

# *The Blooming Bell*

**April 2013**



**Bell County  
Master Gardener  
Association**



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Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b> <i>Hamburger Wednesday</i>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b> Plant Swap 9:30-10 am  General Meeting: Officer Elections Held Growing Lavender 11 am	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b> Board of Directors Meeting 8:30 am	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>  Field Trip	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>				

# The President's Corner

The wildflowers in Texas are getting a slow start this year. According to the Texas Wildflower Hotline, the bloom out is late. Below average autumn rains and a cold winter will result in later and fewer flowers this year. There are a few shows in the Navasota area and in the Hill Country around Goldthwaite.

Though our natural plant shows may not be spectacular this spring, we Master Gardeners had a spectacular plant sale. Thanks to Carla Harmon and her crew for a great sale. We had 47 buyers through the gates before 7:00am. All of the roses sold this year and very few plants were left at the end of the sale. I hope you were able to be a part of this event either as a worker or a buyer.

Our new building is in use. Besides housing vendors last Saturday, the building has been used for the propagation class and part of a general meeting. Over the next few weeks you will see a few changes in the area around the building. Water pipes will be moved, clearing the area in the front courtyard of the building. This will be in preparation to begin landscaping. You may have already noticed the new fence on the wall beside the building. The fence was a donation from Centex fencing. Be sure to say thank you if you see someone from Centex.



The paver campaign is still underway. May 1<sup>st</sup> is the deadline for the first order. The pavers will be used in the landscaping around the new building. Contact Gail Christian to purchase a paver. Most members have put their name and class on their paver. One paver is \$60, two pavers are \$100. Besides being a fund raiser for the organization, the pavers leave a history of membership in Master Gardeners.

Nominations for new officers are still being taken. If you or someone you know wants to be nominated to hold office, please step forward. Elections will be held at the April monthly meeting.

Continuing a spring theme, the April monthly meeting, April 10<sup>th</sup>, will be presented by Lee Harris from the Bird Song Lavender Farm. Members will also be holding a plant and seed swap before the April monthly meeting. For each plant and small packet of seed you bring, you can swap for another. The April Board meeting will be held on April 17<sup>th</sup> at 8:30am. This is a change from the usual schedule, due to the New Class Field Trip on April 24<sup>th</sup>.

With a field trip, Ft. Hood programs, Earth Day events, school programs, and a number of requests for plant calls, programs, and garden information we have a busy spring ahead. But take time to smell the flowers along the way. The Texas Wildflower Hotline is 1-800-452-9292, ext . 4. There are events for "Wildflowering" in our part of the state. Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Days continue through May. Burnet will hold their 21<sup>st</sup> Bluebonnet Festival April 12-14. The Perennials Valley Wildflower Celebration is

April 6<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> in Fredericksburg.

A final thought from Frank Lloyd Wright: "If you ignore beauty, you will soon find yourself without it. But if you invest in beauty, it will remain with you all the days of your life." Invest in the beauty of Spring  
.....Laura

Photo by Terrie Hahn



# Sidney VanLoh

## - Mary Ann Everett

I first met Sidney at a Master Gardener class. He was interested in learning more about plants for this area. He and Marlene live in north Temple, and his property borders on city property and he had occasion to often take care of that also. He was always telling me what he was doing 'over there'. He would try his hand at starting a plant, which didn't always work, but he tried. Then he would tell me his find at one of the stores that carried plants. He didn't care if it didn't grow here, he was going to give it a try. And sometimes, he had success.

When I needed help on projects, he was more than willing to help, if he weren't busy with his own grandchildren or if he and Marlene were traveling. One of those projects was the JMG gardens at St. Mary's School, where we worked at getting a plan together with the teachers and then putting in lots of sweat equity, hauling in soil and bricks to make the raised beds. The fun came with the children coming to plant the next day; clay makes it interesting to plant anything in it, but we finally got the butterfly gardens and herb garden completed.

