

The Blooming Bell

NEWS . EVENTS . GARDENING TIPS. EDUCATIONAL ARTICLES

AMAZING!! What a plant sale!



Upcoming Events	2/3
President's Corner	4
Spring Plant Sale.....	5/6
Herb Spirals.....	7/8
Peaches & Plums Seminar.....	9

KMCCG Report.....	10/11
Texas Superstar.....	12
Monthly Seminar: Bees.....	13
The Art Of Beekeeping.....	14



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

THE BLOOMING BELL APRIL 2023

UPCOMING EVENTS

APRIL 2023

Plant Sale After Action Meeting:

Rainwater Harvesting Barrel Workshop will be on **April 22th** at the BCMGA Learning Center 9:00 am to noon. Sign up to volunteer help build barrels in VMS. Class is Full but we do have 5 audit spots available for a donation.

Rain Barrel Cleaning Day(s) Thursday **April 20th 1:30-3:30 pm** & Friday **April 21st 10:00 am to noon.**

We will be holding a class for the 2023 interns on May 4th.

Speakers Bureau & Monthly Outreach Seminar

Monthly Seminar is Thursday **April 20th 6:00-7:30** on Drip Irrigation with Dave Slaughter at the BCMGA Learning Center.

Special Event: Saturday **April 22nd 9:00 am to noon**, BCMGA Hands-on Workshop "Herb Compound Butter & Cream Cheese Spreads" taught by Jeanne Richard and Charlotte Nunnery in the Classroom in the Extension Office.

Special Event: Thursday, **April 27th 6:00-7:30 pm** Ground Water in Texas taught by Dirk Aaron from Clearwater Underground Water Conservation District.

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

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.

General Membership Business & Education Meeting: Meets on **April 12th**, at 9:30 a.m.; Fellowship time at 9:00 a.m. The meeting will begin with the educational portion of our meeting. Dirk Aaron from Clearwater Underground Water Conservation District will teach us about water conservation. We will meet at the Harris Community Center, 401 N. Alexander St., Belton.

May 10th General Membership Meeting will be our **Spring Fling** at the Immanuel Lutheran Church at 2109 W. Avenue H, Temple. More information to follow.

Board of Directors Meeting: Meets on **April 26th**, 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 Fogleman & Joyce Lauer
Outreach/Speakers Bureau	Debra Thompson

THE BLOOMING BELL APRIL 2023

UPCOMING EVENTS APRIL 2023

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.

This month the **Herb Group** will be hosting on **April 5th**.

For more information, please contact Tracy Brown (this month only) at bcmgtabrown@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.

Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Klassy
Mr. and Mrs. Bradley Dugger

Invite you to the wedding of their children

Daisy Avril Klassy


Brandon Neil Dugger

Friday, May 19th 2023	Reception to Follow
2:00pm	Belton Nazarene Church
Yettie Polk Park	1701 Sparta Rd.
101 S. Davis St. Belton, TX 76513	Belton, TX 76513

*Please RSVP by April 19th to (254) 624-5111
By text or to appaloosagirl@gmail.com*

Registered at Bed, Bath, and Beyond and at Walmart

THE BLOOMING BELL APRIL 2023

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Kathy Love

March 25th was a beautiful day at the Bend of the River ranch for our 2023 Spring Plant Sale! And what a sale it was!!! Over 1,200 contacts were made overall, and the Ask a Master Gardener table assisted over 75 individuals with horticultural questions and concerns.

For the first time in my 8+ years as a Master Gardener the sale was a complete sell out! We have the tremendous publicity we received this spring from our communications director Teri Marceau and her committee and our outreach director Debbie Thompson and her committee to thank for the awesome turnout.

The gross amount for the sale is being counted as of this writing and a total of over \$20,000.00 is going into the bank today (March 27th). Plant Sale co-director Barbara Ishikawa and Treasurer Jackie McLaughlin will have a breakdown of this income at our April 12th general membership meeting.

Over 74 members worked at the sale on Saturday, and another 50 or so helped with set-up on Friday. Our volunteers kept the plants looking good, in order, well displayed, and then sold them to our customers who surely came mostly from Bell and surrounding counties, but we spoke with a gentleman at the Ask a Master Gardener booth who is from Wichita Falls! (Down visiting family, I think he said.)

This sale was truly an incredible success, and everyone involved deserves a well-earned pat on the back for a job well done.

