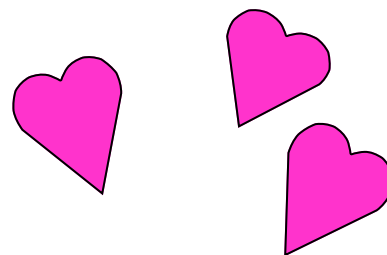


THE BLOOMING BELL

February 2017



This was taken on January 6th-one of those really cold days we had. The fountain still had water moving up into the top where the bird is sitting. She sat there and along the railing nearly all afternoon. Sometimes I could see her with pieces of ice in her beak. - Betty Nejtek

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**Bell County
Master Gardener
Association**



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 Work Day 8 am* Burger Wednesday 10:30	2	3	4
5	6 Youth Fair	7 Youth Fair	8 Work Day 8 am* General Meeting Gary Slanga - Tree Care 10:30 am, Social time 10 am Youth Fair	9 Youth Fair	10	11
12	13	14 	15 Work Day 8 am*	16	17	18 Mother Earth News Fair
19 Mother Earth News Fair	20	21	22 Work Day 8 am* BOD Meeting 9 am	23	24	25 Home and Garden
26 Home and Garden	27	28				

Upcoming events:

* in the event of rain or 40 degree temperature or below, there will be NO Workday.

Remember to record volunteer/education hours.

[Photo of Bluebonnets coming up by Terrie Hahn](#)

The President's Corner

I would like to thank all the volunteers for the three conferences held in January at the Bell County Expo Center. There were enough volunteers to register conference attendees quickly, while keeping the volunteers busy. I know that Lyle Zoeller appreciated the support of the BCMGA, as did the attendees.

One January 4th, we welcomed 21 new MG Interns, plus 2 students transferring from other MG associations. They all seem enthusiastic in their quest to become certified Texas Master Gardeners. As you see them in meetings or on Wednesday workdays, give them your hearty welcome.

February is a busy month, with lots of opportunities to earn service hours. The annual Bell County Youth Fair held during the first full week in February at the Expo Center depends on our support. I know that many members have already signed up to help, but this is such a large event that more help is always appreciated. The annual Home and Garden Show this year is February 24-26 at the Expo Center. We will again host a booth where we will present numerous lectures while also answering the wide variety of questions from the public. This year we will be offering vegetables and herbs for sale. BCMGA members are growing plants, and this is another area where more help is appreciated. Any edible plant is a candidate. Finally, February is when there will be lots of grounds work to be done, including pruning of roses and other perennial plants. This is a great way to help while also meeting new class members and sharing your talents.

February 18-19 is another Mother Earth News Fair, being held at the Expo Center. There are over 150 education events scheduled, so almost any interest should be covered. BCMGA members can earn education hours by attending any of these lectures. You could complete your 12-hour annual education requirement during these two days. A weekend pass at the door is \$30 while advanced weekend passes are available online for \$20. When I registered, they even had an offer of 2 weekend passes for

\$30. Last year was the first time that this Fair had been held in Texas, and they told me that this fair had more attendance than any of their other fairs throughout the nation.

The next general membership meeting is February 8th, with social sharing at 1000 and the meeting starting at 1030. See you then.

- Wayne

Photos by Randy Brown

At the January General Meeting, Walter Ponder, gave us the history of the Superstar Program and a list of some new plants that have been added.

Wayne introduces new officers who were present, First Vice President, Mary Ann Everett, Louann Hight, Second Vice President and Don Wyatt, Treasurer.



Time To Prune Fruit Trees

- Ann Wagner

It is that time of year again to prune our fruit trees. Typically, between January and February is the best time to prune fruit trees such as pear and apple for central Texas. Pruning is done while the fruit tree is dormant so that less damage will be done to tree cells should a freeze occur. To properly prune a branch on a fruit tree, you make a clean cut at the branch collar while avoid cutting into the branch collar itself. The branch collar extends slightly out from the branch and contains part of the circulatory system which trees receive nutrients. This branch collar has cells in it that cause a callous to form over the cut protecting the tree from bacteria introduction.

To get ready to prune fruit trees in winter, you will need the following tools: long handled loppers, curved pruning saw, and disinfectant spray to disinfect the cutting tools. It is important to make sure your blades are sharp to make a clean cut that will not damage the branch. There are different kinds of pruning cuts to make to your fruit tree. First, you

should look at the tree and make sure there are not any suckers coming off the bottom main branch near the base. The suckers need to be cut because they will never produce fruit. Then look for tree branches that from angles less than 45 degrees from the main branch. These branches need to be cut just above the branch collar so as not to injure the branch to cause disease to be introduced. By allowing air to move freely through the branches, it decreases moisture build up which can cause disease. Pears are prone to disease. It is very important to keep as much space as possible between branches to prevent rubbing or disease. Remove dead, dying, diseased, crossing, branches growing down toward the ground, and weak branches to allow for healthier growth. If you have a lateral or side branch that is longer than 1 foot, you can prune it to 6 inches to induce budding. This is done if your tree has not been pruned before or if the branches have gotten too vigorous with too few buds. By pruning your fruit trees correctly, you can be rewarded by a good fruit harvest and have a healthy growing tree free of weak branches and disease.