Sidney took the Entomology and Tree Stewardship Specialist Courses. He helped at several elementary schools giving presentations on insects using the internet with the older students. He enjoyed working and sharing with the children. The other specialist course led him, along with three other Master Gardeners-Gary Slanga, Annette Ensing, and Mary Ann Everett-to put together a ten week course on Woodlands and Grassland Management for the Bell County Master Gardeners, sharing what we had learned during that course. He not only helped with that, but also gave talks on the topic to other organizations as well.

He was also one of the founders of the Central Texas Master Naturalist chapter in 2010. He was on the steering committee as well as being a student during the first course. Sidney was one who was always very giving. He tried to help where he could. He worked with Leah at Mother Neff, and tried to get work days started to help clear the park of downed trees. Can



you picture Sidney with his work gear on, helping the park ranger get the job done?

He kept his illness pretty much quiet, not letting it get him down. He had a positive outlook on life and I always enjoyed visiting with him and Marlene, where he would share some of his work with me, and he was always patient when I couldn't figure out something on the computer.

Sadly, he lost his fight to cancer, but he will always remain with us. As long as we recall his funny way of laughing, his funny remarks, his mannerisms, we will remember him, a wonderful man, a fellow gardener, a naturalist, a photographer. Sidney, we will miss you, but it is your turn to rest. May you rest in peace.



# Plant Sale Prep

The March General Meeting was spent, in part, getting ready for the upcoming plant sale.



MG's on hand when plants were delivered for the Plant Sale.





# Spring Plant Sale Action





## Plant Sale...continued



Photos by  
Randy Brown  
and Gail Chris-  
tian



# 2013 Herb of the Year

## Elderberry

- Beverly Wickersham

Elderberry is a perennial shrub or small tree that is cultivated for its edible purple-black berries. It is a member of the Honeysuckle family (Caprifoliaceae) and is also known as “American Elder,” “Sweet Elder,” and “Mother Elder.” Different species of the Elderberry (or Elder) are found growing in East and Central Texas as well as the Trans-Pecos area and in the Chisos Mountains. It tolerates a variety of soils, but lush growth is encouraged by moist soils along streams and low places. Elderberry may be planted year round in full sun to light shade. Its height can vary for 5 feet to as much as 12 feet if planted in a damp location. Be warned that it has a tendency to spread and take over an area. In the suburban landscape, it is best planted in the marginal areas of property with hackberries and mulberries. There it can provide abundant food for birds and many other wildlife species.

In the Spring, the plant bears numerous white umbel-like flowers known as “elderblow.” In the language of herbs, Elderberry flowers symbolize compassion and sympathy. The flower heads will produce a musky wine that is said to be a “cure all.” The flowers are followed by purple-black berries in early summer. Early American settlers used the ripe berries to make ketchup, vinegar, and chutney, as well as jelly and pies if they could harvest the berries before the song birds, squirrels, raccoons, mice, rabbits, and deer gobbled them up.

Although the bark, roots, leaves, and unripe berries are toxic, Elderberries have been used in folk remedies for centuries in Europe, Western Asia, North Africa, and North America. A tea made from the inner



bark was used as a diuretic, a strong laxative, and emetic as well as a poultice for cuts, sore or swollen limbs, and boils to relieve pain and swelling. The poultice was also used for its known antioxidant activity to lower cholesterol, to improve vision, to boost the immune system, to improve heart health, and for coughs, colds, flu, bacterial and viral infections, and tonsillitis.

I hope you can find a place in your yard for this historically useful plant, if only for the sake of the wildlife.





# MG's Are Busy Bees

## Science Days at Saegert Elementary

JMG's were at Saegert Elementary in Killeen on March 7th for Science Days. Grass heads for pre-schoolers was the project of the day.



## Packing Up Seeds

Hyacinth Bean Vine seeds were packaged up by BCMG's on March 6th to give away at the Plant Sale. The seeds came from the Killeen Municipal Gardens.



