

The Blooming Bell

August 2014



**Bell County
Master Gardener
Association**



Red plant in front of yellow bells is a Firecracker plant or firecracker fern – *Russelia rotundifolia* 'San Carlos'. (Have to be careful if you want this one. There is another plant also called a firecracker plant with totally different leaves. It is *Russelia equisetiformis*.)

- Diane Calderwood

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Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4	5	6 Workday 7 am Hamburger Wednesday 11 am	7	8	9
10	11	12	13 Work Day 7 am General Meeting w/Social Time at 10:00 am Speaker Duncan Brooks on Oak Wilt at 10:30 am Community Service Project Protocol Meeting to follow.	14	15	16
17	18	19	20 Work Day 7 am	21	22	23
24	25	26	27 Board Meeting 9 am Five Year Plan Meeting to follow.	28	29	30
31						

Remember to record your service and education hours for June.

Banner Photo by Susan Terry

The President's Corner

Can't believe it is August already. Time to start getting the garden ready for the fall planting season. Speaking of the fall garden, plans are in full swing for the fall plant sale that will be held on October 4th. Please make plans to help with this event in any way you can. More information will be coming soon.

We have had some very spirited discussions among committee members for the State Conference. Always glad to see that because it means folks are really into this event. Since most of the debate results from a misunderstanding of how the events will blend together, once that is established planning moves ahead pretty smoothly. I am encouraged by the amount of work already done on the conference. We seem to be well ahead of the power curve right now. We have several sponsors already on board and the web site is starting to take shape nicely. If you have not visited the conference web site recently, please do so. I think you will like what you see there. A big Texas thanks to all the committee members who have put in countless number of hours and hard work on the event.

We are going to start the planning phase for the McCane Children's Hospital healing gardens. Thanks to Frances Idoux for her work on that project. Also have an event with the Harker Heights Parks and Recreation for a seed and plant swap. Any one who has extra seeds or plants, please contact Malinda Arriola who is heading up that event.

For anyone who has a demonstration garden plot behind the Ag Office, please harvest your veggies. If your plants are about done for the season, we have a troop of boy scouts that are waiting to use any empty bed for their gardening merit badge project.

As you can see, we have a lot of things going on. Plenty of opportunity for service hours. It's impossible to acknowledge everyone who is working on all these varied projects, but rest assured that all your time and efforts are greatly appreciated.

- Gary

Working at KMCCG

- Photos by Randy Brown



Water Conservation Workshop

- Charles Newsom

Gladys and I attended the Water Conservation Workshop in Kyle, Texas at the Millberg Farm on July 13th. Tim Miller uses a small amount of water from rainwater that is collected to grow his fruits and vegetables on his five acre farm. He uses wood chip mulch by the truck load (think a few hundred truckloads). Some plants are placed directly into the mulch with no soil. He said he does not own a tractor or a lawnmower. He uses a string trimmer, a Troy Built Tiller, and a smaller hand held tiller in addition to hand tools. His irrigation comes from rainwater that is collected. Most of the plants are hand watered with a bucket. He does use soaker hoses and prefers them over a drip system. I found his approach unique in that he uses wild sunflowers in his garden for sheltering plants. He also uses Johnson grass and switch grass that he grows for mulch.

Above: A 3,000 gallon barrel to catch rain water from the roof. A simple system. You can also see a 15,000 gallon



cistern behind the barrel. Left are small rain-



water catchments that are mounted on stones and used to divert rainwater directly into barrels in the garden. He is able to collect rainwater at the point of use into barrels and not have to pipe or pump the water to the point of use. One I saw was mounted on wheels much like a wheel barrow that could be easily moved to different locations.

Above: Tim Miller planting seeds into wood mulch. He uses a no till/low till approach. The weeds serve as ground cover. The area here had the weeds cut down with a string trimmer. The planting area is bordered by wood chips that are mulched in a trench. Left: He is propagating Haupt figs by air layering. This method of propagation works well for him.



Continued on next page...