Q & A

Christmas Cactus

- Terrie Hahn

Q. Diane Calderwood asked me if I knew how to get a Christmas Cactus to bloom at Christmas.

Coincidentally, Gary Slanga sent in the article on the next page about Christmas Cactus and I asked him if he knew the answer. He said:

A. "It is my understanding that it takes two things to force a cactus to bloom. Water and light, or to be exact the lack thereof. How effective that is may be questionable. So, you allow the cactus to dry out somewhat in the fall to get it to go dormant, and then it needs 12 to 14 hours of dark. During the fall, we usually have all the dark hours we need due to the

shorter days and as long as we make sure that it does not get direct sun during the short days we're good. So watering may be the more critical concern. Allow it to dry a little longer in the fall before watering, and that should do it. Keep your fingers crossed."

Mystery Bird

- Kathy Love

Q. Spotted this bird on the deck of one of our stock tanks. So what is it?



Christmas Cactus Answers

- Gary Slanga

I saw the picture of the Christmas cactus that Joyce Richardson sent in and I thought I would add some information that I found on the subject. Here is a picture of my Christmas Cactus which just bloomed about two weeks after Christmas.

This cactus is about 15 yrs. old. It has been in the same pot in the same place for all that time. (Does that make me a bad gardener?) But it has bloomed at different time during its life. It did bloom one year at Easter. It has also bloomed in October, November and January.

According to information I got, the fall blooming plant is (*Schlumbergera bridgesii*) and also comes in a yellow variety while the Easter or Spring blooming plant (*Rhipsalidopsis gaertnerii*) and comes in a variety of bloom colors. Flower tones range from white to red, orange, peach, lavender and pink.

Both plants are easily propagated by cutting a short segments from the stem tips. Plant the segment approximately a quarter of its length deep in slightly sandy soil. Moisten evenly and place the cutting in a well-lit area, staying away from any direct sunlight.



Notice in the picture (below left) of the Spring cactus (*Rhipsalidopsis*) that the flowers are slightly different than the Fall cactus (*Schlumbergera*). The spring cactus has several petals arranged around the receptacle whereas the Fall cactus (below) has what appear to be red sepals at the receptacle just below the flower and it has multiple elongated anthers where the Spring cactus does not.

No matter which one you have it is easy to grow, just keep it out of direct sunlight and let it do its thing.



Wizzie's Wonderful World of Insects

Whiteflies on Indoor Plants

- Wizzie Brown, Travis County AgriLife Extension Entomologist

Whiteflies are small, soft-bodied insects with piercing-sucking mouthparts. They are creamy white and adults have a mealy wax coating their body and wings. Immatures, also called nymphs, are small, oval, flattened and wingless.



Whitefly populations can become a problem on indoor plants due to the temperature being regulated inside structures. They like to be on the underside of leaves, often in clusters. Common species of whiteflies have a wide host range and are able to switch host plants.

Whiteflies use their straw-like mouthparts to pierce plant tissue and suck out juices. Large populations can cause foliage to turn yellow, appear to be dry or even fall off the plant. Some whiteflies cause plant distortion or foliage to turn silver in color. Others are capable of transmitting plant viruses.

Whiteflies exude honeydew, a sticky substance secreted by some plant-feeding insects. Honeydew causes foliage to become shiny in appearance and can attract a fungus called sooty mold.

Some insects, such as ants, like to tend insects that create honeydew and protect honeydew producers from predators and parasites.

To reduce the chance of whitefly infestations, inspect all plants thoroughly for insects before bringing them indoors. If a plant is found with whiteflies, then isolate it while you take care of the problem. While plants remain indoors, they should be inspected for problems weekly. Yellow sticky cards (you can either buy these or make your own with yellow cardstock and adhesive) can be used to capture whiteflies as well as help you easily locate problem areas.

Depending upon the plant that is infested with whiteflies, you may be able to vacuum the insects from the leaves. Choose a vacuum that has low-power suction to pull the insects into the vacuum but not the plant.

Make wise pesticide choices and choose pesticides to target specific pests and/ or specific areas. For chemical treatment you can use insecticidal soap, azadirachtin, d-limonene, horticultural oils, botanicals, or a synthetic product. Target your treatment to the underside of the leaves to get to where the whiteflies like to hide. Multiple treatments will most likely be necessary due to eggs and pupae not being susceptible to pesticide treatments.

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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AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION

The Veggie Guy

- Wayne Schirner

Get Ready for Spring

I encourage members to visit the aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu website on a regular basis. I noted several new entries in the Easy Gardening Series found on this site, including Herbs for Texas Landscapes, Soil Solarization, and What is Aquaponics? If you want more information on these topics and on almost any other gardening topic, this is a great site to visit.

Even though we are currently having weather that warms into to 70's during the day, we can still expect freezing weather on short notice. Be prepared to protect crops in your garden that could be damaged by freezing weather. I was able to keep most of my plants alive in the two 3-day freezing periods we have had this winter by using frost covers. Don't let all your work be wasted because you aren't prepared to protect your plants.