As we move past the hustle and bustle of the plant sale, please be keeping an eye on our calendar of events in VMS. Our Youth directors, Susan Fogleman & Joyce Lauer were recently appointed by the Board of Directors to fill the term of Susan Burchfield who resigned effective March 15th from that position. With support from previous youth director Janice Smith they are busy with youth projects throughout the county. Additionally, we were approached by Sheryl Long, our Extension Agent who oversees 4H projects in the county, to join up with the Fort Hood 4H program on base and will be needing volunteers to help with youth gardens. Wayne Schirner and Joyce Lauer have participated in a conference call and will be meeting with staff on post Wednesday March 29th to provide training. In 2017 the Association received a 1st place award for the Fort Hood Community Gardens and this looks like another great way to serve our men and women in the military stationed at Hood, so especially if you are already able to get on post with minimal hassle, consider signing up for this project which has been included in VMS, though we are told for this project post entry will be streamlined so don't let that stop you from participating.

The Killeen Municipal Court Community Garden (KMCCG) continues to be a showcase of what we can accomplish as Master Gardeners with the support of the community. We were approached by the State along with other associations to showcase one of our projects at the state conference and they have invited us to feature the KMCCG as part of the conference. Dave Slaughter will be working on videos, a presentation, etc. for the conference. We have also been contacted by the Copperas Cove Municipal Court indicating an interest in starting a program like KMCCG for their court and the court coordinator plans to attend the workday on April 1st to learn more about what we do in the garden. Way to go all you KMCCG Master Gardeners!!!

There is lots going on so be sure and keep up with events in the VMS calendar and sign up whenever you can to stay an essential part of our association.

Happy Gardening!!!

Spring Plant Sale



If you haven't heard by now, the BCMGA Spring Plant sale was **sold out** in a manner of hours. It was a beautiful day at the Bend of the River Ranch and we had over **1,200** community members join us to shop for plants and visit our Ask a Master Gardener table.

The many volunteers who supported this event deserve our gratitude - advertising, social media, website, plant buyers, plant growers, research and plant signage, set-up day team, parking team, talliers, cashiers, plant specialists, rainbarrel and seed tables, Ask a Master Gardener table, folks who loaned or donated materials, and many more!

Additional thanks go to the newly-hired transport team (they did the heavy lifting so Master Gardeners could focus on what we do best) and the youth from the Municipal Court.

As successful as it was, we're always looking for ways to improve. We will have a after action meeting on Wednesday, April 12, after the general membership meeting. In the meantime, please take the [short survey](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/23SprSale) while you've still got all those good ideas in your head. (If the link doesn't work, copy and paste this address in your browser <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/23SprSale>)

Thank you, Barbara

Spring Plant Sale



“WOW it was impressive today. I arrived at 7:30 to work and was so excited to see all the cars and customers lined up.”

Nellie Pennington (Intern)



Herb Spirals By Tracy Brown

A lot of folks have been interested in an Herb Spiral, and might feel overwhelmed by all the information available to you. So let me make this easy, and take away some of this stress.

Herb Spiral use the very basics of Permaculture. Creating a miniature ecosystem, to provide for fresh herbs in your cooking, teas, etc. By having a spiral; plants, insects, wildlife are working together making this small ecosystems to evolve, taking care of itself. (No chemicals needed). If you are familiar with Permaculture, your Herbs are generally in Zone 1. This Zone is seen and used everyday. Easy access is the plus. It can be in several containers by your front or back door, or incorporated into your landscape.

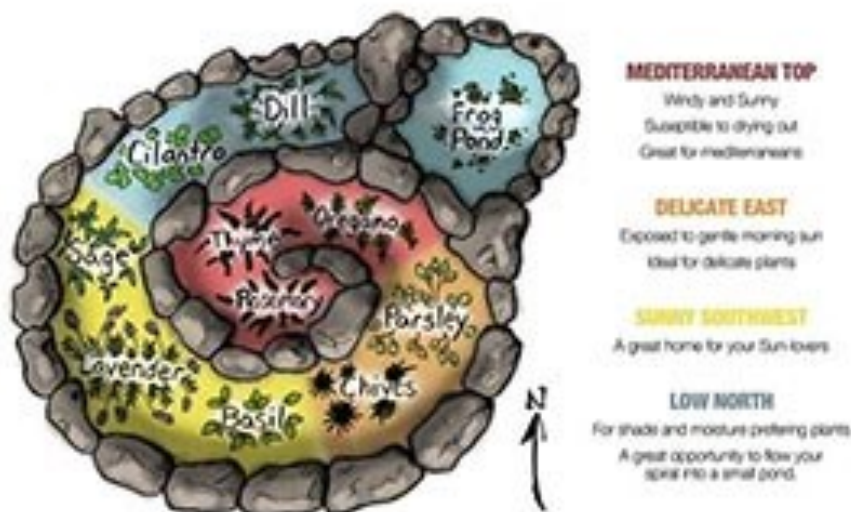
First decide where in your yard it would work best for you. Using landscape paint (found at Lowes or Home Depot. It washes away). Mark the spot and watch it for a week or more, making sure this spot works for you and your landscape. You also need to decide on size.

