



NEWS . EVENTS . GARDENING TIPS. EDUCATIONAL ARTICLES

2023 Spring Plant Sale



Can you feel Spring in the air, yet? If the temperatures haven't given it away then maybe the buzz of our semi-annual fundraiser, a.k.a. Plant Sale has bitten you with Spring fever. It sure had got the committee very excited about this Spring's fundraiser.

We purchase most of our plants at several wholesale nurseries here in central Texas. The benefit of ordering and purchasing plants from a wholesale nursery is there is little price mark-up and the plants are tax free. We are able to pass on the savings to the community who supports our organization.

This year like in years past we are ordering many of our vegetables and herbs from Gabriel Valley Farms a wholesale organic nursery located in Georgetown. Our perennials and grasses come from Joss Growers Wholesale Nursery located in Georgetown as well. We will be selling Texas natives and superstars from Native Texas Nursery east of Austin. All these plants will be delivered on Friday, March 24th. Roses will come from The Antique Rose Emporium in Brenham. This is exciting.

We will be at the Bend of the River, 7915 S. General Bruce St., Temple or the same place as last year. There is plenty to do before the sale and the day of the sale. If you are good at researching we will need help researching plants to make any missing signs. This is a great way to earn education hours in the comfort of your own home. There will also be a set-up and tear-down team so we don't overwork anyone. Please sign-up in VMS even you can only work an hour or you want to work the whole day. This is a big event for our entire association, and we would love to see as many of you there.

Clearwater, Texas Parks and Wildlife, Texas Master Naturalist, 4-H and the Boy Scouts are going to be joining us again this year. If you know of someone who would like to have a vendor booth they cost \$25 or \$10 for Master Gardeners (just let us know).

Remember to bring a chair, your hat, comfy shoes, sunscreen, and don't forget to wear your Master Gardener Shirt, or hat, and your name badge. Please don't wear anything with the old logo on it. All the information is here: <https://txmg.org/bell/plant-sales/>



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Have Gardening Questions? Submit your questions and photos at: bell.mg@agnet.tamu.edu

THE BLOOMING BELL MARCH 2023

UPCOMING EVENTS MARCH 2023

2023 Spring Plant Sale Will be on **March 25th** at the Bend of the River, 7915 S. General Bruce Drive, Temple (take the 6th Ave exit it is on the right side or east side of the I-35 heading north). The sale is 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. or until everything is sold out.
Set-up is the on Friday, **March 24th**, 8:00 am until we are finished.
PS no need to tell people to get their early the day of the sale as there is plenty of plants room and parking.

Communications Meeting: Join the Communication Committee at our next meeting on Wednesday **March 1st**, 1:00-2:00 PM in the Education Center. Sign-up on VMS.

Rainwater Harvesting Barrel Workshop will be on April 8th at the BCMGA Learning Center. Sign-ups will be at the plant sale only. Cost of the class is to be determined.

Speakers Bureau & Monthly Outreach Seminar

Here is a tentative schedule for 2023. Please note the bureau will be adding hands on classes on Saturdays and working in classes on the West side of the county.

March 4 - Bee Box Workshop, 9:00 AM - Noon at the BCMGA Learning Center

March 16 - Peaches & Plums, 6:00-7:30 PM at the BCMGA Learning Center

March 30 - Texas Superstars Annuals , 6:00-7:30 PM at the Harker Heights Library & Activity Center, 400 Indian Trail, Harker Heights

For more information please email: BCMGA Speakers@gmail.com.

Youth – Career Day at Cavazos Elementary School on **March 10th** in Nolanville. Sign-up in VMS.

WEDNESDAY WORKDAYS: First & Third Wednesdays, 9:00 am to Noon, is a Master Gardner workday at the Extension Office. We have demonstration beds all around the facility. Bring a friend who may be interested in becoming a MG or just a friend of the BCMGS. Come for an hour or two or four.

Board of Directors Meeting: Meets on **March 22nd**, at 10:00 a.m., in the Education Center (which is in the AgriLife Building).