Most of the vegetables that could be planted in January can still be planted in February. Bulbing onions and artichokes can be planted up until mid-month. Many root crops can also be planted now. Don't plant too densely, since crowded seedlings grow poorly and will give you a disappointing harvest. Extra seedlings can be clipped with scissors to avoid disrupting the roots of the seedlings you leave to grow.

If you aren't growing your own transplants for both cool-season and warm-season crops, I have noticed that some of the local businesses now have transplants available for purchase. If you started transplants in January, remember that they will benefit from transplanting into larger sized pots. I usually start with 2" pots and up-transplant to 4" pots before putting them into the garden. Cool-season crops can go in anytime this month, and warm-season crops in March. Water your growing transplants on a weekly schedule with a very dilute fertilizer solution to support healthy growth. Brush over the seedlings to stimulate wind movement, which helps promote stronger plants.

Make sure you build the soil in your garden beds before planting warm-season crops. If you follow the

Square Foot Gardening method, you do this on a regular basis after every crop is harvested. If you follow a more traditional method of gardening and your soil hasn't previously been improved, work 3-4 inches of compost in as deeply as practical. For existing garden beds that have previously been amended, an inch or two of compost is probably enough. Wait to mulch your garden beds until after planting to allow the soil to warm, giving you better early growth. If direct seeding into your garden, pay attention to soil temperatures to enhance germination. Lettuce planted in 41F soil will germinate in 15 days but only takes 7 days in 50F soil. It germinates in 2 days in 77F soil, which is why I try to start even cool-season crops in my garage under grow lights.

Cut perennial herbs back this month to remove unsightly growth. These plants will be sending out fresh new growth in the spring. You can cut them back to a couple of inches or just trim away the damaged growth.

Grow the things you like, and above all have fun in your gardening efforts.

This and That

- Pam Dragoo

Did you know?

It's not actually a good idea to trim plants back this time of year as I tend to do. Better to wait a bit longer until all threat of really cold weather has passed. If you cut back too hard and too early and the weather warms up, plants will send up tender new shoots that get hit really hard by a late frost. Do what I say, not what I do!

PARSLEY, SAGE, ROSEMARY, AND CRIME

by Jane L. Van Praag

The above clever caption comes courtesy of Susan Wittig Albert, prolific author of the China Bayles mystery series, each written with at least one herb lurking in the background of every plot. While you're trying to figure out 'who done it' you're also effortlessly learning all about the particular herb Albert has in mind, from its native habitat through various historical and current cultural applications on what to do with it after harvesting, whether in preparation for crafting, cosmetics, or condiments; as a bonus, she includes recipes for cooking and baking all the dishes mentioned in her narratives.

Albert's 27th book in this series is due soon in 2017. Each novel is written to stand alone but I do think the most fun comes from starting at the beginning (Thyme of Death), as I did, and reading in sequence to glimpse how the recurring characters themselves continue to grow. The setting is a fictitious town in a fictitious county along I-35 between Austin and San Antonio, but there are occasional forays outside that area; Georgetown in Williamson County is mentioned here and there; some of Cat's Claw takes place in Salado and much of the action in Widow's Tears is near Round Top where the annual Herbal Forum is held. The full set of her work is available at the Temple Public Library.

Perhaps other avid readers are noticing that it's becoming quite rare to find a volume with no printing errors, and I am sorry to report that this is the case with Albert's publications. Having referred to her as prolific (she has written more than 30 other books--mostly mysteries and often in collaboration with her husband Bill--in four other series), I suggest her impressive ability to tell a good story deserves far better proofing. Maybe if too many typos get to you, it'd be wise to brew a cup of relaxing herbal tea...

When the weather keeps you indoors this winter, curl up with these reads. Then, when you've slurped up all these, you'll find that one tome offers a list of other mystery series with gardening themes:

The Brother Cadfael Mysteries by Ellis Peters...Cadfael is the Welsh monk herbalist who grew

and prepared plants with medicinal and culinary uses back in the 12th century. (This led to the BBC production which series PBS televised and also to a non-fiction book Brother Cadfael's Herb Garden: An Illustrated Companion to Medieval Plants and Their Uses compiled by Rob Talbot and Robin Whiteman.)

The Louise Eldridge Garden Mysteries by Ann Ripley

The Claire Sharples Botanical Mysteries by Rebecca Rothenberg

The Celia Grant Mysteries by John Sherwood

PLUS

Joyce Richardson says that according to the Salado Village Voice, Susan Wittig Albert will be speaking at the Central Texas Area Museum on March 4th.

Terrie Hahn adds Margaret Frazer's Dame Frevisse Series of books where herbs play a small part during the 1400's murder mysteries. Medicinally and of course, sometimes for murder.

