

# The Blooming Bell

June 2014



Bell County  
Master Gardener  
Association



Name that wild-  
flower: Check  
out page 11.

Photos by Carla  
Harmon.

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Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4 Work Day 8:30 am Hamburger Wednesday 11 am	5	6	7
8	9	10	11 <u>NO</u> Work Day State Conference Meeting at Expo Center 8:30 am General Meeting 11 am w/social time at 10:30 am Budget Meeting 1 pm	12 Conserva- tion Expo at Expo Center	13	14 Flag day 
15 Fathers Day	16	17	18 Work Day 8 am	19	20	21
22	23	24	25 Work Day 8 am Board Meeting 9 am	26	27	28
29	30					

Remember to turn-in your service and education hours for May.  
 Photo by Suzanne Boyer from Amsterdam's Kuekenhof Gardens.

# The President's Corner

I would like to thank all you Master Gardeners who have enough confidence in me to select me as the new president of our great organization. I know I have a tough act to follow, and would like to thank Laura Murphy for the outstanding work she did as our president. I hope I can do half the job she did.

I would also like to thank all the conference committee members for the hard work they are putting in to make this conference a success. I will try to make as many of the committee meetings as I can, but you folks are working so hard I find it's tough just trying to keep up with you. So keep up the good work. The conference is taking shape nicely and we are keeping right up with or ahead of the time line.

I know there have been many questions about the cost of/profit from our hosting this conference. I have had concerns voiced over what happens if we make too much money, and why are we not showing a profit on our proposed budget. Let me just say that if you have concerns, please come and see me personally and I will try to answer any questions that you may have. You are also invited to attend the budget meeting on June 4<sup>th</sup> at 1 PM in the AgriLife classroom. This is where we will try to get a handle on the money matters for the conference.

The hectic days of May are past and we have a little more breathing room in June. We will have a meeting at the Expo Center to map out conference activities. That will be at 8:30 on the 11<sup>th</sup>. There will also be a soil health and conservation expo hosted by AgriLife Extension on the 12<sup>th</sup>. We have two MGs doing presentations at that event.

Our general membership meeting will follow the Expo meeting at the usual 10:30 social gathering and 11:00 meeting. For the July meeting we will start the social gathering at 10:00 and meeting at 10:30. This will allow us to conduct our business, which seems to take up a considerable amount of time, and still leave a full hour for our guest speakers. In the past it seems we are cutting our speakers short, leaving question unanswered, and shorting ourselves the one hour education time we need to keep up our certification.

We are also well on our way to installing a rainwater collection system on our new building. Charles Newsom has done most of the work so far, leveling the ground and preparing the footing for the tank. We are using grant money given to the 4H for the project, and Lyle brought in the 3000 gal. collection tank. There is another article in this issue that will go into detail on this project.

Once again thanks to all who are working so diligently to make our organization the best that it can be.

- Gary

*Dear Master Gardeners,*

*First, thank you for allowing me to serve as your president the past three years. You have all been very kind and supportive. Also, thank you for the lovely silver bracelet with garden charms. What a wonderful surprise and gift. I will enjoy wearing it and have already had many compliments and questions about the bracelet.*

*This will be another busy year for Master Gardeners in Bell County, but what an exciting year ahead. Things are beginning to come together for the conference, and it is going to be a good one! I look forward to attending the 2015 State Conference at Expo. Thank you all.....Laura*

# Wizzie's Wonderful World of Insects

## Carpenter Ants

- 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!)*

Carpenter ants nest outdoors in dead wood (tree stumps or dead limbs, fences, firewood, etc.). They can also be found in wood siding, beams, joists, fascia boards or trim on structures. Damage is usually limited since carpenter ants tunnel and nest within wood; they do not eat wood. However, wood can become weakened by carpenter ant excavation.

Carpenter ants are large ants that can vary in color from all black to reddish to yellowish or a combination of colors. These ants have one node, no stinger and a circle of hairs at the tip of their abdomen.

Galleries in the nest are excavated following the grain of the wood and have clean, smooth walls. Nest locations may be discovered by searching for piles of sawdust-looking material under exit holes. Sawdust is coarse and may also contain soil or sand, uneaten insects as well as dead ants from the colony.

Carpenter ants have mating flights, or swarms, to begin new colonies. After mating, males die while females find a suitable nesting site. Females then lay 15-20 eggs which develop into worker ants in about two months. The queen cares for the first batch of brood and feeds them secretions from her body. Once brood has emerged as adult workers, they take over care of the colony and expand the nest as well as providing food for the queen and caring for new brood.

