



# *The Blooming Bell*

**February, 2012**

**BCMGA Newsletter**

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Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			<b>1 Work Day 9 am</b>  <b>Grounds Committee Meeting</b>	<b>2</b> 	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8 Work Day 9 am</b> <b>General Meeting 11 am</b> <b>Biomechanical Exercise Tips for Gardeners with Kathleen Brown</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b> 	<b>15 Work Day 9 am</b> <b>Greenhouse Committee Meeting 9 am</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22 Work Day 9 am</b> <b>Board of Directors Meeting 9 am</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24 Garden Show Set Up</b>	<b>25 Garden Show</b>
<b>26 Garden Show</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29 Work Day 9 am</b>  <b>Vegetable Seminar 6 pm</b>			

Upcoming dates to remember: March General Meeting on March 21st instead of March 14th.  
 Spring Plant Sale, March 24th  
 New Class Field Trip, April 18th

## The President's Corner

February can be a challenging time for gardeners. For gardeners in Central Texas, following the weather forecast is the first challenge. Last year we were having one of the coldest winters on record. This year Spring appears to be arriving earlier than usual and some of us are hurriedly working to finish winter garden tasks. It is easy to overwork while in the garden and yard after a few winter months. If you are planting, pruning, and cleaning up the yard while there are still a few cool days, and find yourself too stiff to move the next day, you will enjoy the February general meeting. Kathleen Brown, class of 2011, will be presenting a program on gardening ergonomics. We all can use some tips on preventing fatigue and possible injury while gardening.

With spring plants and gardening on our minds, there are a few dates you should add to your calendar. The Home and Garden Show will be the 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> of February with set up on the 24<sup>th</sup>. The 29<sup>th</sup> of February there will be a vegetable seminar presented by some of our own vegetable specialists. Master Gardeners and the general public are invited to attend. The spring plant sale is March 24<sup>th</sup> and as usual a wide variety of plants will be available. April 18<sup>th</sup> is the new class field trip. The trip will be to places our master gardeners have not visited before as a group. The Master Gardener state conference will be held in San Antonio May 3<sup>rd</sup> through the 5<sup>th</sup>. If you plan to attend, register now.

Along with the upcoming spring events, there are a few fall dates to note. September 22<sup>nd</sup> will be the fall plant sale. October 13<sup>th</sup> will be the fall garden tour. Besides these events there will be other opportunities for education and participation.

One way you can contribute and participate now is by sharing your ideas for a new facility. If you have driven by the extension office, you have probably noticed a very open and clean area. The old greenhouse was sold and quickly removed by the buyer. The planning committee for a new building and greenhouse is well underway. They would like to hear your thoughts or see the plans you might draw for the area within the fence. In this issue of Blooming Bell, guidelines have been provided for drawing such plans. Talk of a new facility has been taking place for several

years; the organization is now ready to move forward. Please contribute your ideas or drawings.

If you have read the most recent issue of *Texas Gardener*, John Hershey writes of the "raw, bone rattling thrill" of gardening. Rachel Penden, writing in *Green Prints*, says, "The work rinses out the cup of your spirit, leaves it washed and clean and ready to be freshly filled with new hope. It is one of the reasons I am addicted to raspberry patches. The pie is purely symbolic." I think each of us gets something special from gardening. I am anxiously awaiting the first blossoms and leaves. Even a short winter is too long.....**Laura**

**Now is the time to  
prepare our beds for  
the upcoming season  
of planting.**

**To do this you actually  
have to get out and  
till the soil,  
because you can't till it  
by just turning it over  
in your mind.**

**- Laverne Adams,  
MG Class of 2004**



# Final Farewell to the Greenhouse!

Gail Christian happened to be going past the Extension Center when the new owners of the Greenhouse started to dismantle it. She took some photos and came back the following day to take more.



# Sharpen your Pencils...

## - Diane Calderwood

The greenhouse is gone and the greenhouse task force welcomes your design ideas for our new space! We recognize that we have many talented landscape designers in our organization. Together with the committee we would like to create a beautiful area that will meet the needs of our organization.

