

## Master Gardeners of Blanco County

Blanco County Master Gardeners August Meeting

### Gretchen Sanders: Preserving the Food You Raise

Tuesday, August 14, 2012

5:30pm - First Baptist Church

Johnson City

Desserts and Drinks Mary Joyce and Leona Carleton

Bring a sandwich or whatever else you want to eat

### Program:

## Now That You've Raised It, What Do You Do with It?



Gretchen Sanders, County AgriLife Extension Agent, will tell you what you can do with all those tomatoes and squash and beans that you harvest.

Sometimes there's a limit to what you can give away (theoretically, anyway), so Gretchen will show us various ways to preserve the things we raise so that we can enjoy them later.

The harvest may be over for some spring-summer crops, but we have fall crops coming on and may get some ideas for next spring also.

Drinks and dessert will be provided, so bring whatever else you would like to eat—the sack lunch we talked about last fall or a hamburger.

## From Betty: Blanco County Fair Booth Plans

We need help with decorations for the table and plant booth at Fair and Rodeo. **When you come to our August meeting, please bring an old hat and a potted plant that we can use on the table.** The more colorful, the better, but we will take any plant, any hat.

**Preferably the plant will be in a quart size container (#6-8 pot—maybe dressed up a little).** If you cannot attend the meeting, you

can drop the plant and hat off at my house any time before the meeting. We will be doing the decorating the evening after our meeting and can use help with setting up the table and the booth for plant judging inside the exhibit hall. My address is 106 N. C Ave in Johnson City Tx. If I am not home, leave plants and hats on my front porch. **You will receive both your hat and plant back unharmed.**





## Blanco County Master Gardeners Sponsor FIREWISE TRAINING

On July 20, 2012, 17 trainees met in Johnson City for two days of training in how to protect homes from fire. Most were Master Gardeners, both from Blanco County and from surrounding areas, and some were fire department corps volunteers.

The session was led by Texas Forest Service's Mary Kay Hicks, a lively and entertaining presenter. Various segments were conducted by other Forest Service personnel and County Agent Todd Swift. Mark Wobus explained wildfire behavior; Patrick Allen presented a segment on risk assessment and Todd Swift and Robert Edmonson presented additional information. A number of videos highlighted information.

First, an explanation of fire behavior was presented. Videos graphically showed how quickly flames can travel, much like rushing water, quickly engulfing a stand of trees, with walls of fire leaning uphill to ignite material in advance of the main blaze. Trainees saw how pine trees can “crown”—with fire exploding from treetop to treetop—or—“ladder”—with flames spiraling up trunks from undergrowth. A virtual firestorm of flying sparks and embers rained down on buildings and people in the huge fires of Oakland, California, much as they did in Bastrop last summer. Wind currents and winds created by the fire itself were also discussed. A wildfire is impressive and frightening to watch even on video. Viewers grimaced and grunted and gasped at times.



That people are the main cause of wildfires was a revelation, with how we can save our homes from wildfires as the point of the training. We need to teach everyone how to be Fire Wise.

The Forest Service emphasized that the LITTLE things are what make a difference in whether a home can be saved. Is there a way for the fire trucks to enter the property? Is there a cleared area around the house that makes it defensible? Are plantings spaced to prevent spread of fire? Are plants next to the house highly combustible? Is there clutter on the deck or porch—things we see every day and thus do not recognize as a fire danger? Is the woodpile handy to the house? Are the crawlspace, soffits, and any area under the deck protected from flying embers? Is leafy debris cleaned up? Is the welcome mat a welcome place for an ember to land? Is undergrowth cleared out below tree limbs with lower limbs pruned up so that a flame must be several feet high before it can ignite foliage?

These are just a few of the pointers that could save your home in the event of a wildfire. Everyone remembers last summer and the numerous fires that broke out.



People move to the countryside or the forest for the beauty of living with nature. Most of us observe burn bans. But fires start with lightning or sparks from the roadside or barbecues or arson or someone else's burning trash or other reasons. Oxygen, heat and fuel are the components necessary to start a fire. The one we have control over is fuel. Being wise about fire can protect your home, and mostly that is recognizing what can become fuel to feed a fire.

Speakers from the Johnson City and Round Mountain Volunteer Fire Departments also spoke. They will try to stop a wildfire from reaching

your home. But if there is no clear defensible zone around the home in which they can safely fight the fire, they cannot save it. The homeowner's responsibility is to try to provide a fire-safety zone around the home.

Participants did two fire risk assessments at homes in Johnson City, and most of us went home to take a new look at our own premises to see how we can make little changes that might be big changes in the event of a wildfire. There **are** ways to protect your home.

From the Texas Forestry website (<http://txforestservicetamu.edu>) you can access a number of helpful sites that will help you. On [www.texaswildfirerisk.com](http://www.texaswildfirerisk.com) you can find your own home in an aerial view (use the public viewer tab). Or you can go to [www.firewise.org](http://www.firewise.org) for information. Then pass the information on to your neighbors or subdivision because a wildfire is easier to contain if all the homeowners are working together to be fire wise.

To finish certification as specialists, Master Gardeners who attended the training can speak to community groups about being prepared for wildfire and preventing wildfire from destroying homes.

Additional presentations featured Todd Swift and Robert Edmonson. Swift discussed the importance of animal identification in the event of fire or other disaster. Branding, tagging, or tattooing are now required. Edmonson illustrated how oak wilt infects trees, emphasizing protecting trees by painting cuts and using correct pruning techniques. See [www.texasoakwilt.org](http://www.texasoakwilt.org).

