

The Blooming Bell

..... March 2022



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March 2022

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2 Herb Study Group Work Day	3	4	5
6	7	8	9 General Membership mtg. plus education mtg	10	11	12
13	14	15	16 Work Day	17 Monthly Outreach Seminar	18	19
20	21	22	23 Board of Directors Mtg. Work day	24	25 Set up Plant Sale	26 Plant Sale
27	28	29	30 Work Day	31		

"February, when the days of winter seem endless and no amount of wistful recollecting can bring back any air of summer."

- Shirley Jackson, *Raising Demons*

Remember to record volunteer service hours and education hours each month.

To help prevent the spread of COVID-19, please continue to practice social distancing and wear a mask where appropriate.

President's Corner

Kathy Love

February is going out wet and cold. We welcome the wet of course as do our plants, but many of us don't care much for the cold! Burr.

Calls and contacts on the Help Desk are finally picking up after the two very slow months of December and January. Participation is also up as there are regularly two or more members, including interns (who are required to work with a certified master gardener until they gain their own certification) on each shift. The shifts remain Monday thru Thursday 9 a.m. to noon and 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Sign up in the VMS calendar for any shift you want to work. The limit in VMS to participate is 4 so if you can't sign up for a shift it is because all the slots are full.

Our outreach directors Rebeka Lackey & Crystal Mears are getting busy as is our youth director Janice Smith. Calls are coming into the help desk regularly asking for speakers and programs so if you are signed up to present on a topic or topics, be expecting contacts to help with the many programs. If you are not yet signed up for our Speakers Bureau, please sign up. Better Living for Texas Extension Agent Beverly Hodges approached me yesterday asking for help with a new summer program for Harker Heights and I should hear from them next week to get an idea of what they are looking for. Beverly is very excited to have the help of our members with her after school Learn Grow Eat Go programs at Hector Garcia and Raye Allen Elementary schools in Temple.

At the January Board of Directors meeting Janice brought us two new school projects, Clear Creek Elementary School on Fort Hood, A Place to Learn & Grow, and Tarver Elementary Belton ISD, Outdoor Learning Center project which started this month. Wayne Schirner is heading up the Clear Creek project on Fort Hood and if you would like to sign up for that project, it will be beneficial if you have a military ID to get on post. Janice is overseeing the Tarver project which will develop and maintain a garden in an outdoor learning center for students K-5. Per Bill Walker, the Holland Elementary planting project will be needing a few of us transplant their seedlings in the near future.

The new Education Center offices continue to develop into a true horticultural educational space. Thanks to Gary Slanga we have some very interesting insect collections on display and Wayne Schirner has set up a handicap accessible square foot garden display to which we plan to add a grow light and grow seasonal varieties of plants. Teri Marceau has put together seasonal plant display bottles, rainwater harvesting and soil boxes displaying sandy loam, Blackland Prairie and caliche. Glenn Melton set up our composting display. Thanks to Elaine Passman, we have a new bug box display to use as we collect bugs from our citizens on the help desk.

When this is published the Home & Garden Show booths will have been another success, I am sure and thanks to Louann Hight & her team for that success.

It sure feels good to be "back in the saddle" and busy again. Happy gardening!

Meet Our 2022 Interns



Andi Bowsher

Andi is a resident of Kempner and a retired teacher and administrator. She has successful home gardens. She continues to improve her knowledge through books and YouTube. Her friends and neighbors look to her for advice and think that becoming a certified Master Gardener will help her grow in knowledge and become a better advisor. A few of her interests are Herbs, Native Plants, and Entomology.



Annette Shubert

Annette resides in Temple and is a retired Registered Nurse. She worked with Veterans in our area. She grew up helping her father in his vegetable garden and longs to have a garden that resembles his. She loves eating fresh herbs and vegetables from the garden. One of her hobbies is cooking. She is especially interested in serving the youth of Bell County.



April Reding

April and her husband recently retired to Killeen from the Pacific Northwest, where gardening is very different than here in Central Texas. Which is what brought her to our Master Gardener program. April has a strong desire to share her love of all things in the garden. As a former teacher she will fit right in with our Youth Programs. Some of her interests are Rainwater Harvesting, Irrigation Efficiency and JMG.

