



NEWS . EVENTS . GARDENING TIPS. EDUCATIONAL ARTICLES

Project Highlight
Keep Salado Beautiful

The Texas Department of Agriculture recognized Thomas Arnold Elementary School garden as the recipient of a \$10,000 Expanding 3e's (X3e) Grant in August 2022. This grant provided resources necessary to continue restoring the garden established by the PTO and Community partners in 2012.

The garden is completed, dedicated to the memory of dedicated volunteer Kathie Walrath, and the students have enjoyed the fall and spring growing seasons. The irrigation and fencing have provided the necessary infrastructure, and the Ft. Hood soldiers, volunteers, and student involvement have created an ideal blend of community, generating excitement and commitment that is beginning to build across the school community. TAE School Garden has received several awards that recognize our theme of "Cultivating Community."

Successes include the winter spinach harvest; the students delighted in sharing their bounty with teachers. Spring planting was also a great day. Students learned the process in the fall and were ready to plant. They take great pride in the garden. The garden was included in the Governor's Community Achievement Award won by Keep Salado Beautiful, and was the winner of the School Beautification Challenge for the Youth Environmental Ambassadors! Program. The US

Army Garrison Ft Hood presented a \$200 check to 3rd grade teacher Melanie Lane at the SISD School Board Meeting in June. Each of the 3rd graders received a certificate.

We have a group of families that will care for the garden during the summer, the "TAE Garden Friends." We have a grant extension until December to complete the Outdoor Learning Center, renovate the Amphitheater, and complete the gardens. We are also working on Phase 2 of curriculum development and long-range planning.

We appreciate all of the assistance from BCMG during



this past year, and look forward to more collaboration.

Report by Susan Terry, Master Gardener



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Have Gardening Questions? Submit your questions and photos at:

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UPCOMING EVENTS

AUGUST 2022

Speakers Bureau

Salado Library: **July 30th**, 10:30 AM, Wayne Schirner will be teaching on Fall Gardening Starts in the Summer.

Harker Heights Library & Activity Center: **August 16th**, 6:30 PM, Dave Slaughter will be teaching on the Eastern Monarch, their life cycle, and preferred host and nectar plants.

Monthly Outreach Seminar: In the Learning Center at 6:30 pm, **July 21, 2022** class is Bokashi Composting with Pam Dragoo.

Plant Sale Preparation: The preparation for the fall plant sale has begun. On **Wednesday, August 17th, 9:00-11:00 AM**, in the Learning Center with Wayne Schirner. He will be teaching on seed starting using the dense planting technique. You will start seeds for the fall plant sale.

WEDNESDAY WORKDAYS: Every Wednesday, 7:30 am to Noon, is a Master Gardner work day apt 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.

Need Director !!!: Director of Facilities - **OPEN**. This position is supervisory nature, you create a team of folks under you to help coordinate the learning center projects, the demo beds (out back), and the demo gardens (around the building).

Board of Directors Meeting: Meets on **August 24th, 2022** at 10:00 a.m., in the Education Center (which is in the AgriLife Building).

General Membership Business & Education Meeting: Meets on **August 10, 2022** at 9:30 a.m.; Fellowship time is at 9:00 a.m. The meeting will begin with the educational portion of our meeting with **Camille Wiseman, Woodland Ecologist, TX A&M** followed by the business of our association. You don't want to miss either part. We will meet at the Harris Community Center, 401 N. Alexander St., Belton, TX 76513

Burger Wednesday: They are on the **1st Wednesday of the month**. Bring a dish to share and small donations are accepted. Our new organizers and cooks are Don Wyatt, Ray Machovsky & Art Carr for more information contact Don Wyatt, dwyatt2005@sbcglobal.net, 254-314-6758.

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 Community Garden: Meets every Saturday, time varies according to the season. It is harvest season and fall garden preparation time. See Calendar of Events for details. Please contact Dave Slaughter slaughtd915@gmail.com. See VMS for additional harvest days to earn extra service hours.



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

Master Gardener Program Coordinator:
To be Announced

HOW TO FIND US

1605 N. Main St. Ste 105
Belton, TX 76513

Phone: 254.933.5304

Email: bell.mg@agnet.tamu.edu

Website: txmg.org/bell

FaceBook: Bell County Master Gardeners
Association

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Executive Board

President	Kathy Love
1 st Vice President	Jan Upchurch
2 nd Vice President	Louann Hight
Recording Secretary	Misti Daniel
Treasurer	Barbara Ishikawa

Directors

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

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By Kathy Love

Our big event for August will be the retirement of our long-time Ag Agent Lyle Zoeller! Please join us in celebrating 29 years of service with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service for Lyle. We will have a come-and-go celebration at the Bell County Extension Office on August 24, 2022, from 11:00 am to 2:00 pm. Light refreshments and cake will be served. At 1:00 pm there will be an awards presentation for him as well. Hope you can join us!