We are looking for a rough plan for this first design with a more detailed plan to follow if your design is chosen. Please note that the design is for the area inside the fence only. Existing elements such as the stone wall, water/electrical and the area by the front gate cannot be changed. The shed can be moved to another location.

Please include the following new features in your design:

1. 30'x 50' metal building/pavilion with rainwater collection capability (must be sited approximately where the old greenhouse was sitting)
2. 12'x 25' greenhouse

Other elements that have been suggested for the area could include:

1. Demonstration gardens
2. Compost area
3. Arbor/Pergola/gazebo
4. Picnic tables
5. Water feature
6. Dry creek bed
7. Children's garden area

If you are interested in submitting a design, please have it ready for consideration by the next committee meeting on Wednesday, February 15<sup>th</sup>. You are welcome to present your design or someone can present it for you. If you have any questions, please contact Diane Calderwood at dcalder@hot.rr.com; 771-1218.

## - From the Greenhouse Task Force

To those of you who are drawing a preliminary design for our new space...

We have received several questions about the proposed 30 x 50 metal building sited where the old greenhouse stood. To clarify, some of the suggested uses for this building would include plant sales, seminars, specialist training, JMG training, a lunchroom, general meeting area, storage, etc.

We are still discussing the specific design of the building. Two suggestions that have been discussed include:

(1) The building would have 5 garage-type doors. Two doors on each long side and one on the east end. The west end of the building, closest to the street, would be a solid wall. The doors could be opened for ventilation and to give us a pavilion-like structure that could be secured.

(2) The building would be totally open on one side with the west end a solid wall. Garage type doors, that could be opened for ventilation would be on the opposite wall.

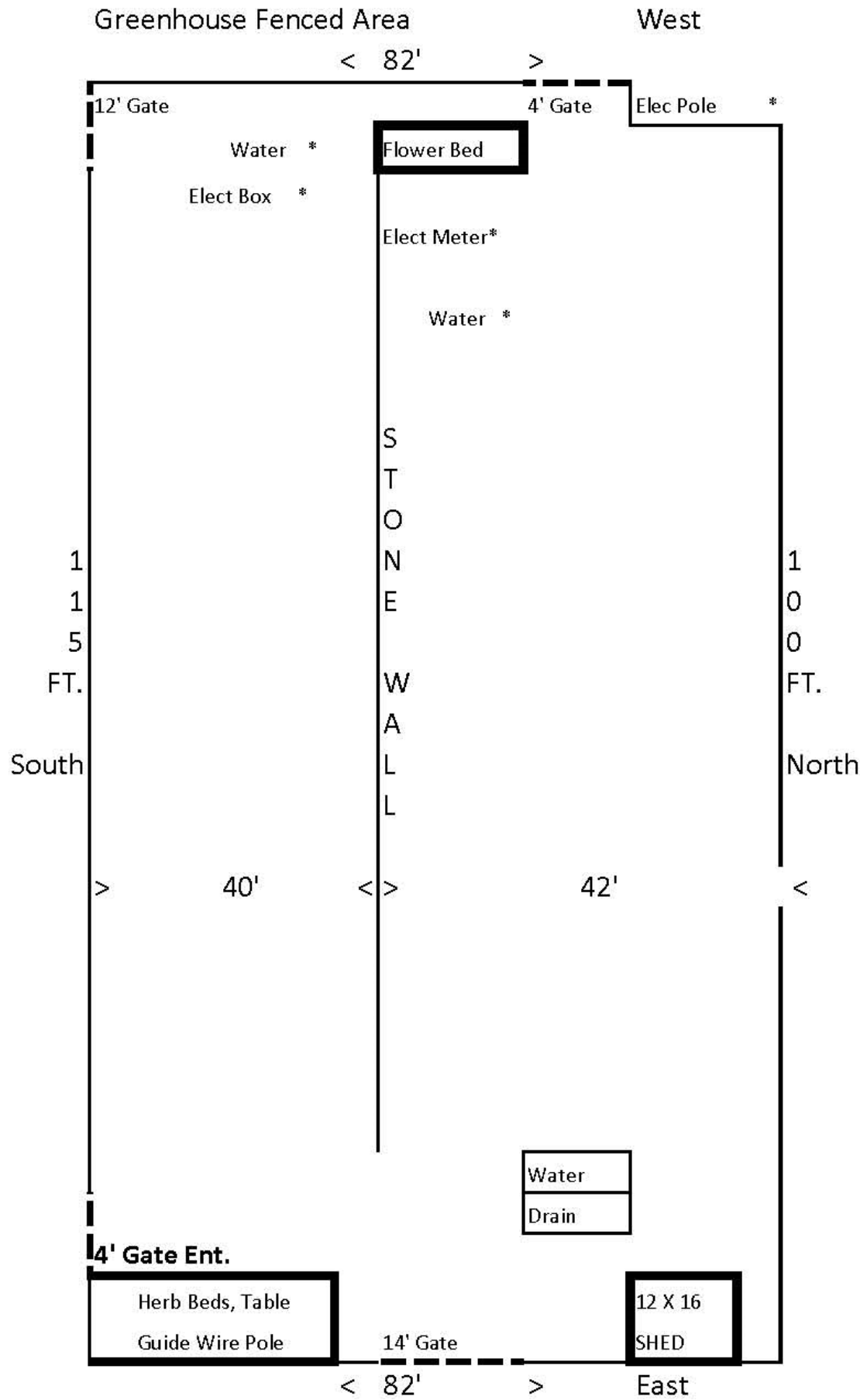
It has also been discussed that the building should be painted a green or other muted color that would blend into the landscape. A barn-like roof, which would give the building a more interesting design, has also been suggested.