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PAGE! GO TO**

<https://www.facebook.com/BCMGA>

Live Auction Success

- Ann Wagner



Wow! The potted pineapple plant that I won at the live auction during our Master Gardener Christmas party produced a very edible and delicious pineapple. I took it home after the auction and kept it in outdoor sunlight. There were several days of cold weather in December where I had to bring it indoors to keep it from freezing. I noticed during the week it was indoors that the pineapple appeared to be ripening. The fruit became a golden yellow on the outside. I picked off one of the leaves growing from the top and it came out easily, indicating a ripe pineapple. I was so surprised because I was expecting this pineapple to grow much larger before it ripened. The fruit ripened

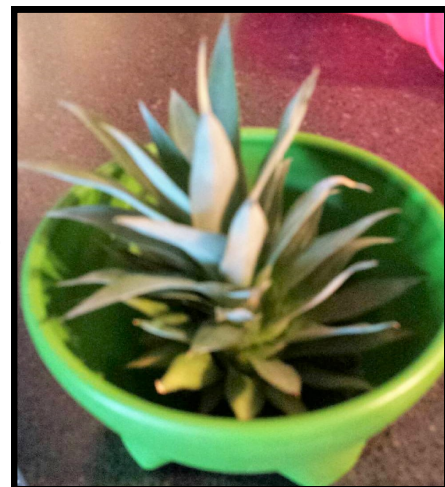
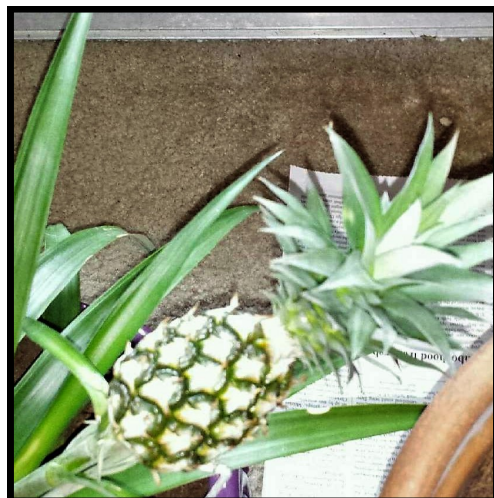
within about 2 months of its purchase.

Some pineapple varieties are dwarf, meaning it produces a small pineapple with all the features of a full-size pineapple. Besides size, there are other differences between dwarf and full size pineapples. Specifically, the dwarf variety has a bit more of an acidic taste and a tough core. I gently twisted the pineapple with my hand and it came off the stalk with ease. If a dwarf pineapple is never picked off the plant, it will turn into a flower.

It was very easy to care for this dwarf pineapple. I simply watered it once a week, by filling the little cup on the plant made where the base leaves coming together. I made sure it stayed out of the cold. Since it is a tropical, I brought it inside when temperatures fell below 50F at night. It was very easy to grow. I cut the top leaves known as the "crown" off my dwarf pineapple and put it in water to get new root development for another plant.

Planting the crown of a pineapple will result in a fruit within 1 to 2 years. It is not a fast process, but it sure is fun! It looks like I may have some other shoots trying to make pineapples off the parent plant. I will keep you up to date. I hope you enjoy the pictures of my dwarf pineapple. The best part of all was getting the pineapple to ripen and be a success in our growing zone.

Above: My live auction pineapple prize; Right, top: the pineapple is ripe and ready; sliced open and ready to eat; the pineapple crown in water taking root.



Let's Welcome the Class of 2017



Sandra Blankenship: I currently live in Killeen, but am originally from Michigan. I'm a nurse. I was interested in gardening very young. I grew up on a farm, and we raised and canned much of our own produce. While my siblings are not huge fans of veggies; I always have been. I am particularly fond of broccoli, even though I got the green worm every single time!



Rebecca Burrow: I was born in San Antonio, grew up in Kempner and now live north of Belton on Whitehall. I'm an Independent Permaculture Landscape Designer. I'm interested in gardening because I love food and I love God's creation.



Lorraine Brown: I'm originally from New York City, but live in Killeen now. I'm a retired Federal employee in the Human Resources department. I want to learn about gardening to beautify the home I purchased in 1993.

Yvonne Brown: I'm from Sun Prairie, Wisconsin, and moved to Kempner in November, 2015. I spent 25 years working as a legal assistant/paralegal. My interest in gardening started with my Dad, who has had an abundant garden for many years. He definitely has a green thumb!! My husband and I started our own garden in Sun Prairie in 2009 and grew a variety of vegetables and fruits each year. Growing up, it was common to see my Mom and Dad preserving many vegetables by canning them and I continue that tradition. I am now interested in starting up our garden again and producing organic vegetables and fruits to add to our table and preserve for the off season.



Mike Butts: I was born and raised in Houston, Texas. I have worked for the U.S. Post Office, a Silver Recovery Company and Chevron/Phillips Chemical Company. I have a start up operation in a new Normal Alpha Olefins Unit. I've always been interested in growing my own food due to higher quality and a desire to be self-sufficient. I've developed a greater appreciation for the beauty obtainable through gardening as well.

Class of 2017



Breanna Care: I now live in Moffat, but grew up in Austin. I was transplanted to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, but found my way back home again in 2008. (They say “bloom where you’re planted.” I’m learning to weather the seasons wherever I am.) I am currently a server at Dead Fish Grill in Belton. I am also a Certified Pharmacy Technician, but I don’t wish to pursue that field. My grandma used to meet me at the door in Tulsa, Oklahoma when I visited with a gigantic bowl of fresh picked cherry tomatoes. This was special to me, but I never saw myself gardening as she did. Now I do, and then some



Linda Farmer: I live in Temple, but am originally from Marlin, Texas. I worked as a Medical Technologist. I want to learn more about gardening, because I love nature and watching things grow.



