there any provisions for this for my membership?

With recent by-laws changes, a Leave of Absence has been added to the options. "If, due to illness or other family emergency, an Active Member is unable to fulfill the requirements to maintain certification, that member may apply for a 'leave of absence'. The request for such a leave shall be made to the Williamson County Extension Agent who, after consultation with the Executive Board, will render a decision. The leave of absence will be for a specified amount of time." To regain Active Membership the individual must fulfill the requirements as set forth in the by-laws by paying dues for the current year, meet at least the minimum re-certification requirements and maintain the integrity of the organization. Requests for hours exemptions are no longer accepted.

10. If I'm doing a demonstration presentation do I have to fill out a project form?

No, this type of presentation should be reported to the Speaker's Bureau for record keeping, but doesn't need a project form. If you have a booth at a non-WCMGA event and you will need volunteers to help man the booth answer questions and have some sort of demonstration, then this does need a short-term project form. It is a simple one page form.

11. Can you send out an email to the group for me?

The answer is generally no. It is very easy to send out an email through the Google group and anyone organizing a project or event will want to do it themselves, so that they get the responses directly. If someone sends a reply to the email it goes to the person who sent it. 1) Be sure to send it from the email account that is associated with the Google group, or you will get an error message that you are not authorized to send the message. 2) Paste this email address into the "To" line in your email program: WCMGA <williamson-county-master-gardeners@googlegroups.com> . 3) Fill in the subject line and CC yourself, otherwise you will not get a copy of the email you sent, because Google knows you sent it. If you have other questions, please ask.

12. I am a Master Gardener Intern still working on my hours to certify, who do I turn them in to?

You will continue to record your hours on your log sheet until you have 50 volunteer hours and 15 educational hours, then that sheet is turned in to JoAnne. From that point on, you will report your hours monthly to the Membership chairperson, including the date, the activity, and the number of hours volunteered and earned through educational opportunities, plus the number of contacts for the month. Once you have initially certified, you will also be eligible to count travel time for volunteer hours as long as the time spent in travel does not exceed the amount of time volunteered for that event. Travel time does not count for educational opportunities.

13. I'm not sure if these hours count as advanced education or volunteer hours. Can you help me figure this out?

Some situations are a little tricky. For instance, if you help with set-up and clean up for our monthly meetings and also listen to the program, then you could count your set-up/clean up time under volunteer hours and the 1 hour presentation under educational. Please note this on your hours log sheet. Social time doesn't count unless you are setting up during that time. Volunteer time is basically any work done with any of the approved Master Gardener projects, any committee work, or administrative work as requested. Educational hours are any classes you sit through related to gardening and only the presentation time is counted. If you sit in on a Master Gardener class, only the time the presenter is presenting is counted, not the lunch or breaks. If you are not sure, please ask for clarification. Travel time cannot exceed volunteer time for any event and does not apply to educational hours. If the activity is more like a field trip, then it goes under educational hours. If doing an activity that is hands on primarily for the purpose of accomplishing a Master Gardener task and you are learning a lot in the process, it counts as volunteer hours, not educational. (ie. veggie garden hours)

Fired Up and Ready!

Grace Bryce

With the continuing drought, we are faced with another possible hazard, wildfires. Texas is in a severe drought, and there are currently 222 counties in the state, under a burn ban. We never know when fire will strike, or how much time we will have to gather things and evacuate. Better safe than sorry. There are many things that can be done to help reduce fire damage around the house. Whatever you can do in advance to prepare for a fire, is time well spent. If you smell smoke, find out where it is coming from and report it immediately.

Landscaping:

Adding fuel breaks such as driveways or gravel walkways help to reduce ground fuel. Gravel mulch is the best fire-wise option. Plants should be spaced adequately and be of low flammability. The Texas Forest Service recommends landscaping with fire-resistant plants that are low growing and have a high moisture content. Many of our local plants such as Yaupon Holly, Ashe Juniper trees, Rosemary, and Algerita contain resins, oils, or waxes that make them more flammable than other choices. Salt tolerant plants often have a natural fire resistance. Slow growing plants that require less pruning are desirable. Sometimes with plants, drought tolerance and fire resistance go hand in hand. The Colorado Extension website has a lot of information about the qualities of FireWise plant materials. <http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/natres/06305.html>

Ideally, 30 feet surrounding the house should be well irrigated and the irrigation system well maintained. This is considered the Home Ignition Zone and can extend up to 200 feet depending on the surrounding forest or grassland. Reducing fuel in this area is essential. Keep grasses cut low and reduce the volume of vegetation. Mow early in the day while it is cooler and there might be a little moisture in the air. Dispose of all dead material promptly and mow often, that is, if you still have grass after these drought conditions. Prune and thin all plants and remove highly flammable vegetation in natural areas. Prune the cedars up 6 to 10 feet to reduce the fuel between the ground and the treetop. Keep gutters clear of debris. Sprinklers left running during evacuation can waste critical water pressure, so don't do it. Create fire breaks around pastures and structures and keep them maintained. Clear excess vegetation especially around fuel tanks and any highly combustible equipment. It is important to properly store flammables. Move firewood 30 feet from the house. Take a look at your property and see what you can do to improve on the fire-wise aspects.