Photos by Gail Christian



# Busy Bees...continued

## Centerpieces Created for 4 H Luncheon

- Mary Ann Everett

The Master Gardeners were asked by the Extension Education Association to help



with their annual luncheon in making the centerpieces for their table decorations. We did this several years ago when we made baskets full of several 3-4" pots, and the Association appreciated that very much. The money that is made on these luncheons help with 4H scholarships. The theme this year was Styles '4' Less.



Photos by Gail Christian



# News From 2013 Master Gardener Class

## Growing, Growing, Growing!

**Beverly Hillyard**

I am very happy to announce my seeds are growing. My pictures do not do justice to how pretty they are. This is my first effort growing anything from seed so this is a major accomplishment. Now I look at my tomatoes, bell peppers and eggplant like they are my



babies. Each stage they go through reminds me of watching Will, my son, grow up. Hopefully my vegetables will be just as healthy and good looking as he is. Thanks for the class on propagation.

## Soil Testing and Basic Soils, and Understanding Soil Test Results

**- Anabel Reeser, Class Reporter**

I was pleasantly surprised to learn that the black clay soil in my yard is not the worst possible. Tony Provin, Director of Operations of the Soil, Water and Forage Testing Laboratory at A & M, was able to explain exactly why, in passing on a wealth of information about soils, their makeup in physical and chemi-

cal terms, and the effect that different soils and amendments have on plants in our Soil Class.

Scientists studying the soil are not geologists. Soil experts analyze the top six feet or so of the soil. First, soil was described as a mixture of air and water, minerals, and organic material. It anchors plants, stores water, and stores nutrients for plants. Its formation consists of the weathering of parent material.

Tony mentioned plant materials, rain, gravity, and time, among other things, that influence what the soil is like. He added that very few states have Texas' diversity of climate, from the 55 inches of rainfall of Orange, to the eight inches, on average, of El Paso.

Texas also has different elevations, in which gravity can play a role. An extreme example would be the Himalayas, where it is cold, there is huge precipitation, and 90-degree slopes. El Paso is built on solid granite stone that is three million years old. Boulders that fell from that granite are found 100 miles away.

Tony also mentioned glaciers, which were two miles thick, and ground up whatever was under them as they moved. When they melted, they left very thick topsoil (for example, in Illinois). Texas had no glaciers, but we see marine deposits in the Texas limestone, because almost all of Texas was once under water.

Time is a factor in soil formation, as in the movement of silt in a river, and the wind blows sand to new places. Erosion was covered. It doesn't necessarily take 100 years to form one inch of topsoil. Land can tolerate a certain amount of erosion, if new soil is being developed fast enough. In El Paso it takes 10,000 years to develop an inch of topsoil, but twenty years elsewhere.

Continued on next page...



## Soil Testing...continued

In speaking of the makeup of soil Tony went into detail about pore space. You need some small pores, which are important for holding water, and large pores also, because all plants require oxygen. A practical hint is that if there are not enough large spaces in your soil, don't stomp on the soil when it's wet.

If you want to amend your clay soil, the shapes of its components are important. Silts are more round, clays are flat like bricks, and some sands are square and lock into place like Legos, so if you want to increase the workability of your soil, (i.e. if you don't want to turn it into adobe bricks) the source of the sand that you add must be a river or a beach, where the sand is round or tumbled.

There are more advantages to clay. The more surface area a particle has, the more water it can hold, and the more room there is for chemical reactions, and there is a place for roots to go around. The shape of clay particles actually has these advantages. He went into further detail about the chemical composition of clay particles (which are usually composed of silica, aluminum, and oxygen) which makes them hold on to nutrients. Houston black clay will hold onto 60 times more nutrients than the sand of North Texas.

In introducing the use of fertilizer, Tony discussed in depth the Ph of soil. He mentioned several key nutrients in managing your soil. He advised to avoid "recreational" tilling. He advised adding woody and brown matter to your compost pile. For amending the soil, he suggested using an organic source that is low in nutrients, to amend the soil, because you can over-apply nutrients. He explained why too much of one nutrient can cause a deficiency of another nutrient which would otherwise have been adequate.

