

The Blooming Bell

April 2015



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**Bell County
Master Gardener
Association**

Summer Snowflakes,
Leucojum aestivum

- Terrie Hahn



Conference Logo Design by
Robin Pohl



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 Work Day 8 am* Burger Wednesday 10:30 am	2 Work Day 8 am*	3	4
5	6	7	8 NO CLASS Work Day 8 am* General meeting 10:30 am	9 Work Day 8 am*	10	11
12	13	14	15 NO CLASS Work Day 8 am* Conference Set Up	16	17	18
				State Conference		
19	20	21	22 New Class Field Trip	23	24	25
26	27	28	29 Work Day 8 am* Board of Directors Meeting 9 am	30		

* in the event of rain or temperatures below 40 degrees, there will be No Workdays.

Upcoming Dates: May 13, plant/seed swap 9:30 a.m. May 6, Graduation Photos by Terrie Hahn

Remember to record volunteer/education hours. 2

The President's Corner

So it is April already and the Conference is upon us. With so much left to do I am going to make this a very short note. I want to thank the Sponsor/Vendor committee for the great job they have done. They have doubled the numbers we were planning on for the conference. Also thanks to all the committee members that have been working so hard. It looks like we are going to have a great conference. Lets keep the momentum going these last two weeks.

Great job everyone.

- Gary

Conference Updates

Plants for Speaker

One of our speakers, Clint Walker, is asking for native plants from our yards as his fee for speaking at our conference.

Please pot and label your plant or plants and bring them to the next monthly meeting, April 8.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 254-721-0931 or email everett.maryann4@gmail.com.

Thank you.

Mary Ann



Photos by Randy Brown of various conference meetings.

State Conference Logo Design by Robin Pohl



Wizzie's Wonderful World of Insects

Carpenter Bees

- Wizzie Brown, Travis County
AgriLife Extension Entomologist

Carpenter bees are one of those insects that can be viewed by people in two varying ways- as a beneficial or a pest. If they are in your garden and helping to pollinate plants it's great, but things can be put into a negative light when these insects burrow into wood and cause damage.

Carpenter bees look similar to bumble bees, but they have a shiny, hairless abdomen. They are ½- 1 inch in length and are typically black and yellow. Male carpenter bees have a whitish spot on the front of their face. Only females have a stinger, but usually do not sting unless very agitated or held in someone's hand. Males cannot sting, but can be territorial and harass insect or other animals (including humans) that enter their space.



Carpenter bees get their name because they use their mandibles to chew galleries in wood creating round, ½ inch diameter holes. Holes often have coarse sawdust near the opening. Holes may have yellowish-brown staining below them from where the bees defecate before entering the nest.

Galleries are rounded and may sometimes cause damage to structures. The galleries are provisioned with pollen/ nectar loaves. An egg is laid on the loaf

and the section is portioned off with a mixture of saliva and sawdust. Adults feed on nectar.

Nest may be created in exposed wood on structures, wooden decks or wood shingles or siding. Painted and treated woods are less preferred, but are not unsusceptible to attack. These bees do not eat the wood, but instead excavate it for nesting purposes.

Carpenter bees overwinter as adults, often in old nesting tunnels. Adults emerge in spring with males usually appearing before females. The females will excavate new tunnels in wood and create the pollen ball to lay an egg on. The eggs hatch within a few days and development to adult take 5-7 weeks. Adults generally emerge in the summer, but they do not create new galleries. They will clean out old galleries to serve as overwintering sites.

Carpenter bees are similar to Bumble bees in that they are generalists and visit many types of flowers as well as having "buzz pollination". "Buzz pollination is where the bee grabs onto the flower, moves its wings rapidly and vibrates the anther which dislodges pollen. Some plants are more efficiently pollinated with buzz pollination.