The Board of Directors will meet this Wednesday, July 27th, and discuss what special recognition we will show our appreciation for all Lyle has done for the Master Gardener program in Bell County.

We are also saying goodbye to Scarlot Barreras, who has retired from the Extension Office for a position at Belton ISD, which will allow her more time to be with her family year-round. Please give Scarlot all of your best wishes in her new position.

We continue an open request for interested non-BOD members to serve on the Nomination Committee. We need two additional members to serve. Please contact Glenn Melton at gmelton1@hotmail.com. Interested members should contact Glenn Melton at gmelton1@hotmail.com. We look forward to your interest in this committee.

It is also my understanding that our help desk staffing for every Tuesday from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm is open for staffing. If anyone is interested in staffing this position, training will be provided, so please let us know if you are interested. Contact me at either 972/672-0999 or lkathy021@gmail.com. The Help Desk contacts are picking back up again, so we need your help to serve our citizens.



On behalf of the Nominating Committee, two subjects are noted below as an update to committee activity and schedule.

Effective July 29, 2022, the Chair of the Nominating Committee will be transferred from Bill Walker to Glenn Melton. Going forward, feel free to contact Glenn via email, phone, or text.

Noted below is a confirmation of the current BCMGA Election Cycle Calendar. This will be reviewed and updated at the upcoming Membership Meeting. Focus your thoughts to the period July - September as this is an important window to think toward candidates for open Director and Executive positions.

BCMGA Election Calendar

JULY - Email General Membership on establishment of the Nominating Committee and note the Officer and Director Positions considered in the election cycle.

JULY - SEPTEMBER - Open period to develop and identify candidates interested in open positions. All interest should be communicated to the Nominating Committee.

SEPTEMBER GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING - Nominating Committee is completed. A slate of candidates is presented at this meeting with notice there will be an election held at the October GM Meeting.

OCTOBER GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING - Election of Officer and Director positions.

OCTOBER BOD MEETING - Newly elected Officers and Directors attend BOD Meeting as a guest of the Board

NOVEMBER GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING - Installation of newly elected Officers and Directors.



Cicada Killer Wasps

Cicada killer wasps, common this time of year, are native to Texas. They are some of the largest wasps that you can find in Texas, reaching up to 1 ½ inches long and can be somewhat frightening if you see them flying about your lawn. Cicada killers have a reddish-brown head and thorax, a black and yellow abdomen, and wings with a rusty tinge. Only females are capable of stinging because the stinger is a modified egg-laying structure. Fortunately, female cicada killer wasps are rarely aggressive. Males look similar to females and are territorial. They will buzz near you if you enter their territory, but once you leave the male's territory, they ignore you.

Cicada killers are considered beneficial insects because they help to control cicada populations. Cicadas, the noisy insects of summer, are stung and paralyzed by female cicada killer wasps. The paralyzed cicadas are carried back to a burrow that the wasp digs in the ground. The female wasp pulls the cicada into the burrow where it is tucked into a side tunnel. Once there are 3-4 cicadas in the side tunnel, an egg is deposited with the cicadas and the side tunnel is sealed. When the egg hatches, the cicada killer larva eats the cicadas provided. The cicada killer wasp that is developing emerges the following year.

Cicada killers usually do not warrant any control methods. If someone is allergic to wasps, insecticidal dust can be sprinkled around the opening of the burrow. Tamp the dust around the opening with your shoe, and as the wasps work on cleaning out the entrance to the burrow, they will pick up the dust on their body and eventually die.

Please note that cicada killer wasps are often mistaken for Asian giant hornets (AGH), also referred to as "murder hornets". AGH have not been found in Texas and have only been located in Washington state within the U.S.



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

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Dense Seed Starting Method

by Wayne Schirner

I have already shared this seed starting method with the group who are starting seeds for the fall plant sale, but I wanted to share this with the rest of the members. This is a useful method to use when starting many seeds of the same variety.