Please continue to forward all your questions and comments as we work together to develop our new space.

***A drawing of the area by Don Wyatt is on the next page...***



Sharpen You Pencils...continued



# Tomato Grafting

*Editor's Note: Tomato grafting was demonstrated by Gary Slanga at the January Membership meeting. The photos are from that meeting. Gary has written below to explain how to care for the grafted plants.*

## - Gary Slanga

After the grafts are made, the plants must be protected from wilting until the cut ends knit together (heal). Keep the grafted plants at room temperature and with a high relative humidity for 3-5 days while the cut ends heal together. This is done by placing the newly grafted plants under a plastic cup covered to reduce light levels. Plants under the cup should be misted once or twice a day during this period. A small hand-held pressurized sprayer works well for small scale misting. After healing, the plants must be re-acclimated to the full-sun conditions. Do this gradually over a period of 3 to 4 days. Start increasing the light exposure by moving the plant to indirect light and remove the plastic cup a few hours in the early or late part of the day increasing the interval each day. Continue to mist as needed to avoid wilting. After a few days, remove the plastic cup but continue to mist as needed to avoid wilt. Finally, when you plant the grafted plants it is important to keep the graft union above the soil line. Tomatoes tend to root easily and if the scion roots into the soil, the plant will be susceptible to soil-borne diseases and you will lose some of the benefits of the graft.



Photos of Grafting by Gail Christian

Photo at right: Kathleen Brown and Mary Ann Hill with their delicious refreshments by Mary Lew Quesinberry.





# Instant “Grass”ification

- Darla Horner Menking

Today, we live in a society that not only wants a lot, but also wants things right away; in other words, instant gratification. My “play-on-words” title follows along these same lines.

Last year, I became aware of a growing trend for yards, during the winter months... a very instantaneously green yard. No, they are not over seeding with winter rye grass. It's more instant than that. It's dyeing, or spray painting, their dormant brown grass to be green, in a matter of a couple of hours. Come to find out, it's not a new process, but one that has been done for years- usually on sports fields or golf courses where aesthetics are of utmost importance.

Now, it has trickled down to us- commoners with a common yard in a common neighborhood.

I did some research to learn what I could, since I knew regular spray paint, which contains elements harmful to plant life couldn't be used. This grass dye turns out to be a latex-type product but without the potentially harmful effects. It is usually purchased as a concentrate and diluted prior to use. A variety of sprayers, whether paint sprayers or the agricultural type, may be used to apply it to turf. Neatness and consistency of color can fluctuate based on equipment used and/or the methodology of the person spraying. I've seen good jobs where the color was smooth and solid, and not-so-good jobs where spray lines could be seen and the color was inconsistently dark and light.