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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EXTENSION

The Beginning of Days

the light slowly filters through
the dense darkness of the barren trees
the crystal frost delicately balances
on the leaves of grass
the gentle trickle of a nearby spring
dampens the delicate nose of a doe
the orchestra of nature
is out of tune as each entity
is warming up its tone.
the crickets, the frogs,
the distant sounds of converging cattle,
the rugged sounds of galloping horses from a neighboring ranch.
the rooster, the hens, and yes,
the bark of ones faithful companion.
each in its own starting its day
slowly harmonizing with one another
and by mid morning a symphony.
my skin is weathered
my hair may be thin
my bones are weary
my step may be slow
yet my mind is alive, the light awakens my soul,
the air stirs my spirit,
and the earth is beckoning my hands to dig deep
once again into its surface to
moil the soil.
to bring forth a new life,
to prune a heady brush,
to plant another seed, to once again be a part
of the harmony that has evolved since the beginning of time,
to be one with the earth
and to start anew
the beginning of Days.

- Georgio R. Graf, New Class Intern, 03-19-15

Don't Prune Your Moths!

- Terrie Hahn

A couple of weeks ago, I was pruning my *Salvia greggii* and *Lantana* when I heard something moving around. After jumping back three feet, I carefully looked, expecting to see a snake or bird-something a bit bigger and heavier, but instead I saw this critter! I gently covered him up with brush to protect him from the birds while I got my camera. I got a shot off just before he took off into the trees.

This was a male Polyphemus Moth, *Anthraea polyphemus*. They have prominent, owl-like eye spots and about a 5 1/2 inch wingspan. They protect themselves using mimicry. "Besides looking like dead leaves or bark when their wings are folded, these moths will open their wings suddenly, revealing the large eyespots, (which is exactly what this guy did and why I jumped back 3 feet!) These eyespots mimic an owl's eyes, and can surprise a predator, such as a squirrel or bird. You can tell a male adult moth from a female by its antennae. The male has large, feathery antennae which help it detect the female's scent (pheromones)," according to www.fcps.edu

After mating, the female lays 3 to 5 eggs on the underside of a leaf that the caterpillars will be able to munch on when they hatch from their eggs. According to www.texasbutterflyranch.com, "Polyphemus change dramatically during the caterpillar cycle and in their final instar become a fantastic three or four inch green caterpillar with silver and/or red spots on the side. Like many moths, these members of the Saturnid, or silk moth family, spend most of their life as caterpillars, eating up to 86,000 times their body weight at emergence in just two months. Once they become a moth, however, their vestigial mouth parts make eating impossible. Basically, their mouths don't work anymore. Their sole focus as a moth is to reproduce."

Host plants include many trees and shrubs nationwide. The caterpillar and adult moth are vulnerable to predators,

including birds, small mammals, and predatory insects.

If it is late Summer or early Fall, the pupa inside the cocoon will overwinter and emerge the following spring. Some cocoons stay stuck to a tree branch all winter. Others fall to the ground when the leaves fall.

So, let's be careful out there with our clippers!

Photos by Mona Miller, Lacy L. Hyche, Auburn University and Terrie Hahn

Thanks to Texas Butterfly Ranch and Study of Northern Virginia Ecology for Fairfax County Public Schools.



New Intern Field Trip

- Walter Ponder

The Field Trip for the 2015 Master Gardener Interns will take place on April 22, 2015. The trip will encompass visits to three different locations. One will be the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. It is noted as a 279 acre public botanical garden devoted entirely to native plants, with more than 700 species native to central Texas. The second location will be the home of Patty Glenn Leander a Master Gardener Vegetable Specialist, and a contributing writer to the Texas Gardener magazine. The final stop will be to the Natural Gardener, known for its "pioneering work in organic gardening and sustainable living", it has been voted "Best Nursery" ten times in the Austin Chronicle's Best of Austin Poll. It has also been nationally recognized by the Garden Center Magazine as "Innovative Garden Center of the Year."

For more information regarding the trip please contact Walter Ponder

Poppies are Coming!