Meet Our 2022 Interns



Brenda Smith

Brenda is a military brat and retired teacher who lives in Bell County between Belton and Salado. She loves her grandkids and the gym. The gardening bug bit her a few years ago when she moved to the county. Some of her interests are Youth Fair, JMG, Greenhouse and Landscaping & Grounds. She is ready to expand her knowledge by working the AAMG booths and the Help Desk.



Cindy Claburn

Cindy's given name is Lucinda and comes to us from Salado. She will fit right into our Keep Salado Beautiful project especially with her love of native plants and community projects. You may find her around the grounds working in our demonstration landscaping.



Debbie Thompson

Troy is home to Debbie and her husband, Randy whom you are already becoming a friend of BCMGA. Debbie was born at Fort Hood, as a child her father was stationed at numerous military bases. But she grew up and graduated in Killeen. She participated in the world famous Kilgore Rangerettes. You may want to ask her to show off her high kick routine (wink wink). Her interests lie in Administration, Youth Fair, Rainwater Harvesting and Trees.

Meet Our 2022 Interns



Denise Daniel

Denise hales from Temple. Her gardening interests are vast. She is interested in our written education through writing articles and working on the newsletter. Sharing her knowledge in serving at the AAMG. I would say that Denise has a desire to serve our community by sharing all things gardening.



Greg Holland

Greg lives in Temple and is interested in all things that slither like Snakes. Veterans are dear to his heart and would like to serve our military and veterans. Harvesting our rainwater is a goal of his.



Jane Wells

In Person

Jane is a seventh generation Texas living near Lake Belton with her husband, Terry. She is a fine arts graduate from UT at Austin and is a professional artist. She has a love for our Youth Projects and JMG program. Another interest of hers is Native Plants. You could say Jane loves landscaping and gardening.

Meet Our 2022 Interns



Lou Ellen (L.E.) Davis

L.E. (Ellie) comes to us as a transfer from the Marion Count Oregon Master Gardener class of 2019, now residing in Temple. Gardening picked her interest when she retired from the Navy. She is auditing the 2022 class. While she is not an intern she is new to gardening in the Central Texas arid environment. Some of her interests are Community Outreach, the Help Desk and Public Relations.



Lynette Jones

Lynette is from Idabel, Oklahoma now living in Salado. She retired from being a restaurant owner and school teacher. As a daughter of a rancher, gardening is a part of her. If I had to guess, I would say Lynette engages her love of gardening with her talent of cooking. Our Herb Study Group will certainly get her attention.



Melissa Johnson

Melissa is a resident of Killeen but originally comes from N.E. Pennsylvania. Becoming a Certified Master Gardener will help her understand our gardening climate here in Bell County. Her interests are in preserving the harvest from her garden and cooking the fruits of her labor.

Meet Our 2022 Interns



Jimmie Snelson

Jimmie resides in Temple and is interested in helping our youth come to love gardening as much as he does. You may find him in the Education Center helping. His desire to help educate others doesn't end with the youth but spills over to our Rain Barrel Workshops.



Keith Cryer

Keith came to live Salado by way of Tennessee. The gardening bug bit Keith at a young age on his grandparents' farm. He saw at this young age that they could have benefited from a knowledge of how to care for their orchard and gardens which is what drives him to BCMGA. While living in Birmingham he became fascinated with indoor plants. This love of plants led him to own acreage on a wildlife exemption and working toward reviving the native prairie.



Lee Ann Smith

Lee Ann moved north from Houston to Belton and is a yoga instructor. She learned gardening from her father. Her interests in gardening lend to her interest in holistic remedies. Herbs lean strongly towards this liking. A few more interests in serving Bell County lie in Water, Irrigation Efficiency, Rainwater Harvesting and Square Food Gardening.

Meet Our 2022 Interns



Misti Daniel

Temple is home to Misti. Misti is a gardener ready to serve the community through our projects. Some of those interests lie in Demonstration Gardens, Native Plants, Social Media and Plant Sale Administration.



Randine Bickel

Randine moved to Salado from Colorado but is a native Texan. She is another great candidate for our Keep Salado Beautiful project because she is interested in Community Garden. She was a Certified Master Garden in 1994 in Colorado. So she is no stranger to our service projects. Some interests include Schubs, Trees, Water Conservation and Plant Sale.