In closing, Tony kindly looked at the soil analysis of anyone who asked, explaining exactly how to put the information into action, and offered advice, to several people who had long-standing problems with their land.

Photo by Terrie Hahn

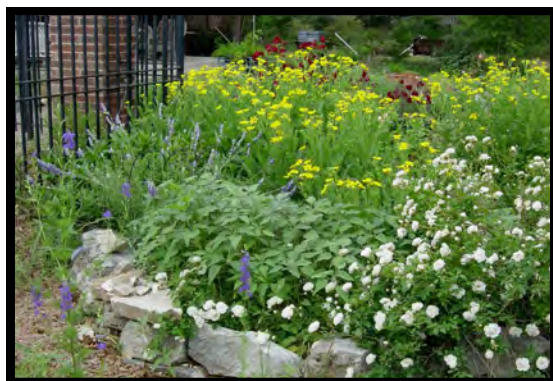
## Landscape Design Class

### - Anabel Reeser, Class Reporter

The class which met on 20 February 2013, "Landscape design," was presented by Diana Kirby, of Austin, who owns "Diana's Designs." Her lecture included plenty of slides, and was followed by two exercises for the class.

Several types of landscape designs were introduced. Some require much less work to maintain, as for homeowners who travel a lot. Often the outside design echoes the owner's indoor decorating style. All these styles can be created in our climate by substituting adapted plants whose shapes and colors create the feel of the original type of garden.

The English cottage garden has a meandering layout, arching branches and delicate leaf and flower shapes, lots of seasonal colors that lean to the pastels, and beds arranged from tallest to shortest plants.



The Mediterranean style depends on big leaves and bold colors for its impact. Although the banana plant, for example, does not do well in central Texas, there are many similar-looking plants that do thrive in our area that would give the tropical feel of this type of garden.

There is a Southwest Desert style, which could include yuccas and cacti, and pebbles instead of grass. A similar but expanded version of this style is the "Texas Native" style, often called "Xeriscape," which includes plants that can survive the Texas heat if you water them once a week. The plants can actually originate from many different countries and regions in the United States, with differing rain amounts and altitudes, but would all be adaptable to Texas.

Continued on next page...



## Landscape Design...continued

An example would be the crepe myrtle, which originated in the Southeast, but thrives in Texas. Other plants in this style are bird of paradise, rosemary, sage, agave, feather grasses and the butterfly bush.

With the Asian garden, we enter the realm of the more formal and modern style, which leans to simplicity and a “less is more” ideal. The Asian garden would be created using rocks, gravel, sand, and water. An example of the plants there are the plum yew, a shrub that is almost a ground cover, the weeping yaupon, hastas, which grow in wet shade, and silvery evergreen.



Japanese Gardens in Portland, Oregon.

There is the Modern or contemporary style garden, which emphasizes straight lines and right angles instead of curves. A row of flat-trimmed boxwood might be backed by a row of round-trimmed box shrubs. The lawn is manicured, and roses might add to the formal aspect.

We had two practical exercises, which we did individually. The first was to list all the problems, characteristics, and goals for the use of our property that we could think of. A problem could be telephone lines crossing part of the yard; a characteristic might be the direction the front door faced; and our goals could include, for example, a play area for children.

Our next exercise was to create a landscape for a house. We were all given the same “footprint”, or outline, of a generic house on a lot. We all had to

landscape the house, but each of us was asked to concentrate on one of the three areas that are crucial to landscape design. Some of us pondered focal points in our design. Others focused on achieving a symmetrical type of balance in the landscaping. (Asymmetric designs are equally valued, but we were limited to symmetric designs.) A third group concentrated on introducing a successful use of repetition in their design. Knowledge of plants and their names was not required, but it did give some interns a huge advantage.

## Wildscape Gardening

### - Anabel Reeser, Class Reporter

In our Wildscape Gardening class in February, Kelly Bender emphasized that all of us need to spend time outside enjoying the natural world. One way to do this is to plant a garden that will attract wildlife, providing what they all must have: food, shelter and water. Native plants (or well adapted ones) will provide native animals and insects with everything they need.