Armand Hufault: I live in Killeen, but am originally from New York. I worked as an Electrical Engineer. I’ve been interested in gardening all my life and was influenced by my Mother.



Sharon Hardin: I’m from Arkansas originally, but live in Temple now. I worked for the Government. I grew up on a farm and learned from my parents about gardening.



Kellie Hussmann: I’m from Daphne, Alabama and now live in Temple, Texas. I’m a Freelance Writer. I’m serving in the Americorps VISTA at World Hunger Relief, Inc. in Waco to develop a school garden curriculum.



David Hubbell: I live in Temple, but am originally from Jacksonville Beach, Florida. I’ve worked with the Army, Exxon, Mobil, have been self-employed and have been a faculty member at CTC. I grow my own vegetables and like the creative process of gardening. I also like the color green!



Class of 2017

Barbara Ishikawa: I live in Gatesville in Coryell County and am originally from Northern California. I worked in the Insurance field. I got interested in gardening in grade school by working in my Mother's vegetable garden pulling bugs off of the plants!



Glenn Melton: I'm from Killeen and still live in Killeen. I was in the U.S. Army and worked in the Killeen Independent School District. I got interested in gardening helping my parents in the family vegetable garden as a child.



Emily Kuczek: I'm originally from Chappell, Nebraska. I live in Killeen now. I was an Army officer, but now am the Practice Manager of Aztec Pet Hospital. My mom was always trying to garden. We moved all over, so she learned a lot over the years. I enjoyed working with her.

Kathleen Ramey: I live in Salado and have lived in Houston and Fort Worth. My career was in Accounting and Finance. I got interested in gardening, because of my love for flowers and food.

Allan Ramos: I am originally from the Philippines, but not live in Killeen. My career is in the medical field. It was wonderful to see plants and trees growing and bearing fruit at my grandparents

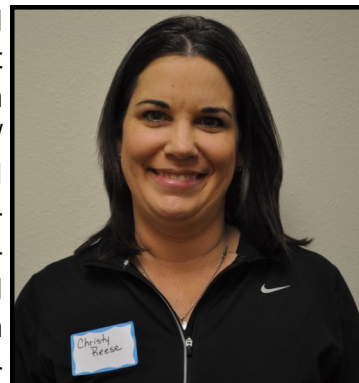


farm...getting that feeling back and sharing it with my children is great!



Connie Kuehl: I live in Morgan's Point, but have lived in Fort Worth, Benton, Arkansas, Pittsburg and Austin. I am the Director of the Killeen /Civic & Conference Center. I got interested in gardening from my Grandparents.

Christy Reese: I live in Belton, but am originally from the Fort Worth/ Arlington area. I work in Construction Administration/ Accounting. I got interested in gardening, because growing up, my Grandparents always had a garden. I also prefer fresh produce.



Class of 2017

Dee Seely: I live in Troy and am originally from Waco. I'm a teacher. I got interested in gardening through my Grandmother and Sister.

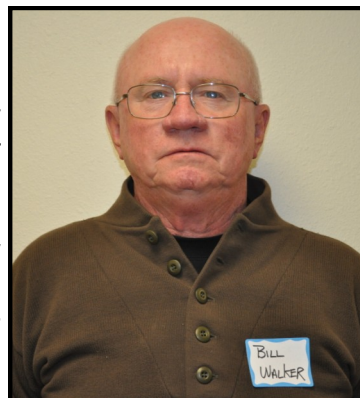


Janice Smith: I'm originally from Bay City, Texas and live in Belton now. I had a career as a Family Medicine Physician. I became interested in gardening by working with my Grandmother in her garden as a child....she instilled a love of gardening in me that continues to grow.



Bill Walker: I'm originally from Fredericksburg, Virginia. I live in Holland, Texas now. I'm retired from the McLane company, Inc. after 39 years of service. I began my career out of college as a produce buyer. From this initial beginning, things progressed through Marketing, Transportation and Warehouse management and ended with my final years

moving to Temple, Texas to be a Corporate Product Director. My father was a gardener raising and selling strawberries and raspberries. My first job at 15 was working in a nursery and garden center. In the mid 70's, I obtained a



BS degree in Agriculture/Applied Horticulture at the University of Maryland. After my McLane career ended with retirement, we've developed a commercial peach orchard, blackberry arbor, bee apiary and vegetable production on our farm in Holland, Texas.



Susannah Smith: I'm originally from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, but live in Salado now. I had a career as an Art Museum Curator. I became interested in gardening through my Grandmother who had a love of flower and vegetable gardening.



Dolly Wilson: I live in Salado, but am originally from western rural New Jersey, "The Garden State." I am still a baker at three local eateries. I had two

gardener Grandfathers - one who grew flowers and the other who grew vegetables. Their practices intrigued me: making manure soup, screening soil, the rhythms of the seasons and the chores seemed soothing, natural and right. My mom sealed the deal when she gave me an old jar lid with wet cotton and let me "plant" bird seed. I watched it grow many times a day-wow! That was powerful stuff. I was hooked!