Seed starting in 6-packs: The seed starting mix needs to be moist when you plant the seeds. There are at least two ways to do this. Moisten the mix before you put it in the 6-pack or moisten the mix after you put it in the 6-pack. Personally, I like to put dry mix in the 6-pack and then moisten. I think you get a better distribution of the mix in the cell if you put it in dry than if you moisten it first because the moist mix is clumpier. Once the 6-pack is filled with seed starting mix, make sure it is moistened well. I tap the 6-pack on a table top a couple of times to make there are no air pockets in the mix, but I don't compress the mix. Once the seed starting mix in the 6-pack is moist, lay seeds on top of the moist mix, whether you are planting 1 - 2 seeds per cell or 10-20 seeds per cell. Then use more dry mix to cover the seeds. Lettuce seed needs light to germinate, so when it is time to start lettuce seed, don't cover those seeds, or at most a thin sprinkling of dry mix on top of the seed. After placing the dry mix on top of the seeds, then moisten again. This technique will give you the best contact between the seeds and the moistened mix. Use whatever method you want to identify what seeds are in each cell. I number the cells, and on a separate piece of paper write the seed name for each numbered cell. I don't use labels until I up-pot. Once I have each cell planted, I place the 6-pack on a Styrofoam tray that is roughly 6"x 8". These have a lip that helps contain any water and can be used to bottom water if needed. At this point, I cover each planted 6-pack with plastic wrap. This time of year, I don't use heat mats, so there isn't much condensation on the plastic wrap. If there is condensation, I just flip the plastic wrap daily. This allows excess moisture to evaporate and helps prevent damping off. If you moistened your mix adequately in the seed planting steps, you shouldn't need to add more water until after germination has occurred. The plastic wrap allows a way to get rid of excess moisture while also providing a way to reduce evaporation when there isn't excess moisture.



Now, just look at your 6-pack every day. Until seedlings appear, light isn't needed (except for lettuce.) Once seedlings appear, they need light! Light won't hurt the seeds that haven't germinated, so once the seedlings in one or two cells have appeared, put the whole 6-pack under light. Some of you may have an AeroGarden stuck away in a closet somewhere because you don't use it anymore. The LED light that is part of that system is ideal for providing enough light for one 6-pack. I keep one in my kitchen and every morning I turn the light on and every night I shut the light off. If you don't have a grow light of some sort, you can probably get by with placing your 6-pack on a windowsill. Because the 6-pack has such a small footprint, you can move it to different windows in your house during the day to maximize light exposure. After two weeks of growth, you can start acclimating your plants to direct sunlight. I start by placing the seedlings in full sun for 30 minutes the first day. I add another 30 minutes daily so that on day 6 the plants are in direct sun for 3 hours. Then I start adding 1 additional hour daily so by day 9 they are in direct sun for 6 hours and by day 11 they are in direct sun for 8 hours. The times they aren't in direct sun, I either have them in shade or under grow lights. You can do this without grow lights. As a minimum, you should have your plants fully acclimated to direct sunlight by the end of 4 weeks from when you planted your seeds. Watch your plants closely and make sure they get enough moisture during this hot/dry weather we are having. It is so much easier to do all of this by just moving a 6-pack on a 6x8 Styrofoam tray around than by having to deal with moving three 1020 trays of plants around, which is what you can get from a 6-pack of seedlings. After 4 weeks of growth in the 6-pack, the seedlings are ready to be up-potted. I have scheduled a demonstration on 17 August starting at 9:00 at the learning center so you can see the process. The photo above is a tray of seedlings ready to be up-potted.

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KILLEEN MUNICIPAL COURT COMMUNITY GARDEN REPORT

By Dave Slaughter

7-16-2022 Hot day, great harvest especially for July, 93.2 lb, weeding, watering and replacing biosoil.



7-23-2022

Hot day, harvested 43 lbs of different squash varieties, cucumbers and peppers. Waging a battle with aphids. Had to thin several okra and squash plants that could not be saved even with abundant Lady Bugs present or washing off; thinning them out of the garden to save the other plants. As always, good maintenance, watering conducted in the garden. Teri Marceau did a Facebook Live presentation with Dave Slaughter on KMCCG.

7-30-2022

Hot, windy day at the garden. 39.3 lbs of various squash varieties, okra, peppers, and tomatoes harvested. Currently, the garden continues to battle aphids and squash borers. Maintenance continues: watering, weeding, trimming. To date, we have harvested 461 pounds for the month of July, bringing our total harvest for the year to 2,808 pounds. We have mentored 27 young people, and 52 master gardeners have worked at the garden in July. We are now preparing the garden for our fall vegetables, consisting of cabbage, cauliflower, turnips, beets, kohlrabi, Brussels sprouts, and carrots.