Texas AgriLife Extension Service
Horticulture Program in Bell County

1605 N Main St Ste 102 Belton, TX 76513

Email: bell-tx@tamu.edu

Phone: 254.933.5305

Fax: 254.933.5312



Executive Board

President	Kathy Love
1 st Vice President	Anna Sartin
2 nd Vice President	Louann Hight
Recording Secretary	Misti Daniel
Treasurer	Jackie McLaughlin

Directors

Communications	Teri Marceau
Facilities	April Marek
Membership	Sherry Oermann
KMCCG	Dave Slaughter
New Class	Pat Johnson
Projects	Wayne Schirner
Youth	Susan Burchfield
Outreach/Speakers Bureau	Debra Thompson

THE BLOOMING BELL MARCH 2023

UPCOMING EVENTS

MARCH 2023

General Membership Business & Education Meeting: Meets on **March 8th**, at 9:30 a.m.; Fellowship time at 9:00 a.m. The meeting will begin with the educational portion of our meeting.

We will meet at the Harris Community Center, 401 N. Alexander St., Belton.

Burger Wednesday: We are back to our socializing with our Burger Wednesdays. They are on the **1st Wednesday of the month**. Bring a dish to share and small donations accepted.

For more information please contact Melissa Johnson at (484)767-1730 or shinyone1966@gmail.com.

Herb Study Group: Meets on the **3rd Wednesday** of the month, **10:00-11:30 AM**. See the Calendar of Events for location as it may fluctuate between the learning center and the extension classroom.

Please contact Tracy Brown for further information: bcmgtabrown@gmail.com.

Killeen Municipal Court Garden: Meets every Saturday, time varies according to the season. It is harvest season as well and fall garden preparation time, see Calendar of Events

Please contact Dave Slaughter slaughtd915@gmail.com. See VMS for additional Harvest Days to earn extra service hours.

HELP DESK: Monday through Thursday, 9:00 am to Noon & 1:00 to 3:00 pm.

Come and get both volunteer and educational hours. Spring is here which means we are picking up in the office.

Blooming Bell Newsletter: You can find the newsletter on the Home Page of our Website at txmg.org/bell.

April Newsletter theme will be on Herbs. So, please get your related articles in to Julian Hancock, April Marek, and Teri Marceau by **March 25th**.



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THE BLOOMING BELL MARCH 2023

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Kathy Love

February certainly saw its share of ups and downs, meaning temperatures primarily, and here's hoping everyone made it through the freezes and warmups with minimal, if any damage!

The month began with an outstanding presentation by Bill Walker at our monthly general membership meeting on Microbiome in agriculture and continued throughout the month with Outreach presentations assembled by Outreach Director Debbie Thompson and her team on topics such as Honeybees, Native Bees and Gardening and Spring Gardening Starts Now at various locations around the county, ending with the Ask a Master Gardener (AAMG) and Kidz Zone (KZ) booths at the annual Home & Garden (H&G) show.

All the above events were very well attended, with the H&G AAMG booth in particular seeing 740 contacts during the event. Thanks to Louann Hight and everyone who volunteered for this always important and well attended event. Louann advises me that for the past several years we have been the only "Gardening" element of the Home & Garden Show. Our speaker's bureau education sessions were well attended and thanks to our presenters for their work in this important capacity.

Susan Burchfield headed up the KZ at the H&G Show with support from members and we had 182 kids and adults at the zone. I think I saw Elaine Passman in a TV commercial for the event! Way to go fellow MGs!!!!

Both our Outreach and Youth directors have been very busy setting up various events and training courses around the county. Outreach director Debbie Thompson has had and has numerous events and has established two new locations for classes, Christ Episcopal Church in Temple and the Salado Museum. Wayne Schirner presented his program "Spring Gardening Starts Now" at both locations in February. Beginning in March our 3rd Thursday night public classes in the Learning Center will begin at 6 p.m. rather than 6:30 p.m. so please make note of the change in time.

Youth Director Susan Burchfield is planning to establish a youth committee in the coming weeks so anyone interested in working with community youth please plan to sign up for this very important group. We are receiving many, many requests from various schools around the county for programs such as Learn Grow Eat Go and Junior Master Gardener and to support these requests, we need the support of our membership. For the first time since the pandemic Fort Hood will again host Earth Day on April 6th. This has always been a major youth event so many volunteers will be needed. These are all excellent events to earn service hours so please pitch in!