More 2016 Awards

Several recipients of awards not present at the December Christmas Party received their awards during the



January 2017 General Meeting. Tom Rennels received his 100-199 Volunteer Hour Certificate and an Honorable Mention Certificate for

2016 New Master Gardener of the Year; Mary Lou Edmondson received her 100-199 Hour Certificate and her 15 Year Pin; Walter Ponder received his 100-199 Hour Certificate; Gail Pierce received her 5 year pin. Above: Gary Slanga hands over the gavel to our new president, Wayne Schirner!



Oops!

- Terrie Hahn

Seems I made an error with the Awards photos in the January Blooming Bell. Kathy Love gave me the correct info.



The Golden Trowel awards went to Kathy Love, **Wayne Schirner** and Jane Van Praag. The photo I used of Kathy, Don and Jane (below) was for our service awards, Kathy: 700+, Don: 500+ and Jane: 400+.



Photos by Daisy Klassy and Randy Brown

Announcements

Grounds Workdays

- Walter Ponder

Here is the Workday schedule for January:

February 1, 2017 8:00 a.m. Workday

February 1, 2017 10:30 a.m. Burger Wednesday

February 8, 2017 8:00 a.m. Workday

February 15, 2017 8:00 a.m. Workday

February 22, 2017 8:00 a.m. Workday

In the event of rain or 40 degree temperature or below, there will be No Workday.

February General Meeting

- Mary Ann Everett

The **February 8th** General meeting's speaker will be Gary Slanga speaking on Tree Care. Meeting at 10:30 a.m. Social Time is 10:00 a.m.

Check Out the Calendar

-Carol Morisset and Jan Upchurch Co-chairs, Educational Outreach

Fellow Master Gardeners:

We are excited to announce that you can now access a master Calendar of Events for all Master Gardener activities through your volunteer hours sign-in portal: <https://texas.volunteersystem.org/UniversalLogin.cfm>

The calendar is located to the left under Events Calendar.

We have updated the calendar with all events known at this time. Note that when you click on the event

with it the calendar you can access more details about that event. Please continue to send Scarlot all your events, whether they be educational events, volunteer opportunities or committee meetings, so we can continue to keep the calendar current.

In addition, this is also the site to find approved community **speaking opportunities**. The requested engagements have been added to the calendar and approved community speakers can sign up right there on the calendar.

FOR ALL EVENTS you have the ability to send yourself a reminder through this calendar!!!

Please feel free to let us know if you have further suggestions for us. We are looking forward to keeping you informed of all opportunities to serve our community!!!

Bell County Youth Fair

- Betty Nejtek

The Bell County Youth Fair will be **Saturday February 4th through Saturday February 11th** this year. First, I want to say Thank You to all my fellow Master Gardeners who have already volunteered to help at the Fair this year. The Fair would not be the successful event it is without the volunteers who work out there all week (and many before the Fair even starts). If you have not signed up to work at the Fair and would like to help - please feel free to contact me (phone 254-913-4065 or email enejtek@hotmail.com) and let me know what date and time. We can always use your assistance Monday (the 6th) through Thursday (the 9th).

The Family and Consumer Science division starts Saturday with the Fashion Revue and Fashion Show open to the public at 5:30pm in the Special Events Room of the Expo Center. The entire Fair winds down the next Saturday with the Auction at Noon. This is an opportunity to bid/purchase projects and/or provide add ons to any items at the Auction. The Auction itself is a fun event just to attend and watch, see the winners. It's a positive experience for our Youth and Leaders of tomorrow.

Announcements

Kid Zone at Home & Garden Show

- Marjorie Gillmeister

Home and Garden Show 2017 is around the corner! Learn how to "Eggshell Garden" with Master Gardener of Bell County Class of 2016, Marjorie Gillmeister. She will have an interactive booth at "The Kid Zone" look for "Wolfgang's Garden Booth."

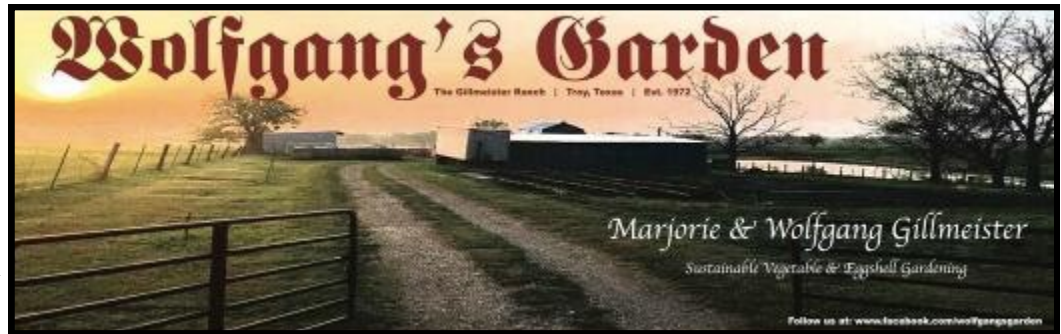
Saturday, February 25th (10am-6pm)

Sunday, February 26th (12pm-5pm)

Join us at The Master Gardener Booth for a seminar on "Eggshell Gardening" with Marjorie on **Saturday, February 25th at 1:00pm.**

Bell County Master Gardeners host free seminars at the 2017 Home & Garden Show.