Water Conservation Workshop...continued

Right: Branches from his peach trees are used to deer proof the small fig trees. His peach trees are dying, and he is replacing them with fig trees planted on eight foot centers where the trees have been cut down and removed. He plants fig trees in the summer, and has success in doing so. With the heavy wood chip mulch, he only waters a small amount once or twice a week. He waters in the evening, about 8 PM.



Right: Newly planted seeds covered by switch grass to protect them from the summer heat. He also uses



Johnson grass for the same purpose. Above: Some switch grass he grows for mulch. He also grows Johnson grass for mulch and Tim plants sunflowers by cutting them down and laying them in a row where he wants them to grow. Right: This is one of his onion beds. You can see the onion plants among the sunflowers. This approach is different than I have seen in most gardens.



Below: The wood chips in this bed were about two feet deep. Some crops, such as potatoes, he plants directly into the mulch. The mulch is placed on the soil, but it is not tilled into the soil. Even on a 100 degree day in July, when he moved the mulch down to the soil level, there was moisture.



Tim's source of wood chips was from the company that trims trees for the power lines. These chips would be large and un-screened. The planting he did with the seeds used wood chips that had been screened. These screened chips were decomposed and were very fine. He has been doing this for 25 years, and he knows what works for him. He also plants heirloom seeds rather than the

hybrids you find at the big box stores. Any gardener/farmer that actively cultivates Johnson grass, red pig weed, and wild sunflowers is different from most.

According to LocalHarvest.com, Tim Miller has been Certified Organic since 1989, utilizing dryland farming practices, raising only heirloom crops. Specializing in alternative farming techniques and tools, looking for families to join his Community Supported Agriculture farm in the Kyle/San Marcos area. Seasonal produce grown year round includes veggies, fruits and some herbs. Tomatoes almost year round due to an array of heirlooms that can be fit into windows of opportunity. For more information, check the Texas Young Farmers website at: <http://www.texasyoungfarmers.org/tim-miller-teaches-dry-gardening-all-around-excellence/>

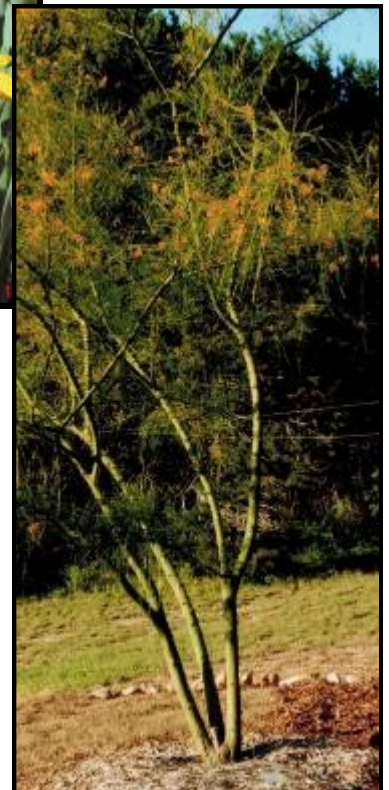
FRIENDS IN THE GARDEN

“A friend is what the heart needs all the time.”

One of the most pleasant feelings I experience as I walk in my garden is the remembrance of special people who have given me precious plants. Gardeners are special, loving, generous and kind, sharing their bounty with others. They love what they do and they want you to be successful too. As I meander through my garden I see daffodils which remind me of Beverly Wichersham who gave me some bulbs. I see my goldenball lead-tree which I received from Mary Lew Quesinberry. The retama tree and the scented geraniums are gifts from Mary Lou Edmondson. I have an Archduke Charles rose from a cutting from Lawrence Cox and a Rainbow Sorbet rose from a cutting from Jann Dworshy. The spring blooms of Gulf Coast pestemon remind me of the gift from Janet Stein as well as the foxtail fern from Judy Herrmann. The purple coneflowers I dug up (with permission) from Annette Ensing's garden. The comfrey plant was given to me by Kim Pringle along with some of her vast knowledge of herbs. I have never purchased an iris, yet they spring forth each spring in a myriad of colors just because some generous members have shared their extras.