Personally I had my yard maintenance crew dig for me. You do not have to dig too deeply. You can use bricks, rocks, wine bottles, left over landscape materials, etc. I like to recycle so I used Wine bottles and you do not have to remove labels. This is the most labor time spent is in building. I did over a week a little at a time.

Once built, how you plant and what you plant starts your ecosystem. (I am not going into soil here. You might bring in or use what you have). Plants that require less water are planted on the top. Ex: Lavender, Rosemary ... (They like high and dry) Work your way from there, going around your spiral. Plant Herbs you will use. But also research which ones like being next to others For example, if you enjoy multiple Basil's, be sure to spread out and on the upper wind side (they can cross pollinate) plant chamomile, echinacea, nasturtiums and marigolds in between. Experiment and see which planting method works for you. Adding edible flowers in between your herbs, helps with pollinators and beneficial insects.

If you notice (from example below) at the very bottom of your Spiral, you add a small water feature. This can be a stagnate pond for frogs and or toads (which eat bad insects at night) or growing watercress, water Lillie's, etc. Or a solar fountain to attract birds for water and baths, which they can eat insects, worms, etc.

The best part, these Spirals can be any size. One of mine is ten foot across, and handles all my culinary and edible flowers. When creating this size, keep in mind you will need strategically placed stepping stones. Plus you will need to add drip line to assist with better watering, or soaker hoses.



Herb Spirals



The other Spiral I built this last year is an 'S' style, which will carry Tea on one side and Medicinal Herbs on the other side. With Ginger and Turmeric separating in the middle.



If you decide to build one from containers for your front or back door areas, different size and heights, can make a spiral as well, and it is possible to add a water feature too! The Spiral is only limited by you. I saw someone online built a Spiral for veggies and cut flowers.

It is much easier than you think. Please, you are welcome to stop by and see mine at 703 N 5th Street in Temple (corner of N 5th and W Garfield).

THE BLOOMING BELL APRIL 2023

Peaches and Plums Seminar

By Dawn Woodcock, Intern 2023



No doubt you have noticed them everywhere you shop. I am talking about those beautiful blooming peach trees for sale that bring promises of warmer days enjoying a fresh, juicy peach. As a plant addict, I find it difficult to resist the urge to take one home with me every time. According to Bill Walker, Certified Master Gardener and speaker at the March seminar on Peaches and Plums, it was a good thing I didn't buy a peach tree on impulse. The best time to plant a peach tree was back in January, when it was dormant. I would be much better off with a 3 ft whip sapling than the 10 ft trees at the stores. In addition, the variety for sale may not be the best for our area.

Bill Walker stressed that before you consider growing peaches and plum trees, you need to do your research. That includes evaluating your soil, space, sunlight, and drainage. Both peaches and plums require full sun in fairly fertile, well-drained soil and 25 feet between trees.

You may have heard that fruit trees require a certain amount of "chill hours". Chill hours are defined as one hour of temperature in the range of 32 to 45 from the first of November to the end of February. Varieties with lower chill hour requirements are likely to bloom early and be more subject to frost. Varieties that need more chilling hours than are available will fail to set fruit. Of course, weather here is unpredictable. Commercial growers expect to lose one in six crops. Bill suggested Texas grown trees with mid-chilling requirements for our area. Bill stated that the variety 'TexPrince', developed by Texas A&M, with 550 chill hours is hard to beat.

A young tree (whip) is recommended for planting because they establish quickly and in a few growing seasons catch up and overtake trees planted as larger stock. Besides, whips have a cheaper initial cost, develop more vigorous root system, and have less transplant shock. November to February are the best times to plant or move trees. Prune the whip to a single trunk and cut back to 2-3 ft tall. Wrap the lower 18 inches in aluminum foil for the first growing season to help it withstand weather changes. Mulch and water every 3-4 days the first year. Above all, do not overwater. More peach trees die from overwatering than anything else.

Pruning is done during dormancy. After the first growing season, start training the tree to a martini glass shape with an open center. Peaches are borne only on 1-year-old wood so, starting the second dormant season, retain some 1-year-old wood for fruiting. Developed peach and plum plantings should be dormant pruned 50-60% each year. Good fruit thinning is recommended starting the third year when you will thin to 300 and 500 thereafter. As always, practice Integrated Pest Management (IPM).