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Bell County Master Gardeners Present a Water Bath Canning Class

By Sylvia Maedgen

On Saturday morning, July 16th, we conducted a water bath canning class for the public at the AgriLife Extension meeting room. The class was sponsored by the AgriLife Extension Service, Belton.

I gave a talk on the canning process and techniques for a successful outcome; explained what we were doing at each step, and then I began combining and cooking the ingredients for picante sauce which I cooked for an hour. The tomatoes, bell peppers, and jalapenos were from my garden.

Then Debbie Thompson explained and began the process of making grape jelly using unsweetened grape juice. Then I prepared and cooked strawberry/fig jam with the figs from my fig trees. For each process, we sterilized the jars and lids; filled the jars with the fruits and veggies; sealed them with the lids and bands; processed the picante sauce for 20 minutes and the jelly and jam for 10 minutes. We used a stove-top water bath canning pot and an electric water bath canner. Then after we removed the jars from the water bath, they sat covered with a towel overnight to cool and seal.

We had 10 people in attendance who had never canned before. Also assisting us for preparations and clean-up were MGs Melissa Johnson and Charlotte Nunnery. The class took about 3½ hours, and all the participants received an 8 oz. jar each of picante sauce, grape jelly, and strawberry/fig jam. We also provided a tasting of the strawberry/fig jam, tomato/basil jam on cream cheese, picante sauce, and zucchini nut bread.



Photos courtesy of Mike Myers,
The Belton Journal

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Herb Study Program

Programs for the upcoming Herb Study Group

August - Herbal Tea - Will be having a tasting of different herbal blends.

September - Herbal Extracts - How to do it yourself

October - All members bring information about your herb gardens. Concerns, fall planting, etc.

November - Thanksgiving - Pot luck - Bring your favorite recipes made from your garden.

December - Bring plant/garden accessories to swap, white elephant style

Herbal Recipe From July Meeting

Our Favorite Baba Ghanoush (Roasted Eggplant Dip)

- PREP 25min
- COOK 40min
- TOTAL 1hrs 5min

Baba ghanoush is best left rustic with some texture. Because of this, simply mashing and stirring with a fork is all that's needed. You can make this in a food processor or blender. Be careful, though. It will become much smoother. This gets even better after a day or two in the refrigerator, so this is perfect for making ahead!

Makes approximately 6 servings

YOU WILL NEED:

- 2 medium eggplants (about 2 pounds or 900 grams)
- 1/4 cup (60 ml) tahini, see our homemade tahini recipe
- 1/4 cup (60 ml) lemon juice
- 2 to 3 garlic cloves, finely minced (see note)
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/4 teaspoon fine sea salt
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley leaves
- 1 teaspoon olive oil, optional

DIRECTIONS

Adjust an oven rack to the middle position and turn broiler on (high heat). Line a baking sheet with aluminum foil. Place eggplants onto the baking sheet and prick in several places using a fork. This helps steam escape while the eggplants roast. Broil eggplants 2 minutes on all sides. The skin will darken a little and begin to smell smoky, adding lots of flavor to the dip.

Turn broiler off, but do not remove eggplants from the oven. Heat oven to 375 degrees F, and then roast eggplants until very soft; 25 to 30 minutes. Cool 10 to 15 minutes until easily handled.

While the eggplants roast, combine tahini, lemon juice, garlic, cumin and the salt in a medium bowl. Set aside so the flavors meld.

Split the roasted eggplants, drain excess liquid, scrape out the flesh, and add to the tahini mixture. (Discard excess liquid and skins). Mash the roasted eggplant into the tahini mixture with a fork until somewhat smooth with some texture remaining.

Cool to room temperature then stir in parsley and drizzle the top with olive oil. Store in an airtight container and refrigerate up to 5 days.

- **Garlic:** We enjoy the extra kick garlic gives here. The tahini stands up very well to the garlic. If you're not sure you want to use three cloves, reduce it to two or even one clove.
- **Tahini:** Tahini is a paste made from ground sesame seeds. You can find jars sold in most grocery stores. Look where international foods are sold. You can also buy it online or easily make tahini at home yourself.
- **How to Make Baked Pita Chips:** Cut 2 to 3 pitas into wedges. Add to a baking sheet and bake in a 375 degree F oven until lightly browned and crisp; 7 to 10 minutes.
- **Nutrition facts:** The nutrition facts provided below are estimates. We have used the USDA database to calculate approximate values.