The new system of background checks has not run very smoothly, membership director Sherry Oermann reports. At our last Board meeting we decided we will try to schedule a meeting with our agent Floyd Ingram and the individual overseeing this project at A&M to see if we can move this necessary state project along for our members. I had not received the necessary email from Sterling Volunteers until yesterday even though they have been sent several times. When you do receive the emailed link, note the fact that the application needs to be completed within 72 hours.

The help desk is becoming very active as the gardening and growing season is starting up and this is another great opportunity for service hours so, please sign up in VMS and come for any of the shifts Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Our March General Membership meeting will be held March 8th at the Harris Community Center, 401 N. Alexander, Belton as is customary. Our speakers for this meeting will be Kathy Lovelace and Rachel Glass on the topic of Landscape Design so don't miss it.

Finally, don't forget the Spring Plant Sale coming up March 25th at the Bend of the River Ranch. Check out our website for a link to a list of plants we will be offering. Thanks Barbara Ishikawa and Wayne Schirner for heading up this event.

In the meantime, happy gardening!!!!

Growing and Cooking with Herbs

Presented by Kim Pringle

At the February Herb Study Group Meeting

Culinary Sage (*Salvia ssp.*)

- Rustic flavor
- Use in beans, potatoes, breads, vegetables, and meat dishes.



Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*)

- Perennial
- Wild and cultivated varieties are delicious and nutritious.
- Delicacy on European tables in salads.
- Yellow flowers flavor wine.
- Medicinal uses.



"The soil is the stomach of the plant: you feed it and the plant feeds you."

John Dromgoole, owner, The Natural Gardener, Austin, TX

Basic Growing Requirements:

- Average soil (not overly rich but not poor)
- Good drainage
- Light (5-6 hours per day)
- Water is required
- Mulch (helps retain moisture in soil, provides winter protection, weed control)

Continues on next page.....

THE BLOOMING BELL MARCH 2023

Site Selection – *there are* Many options

- Landscape beds (formal and Informal)
- In the vegetable garden
- Raised beds
- Containers (Tubs, boxes, pots) ... Use posting mix rather than garden soil

Soil Preparation

Break up the soil and amend with “lots” of organic matter like:

- Compost
- Manure
- Leaves
- Grass clippings
- Ground peat or sphagnum moss
- Cottonseed or rice hulls
- Shredded newspaper
- Supplemental organic fertilizers if required in soil test
-

Disease & Insect Control

- NO HARMFUL CHEMICALS
- May use soap bath or citrus oil
- Remove infected plant
- Some herbs naturally repel insects
- Don't kill the caterpillars often found on dill, fennel and parsley if you want swallowtail butterflies in your garden.

WHY GROW HERBS?

Herbs add visual appeal and texture to your garden. They offer a variety of flavors and seasonings for food and teas. Herbs are often used medicinally. I don't know about you but herbs have many wonderful fragrances. Don't forget the appeal herbs have to bees, hummingbirds, and butterflies providing your garden with plenty of interest and activity.

We will be selling herbs at the 2023 plant sale. Be sure to stop by and talk to the Herb Study Group. We love to talk about herbs!

THE BLOOMING BELL MARCH 2023



Salado Gardeners

P.O. Box 1451
Salado, TX 76571
saladogardeners@gmail.com

Article by Susan Terry

Just like the butterflies in the Salado gardens, Keep Salado Beautiful has transformed. Affiliated with Keep Texas Beautiful in 2009, KSB was established by Tourism in 2007 and has successfully worked with the community for nearly 15 years. Initially a Recycling Center run by volunteers was established that generated funds to support beautification projects. The Recycle Center helped establish the Salado curbside recycle program that exists today.

Beautification began when we partnered with Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists for the first refurbishment of the Green Bridge Garden in 2009; this success led to the establishment of the Pocket Garden concept for the Village. Currently there are thirteen public and private gardens that have the pocket garden designation.

Clean up programs twice a year led to an Adopt-A-Spot program in 2015. We celebrated Earth Day with Village events for several years, and partnered with Sirena Fest.

Education programs in the schools led to us working in the established Thomas Arnold Elementary school garden and Monarch Way Station and when this garden needed a boost, we helped secure the A&M \$10,000 grant to expand opportunities for the TAE students.