Carpenter ants are able to enter homes from tree branches or utility lines touching the home, through cracks and crevices around windows and doors, cracks in foundation walls, ventilation openings or heating and air conditioning ducts.

Here are some tips for a carpenter ant infestation:

- \* Remove dead trees and/ or limbs and remove tree stumps from the landscape. Many times you can remove the (possible) nesting sites and get rid of the ants without using pesticides.

- \* Prune trees and shrubs that touch the home. Carpenter ants will often use these areas as a bridge to enter the home.

- \* Replace wood that is water damaged. Carpenter ants are drawn to moisture damaged wood, so make sure to repair any water leaks and replace damaged wood.

- \* Remove wood debris and firewood that is near the home. Carpenter ants may nest in firewood and when it is stacked right next to the home, it allows the ants to enter more easily.

For more information or help with identification, con-



tact Wizzie Brown, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist at 512.854.9600. Check out my blog at [www.urban-ipm.blogspot.com](http://www.urban-ipm.blogspot.com)

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# Rain Water Harvesting Project

## - Gary Slanga

We are well on our way to installing the new rain water collection system. This project is a collaboration between the 4H who obtained a grant from Red Lobster and the Master gardeners, with the objective of providing a site to demonstrate the correct way to install such a system. The MG committee working on this project consists of Lyle Zoeller, Laura Murphy, Ursula Nanna, and Charles Newsom. Most of the work done so far has been by Charles and our thanks to him for the work on the foundation for the tank, and for most of the plumbing we need so far. Also thanks to Lyle who

committee will try to have all the components necessary for completion of this system, and during the seminar we will put it all together and dedicate the completed project.

The seminar will be on Monday June 30<sup>th</sup> from 9 AM to Noon. All master gardeners who attend will get 2hrs of education credit. 4H members who attend will hopefully leave with a better understanding how this kind of system is installed.



Photos by Don Wyatt



went to Marble Falls and picked up the tank for us. We have included pictures of the crew moving the tank into position.

We plan to use the final phase of the installation as a teaching seminar for all Master Gardeners who wish to attend and as many 4H members as we can round up. This will be a hands-on demonstration of how to install a rain water harvesting system. Lyle will try to have some additional speakers on water conservation, and other related topics. The



# Martin Time - My Favorite Time of Year

- Jean Flores

This Spring marks my fifth year as a Purple Martin Landlord. The joy these gorgeous birds bring me each year is indescribable. Several of my neighbors now get excited when they see their first Purple Martin each Spring. Last year, my son texted me on his way to school to say, "Mom, go outside and look up!" There they were! Friends laugh at me as we'll be visiting in the house and I suddenly run outside because I've heard that familiar song. Everyone I introduce them to falls in love with them.

I've met countless people that tell me they put up a



house, but it just gets taken over by House Sparrows or that the Purple Martins just don't come. Learn as much as you can before you put up that house. The Purple Martin Conservation Association (PMCA) is a great place to start. There is no way I could write in this short article all there is to know, but I'll try to give you some main points.

Placement of the house/gourds is everything. The site needs to be clear of trees for at least 40 feet so they have a clear flight path in. They like to be near human housing, which is great because then you can enjoy them easier. You have to be willing to work at it in keeping the predators away. You have to be vigilant in keeping the House Sparrows (HOSPs) and Starlings out. I've kept the Starlings at bay by buying gourds with special entrances, but there are also plates that can be added to houses that do the same thing. Here in the South, the Starlings are sometimes smaller and I had a couple breach the entrances a couple of years ago. I fixed that by gluing squares of coroplast (plastic sign board) to the porches. It raised the level just enough, and made it slick enough, that the taller Starlings can't get it because their legs are too long and the slickness prevents them from shoving themselves in. Unfortunately, the only way to keep the HOSPs out is to be their worst enemy, and it can take a lot of work for a month or so. Once the Purple Martins have taken all of the gourds, I can let down my guard a bit because the Purple Martins help keep the HOSPs out. I still keep an eye on them, but there are days in the Spring that I have to pull the rack down three times to pull out a HOSP nest and destroy any eggs that they may lay.