Susan Burchfield

Susan began our intern program last year but had to drop out due to severe flooding of her home, now that all the repairs are complete she has returned to the class. She is a retired educator who became interested in gardening and will lend a hand at sharing her newly gained knowledge with our community. She is interested in the Youth projects and Fair, Senior Center, and staffing the Help Desk.

Meet Our 2022 Interns



Tracy Brown

Tracy lives in Temple. She took AG classes back in school now the passion for gardening has been sparked. She has already jumped into service head first. She has shown her interest in Seed Saving, Herbs, Community Outreach and our Veterans Programs. She is a knowledgeable self starter.



Velvet McKague

Velvet comes to Temple from Green Ville, South Carolina. She grew up on a farm and has always had a big garden defying nature. I imagine her interests in service are many and look forward to all that she will contribute to Bell County.

Virtual Students

We have three virtual students who will be participating in some in person classes. April Marek, Kerri McClelland and David McWorter. All three are excited to begin serving in many of our projects.

Intern Class of 2022 Update

The Intern Class of 2022 has gotten off to a tremendous start. We have twenty interns meeting in person and three on line. The leadership team has done a great job organizing the materials and presenters and acquainting us with the workings of BCMG. Each week we are gaining knowledge and confidence.

The February 2 class was our first chance to be hands-on, working with seeds in the soil. We discussed the benefits of starting seeds indoors and the requirements for germination. We planted in egg shells and 6 packs and are watching for our “first born” to sprout. For some of us, this is a first experience. For others, this is an opportunity to learn new techniques and improve skills. For all of us, this is a time to ask questions and pick the brains of the Master Gardener experts who have been very welcoming.

We are also discovering the many areas of community service available for us to volunteer. Almost all of us volunteered at the Bell County Youth Fair and many are helping at the Killeen Municipal Court Garden and the Extension Office grounds and the Help Desk. Several are involved with preparations for the upcoming Plant Sale. We are all enjoying these opportunities to be fully involved and learn beside the MGs.



Educational Article by Wizzie Brown



How to Identify Ant & Termite Swarmers

Soon it will be time for swarming insects to emerge out from their homes in the ground and fly into the air in search of a mate. Usually, this event coincides with warm temperatures and a significant rainfall event but can also occur if you forget to turn off your irrigation system.

"Swarmers" or "alate" are other terms used to describe the reproductive stage of ants and termites. These insects have wings when they initially leave the colony, but the wings are either shed or chewed off after they land on the ground and before they form a nest. So, how do you tell them apart?

Ant swarmers have antennae that are bent at a ninety-degree angle and are said to be "elbowed". The area where the thorax and abdomen meet, sometimes called the "waist", is constricted, narrowed, or pinched. If you find a reproductive that still has wings- they chew off their wings once they have mated and land on the ground- the front wing will be larger than the hind wing and all wings will have few veins. If the wings are missing from the ant swarmer, there will not be a wing stub left on the thorax from where the wing was attached. Male ant swarmers retain their wings after landing on the ground, but they die after mating.

Termite swarmers have antennae that are straight and a thorax-abdomen area, or "waist", that is broadly joined together. Termite reproductive wings are similar in size and shape and tend to have a lot of veins. Sometimes with termites you may find only wings that have been left behind due to shedding when the termites land on the ground or you may see the termites themselves with or without wings still attached. If you find a termite reproductive without wings, there will be wing stubs, called "scales", left behind on the thorax. Male and female termite reproductives shed their wings after landing on the ground, pair up, and find a site to begin a new colony.

For more information or help with identification, contact Wizzie Brown, Texas AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist at 512.854.9600.

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Projects in the community

KMCCG

Master Gardeners, Interns and students planted the first two rows of potatoes, watered the garden and continued maintenance at front entry.

Wind really cut through everyone.



February General Meeting

We had a great crowd for the General Meeting. The meeting disseminated information on the Home and Garden Show, Plant Sale, Update on new office, adding items to VMS Calendar, and finances. The Association presented gift hats to The New Master Gardener of Year, Green Thumb and Golden Trowel. Bill Walker presented the education program on an engaging and wide-ranging topics of interest to gardeners.



Jackie McLaughlin at her retirement reception on January 27th. The group picture is of MG's that came to her reception and Kathy Love presented Jackie with a card and cash collection from the BCMG's. We wish Jackie all the best.



Educational Article By Wayne Schirner

Let's Talk Tomatoes!