Thank you garden friends. You have made my gardening experience so fulfilling. I think of you every time I walk past your gifts to me.

- Carol Runyan



Wizzie's Wonderful World of Insects

Pillbugs

- Wizzie Brown

(Editor's note: I'm excited to announce the addition to the Blooming Bell of this column written by Wizzie Brown, Travis County's AgriLife Extension's Entomologist. I know everyone will be very happy to learn something new about insects!)

Pillbugs, or roly-polys, are crustaceans, closely related to crayfish and shrimp. While terrestrial, these creatures must live in moist environments to be able to survive. They may sometimes invade homes in large numbers, but they are a nuisance pest and do not bite, sting, transmit diseases or cause physical damage to the home or its contents.

Pillbugs are ¼- ½" with dark grey coloring. Their oval bodies are convex above and either flat or concave underneath. Pillbugs have seven pairs of legs and two pairs of antennae and roll up into a ball when disturbed.



Pillbugs are scavengers, feeding mainly on decaying organic matter. They may occasionally feed on young, tender plants, but damage is typically not sig-

nificant. They can be found under mulch, flower pots, compost, stones or other items resting on the ground.

They often invade crawl spaces and homes at ground level with common points of entry being door thresholds and expansion joints. When these pests are seen indoors, there is usually a large population breeding on the outside of the home near the foundation. Since pillbugs require moisture, they do not survive indoors for more than a few days unless there are very moist or damp conditions.

To manage infestations inside the home, rely on sanitation and exclusion techniques. Repair or replace door thresholds and seal expansion joints where pillbugs may be entering the structure. Pesticides are not usually needed indoors to manage these occasional invaders. They soon die on their own from lack of moisture and can be swept up using a broom and dustpan or a vacuum and disposed of.

Outdoors, move any piles of debris away from the foundation of the home. If there are high numbers in and around landscape beds, turn the mulch to allow it dry out to make the area uninhabitable. Any leaky faucets or irrigation lines as well as leaking air conditioning units should be repaired to eliminate moisture buildup. You may choose a pesticide to treat mulched areas or other areas that are harboring large pillbug populations. Look for products labeled for pillbugs, sowbugs or isopods.

For more information or help with identification, contact Wizzie Brown, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist at 512.854.9600. Check out my blog at www.urban-ipm.blogspot.com

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What's Wrong With this Picture?



- Robin Pohl

Check out page 10 for the answer!

Q & A

Last Month's Question

- Terrie Hahn

We have quite a few Antelope Horn Milkweeds in our yard. My question is, are these plants used by the monarchs to lay their eggs and feed the caterpillars just in March and April? Can we mow now? Are they needed on the return migration?



Texas from Mexico in early spring, March, produce another batch of newly emerged butterflies and the new ones continue on the northward journey.

This Month's Question

- Cindy Allen

We had beautiful berries this year, both blackberries and strawberries, but we are losing most to critters. Anyone found solutions to the birds in blackberries, and to snails or pillbugs...whatever it is that leaves a hole in every



strawberry we have ripen? I feel like I remember some advice from MG class, for getting strawberries up off the dirt, but can't find that for the life of me. Help! Photo from www.gardenweb.com

And the Answer is:

- Gail Christian

I think that they need the milkweed plants through August. The Monarch butterflies migrate to Mexico in the fall. You don't want to mow if they haven't gone to seed yet. The Monarchs come back through

Nostalgia Plants

- Frances Idoux

Most of us have a “nostalgia plant” somewhere in our gardens – a plant that we dug a hole for, just because of the memory that came attached. Some of these plants are small and unobtrusive – they are just there to remind us of the friend or relative who grew them. My nostalgia plant is neither small nor unobtrusive. My nostalgia plant is a rather imposing peach tree.

When I was a little girl, I loved the peach tree that grew in my aunt’s backyard. I enjoyed the peaches that it produced in summertime, but it was a perfect tree to climb and I took delight in climbing in its branches.