Plums have the same cultural requirements as peaches. Bill mentioned two varieties of plums that are recommended for Bell County: 'Santa Rosa' and 'Methley'. Cross pollination is required for plums and these varieties are both good cross pollinators for each other.

THE BLOOMING BELL APRIL 2023

KILLEEN MUNICIPAL COURT COMMUNITY GARDEN REPORT

By Randy Brown



3-11-23

Warm breezy day in the garden . Great turnout of Master Gardeners! Half row of tomatoes planted. Is a risk planting this early, but no freeze forecasted. Lot of maintenance (weeding)

3-18-23

Today was a cool cloudy workday that just didn't seem to warm up. Workday consisted of garden maintenance and harvest day.. a lot of weeding and pruning. Harvested 19.6 lbs of carrots and radishes. 2023 Interns Monique Armas and Dawn Woodcock joined us. Squash and Zucchini have germinated and look really good. 17 rows under cultivation.

3-25-23

It was a beautiful day in the garden. Was again primarily a maintenance day with efforts divided between the Association Plant sale AND KMCCG. All squash rows have germinated. Only a row and a half of tomatoes are left to be planted and at that point, all rows will be under cultivation. Many flowers are blooming at the garden including all varieties of roses, bluebonnets, Iris, and many varieties of wild flowers. Peach trees are still in bloom. Other fruit trees are leafing out as well as Pecan Trees. Great time to visit!



Interns planting.



Dawn with her radish bouquet.



April with part of radish harvest.

THE BLOOMING BELL APRIL 2023

KILLEEN MUNICIPAL COURT COMMUNITY GARDEN REPORT

By Randy Brown



Ann, April and Melissa discussing next moves.



Interns Dawn and Monique with harvest of 19.6 lbs of carrots and radishes. *Photo April Marek.*



Farm looking south.



All hands on deck!

TEXAS SUPERSTAR OF THE MONTH



For the month of April, we will be featuring the beautiful,

Gold Star Esperanza

By Melissa Johnson



The 'Gold Star' Esperanza is known botanically as *Tecoma stans* and is in the family known as Bignoniaceae, which means it is related to the native cross-vine.

'Yellow Bells' is often sold generically, but the variety name, 'Gold Star' Esperanza from the Texas Superstar program, is starting to spread.

It was chosen as a Texas Superstar winner due to the many satisfied gardeners in San Antonio and throughout the State of Texas. This evergreen shrub produces yellow, bell-shaped flowers from spring through frost. It practically laughs at the full-sun heat in July and August. The striking flowers are complemented by dark green, glossy foliage.

Butterflies and hummingbirds relish the 'Yellow Bells' nectar. Combine this with other hummingbird-attracting plants like the Fire Bush or Mexican Bird of Paradise, or even the hardy perennial Firecracker plant for beautiful pollinator group. Grow them in large containers around the porch, accent entryways, patio, or deck. Or perhaps in mass plantings.

It is a root hardy perennial and the best time to plant this would be in spring. It will grow to a height of 4 feet, and up to 3 feet wide, it is highly pest and deer resistant, it loves to be in full sun, and requires low to medium amounts of water, this is best planted in a well-drained soil.

You could not go wrong with this beautiful plant. It truly is very striking with those bright vibrant yellow flowers. It is really an eye-catching addition to your home and landscaping area, and pollinators love it, win-win.

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 Art of Beekeeping

By Melenda Pomykal

Do you love honey? Did you know that to make 16 ounces of honey it requires 1,152 bees to travel 112,000 miles and visit 4.5 million flowers? It is true! Just ask Eric and Cheryl Robertson, owners of Raw-Bee's LLC, a honeybee supply company in Lorena, TX.

On March 4, 2023, Bell County Master Gardeners Association alongside Eric and Cheryl Robertson presented a hands-on Bee Box Workshop. Eric and Cheryl guided the class participants in building their own honeybee deep brood box. Everyone in the class was new to bee keeping, so after the bee boxes were complete, Eric and Cheryl were kind enough to answer the many questions that were "buzzing" around the room. They also showed examples and taught about the other components needed to complete an apiary. You could hear the passion in their voices for sharing the knowledge needed to keep the tiny pollinators safe and healthy.

The Robertson's store, Raw-Bee's, supplies beekeepers with high quality products, including local queen bees. And while you are there, be sure to pick up a jar of their delicious golden Texas honey.

They also offer mentorship and maintenance services especially for new beekeepers. Whether experienced or new to the art of bee keeping, Eric and Cheryl Robertson are an amazing source for all things honeybee related.

If you're interested in learning more, you can find them online at raw-bees.com or visit their Facebook page.