It's that time of year again when everyone is itching to get their tomatoes planted, even though it is currently below freezing, and our average last frost date is March 11th. I wanted to share some things I have learned about tomatoes in the last year that was new to me.

We are familiar with the differences between determinate tomatoes and indeterminate tomatoes. Determinate tomatoes grow like a bush to a certain height and then flower and set fruit in a short period of time. These varieties are preferred by commercial growers so they can harvest their crop all at once. They are also a favorite for home gardeners who want to can tomatoes or use their crop to make sauces. Sucker pruning is not recommended for these varieties because that will only reduce the number of tomatoes produced. Tomato cages can be used for these varieties to keep them off the ground. Indeterminate tomatoes grow more like a vine and can reach 20 feet in length before they die from either diseases or frost. These varieties need sturdy trellises that are taller than the typical tomato cages. They flower and set fruit throughout the growing season if air temperatures are not too hot or too cold. That means they produce their fruit over a longer period and are preferred for use as slicing or eating tomatoes. If you don't remove suckers, the plant can quickly get out of control. Did you know that there is now a third type of tomato plant? These are called dwarf tomatoes and have benefits of both determinate and indeterminate varieties. Like a determinate variety, they only grow to a certain height, usually less than 5', and removal of suckers isn't recommended. That means they are easy to grow in a container and managed with a simple tomato cage. Like the indeterminate varieties, dwarf varieties flower and set fruit as the plant grows, so you have tomato production over a longer period than with the determinate varieties. Last year there were 116 different varieties of dwarf tomatoes and this year 145 different varieties are available. Seed for some dwarf varieties are available from several different companies but all varieties are available only from the Victory Seed Company. This might be a good way to venture out of your usual comfort zone and try something different.

While we're talking about tomatoes, have you ever been waiting for a tomato to get perfectly ripe on the plant before picking it. You're in your garden one day and think "just one more day." You go out the next day and it has been destroyed by a bird taking a big chunk out of the tomato you were salivating over, or there are huge cracks in the tomato because of an overnight rain. The key to avoiding this is recognizing what is known as the "breaking point." This is when the tomato has just started to turn color. At the breaking point, the tomato is fully mature. Pick it then and set it on your kitchen counter. Over the next few days, it will continue to change color and the taste will be indistinguishable from a "vine ripened" tomato. Try it, you'll like it.

Education Center Update

As mentioned in my President's Corner article, our new space dubbed The Education Center, is really coming together thanks to the participation and generosity of numerous members. Much thanks to everyone who has helped us out. One of our virtual interns, David McWhorter brought us two banana boxes of seeds from his HEB job in Copperas Cove. They were pulled from the shelf as they are dated for 2021 season. There are many varieties of vegetables & flowers. Come by and see if you may want some of these as they are free for the taking! Kathy Love, President



Our handicap accessible square foot gardening display, waiting for grow light to plant.



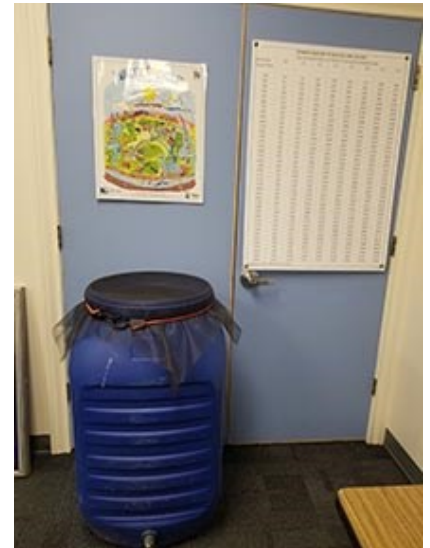
Insect collection displays.



S.M.A.R.T. (Size, Moisture, Aeration, Ratios, Temperature) Composting posters.



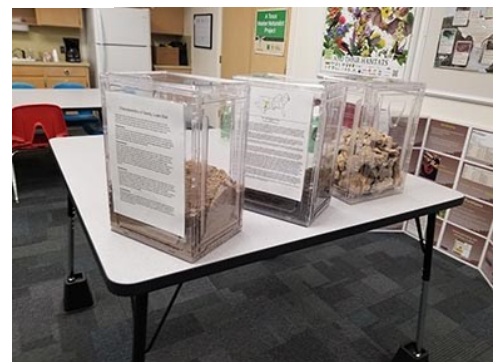
Seed saving project and seeds available to our members and the public.