Photos by Marjorie Gillmeister



Home and Garden Show

- Louann Hight

BCMGA members will host a free educational booth and present a series of free educational seminars on February 25-26 at the Bell County Expo Center during the 2017 TABA Home and Garden Show.

Visitors are encouraged to stop by the Master Gardener's booth at any time during the show if they have gardening questions or need assistance in solving gardening problems. In addition to the free seminars, propagating techniques will be highlighted all three days of the Show. The first ever Master Gardener Cookbook will be available for purchase, along with information on the annual Spring Plant sale. Depending on growing conditions, we plan to have a minimal number of vegetables & herbs for sale. The free seminars will be held in Building C.

Saturday - February 25th

10:30 a.m. and 2:15 p.m. - So! You Want to Grow Tomatoes -Vegetable Gardening

1:00 p.m. - Egg Shell Gardening

3:30 PM - Rainwater Harvesting

Sunday - February 26th

12:30 PM - Square Foot Gardening

1:45 PM - Care of Landscape trees

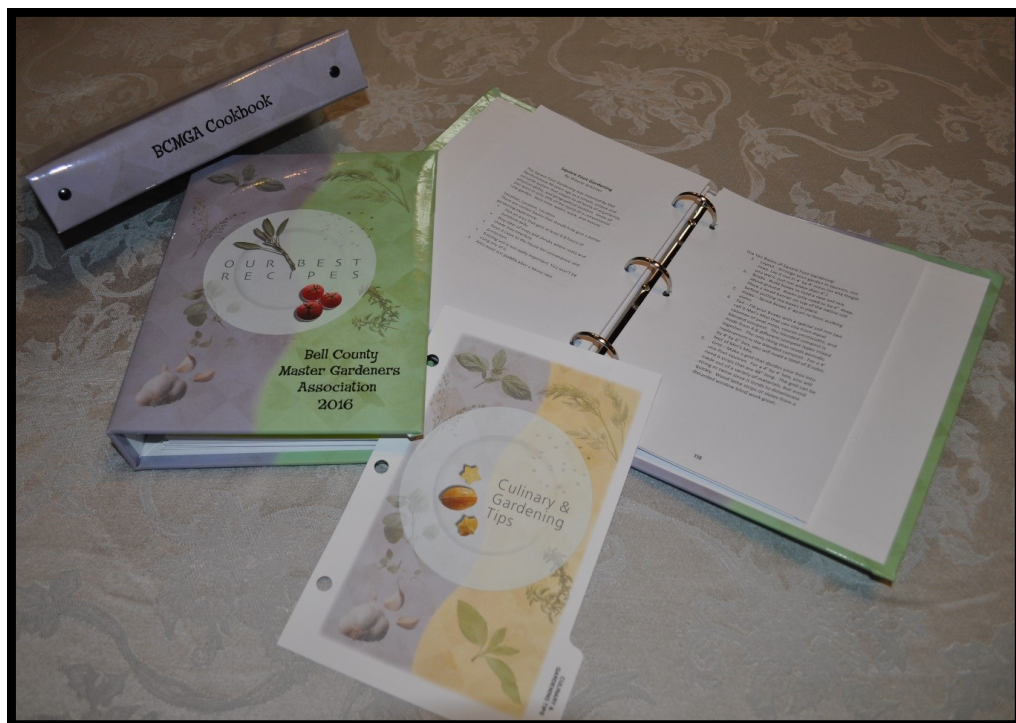
Masters Gardeners are again sponsoring two Kids Zone booths during the Home and Garden Show.

Announcements

Bell County Master Gardener's Association 2016 Cookbook

- Sylvia Maedgen

The Bell County Master Gardener's Association 2016 Cookbook arrived in late November. The cookbook is a fundraiser for our association and contains 360 recipes. Included is a section on Culinary & Gardening Tips to include the subjects: Herbs; Raised Garden Beds; Container Gardening; Square Foot Gardening; Plant Growth & Development; and Additional Resources. Several of the included recipes were prepared using various herbs in the Master Gardener's intern classes.



We plan to add pictures of Master Gardeners in action in the very near future to add to the cookbook. The cookbook is in a 3-ring binder and we plan to supplement additional recipes as well as Culinary & Gardening Tips in the future to supplement our fundraising. The cookbooks will be sold at the Home and Garden Show and the Spring and Fall

Plant Sales. If you have not purchased your cookbook yet, you may do so by contacting Sylvia Maedgen, at 254-624-6171. The purchase price is \$18; you can make your check payable to - BCMGA. Get your cookbook before they are all sold!

Photo by Sylvia Maedgen

Mother Earth News Fair

Feb. 18-19, 2017

Bell County Expo Center
301 W Loop 121
Belton, Texas 76513

Saturday: 9:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m., Sunday: 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

With more than 150 workshops, there is no shortage of informative demonstrations and lectures to educate and entertain you over the weekend.