So depending on how much you trust yourself is whether you would “do it yourself” or hire a professional. There are businesses in this area that offer this service to homeowners, but the product and instructional videos can be found easily on line.

So, the pros and cons to this trend? There are a few of each. The pros include: a green yard (obviously), it

covers up dead, bare or diseased spots or drought/pet damage, it uses less resources than if you over seed with another type of grass, and as I have witnessed first-hand, dormant grass greens up quicker after being sprayed due to added heat/light absorption (some businesses may offer an additive they can put in the stain to promote healthy root systems).

Cons might be: the cost- since it might take two applications until dormant grasses green up on their own, not enough winter watering of the dormant grasses' roots since the grass appears so green, too much watering since you may forget it's dyed and feel like it needs watering- leading to fungal growth and death to roots. Then there's always the possibility of neighbors getting upset that your green yard makes theirs look badly.

I'm sure there's much more to this trend, but my point is this: in today's society, we have so many options when it comes to our yards and homes. This is but one upon which we must carefully consider before deciding. Me? After seeing the results from a neighbor who did this last year and not only had the greenest yard during the winter but also the greenest in the spring, I realize it's not just all about vanity, but a healthy lawn as well. I have made up my mind to give this instant “grass”ification a try! What about you?



Photo from [www.kwes.com](http://www.kwes.com)



# More New Class Members

Jan George has lived in Bell County for 40 years and has been active in gardening for the past 30 years. She retired in September and is looking forward to the Master Gardener course. She is most interested in flower gardening. Upon arrival in Central Texas, they lived in Harker Heights for two years and moved to Ding Dong where they have lived for 58 years. She has been active in the Bell County Youth Fair for the past 9 years serving on the Buyers Committee.



Pam Dragoo

New Class Photos by Werner Hahn, photos below by Ursula Nanna

## What Was I Thinking???

- Ursula Nanna

After sailing in the Bahamas and then in the Florida Keys this winter, it was easy to plan for spring. Ya, right!!!! So, guess who ordered not 1, but 2, DIY Purple Martin Poles, racks, and houses????



They arrived, in 7 boxes, each weighing about 1000 pounds, it seemed. I opened them randomly because no one in shipping labeled the boxes 1, 2, 3 and so on. How inconsiderate, especially after all the money I spent on them!!!!

Out spilled some directions *from the very last box I opened*, you know, the divorce-maker kind of directions that tell you to put post 1 into angle post 2 and so on, and somehow nothing fits right. I sat for hours, stunned that something like a pole and a rack could pose such a terrible problem; who knew??!! Bravely, I called a friend and asked him if he wanted to experience the wonders of constructing Purple Martin poles, racks, and houses. Man that he is, he was at my house before I hung up the phone. He was all excited about constructing his first Martin domains. Eventually, we figured out the poles and screws, posts and racks, pulleys and winches. The garage was a haven from the wind so we assembled in there. Finally, we brought out the first completed pole, donning proudly large racks, to the yard and guess what? We couldn't get the racks through the gate because they were 6' too long and the whole assembly weighed 500 pounds!!! But, industrious as we were, we managed to lift and shove until we successfully got everything in the yard without disassembling a thing. Once I recover from this event, I'll put on the houses....They are like 16 pound bowling balls....no kidding.



*Editor's Note: Ursula wrote this for the Master Naturalist Newsletter, but I enjoyed it so much, that I asked her permission to print it here too.*

# BCMG's Contend for State Awards

- Mary Lew Quesinberry

Edie Campbell, class 2008, will represent BCMGA, in the "individual master gardener" state award category. Gary Slanga, the awards committee and Randall Rakowitz are working to meet the February 3, 2012 deadline on award submissions.

There are ten categories of awards- Educational Program, Exhibit/Poster, Graphic Presentation, Individual MG, Mass Media, Newsletter, Outstanding Assoc., Project, Publication, Website education. Also the Sheri Lanza Award and JMG recognition awards. The Texas Master Gardener Conference( River Walk and Garden Talk) is May 3-5th in San Antonio.