The public gardens are demonstration gardens with plant markers, and demonstrate the benefit of using native plants to withstand our climate and the deer population. Plant books are available at the library for \$2.00 to help determine what is best for your yard.

Keep Salado Beautiful was awarded \$45,000 in grants that benefited the Village for gardens, education, and recycle containers. In addition, we received Keep Texas Beautiful awards as TXDOT grants for \$90,000 in 2018 and again in 2022. We added railing to the Thomas Arnold overpass as a safety measure in 2018. The 2022 award is in discussion.

The KSB Board requested a merger with the Village in January 2022, as we had not been able to recruit new Board Members. Most of the successful Keep Texas Beautiful affiliates work closely with their city. The Village agreed and a merger was in place. When admin changes occurred, the Village was not staffed to give attention to the needs of KSB. Unfortunately, at this time KSB has dissolved.

Salado Gardeners will remain a BCMGA project and continue to maintain the Museum and Sirena gardens, and assist with the TAE School Garden. The Lions Club has offered to sponsor the Main Street cleanups, and our Liter Chair will continue to work with the Adopt A Spots.

Community collaboration, education, and development of new projects will be left to others.

We encourage anyone interested to join us for 1st Monday gardening at the Museum or workdays at TAE School Garden. Look for Salado Gardeners on Facebook for current information.



TAE School Garden: weeding the pumpkin patch



1st Monday Gardeners at Sirena Garden

Horticultural myths

There are hundreds of horticultural myths. Part of our mission as Master gardeners is to provide relevant, research-based information to the citizens of Bell County and the State of Texas. To help accomplish that mission, we need to educate ourselves about the common horticultural myths so we can become better horticultural educators. The two sources that I have found to be most useful for myth busting are based on information from Dr Linda Chalker-Scott and Mr. Robert Pavlis.

Dr Linda Chalker-Scott has a Ph.D. in Horticulture from Oregon State University. She is Washington State University's Extension Urban Horticulturist and a Professor in the Department of Horticulture. She has published numerous books and was recognized by the Association for Gardening Communicators as the first recipient of their Cynthia Westcott Scientific Writing Award. Her books and publications include:

The Informed Gardener (2008)

The Informed Gardener Blooms Again (2010)

Horticultural Myths - <https://puyallup.wsu.edu/lcs/>

"The Garden Professors" Facebook page - www.facebook.com/TheGardenProfessors

The Garden Professors Blog - gardenprofessors.com

Mr. Robert Pavlis is a Master Gardener, author, well known speaker, and educator with over 40 years of gardening experience. His books and social media resources include:

Garden Myths Book 1 (2017)

Garden Myths Book 2 (2019)

Blogs: <http://www.gardenfundamentals.com/> and <http://www.gardenmyths.com>

YouTube: www.youtube.com/channel/UCJfYCNSWCluOB2sItDh5ZjQ

His Facebook group is called Garden Fundamentals.

I plan to present articles on horticultural myths from one or both authors in monthly issues of the Blooming Bell.

The topic this month is on the use of drainage material at the bottom of containers. The link below provides the information refuting the myth of using gravel or other material at the bottom of containers to improve drainage.

<https://s3.wp.wsu.edu/uploads/sites/403/2015/03/container-drainage.pdf>

Happy Myth Busting

Wayne

THE BLOOMING BELL MARCH 2023

KILLEEN MUNICIPAL COURT COMMUNITY GARDEN REPORT

By Randy Brown



2-4-2023

Garden day began cold and foggy, but sun and blue skies came out the last half of the workday. South winds remained cool. First row of potatoes were planted. More biosoil layed down prepping for five additional potato rows to be planted in coming weeks. Maintenance continued on mulching beds and weeding. Garlic, onions and carrots came through ice storms ok; remaining brussel sprouts did not do well in storms and were removed. The garden received an inch of moisture.

2-11-2023

Was a cold, windy but beautiful workday. Another potato row of Reds planted and a row of cabbage planted. Turnips and radishes are germinating. Garlic, onions and carrots continue to thrive. More biosoil was added and tilled in preparing for future plantings of additional potato rows. Weeding continued in entry beds and the north bed received new mulch. April M brought great pecan and apricot bars.