This is a great way to earn Education Hours. Fun, Informative workshops and demo's!

Go to: <http://www.motherearthnewsfair.com/texas/>

What's Happening in Your Yard

Lost Leaves!

- Crystal Fisher

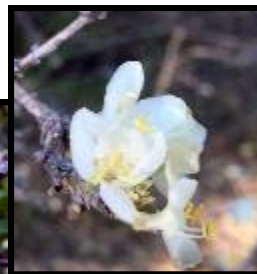
Mexican White Oaks are known for holding their leaves till Winter is over. In the case of the high winds that came through Central Texas early this year, that didn't happen. Perhaps these leaves are now in the next county.



Winter Growth

- Terrie Hahn

Below: A carpet of Borage starting up; Snowbells (Leucojum) are back; Rosemary flowering and White Winter Honeysuckle.



What's Happening in Your Yard

- Randy Brown



Kathy and I took a trip up the Dallas Arboretum on January 24th and took these photos. Some of the bulb plants are already coming up.



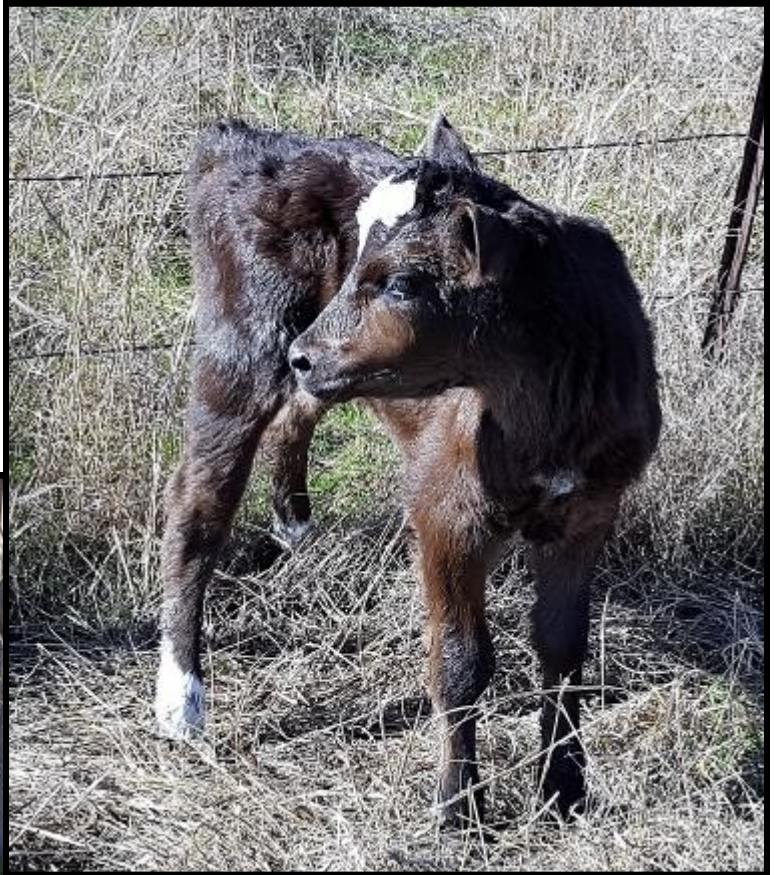
Editor's Note: I wanted to add this photo of Randy and Kathy. Such a cute, hard-working couple!

What's Happening in Your Yard

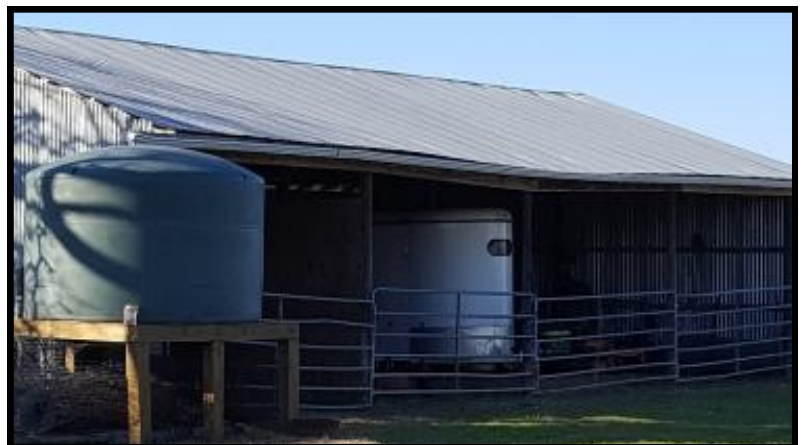
- Kathy Love

Calves are not normally born on our farm, the moms go back to our leaser's ranch to be born. This one was accidentally born on inauguration day, January 20th before mom went back to the ranch. I've named her "Trumpet"!

Have finally installed 1,500 gallon tanks from Ursula's yard. The one below is catching water off of the roof of my dog kennels (primarily plant care kennels these days!) for my gardens.



This one is set to catch water off of our pole barn to provide water for my horses --need a longer hose! Think that roof will fill up a tank?



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Please do not send PDF documents.

A publication of the Bell County Master Gardener
Association sponsored by Texas AgriLife Extension of
Texas A & M University

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