- Randy Brown

My yard is full of Poppies! To the right is the first one that has bloomed!



BCMG Herbes Flock to Herbal Forum

- Carol Runyan

Neither rain nor mud nor gloom of mist stays the herb-
alists from the swift completion of
their appointed rounds at the plant
sale and herbal Forum (apology to
the postmen's oath)

There were 17 BCMG who attended
the Herbal Forum March 20-21,
2015 in Round Top, Texas. As soon
as we arrived, we headed straight to
the plant sale area which is amazing
- tables and tables and tables of
herbs! There are also other plants
available. The big problem is pack-
ing our cars when we come home!
There were garden tours and work-
shops to attend in the afternoon or
additional plant purchasing.

On Friday evening, we had our tradi-
tional picnic dinner on the porch of
one of Festival Hill's Artist Resi-
dence Houses where we were staying. Everyone
brought a dish containing at least one herb. Also stay-
ing in our building was Trisha Shirey, the Director of
Flora and Fauna at Lake Austin Spa in Austin. You

have probably seen her on "Central Texas Gardener"
on the PBS station, KLRU from Austin. We invited her
to join us for dinner.

Saturday was filled with lectures. We left about 5 p.m.
and drove home in the rain.

Savory is the Herb of the Year for 2015; therefore, it
was the focus for this year's Forum. We learned that



there are many varieties of Savory, but for Central
Texas, the most successful to grow is Winter Savory,
(*Satureja montana*), which is a hardy semi-evergreen
perennial that grows to 15 inches and is
highly aromatic. It produces small fragrant
white to lilac colored blossoms that attract
bees. It is a member of the Mint family with
square stems. The plant grows better in
poor stoney soil and in a sunny location. It
is propagated by seed, cuttings or division.
The peppery flavor of Winter Savory is well
suited for soups, stews, beans, herb but-
ters, vinegars and teas. Traditionally Savory
has been one of the five herbs in the popu-
lar blend known as Herbes de Provence.
The others are marjoram, rosemary, thyme
and oregano. The health and medicinal
uses of Savory include remedies for sore

Continued on next page...



Herbal Forum...continued

throats, indigestion and flatulence. A sprig of Savory rubbed on wasp and bee stings gives instant relief. Most Savories are native to the Mediterranean region.

The 2016 Herbal Forum Is "Some Like it Hot, Some Not" celebrating the 2016 Herb of the Year, Chili Peppers.

Those former, current and intern Bell County Master Gardeners attending this year's Forum were: Frances Idoux, Pam Dragoo, Jeanne Richard, Nancy Kozusko, Linda Carter, Vivian Rush, Barbara Beebe, Crystal Fisher, Mechelle Davies, Kim Pringle, Suzanne Boyer, Daisy Klassy, Brenda Smith, Tina Mazur, Carol



Runyan, Nancy Blansett, Jane Van Praag, Terrie Hahn and Susan Firth met us for the plant sale.



Science Night at Timber Ridge Elementary School

by Gail Koontz, class reporter

Ten of us – Dennis Biggs, Debbie Brumleve, David Carpenter, Ann Eubanks, Mary Ann Everett, Gail Koontz, Elaine Passman, Amazon Roberts, Jane Van Praag, and Faye Zook – gathered in Killeen Tuesday, March 10, to help some 150 elementary students make nature masks.

We were one of many stations throughout the school. As you can see, some of the Master Gardeners and Interns got in on the fun also.



Photos by Gail Koontz



From my point of view . . .

Spring is here - Class of 2015

- **Gail Koontz, Class Reporter**

My tomato plants are in the ground. Hummingbird feeders are up. Outdoors is calling me and here I sit writing my article for The Blooming Bell. Oh well, it can wait until tomorrow. And then there will be twice as much to do. I have moved my laptop to a table by a window so I can watch all that is happening outside. I love this time of year.