2-25-1023

Last February work was cold and cloudy but eleven Master Gardeners and five students overcame the weather planting the final two rows of potatoes and half row of Brussels Sprouts. Much maintenance (weeding) was done in the radish bed, cabbage and turnip rows, and onion rows. Work continued on the row expansion in The Farm with the first layer of biosoil added. 15.5 rows are now under cultivation. There was a lot of weeding and cutback in the floral raised beds and the butterfly Weigh Station.

For more information see Barbara's KMCCG Blog at <https://txmg.orgbell/kmccg-blog/>

KMCCG monthly meeting

Dave Slaughter conducted the February meeting at Rudy's BBQ Killeen. Discussed were remaining February Work Days, March workdays and student holidays. Youth participation was 20 for January. General planting times for remaining potatoes, tomatoes and squash were discussed. Discussed were how many gardeners planned to be at KMCCG verses the BCMGA Plant Sale March 25. Changeover to summer hours in May was also announced. Barbara Ishiwawa announced the posting of her weekly KMCCG Blog and where it was located on BCMGA Website. Misti Daniel gave an excellent and informative class on growing cut flowers in Centex. Each gardener was given a promise bouquet of seed packets. She will conduct a followup class in July when locally grown cut flowers are available to demonstrate arrangements.

THE BLOOMING BELL MARCH 2023

KILLEEN MUNICIPAL COURT COMMUNITY GARDEN REPORT

By Randy Brown



TEXAS SUPERSTAR OF THE MONTH



Dwarf Mexican Petunia

Ruellia brittoniana (various dwarf cultivars)

By Sylvia Maedgen



This perennial is a spectacular, low-growing, heat-tolerant bedding plant with profusions of violet, light pink or white flowers. It is highly pest resistant and quickly fills in as a ground cover. The Mexican petunias are very adaptable and will tolerate wet and dry soils. They prefer full sun but will tolerate shade; however, since flowering is light-related, the plants will flower less in shade.

These Mexican petunias are drought-tolerant once established, but they perform best with regular irrigation during droughts and with regular feeding of high phosphorus fertilizers. These plants are disease and insect resistant and are rarely bothered by snails and caterpillars. The plant does wilt easily without moisture.

This plant can be aggressive in well-cared for situations, spreading by both by seed and rhizomes. The plant will reseed true, retaining the dwarf, clumping character, but the Dwarf Ruellia is not as invasive as others in the species. It quickly fills in as a ground cover, you can propagate by seed and division, and the seeds explode when watered.

The individual plants are usually less than 1 foot tall by wide, usually 6-8 inches tall. The flowers will bloom from spring to frost, and they pick up where spring bulbs leave off. You can cut the plant to the ground after the 1st frost.

The Dwarf Mexican Petunia attracts 2 butterflies – the Texas Crescent and the Common Buckeye. This plant has been classified as a Texas Superstar because of its beauty and low maintenance requirements.

Resources:

<https://texassuperstar.com/plants/ruellia/ruellia.html>

'Plants for Texas' by Howard Garrett

'Texas Home Landscaping' by Greg Grant & Roger Holmes

Community Outreach Seminar

February Monthly Seminar Was the Place to “Bee”
by Randy Thompson



A very good crowd braved the cold weather Thursday, February 16 to hear Master Beekeeper, Greg Oermann present a seminar on Honey Bees, Native Bees and their importance as pollinators.

The Texas Master Beekeeper Program is a beekeeper training and certification program provided by Texas Apiary Inspection Service and the Texas Beekeepers Association. The program offers four levels of training and advancement: Apprentice Beekeeper, Advanced Beekeeper, Master Beekeeper, and Master Craftsman Beekeeper. In order to obtain certification in each level, the previous level examinations and requirements must be completed successfully. Mr. Oermann completed Master Beekeeping certification in 2022 and is currently working on his Master Craftsman Beekeeper certification. The crowd enjoyed an interesting and informative presentation with Greg fielding many questions on types of bees, protection of bees, and providing the best landscapes for attracting these wonderful pollinators. After the presentation, the crowd was treated to door prizes of local honey and a lavender pollinator plant. Greg welcomes the public to contact him at oermannfamilyfarm@att.net if they have any further questions about beekeeping, or further information about native pollinators.



THE BLOOMING BELL MARCH 2023

Bell County Home & Garden Show



Seed packets



The kids zone



Gary answering a question



Jan and her succulents

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