In previous seasons, my tree had produced only a few peaches, which usually disappeared with fleeing squirrels. Because of



the bounty of rain, this year my peach tree hung heavy with fruit. Two hail storms had thinned the smaller peaches as I had never done. Pleased with this crop, I wanted to protect it. As the fruit began to ripen, I called Master Gardener Terrie Hahn to see if there were ways to squirrel-proof the peaches. Terrie suggested using the wet paper towel method to cover the ripening peaches or just picking them and allowing them to ripen on the kitchen cabinet.

I first tried the wet paper towel method, covering the ripest peaches with wet paper towels, which would dry and hide the fruit. The lower branches of my tree looked like they had been invaded by small ghosts. Then came the rain, and the wet ghosts melted and fell to the ground. Faced with hungry and impatient squirrels, I picked the peaches and brought them in.

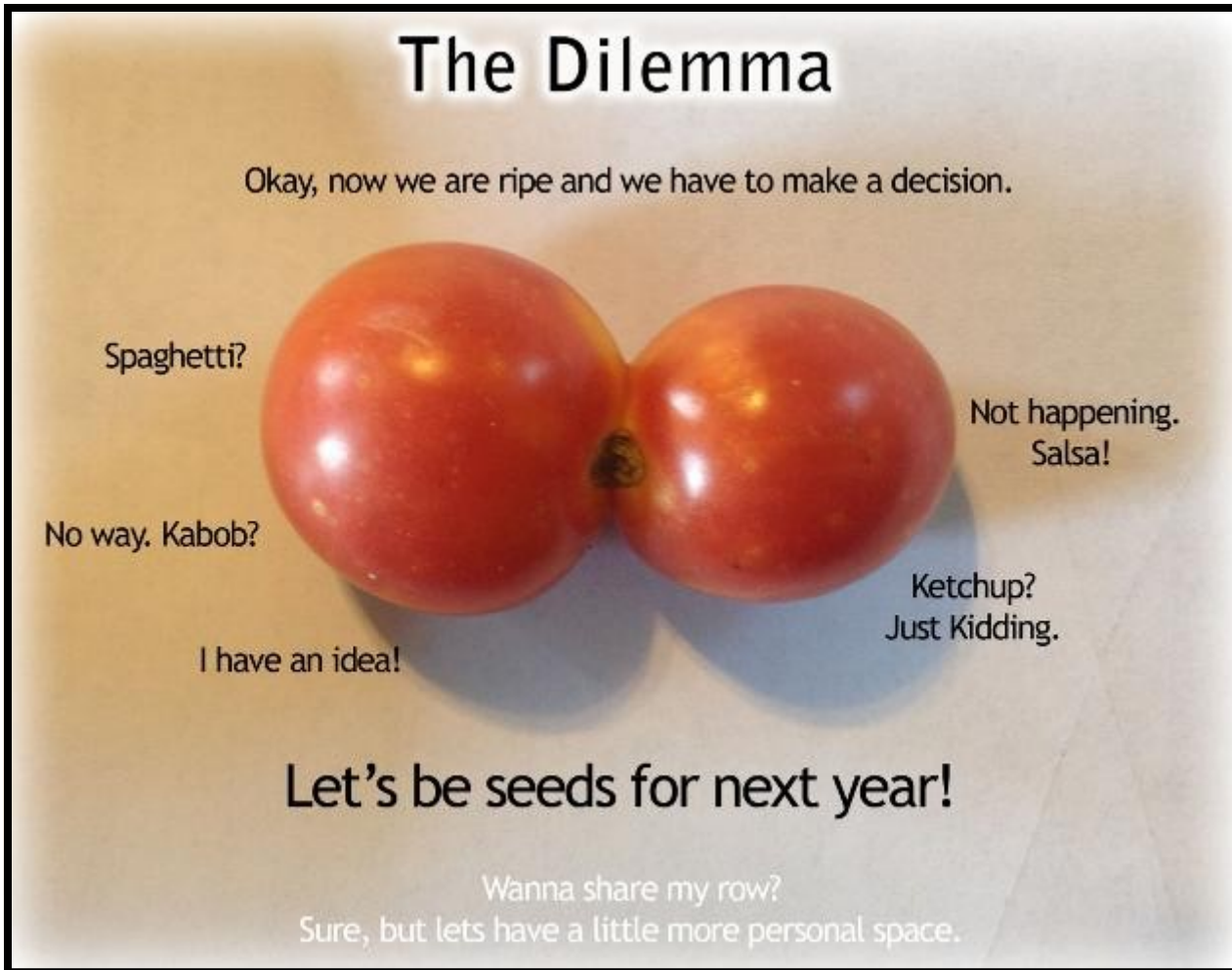
As I waited for a counter full of peaches to ripen, I began to wonder about the history of these delicious fruits. I enjoyed this tree, but I knew nothing about it. I learned that peach trees are native to China, and China is still the world’s largest producer of peaches. They were later cultivated in Persia and then in Europe. Peaches were brought to America by Spanish explorers. Later, horticulturist George Minifie is credited with bringing the first peaches from England to his estate in Virginia, and Thomas Jefferson had peach trees at Monticello.