During our first class in March, Gary Slanga gave a presentation on Fruit and Nut Trees. He explained how to select a tree and how to plant it. He talked about recommended fruit trees for Bell County, along with the importance of pruning, pollination, and reducing the fruit load. Gary spoke about the pecan tree, the state tree of Texas, and how to water and fertilize it. For more information on fruit and nut trees in Texas, Gary recommends this website: aggiehorticulture.tamu.edu/fruit-nut.

Following Gary's presentation, Lyle Zoeller, Extension Agent for Bell County, talked about the importance of reading pesticide labels for herbicides, fungicides, and insecticides. Read and follow instructions. He brought in containers for each of us to read the instructions as a way to discuss how to use safely.

On the 11th, Steve Chaney, Extension Agent for Tar-

March 18 proved to be a nice break for me. My homework is now done. Education and service hours are posted. My notebook is better organized. After this class I go to First Baptist Temple to facilitate a two-hour Financial Peace University class. Spring break meant no class for this group also. So I worked on graduation certificates for 25 people who graduated on March 25. Check that one off my list.

On the 25th, Louann Hight gave a composting presentation. She shared the benefits of composting, including keeping those items out of the landfill and growing healthy plants in enriched soil. Reduce, Reuse, Recycle. In the spring and summer, much of our yard waste goes to the Temple Landfill when much of it should be going into our compost bins. Grasscycling means leave grass clippings behind; don't bag. She explained how to create a compost bin: A 3x3x3 foot bin is a manageable size. Layer in brown, green, moisture. When done, you should have black gold or humus. Done when no longer getting hot. Use in vegetable and flower gardens, on lawns, around trees, and in containers. And then she told us about keyhole gardens. I'm doing more research on this as I really like this idea. Sounds like a group of us might be going to Clifton to do some group research.

Next Jean Flores gave a vermiculture presentation. Vermicomposting or worm composting is the use of red worms to convert organic waste into compost (also known as worm poop). Please handle with gloves. Vermicompost improves soil structure, enriches soil, improves water holding capacity, improves root growth, encourages better plant growth, and reduces waste to the landfill.

And the worms do all the work. A squirm of worms doubles in number in three months. Their menu includes potato peelings, apple cores, pea pods, shredded paper, egg shells, hair trimmings, any fruit or vegetable scraps. Moisture added should be distilled water. The ideal temperature for these little creatures is 55-77 degrees so they should be allowed to live inside.

Jean showed us the tray her worms live in. More information can be found on these websites: texasredworms.com, yelmworms.com, cathycomposters.com,

Continued on next page...



rant County, talked to us about Turf Grass. He gave us some guidelines for lawn management for homeowners, including the topics of mowing, watering, fertilizing, weeds, diseases, and insects.

Spring is Here...continued

Redwormcomposting.com; naturesfoot-print.com, motherearthnews.com, worm-farmingrevealed.com. I

I'm doing some research. Another concept I really like. When I mentioned this to my husband, he said no worms living in the house. We'll talk more. He'll come around.

Mary Ann Everett closed with a presentation on EarthKind Concepts – Working with the Drought: Research proven system for gardening and landscaping; provides plant enjoyment; protects our fragile environment. Mary Ann went on to explain each of the EarthKind Landscaping principles: site selection, soil preparation, composting, cultivar selection, mulching, turf selection, irrigation, reduction in pesticide use, and landscape management.

Looking ahead to April: Each should tally their service hours and bring to class next week. There will be



class on the 1st and the 29th. No class on the 8th and 15th for conference prep and setup. Field trip is the 22nd. Wow! We're almost there, people!! How exciting is that!?!?

Photos by Werner Hahn

Wildflowers in Texas

- Randy Brown

Sixty Master Gardeners heard LaShara Nieland discuss the medical uses of wildflowers yesterday and today at the March General Meeting. She also offered her two books, co-authored with Willa Finley, Wildflowers in Texas and Wildflowers in New Mexico. She will be at the Conference for anyone who missed buying this wonderful book. It is color coded on the side to find the flower you're looking for easily with a wealth of information on the medicinal and culinary uses of wildflowers.