This year is my best yet. I have a full "house". For the first time I have a nesting pair in every single gourd. The nestlings started to hatch on 7 May and we are having a blast checking on them each day to make sure all is well. Sometimes the half of a hatched egg will cover another egg, making it harder or impossible for the baby in there trying to get out. This is called capping, and I am careful to look for this while doing nest checks. Sometimes it's necessary to do a nest change if there is a mite problem, but so far this year, fingers crossed, I haven't had to do that. I hate having to handle the babies as they are so fragile the first several days.

Continued on next page...

## Martin Time...continued

As I write this, we have 24 adults, 36 young, and 28 eggs yet to hatch. That's A LOT of birds on a little 12-gourd rack! It is amazing to see how much they change in just a few short days, and I'm always stunned that in just a few months they will fly back to Brazil and points South. Incredible little birds and I'm already starting to miss them as I know they won't be around much longer.

If you are looking for something very moving to see, head down to Austin one evening in late July/early August to the old Highland Mall just East of I35, off of Airport Blvd. Head to the North side of the mall. In the parking lot across the street from the Wells Fargo Bank there are three trees (right in line with Jonathan Drive). Set up your lawn chairs and get ready for a show. Thousands and thousands of Purple Martins arrive at sundown as they roost together to get ready for their long journey back home. There are so many of them, you can feel the wind from their wings. Truly, it is far more moving than the bats under Congress Bridge.

I'm willing to help anyone out with advice or a visit to your colony to see what might be wrong if you are having troubles. I can be contacted at:  
danandjeanflores@aol.com



Capped Egg - Unhatched egg covered by newly hatched shell.



After 2nd year female (l) and male (r)

*Editor's Note: Check out Jean's new blog at:  
<http://scottishlamb.typepad.com/nature/>*

*Photos by Jean Flores*

## Save Your Tomatoes

**- Terrie Hahn**

I was online on a Garden Forum and found an interesting solution to keeping birds from pecking all your ripe tomatoes. The Mockingbirds were devouring ours, so we thought we'd try this.

Carefully wrap your tomatoes that are just starting to turn red with a damp paper toweling so that no tomato is showing. The paper toweling clings to the tomato and will turn white and the birds won't notice them. Give them a few days and check them out and see what perfect tomatoes you have. Be aware if it's really close to the ground, you may have pill bugs or roly polys get at them.

Obviously this won't work for them all, because it's kind of troublesome to do, but at least you can save your biggest and best. I've also wrapped whole clumps. The paper toweling pictured is still damp, but will turn white when dry.





# **Congratulations to the Class of 2014!**

Graduating with their certification already are, right and clockwise: Jean Flores, David Mitchell, Walter Ponder, Todd Strait, Elvira Townsend, Cindy Bollinger, Jo Carlsen and Tina Mazur (not pictured). Continued on next page



# Congratulations to the Class of 2014!

Also completing their training and receiving nametags are, pictured left to right by rows: Linda Chichester, Kay Coburn, Mary Jo DoVal, Stan Henn, Patty Kuehl, Jacob Manns, Katy Mitchell, Daniel Perry, Vivian Rush and Sandy Sedberry. Not pictured are Janet Eberhardt, Justin Hammonds, Carl Mauritz. Graduates who haven't certified yet have until May 31, 2015 to become certified.



Photos by Randy Brown



# Laura's Last General Meeting as President



Bernie presented Laura with a garden charm bracelet from the membership as a thanks for her work as President during the May General Meeting. Mary Ann offered up a prayer and Heidi Prude spoke about Water Education.



Photos by Randy Brown

# Q & A

## Name That Wildflower

- Terrie Hahn

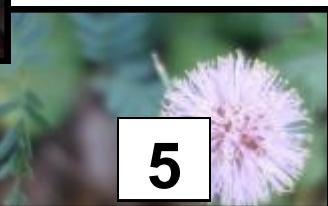
On the front cover of May's Blooming Bell were photos of wildflowers in bloom in April (pictured to the right). Can you name them all?

The Answers are:

1. Scarlet Gaura, *Gaura coccinea*
2. Red Poppy
3. Corn Flower, Bachelor's Button, *Centaurea cyanus*
4. Lace Cactus, *Echinocereus Reichenbachii*
5. Sensitive Briar, *Schrankia* sp.
6. Wild Onion, Canada Onion, *allium canadense*
7. Antelope-Horns Milkweed, *Asclepias asperula*
8. Fluttermill, Missouri Primrose, *Oenothera missouriensis*
9. Blue Larkspur, Carolina Larkspur, *Delphinium carolinianum*
10. Blue Curls, *Phacelia congesta*

The front cover of this issue of The Blooming Bell has 10 photos of wildflowers blooming in May taken by Carla Harmon. Can you come up with the names of all of them? Let's see who knows their wildflowers!