There are two basic types of peaches – cling or free-stone, depending on how the fruit is attached to the pit. There are many varieties, and it is important to select a variety that will do well in Central Texas. The type of my tree is La Fortuniana.

And one interesting fact about peach pits. Tucked inside the peach pit is an almond-like nut, called a noyau. In order to extract the nut, the pit must be roasted at 350 degrees for 10 to 15 minutes. When it’s cooled, it is wrapped in a dish towel and hit with a hammer. The nuts are used in custards and ice cream. I haven’t tried the nuts, nor have I climbed this tree yet. However, I am enjoying the rescued and ripened peaches.



This and That



Created
by Robin
Pohl



Answer from page 8 -
"What's Wrong With This
Picture?"

Announcements

Policy Meetings Scheduled

- **Bernie Hurta**

There will be a meeting to discuss the protocol for approving service projects. The meeting will be **after the August 13th monthly meeting** and it is being held in the Board Room. Any interested individuals are encouraged to attend.

Also, there will be a meeting to start planning the new Strategic Five Year Plan. It will be in the Board Room **after the August 27th BOD meeting**. Any interested individuals are encouraged to attend.

If you have any questions, please email Bernie Hurta at bhurta@gmail.com.

Photo taken in May in the Marble Falls/Llano area by Susan Terry

August General Meeting

Just a reminder that the social event before each of our general membership meetings has been moved up to 10 AM to give us more time to include our guest speaker and conclude our organization's business.

- Gary

This month's speaker will be Duncan Brooks, Certified Arborist speaking about Oak Wilt at 10:30 a.m. See you at the next meeting. - Randy

Grounds Committee

The landscape/grounds committee will have the following workdays:

August 6, August 20, 7 a.m.

Hamburger Wednesday is August 6th. Come visit with other MG's and enjoy a burger. Bring your favorite side dish or dessert to go with the burgers.

Thank you,

Walter Ponder, Carla Harmon



What's Happening in Your Yard

- Susan Terry

These are photos of my daughter/granddaughter's fairy garden and their enclosed "deer proof" garden in Georgetown. I was the plant consultant, but it is my daughter, Mariah's green thumb that has produced this lovely scene. My son-in-law built the enclosure.



What's Happening in Your Yard

- Diane Calderwood

Blooming in my garden this summer are Water Lilies; Hibiscus: Moy Grande or Texas giant Hibiscus, a Texas superstar; Pride of Barbados and Orange Bells: Tacoma stans 'orange jubilee.'



What's Happening in Your Yard

Blooming!

- Randy Brown

A triple Spider Lily and Angel Trumpet were blooming in my yard in July.



Summertime Garden

- Laura Murphy

I have been growing a little broom corn and cushaw this spring/summer. Enough straw for a very small broom, but some nice/large cushaw.



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Please do not send PDF documents.

“Shedding skin” photos from former BCMG Susan Firth.



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