## Wonderful World of Plants

- Mary Lew Quesinberry

Laura M Miller, Tarrant County Extension Agent for Commercial Agriculture was the lively instructor for January 18th class. Her topic was the wonderful world of plants, plant processes, and effect of recent drought. She was animated and vibrant and brought "clickers" so the students could participate in the lecture answering questions.



# Announcements

## Make Reservations Now For New Class Field Trip on April 18, 2012

- Suzanne Boyer

The bus will start loading at the Extension Center at 7:30 am and will leave for Austin promptly at 8:00am. Our first stop will be an organic farm, Boggy Creek Farms, on Market morning. Then we will have a lecture, eat the sack lunches we have brought, and shop at The Great Outdoors. We will conclude our tour with a lecture on Disappearing Fountains and Streams with time to shop at Hill Country Water Gardens. New Class Students have already paid. All other Master Gardeners and all guests need to pay \$20 to reserve their seat. We usually have a waiting list, so make your reservation now. You can give your \$20 to Kim Pringle or Suzanne Boyer, or mail to: Suzanne Boyer, 710 Chatham Rd, Belton, TX 76513.

## General Meeting Information

- Bernie Hurta

The February program for the monthly meeting will be " **Biomechanical and Exercise Tips for Gardener's**" by **Kathleen Brown**. She is from the 2011 MG class and she is a retired physical therapist.

The date for March's monthly meeting has changed due to Spring Break. The meeting will be March 21st. (instead of March 14<sup>th</sup>).

## Grounds Work

- Brenda Albro

We will have a work day every Wednesday until the plant sale on March 24<sup>th</sup>. These workdays will begin at 9:00 a.m. until it warms up or the time changes. We will keep you posted. If it is raining or the wind chill is below 35 degrees, we will not be able to work.

There is much to be done and we do so appreciate everyone's work to keep the AgriLife grounds beautiful. Thanks much.



# What's Happening in Your Yard?

## - Diane Calderwood

Louse Crowell has almost an entire front yard of wonderful leaf lettuce from her crop that went to seed in the back yard and blew over the fence. She gave me some of the lettuce and it

was great! Pretty funny...if we had bunnies in the neighborhood they would love it!



## - Annette Ensing

(Above) A flowering quince that doesn't know that spring isn't on the way. All of mine are budding.



## And On Your Vacation!

## - Laura Murphy

(Right) December in Patagonia. I thought the wild roses and lupine/blue bonnets were very pretty. The mountains in the background are part of the Andes.

Photos by Diane Calderwood, Annette Ensing and Laura Murphy.





# USDA Unveils New Plant Hardiness Zone Map

WASHINGTON, Jan. 25, 2012--The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) today released the new version of its Plant Hardiness Zone Map (PHZM), updating a useful tool for gardeners and researchers for the first time since 1990 with greater accuracy and detail. The new map—jointly developed by USDA's Agricultural Research Service (ARS) and Oregon State University's (OSU) PRISM Climate Group—is available online at [www.planthardiness.ars.usda.gov](http://www.planthardiness.ars.usda.gov). ARS is the chief intramural scientific research agency of USDA.

"This is the most sophisticated Plant Hardiness Zone Map yet for the United States," said Dr. Catherine Woteki, USDA Under Secretary for Research, Education and Economics. "The increases in accuracy and detail that this map represents will be extremely useful for gardeners and researchers."