Email me at [moompie45@hotmail.com](mailto:moompie45@hotmail.com) or call me at 512-863-9837.



Oak Wilt & Tree Health • Fuels Mitigation and Prescribed Fire  
Wildlife Tax Valuation • Land Management Operations & Water  
Resources • Soil Health • Firewise & Native Landscaping

# Bell County Conservation Expo

Thursday, June 12, 2014, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Bell County Expo Center

301 West Loop 121

Belton, TX 76513

*\*\$25 Registration, includes lunch.  
Continuing Education Units (CEUs) available.*

**Let us help you manage your own little piece of the Lone Star State.**

To RSVP, contact:

Bell Co. AgriLife Extension Services

(Checks payable to: Bell Crops Committee)

1605 N Main St., 102

Belton, TX 76513

254-933-5305

[l-zoeller@tamu.edu](mailto:l-zoeller@tamu.edu)

[www.texasconservation.org](http://www.texasconservation.org)

The Bell County  
Conservation Expo  
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**Central Texas  
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Texas AgriLife Extension Service, Texas A&M Forest Service, Texas  
Parks and Wildlife, Natural Resources Conservation Service,  
and Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board

# Announcements

## New Program for Service/ Education hours

- Gail Christian

I noticed that quite a few people have entered service hours in the new program. A few brave souls have even put their photos on their profile page. The responses have been positive from everyone experimenting with entering data. If you haven't tried it, now is the time to experiment with the program.

Just remember, we still need you to turn your time in by the paper time sheet until **May 31st**. **June 1st** we start our new fiscal year. Then we will start using the new system. Stacey will still enter the data for those who don't have a computer. If you have a problem with the system, I am available to help.

To get started, go to:

<https://texas.volunteersystem.org/UniversalLogin.cfm>

Type in your e-mail, then at the bottom click on new user. It will e-mail you a temporary password. This you can copy or type into the second box. That will let you into the system. You can then find your name and change the password to something you can remember. Log in to edit your profile and to change information. You can add a photo which would be helpful to the rest of the membership so we all get to know each other better.

Click on "add new hours" to record your volunteer and service hours. Make sure to click "save hours" at the bottom of the page.

## Dues Due

- Gail Christian

The 2014 - 2015 membership dues are payable now till the end of June. Dues remain \$25.00 for each individual. Checks should be made to BCMGA and may be mailed or dropped off at the Agrilife Extension Office at 1605 N. Main St., Belton, TX 76513. They

may also be mailed directly to the Treasurer, Gail Christian, at 3426 Bob White Lane, Belton, TX 76513.

If you have already paid this years dues, thank you for your continued participation in this organization.

## FYI

### Texas Gardener

Make sure to check out the upcoming July/August issue of Texas Gardener for the article on the Killeen Municipal Court Community Garden.

### Nesting Materials

- Crystal Fisher

Just look at the myriad of materials used by this sparrow to make a nest. I think we can all name several ingredients. You just never know what a bird will find valuable.

Photo by Lee Williams



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

## **Harvest Time!**

- Don Latham



Before and After. It's harvest time!

The spring season is finally here. I picked 150 pounds of yellow squash and zucchini. Prettiest garden I have had in recent years.

I have an acre of produce and fruit trees. Big peach crop on the way also.

## **Those Crazy Squirrels!**

- Jerry Lewis

I call this one "Hogs at the Trough."



# What's Happening in Your Yard

## Traveling!

- Suzanne Boyer

I was in Europe recently. The photo of me was taken on a tulip bulb farm outside of Amsterdam. The others were taken at the Kuekenhof Garden in Amsterdam.



# What's Happening in Your Yard

## Gardens Welcoming Rain

- Charles Newsom

The garden enjoyed the 2 1/4 inches of rain in mid May. We planted flowers (marigolds and zinnias) between the tomatoes. And we planted sunflowers. Pictured on the right, the temperature of my compost pile. I cover my compost pile. That seems to give me better control of the composting process. At the bottom of the page are photos of some of my non edibles. We have a diversity of plants such as Common Mullen, Castor Bean and Devil's Claw.



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***Please do not send PDF documents.***

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