Rainwater Harvesting display.



Seasonal plants display (not much to display right now but it will be coming!)



Area soils display.

Help Needed / Announcements

COVID19 restrictions have been lifted and most projects are gearing up for 2022 and could use your help. You can find a complete list of projects in VMS; there you can email the project manager for volunteer opportunities. For help with finding an active project to volunteer in you can contact Stacey Parry at stacye1120@gmail.com.

HELP DESK: Beginning in 2022 the HELP DESK will be open 5 days a week. We are looking to fill 3 hour shifts with 2 people per shift. There is a morning shift, 9:00 am to noon and an afternoon shift, 1:00-3:00 pm. We are already starting to take volunteers. Working in the new Education Center is a great way to learn. getting your continuing education hours and to fill you service hours.

NEW OFFICE NAME & HOURS: Beginning January 2022, the MG office will be called The Education Center. We will have displays for the public both from MGs and from the Master Naturalists, along with our education materials being displayed and available for the public. The Education Center will be open Monday through Friday (closed on Holidays) 9:00 am to 4:00 pm (closed for lunch noon-1:00 pm). The Education Center is located in the first office on the left as you enter the Extension Building. Stop by and see us. We are currently working on the display plans while we are working at our new help desk.

ADVANCED TRAINED MEMBERS MEMO FROM TERI MARCEAU

I am compiling a list of MGs who have gone through any advanced training to keep handy at the Help Desk so we can start to share the wealth of inquiries we receive. Just in May with all the rain we received over 80 calls/emails. It would be very helpful to be able to spread the work load out as the summer approaches, so will the calls/emails increase. Just send me a quick email with your name, preferred phone number, email and what your advanced training is in. Thanks so much. Teri Marceau

Help Needed / Announcements

Communications

Please send photos of your garden with a note about your photos to TeriMMarceau@gmail.com or to [Bell.mg@agnet.tamu.edu](mailto:bell.mg@agnet.tamu.edu) and Teri will post them on Facebook.

If you know of someone in our organization who is ill, scheduled to have surgery, or has lost a loved one (including fur babies) please email Teri Marceau at bell.mg@agnet.tamu.edu, or our correspondence secretary, Debbi Harris, at dcharris99@yahoo.com.

An appropriate card will be sent.

BIRTHDAYS: The communication committee is looking for your birthday (month and day) so we can celebrate with you. Please send the date to Teri Marceau at ter-immarceau@gmail.com. We LOVE to celebrate our Master Gardeners.

Board of Directors Meeting

23rd March

Grounds Workdays

Karen Colwick and Paul Carter

List of individual tasks are posted on the gate each week. Gate code is 2019 and extra tools may be found on back of the wood shed.

In the event of rain, there will be no work day.



Refreshment Committee General Membership Meeting

A minimum of 7 volunteers are needed for each meeting.



Directors

Communications	Teri Marceau	2020-2022
Facilities	TBD	2019-2022
Membership	Sherry Oermann	2020-2022
KMCCG	Dave Slaughter	2021-2022
Outreach	Crystal Mears & Rebekah Lackey	2021-2022
New Class	Pat Johnson	2019-2022
Projects	Wayne Schirner	2020-2022
Youth	Janice Smith	2020-2022

Executive Board

President	Kathy Love	2022-2024
1 st Vice President	Jan Upchurch	2020-2022
2 nd Vice President	Louann Hight	2022-2024
Recording Secretary	Gail Koontz	2022-2023
Treasurer	Barbara Ishikawa	2020-2022

AgriLife Agent Lyle Zoeller

Texas Master Gardener website

<https://txmg.org>

Bell County Master Gardener website

<https://txmg.org/bell/>

Texas Master Gardener Volunteer Management System

<https://vms.texasmg.org/>

Editor: Julian Hancock

Please submit articles with photos not to exceed 300 words and without photos not to exceed 500 words as Word documents. Photos should be sent separately in a folder through a link using OneDrive, Dropbox, or Google Photos. **Photos must be in the JPEG format.** Do not text your photos. *(If texting is preferred, please let me know in advance.)*

Email your documents and pictures to Julian at julianhancock61@gmail.com.

***Please do not send PDF documents.
I will send them back to you!***

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