Construction:

It is best to build with wildfires in mind, to begin with, but there are still some things you can do to improve the fire safety of your house. The safest construction is fire resistant or non-combustible. Brick, stone, cement or stucco masonry are all safer than wood. If you have wooden construction, consider installing Hardy board siding or another fire resistant or non-combustible siding for added protection. There are also fire resistant roofing shingles or tiles and fire resistant sub roofing can also add protection. Double paned tempered glass windows are more reliable and effective as a heat barrier than single paned windows. Fences, decks and porches are potential fuel leading to your house, especially if they are made of flammable materials. Decking made out of composite materials may offer more protection than wooden decks. Insulating interior walls, may prevent the chimney effect of fire spreading within the walls.

Preparation:

If there are wildfires in your area, you may have to evacuate quickly. It is best to make preparations, so that this process will go more smoothly and safely. Have an emergency plan and discuss it with family members. Plan fire drills and a meeting place. Leave before it is too late. Remember, it is just stuff, and not worth losing your life over it. Have pet carriers handy. Know where your tools are. While the big jobs should be left to the firefighters, axes and chainsaws could be essential during the last minute preparations. Small fires should be extinguished before you leave, if it can be done safely. Consider maintaining an emergency water source. Is your address clearly marked and are street signs visible? Can emergency vehicles have easy access to your home? If you have a long driveway, is there space for them to turn around? When evacuating you will want to leave entry gates open. If you have livestock, plan how you will evacuate them. Keep a stock trailer hooked up and faced so that it can be easily loaded and doesn't require turning around. This will save time if livestock evacuation is needed. Have Smoke alarms with good batteries and a charged fire extinguisher on hand.

Evacuation:

Before leaving you will want to close all windows, making sure they are unlocked. Remove flammable curtains and window treatments and close the shutters. Shut off gas at the meter and turn off all pilot lights and propane tanks. Know where utility shut offs are and how to use them. Leave the lights on in your house and outside. This will make your house easier to find in heavy smoke. Turn off

your air conditioning system. Keep vehicles backed in, so they can more easily be driven away. Wear natural fiber clothing and stay hydrated.

Keep enough fuel in your gas tank at all times. During evacuation, traffic can be heavy and slow. Early evacuation will help reduce traffic congestion and give emergency personnel room to do their jobs. Think about where you will go when evacuating. It could be to a friend's house or to a shelter in a safe place. Let family members know you are safe. Choose a safe route out when evacuating.

An emergency supply kit should be ready and in each vehicle. Bandana or particle mask, battery powered radio, emergency contact numbers, and drinking water would be good to have on hand. Keep an extra pair of shoes in the car and a flashlight in case you have to leave in a hurry in the middle of the night. Stay tuned to fire updates on Facebook, web, or radio. Search on Facebook for the *Williamson County Office of Emergency Management* page and the *Texas Forest Service* page, there may also be Facebook pages for your city or nearby fire department. This can be very handy for quick updates when there is a fire. Simply "Like" the page to stay connected and get easy access.

Supplies to gather and take with you:

Drinking water

Snacks

First aid kit

Extra set of car keys (I've started keeping all of my keys in my purse)

Credit cards and cash

Extra eye glasses and contact lenses (I keep extra glasses in my glove compartment)

Important family documents (consolidate these into a portable file box for easy evacuation)

Prescription medicines

Family photos or other irreplaceable valuable (consider putting photos on cds to store offsite, or store on Facebook or other form of media.)

Personal computers

Chargers for computers, cameras, cell phones etc.

We also have our RV connected and faced out ready to go if needed. What else can you do to be ready if wildfire strikes?

Most of this information is condensed from the Ready, Set, Go brochure.

For more information visit:

<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/>

<http://ticc.tamu.edu/Response/FireActivity/>

<http://www.firewise.org/>

<http://txforests-service.tamu.edu/main/article.aspx?id=2080>

<http://www.nfpa.org/newsReleaseDetails.asp?categoryId=488&itemId=53161>

<http://www.wildlandfirersg.org/>

<http://bartonhills.org/2011/09/ready-set-go-wildfire-action-plan/>

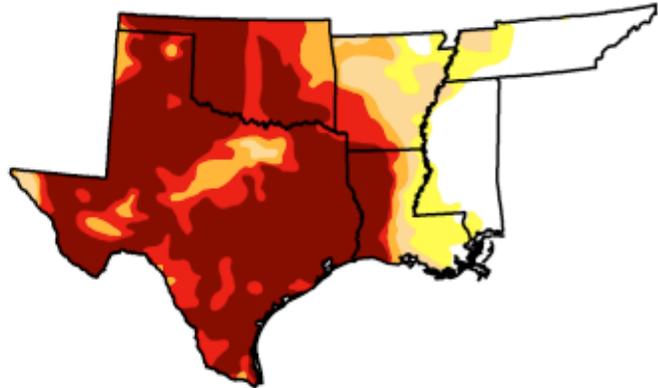
U.S. Drought Monitor

South

October 18, 2011
Valid 7 a.m. EST

Drought Conditions (Percent Area)