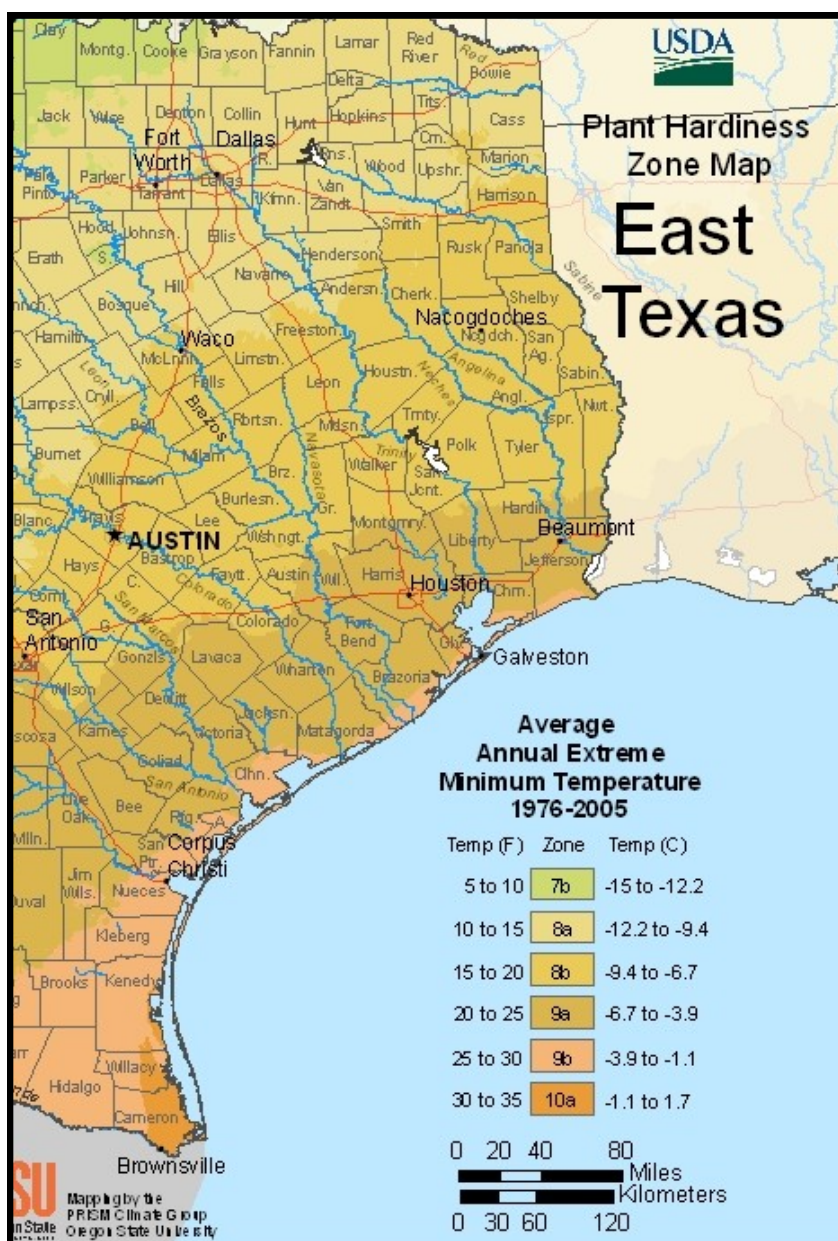
Plant hardiness zone designations represent the average annual extreme minimum temperatures at a given location during a particular time period. They do not reflect the coldest it has ever been or ever will be at a specific location, but simply the average lowest winter temperature for the location over a specified time.

The new version of the map includes 13 zones, with the addition for the first time of zones 12 (50-60 degrees F) and 13 (60-70 degrees F). Each zone is a 10-degree Fahrenheit band, further divided into A and B 5-degree Fahrenheit zones.

To help develop the new map, USDA and OSU requested that horticultural and climatic experts review the zones in their geographic area, and trial versions of the new map were revised, based on their expert input.

Compared to the 1990 version, zone boundaries in this edition of the map have shifted in many areas. The new map is generally one 5-degree Fahrenheit half-zone warmer than the previous map throughout much of the United States. This is mostly a result of using temperature data from a longer and more recent time period; the new map uses data measured at weather stations during the 30-year period 1976-2005. In contrast, the 1990 map was based on temperature data from only a 13-year period of 1974-1986.

*Editor's Note: Annette Ensing brought this recent change to my attention. She saw it in the Neil Sperry's Online Newsletter. According to this map, Bell County is in **zone 8b** with minimum temperature of 15 to 20 degrees. I believe we've been in zone 8a. The map and information is taken from the website at <http://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov>*





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Front cover photo of Louise Crowell's lettuce  
growing in her front yard by Diane Calderwood.

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