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BCMGA July General Meeting

Good crowd, two 2022 interns received name badges and Glenn Melton presented the education portion on Basic Composting.



GARDENING TIP OF THE MONTH

August is a tough month for vegetable crops, especially with the current 100-degree temperatures and lack of rainfall this summer. Below are examples of pests feeding on vegetable crops at KMCCG this month.

Photo 1 shows a squash leaf with the telltale signs that a leaf is infected with aphids. Symptoms include leaf puckering, the shiny sugar substance known as honeydew, and the presence of nymph castings.

The best method of control is to wash away the aphids with a gentle stream of water.



Photo 3 shows okra leaves that have been damaged from insect penetration. Photo 4 shows the likely culprit, the Glassy Winged Sharpshooter insect. The current minimal damage at this time requires no control; however, if damage should increase, a control such as Tree Tanglefoot Insect Barrier should be applied to a three-inch stick to catch the offending insects.



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Help Desk ~ Ask a Master Gardener By Teri Marceau

On Sunday, July 24th the help desk received the following inquiry about issues with a cantaloupe. Nighttime temperatures are not helping our summer fruits and vegetables.

"Hello,

I am having a tough time finding out what's covering my cantaloupes. I've grown these for a couple years now and haven't had these thicker growths on them. This year I grew them on the ground (usually I grow them vertically) so I thought maybe some kind of mold, even though I tried to turn them often to prevent that and I do use a straw mulch. I searched high and low on the internet and can only find issues with leaves (no big ones here), or fruit rotting (insides are perfectly fine). I did have to rip them all out early as I found something has been making holes in them, but I'd still like to solve the problem so I don't have any issues with the next crop. Thank you for any help you are able to give.

Sincerely,

April M., Killeen, TX"



Janice Smith and I did a whole day of researching the issues you see in the photos with very little luck. There were a lot of research-based articles on growing cantaloupe along with disease and pests that effect this delicious fruit, but nothing that covered the issues we were looking at in photos April provided. Therefore, we reached out to you, our fellow Master Gardeners. You all got busy trying to find the solution. I have enjoyed reading each article and email with your thoughts and experience.

Ultimately, we agreed with the article MaryAnn Everett sent from Successful Farming (SF). She said "while I searched on university sites, including TAMU and Oklahoma State Extension, but I saw nothing about something like this. There were also several sites talking about the drought, and therein lies what is probably the instigator. If she never has had this before, but has it now, I would attribute it to the weather. We are seeing 30-40, and even 50 days with successive over 100-degree heat, and that heat stays until 9-10:00 at night. One night my thermometer measured 100 at 9:00. The plant is trying to survive, and they do that any way they can. Thicker skin would help the fruit keep viable. With that said, I have had to pull up most of what I had, I found the fruits were tough and bitter. All the water I could give it was not enough with the heat and the humidity going into the night." She included this link to SF— <https://www.agriculture.com/weather/news/lack-of-rain-increasing-dryness-across-midwest>.

Many of you agree with MaryAnn's assessment as well as SF's article.

Dave Slaughter wrote, "Spoke with the Horticulture Agent this morning. She has seen this in West Texas and it's heat related, no damage to the fruit."

Bill Walker wrote, "Can't be of much help with a specific cause backed up by scientific detail.

That said, I could provide an opinion..... The callus cover does not look to be insect related. I've seen a lot of issues this year related to excessive air and soil temps especially with raised beds. Think back, we've been in this "soup" of excessive or above normal heat since 2nd week of May.

About 3 weeks ago, I went round and round with a lady who came by the help desk asking about her raised beds not producing or dying, but she knew and justified watering and fertilization was maintained properly. I convinced her to go home and take a soil temp of the bed at 2". In this case the temp was 94 degrees. When soil temps push upward toward or above 90, everything just starts to shut down above and below ground. This consideration of soil temp does not consider the extreme air temps compounded by bed orientation and sun light exposure creating much higher temps."

Dennis Biggs wrote, "Hello, Thicker skins may be due to hotter/ dryer weather,(even if you are watering regular) holes may be from insects, or small birds, or small rodents. any other growths may be from watering late in the day as you may get a mold or fungus on over nite. some may also cause the holes, some pest also like it."

Debbie Thompson shared this article <https://apps.extension.umn.edu/garden/diagnose/plant/vegetable/melons/leaveswilting.html>