| | None | D0-D4 | D1-D4 | D2-D4 | D3-D4 | D4 |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Current | 14.13 | 85.87 | 78.18 | 71.28 | 63.72 | 47.94 |
| Last Week (10/11/2011 map) | 13.64 | 86.36 | 78.80 | 70.71 | 62.22 | 47.03 |
| 3 Months Ago (07/19/2011 map) | 12.21 | 87.79 | 80.28 | 71.23 | 62.57 | 47.48 |
| Start of Calendar Year (12/28/2010 map) | 8.86 | 91.14 | 67.65 | 35.21 | 10.17 | 0.00 |
| Start of Water Year (09/27/2011 map) | 18.34 | 81.66 | 76.26 | 70.61 | 63.67 | 53.77 |
| One Year Ago (10/12/2010 map) | 49.62 | 50.38 | 26.88 | 13.97 | 1.84 | 0.00 |



Intensity:

- D0 Abnormally Dry
- D1 Drought - Moderate
- D2 Drought - Severe
- D3 Drought - Extreme
- D4 Drought - Exceptional

The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. See accompanying text summary for forecast statements.

<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu>



Released Thursday, October 20, 2011
David Miskus, NOAA/NWS/NCEP/CPC

Berry Springs Fall Work Party and Pot Luck

Veronica Petterson

More than 50 Master Gardeners, Master Gardener interns, Master Naturalists and Junior Master Gardeners came armed with garden gloves for a day of restoration, renovation and repair at Berry Springs Park and Preserve on October 8, 2011. This beautiful park was voted “The Best Kept Secret” in the “Best of Georgetown” contest in 2010. We were off to a promising start with a wonderfully cool and cloudy morning full of sunny smiles to match the high energy and camaraderie of our volunteers.

That energy was put to good use as our intrepid gardeners applied a little elbow grease to a variety of tools generously supplied by our fearless leader, Captain Susan Blackledge. She, along with her co-captain, MG Wayne Rhoden kept the day running smoothly and productively as we participated in such lively activities as pruning, mulching, transplanting, weeding, and even mesquite removal!



Captain Susan



Who knew the words work and party could fit together so well?

Some of the hidden (and not so hidden) talents of our group became apparent as the day progressed: Williamson County Master Gardener Association President, MG Grace Bryce proved to be a champion mesquite puller and Cap'n Wayne expertly identified plants whilst wearing his captain's hat with panache. Under MG Carol Hoke's skilled leadership the JMGs proved industrious workers as they transplanted native plants at the bird-viewing area as part of their developing “wild-scape habitat” as well as sowing wildflowers seeds (and wonderful memories) in the prairie restoration fields.

Working outdoors works up a powerful appetite. We made huge inroads into our table-loads of home-made delicacies while we seized the opportunity to socialize a bit. The day raced by, but ended perfectly with a welcome dash of rain that no one seemed to enjoy more than MG Grace Bulgerin. Many of us are looking forward to next year's volunteer party at Berry Springs Park and Preserve, but the park is a great way to get volunteer hours throughout the year just by contacting MG Susan Blackledge. See you there next year!



MG Grace Bulgerin enjoying the rain

... And A Good Time Had by All



Williamson County Master Gardener Officers for 2011

Officers:

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|----------------|
| Grace Bryce, President | bryce.grace84@gmail.com | (512) 868-9191 |
| Claire Hall, Vice-President | clairevhall@gmail.com | (512) 868-5460 |
| Carol Parsonage, Secretary | parsonage_hc@verizon.net | (512) 864-3510 |
| 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 | Carol Parsonage | parsonage_hc@verizon.net | (512) 864-3510 |
| | Lynn Stude | lstude@hotmail.com | (512) 869-3413 |
| Communications | Clyde Adley | cadley+mg@gmail.com | |
| Membership/Volunteer Opportunities | Brenda McIndoo | airedale98@gmail.com | (512) 868-9212 |
| Awards | Margaret Seals | marjim@suddenlink.net | (512) 863-4127 |
| Class Training/Facilitation | JoAnne Dieterich | rdieterich@yahoo.com | (512) 778-6690 |
| JMG Coordinator | Carol Hoke | carolhoke@gmail.com | (512) 869-1948 |
| | Jessica Woods | jwoods@round-rock.tx.us | (512) 246-3036 |
| Fund Raising | Ingrid Langdon | ingridlangdon@hotmail.com | (512) 863-6143 |