Announcements

April General Meeting

- Randy Brown

The April General Meeting will deal with the upcoming Conference. It's almost here!

Grounds Work Days

- Walter Ponder

Here are the scheduled workdays April. We have added additional workdays in preparation for the State Conference.

April 1, 2015 8:00 a.m. *Workday

10:30 a.m. Burger Wednesday

April 2, 2015 8:00 a.m. *Additional Workday

April 8, 2015 8:00 a.m. *Workday

April 9, 2015 8:00 a.m. *Additional Workday

April 15, 2015 8:00 a.m. *Workday

April 29, 2015 8:00 a.m. *Workday

* in the event of rain or temperatures below 40 degrees, there will be No Workdays.

Thank you.

Plant & Seed Swap

- Bernie Hurta

We will have a plant and seed swap before the **May 13th** monthly meeting. More details to follow at a later date.

Entomology Specialist Course

Registration for the 2015 Master Volunteer Entomology Specialist (MVES) training (September 28 – October 2, 2015) is now open for those who are presently Master Gardeners or Master Naturalists.

It will be held at the Tom Leroy Education Center lo-

cated at the Montgomery County Texas A&M AgriLife Extension office, Conroe, TX. Go to: <http://agrilife.org/insectspecialist/?p=285> - **Wizzie Brown**

New Free Pecan Grafting Seminar!

- Gary Slanga

A pecan grafting seminar and demonstration will be held in the Master Gardener Class Building at the AgriLife Extension Office on Saturday April 18th at 9 AM. The Seminar is free and no registration is necessary. There will be pecan graft wood available for sale. The classroom is located at 1605 N. Main St. Belton TX. Anyone interested in attending is welcome.

Memorial for Ursula

- Gail Christian



We have received a substantial amount of donations for a memorial in Ursula Nanna's memory. If anyone is thinking about donating something, now would be a good time. After the 2015 Conference, there will be a meeting to decide how to spend the money. Jan George, Carla Harmon and Gail Christian are on the committee, and an e-mail will be sent so anyone interested can attend.

Watch Monarchs Online

- Crystal Fisher

I saw "Journey of the Butterflies" on PBS about the Monarch migration. It's worthwhile watching. A 2,000 mile migration that is very educational as well as enlightening.

While it was aired back on November 30, 2011, you can watch it now online.

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/nature/journey-butterflies.html>

CHECK OUT BCMGA FACEBOOK PAGE! GO TO

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

What's Happening in Your Yard

- Vivian Rush

My creeping phlox is blooming along a french drain in my back yard, and in the front yard the peach trees have bloomed along with some daffodils.



What's Happening in Your Yard

- Peg Fleet

Saving Grace?

Paul and I planted this tree about 15 years ago or so, laboring in the belief that we were planting a peach tree. This tree has far outpaced the others in its growth. The blossoms look like the peach blossoms on the other trees, and the leaves certainly look like peach tree leaves. The fruit? That's something else again. It has never produced much fruit, and what we have been able to get is small and looks like a cross between a plum and a peach, but without a definite flavor of either. The fruit isn't bad; it just doesn't taste like much. We started calling the tree our "pleach" tree. Toward the end of last year's growing season, I started muttering about taking it down and replacing it with something else. I was very definite about that. Paul was against it. I hadn't changed my mind, until it put on this display of blossoms. Not only that, but bees were buzzing all around it, the bees that had been absent last year. Then I remembered the occasional bird's nest that we find in that tree. We may never get any delicious fruit from that tree, but it has redeemed itself in other ways.



What's Happening in Your Yard

- Terrie Hahn

A few things we planted are blooming like the Gopher Plant and a bulb that we don't remember the name of, but what's really putting on a show everywhere including our yard are the wildflowers. What a great year for them!



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Please do not send PDF documents.

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Photos by Gail Koontz

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