Kelly named many plants and what they attracted. She also mentioned that butterflies like clusters of flowers that form a flat surface, and that hummingbirds like vertical towers of blooms.

A Xeriscape garden forms a small ecosystem that doesn't need a lot of insecticides, because with so many kinds of animals and insects living there, potential pests are controlled by predation.

Kelly's early plantings in her yard were carefully selected for attracting all kinds of birds and butterflies and other wildlife, but her yard looked like a botanical specimen exhibit. Later, to make it easier for people to watch wildlife, she set up a carefully landscaped yard. The same plants were included, but their placement was very different. It was well designed to provide the needs of the family living there, and was planned artistically. Importantly, it offered sitting areas where the family, and all the visitors who were being attracted to the yard, could get acquainted and enjoy watching the wildlife.

Photo by Werner Hahn



# The Importance of Herbs

- Ann Hunter

An herb is any plant used for culinary and medicinal use. They are used fresh or dried for seasoning, medicinal properties or in perfumes. Herbs have been used and recognized since Biblical times. As a matter of fact, in the very first book of the Bible, **Genesis 1:29-30** reads: **And God said, Behold, I have given**

**you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to everything that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so. And Psalms 104:14** reads: **He causeth the grass to grow for cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth.** The Bible goes on and on about herbs even naming a few such as hyssop used for cleansing and mandrakes used for infertility.

One very important element about planting and using herbs is that they are very low maintenance. They

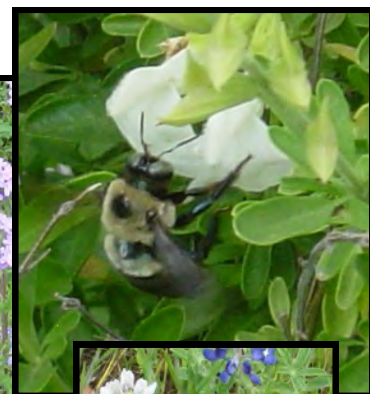
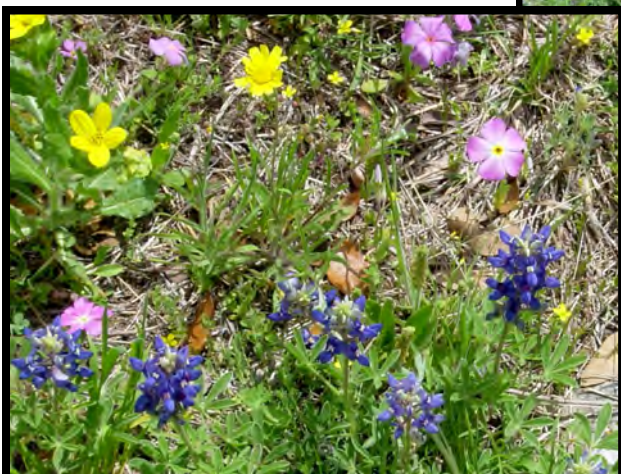


seem to thrive in various climate changes and soils as long as soil is well draining, and herbs do very well in pots. Aromatic herb gardens aren't bothered by pests as vegetable and flower gardens are. Placing herbs amongst vegetables is considered companion gardening and is done to help repel certain insects and also to

attract other beneficial insects. For example, mint leaves are used to make tea that helps soothe the digestive system. The fragrance has calming and rejuvenating effects so it's used in several bath products, but that same fragrance deters mosquitoes and rodents from your garden! Lavender may also be used for teas, fragrant bath and body products and is legendary for repelling moths. It also attracts bees and ladybugs to your garden. Have fun as you experiment with different herbs. They add character and strength to any landscape and they add to our physical well-being. Try them indoors or out. Dress them in splendor in colorful pots of different shapes and heights and they will respond with an elegant performance bursting with showy flowers and soothing fragrance.

## Wildflowers and Bees, Oh My!

- Terrie Hahn





# Q & A

*Editor's note: Let's learn from one another. Submit your questions and answers to me at [moom-pie45@hotmail.com](mailto:moom-pie45@hotmail.com) or call me at 512-863-9837.*

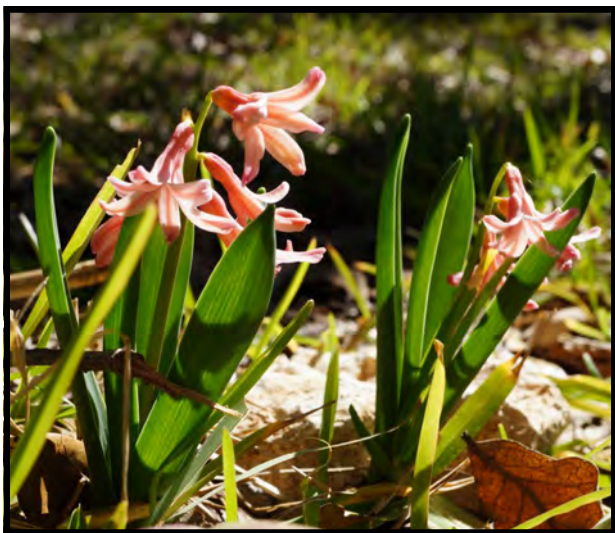
## ***Last month's question from:***

**-Terrie Hahn**

My friend, Linda Mahaffey has this flower come up in her yard every year at this time. What is it?

## ***And the answer is:***

We don't have an answer yet! Please help us identify this flower. Some sort of lily maybe?



## ***This Month's Question:***

**- Cindy Allen**

I need help identifying this little tree behind my house in Morgan's Point.



One of my friends would like help identifying the small tree or large shrub below, also found in Morgan's Point.





# Announcements

## April Monthly Meeting

- Bernie Hurta

Our April Monthly Meeting is Wednesday, April 10<sup>th</sup> at 11 am. Refreshment and social time is 10:30.

Our program for the meeting is "Growing Lavender" with Lee Harris from the Bird Song Lavender Farm in Troy, Texas.



Photo by Terrie Hahn

## April 10th Plant/Seed Swap

- Bernie Hurta

Before the April meeting, we will have a Plant/Seed Swap. Please bring potted plants, including houseplants, and seeds to our **Master Gardener's Building on Wednesday, April 10<sup>th</sup>, between 9:30 and 10 am.** The swap will end at 10:45, so we can attend the monthly meeting. Those people bringing plants may choose plants before the meeting. After the meeting, any plants leftover can be taken by anyone regardless if you brought plants.

## Field Trip Full

- Kim Pringle

The bus for the New Class Field Trip scheduled for April 24th is full. I have a wait list if you'd like to be added. Contact me about the possibility of carpooling there.

## *Thank You*

I wanted to take this opportunity to thank you and the Master Gardeners for the invitation to the dedication of the new building on February 26, 2013 in Belton.

With the dedication of the building to Bell County, it shows the dedication and commitment that each of you have not only to the Master Gardener program and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, but to Bell County as well.

The support of the Bell County Master Gardener program and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service in Bell County was very evident with the county judge and all 4 commissioners in attendance.

I can't tell you enough how much Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service appreciates what you and the group do in helping to educate the residents of Bell County.

Without the help of volunteers like the Bell County Master Gardeners, the Extension program in Bell County would not be what it is today.

Thanks again for all the Master Gardeners do in supporting the mission of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service.

Donald W. Kelm, District Extension Administrator

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service



# ***What's Happening in Your Yard?***

## **New Bluebonnet?**

**- Gail Christian**

Several weeks ago I went with Gary Slanga and Mary Ann Everett to A&M for a seminar on tax free organizations. I won this red bluebonnet as a door prize. They are not on sale yet. I planted this in the Special Needs flower bed. I can't remember who supplied the plants.



## **Wisteria Blooming**

**- Dee Coffeen**

Wisteria Blooming. Bees were buzzing my head. It's beautiful!



## Officers and Directors 2011- 2012

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