Blanco County Master Gardeners attending the Firewise training included Mary Joyce, Chris DeBremacher, Betty Mucha, Carol Rankin, Susan Evans, Susan Hamm, David Hamm, Pat Owens, and Mary Nabers. Karen Casey, Henrietta Smith, Cerise Spivey, Jim Meadows, Leona Carleton, and others manned the kitchen and break time.

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The Blanco County contingent

Mary Kay Hicks—who charmed Willie Nelson and Ted Nugent into public service announcements and charmed participants, too.



**August Plant Identification by Texas Master Gardener Chris DeBremaecker**  
**Scientific Name: *Stenosiphon linifolius* (Nutt. ex James) Heynh.**

**Common Name:** False gaura

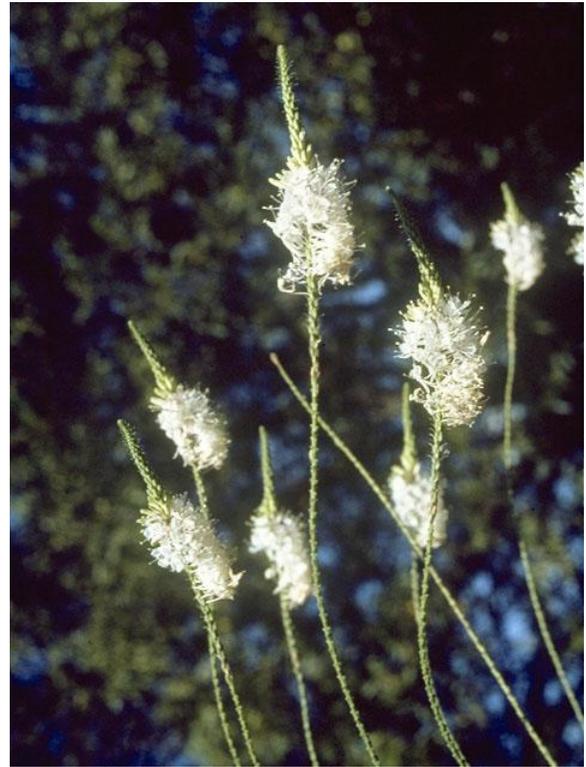
**Family:** Onagraceae (Evening-Primrose)

**Duration:** Perennial

**Habit:** Subshrub, forb, herb

**Leaves:** dicot

**Size:** 4-6 feet



**Requirements:** Sun, dry soil

**Bloom:** White

**Bloom time:** now through September

**Native habitat:** Grows in narrow longitudinal band along county lines of very eastern Blanco County-western Hays County

**Where to see it in Blanco County?** Currently blooming along W 290 by Henly

**Comments:** I've always loved it for its graceful blowing in the wind and because it is fairly uncommon and local!

It **used** to seem like it blooming meant fall was not far away! Not anymore!

**Benefits:** Attracts hummingbirds, bees, butterflies and other insects.



Sources: [http://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id\\_plant=STLI2](http://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=STLI2) accessed June 30, 2012

Wildflowers of Texas, Geyata Ajilvsgi



Thank you

To Everyone who helped with presenting the Firewise Training:

To Food Providers: Peggy, Susan E, Joan, Susan H, Barbara, Donna, Cerice, Kathy E, Betty, Beverly M., Mary J, Leona, Mary N, Diana, and Carol R-- who shopped for us. To Kitchen crew: Jim Karen, Cerice, Henrietta, and others.

Pat and the Committee

Betty, Henrietta, Susan E., Peggy, Cerice

To Pat, Betty, Hwenrietta, Susan E., Peggy & Cerice:

A special thanks to all of you that served on the task force to plan for our group hosting the Firewise Landscape specialist training program in Blanco County.

I thought the program went off without a hitch.

The presentations were good, food and hospitality great and I heard nothing but positive comments during and since Saturday.

Thanks again for your efforts in making Agrilife Extension and the Master Gardeners of Blanco County look good!

*Todd W Swift*

Texas AgriLife Extension Service-Blanco County  
County Extension Agent-Agriculture and Natural Resources  
101 E. Cypress, Johnson City, Tx 78636  
Ph # 830-868-7167 [tswift@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:tswift@ag.tamu.edu)

"Cultivators of the earth are the most valuable citizens. They are the most vigorous, the most independent, the most virtuous and they are tied to their country and wedded to its liberty and interests by the most lasting bands."

Thomas Jefferson, 1785

## **June Meeting Minutes**

Tuesday, June 12, 2012 at 6:00 p.m.

Texas Hill Country Olive Company, Dripping Springs, Texas

We met at Texas Hill Country Olive Company in Dripping Springs for a tour of their facility. The tour started with a sampling of the products produced at their facility and imported from Italy to their facility. Sampling of olive oil and balsamic vinegar, which included different varieties of flavored olive oils and balsamic vinegars, started the tour which the group was then led into the production room of the olive oil. The guide, Shawn, explained the process of production from receiving the olives, to pressing olives for oil, to bottling the olive oil. Shawn gave a detailed presentation of the process and he answered many questions from the Master Gardeners. The group then went out to the organic olive orchard where Shawn talked and answered questions about the different olive trees in the orchard.

After the tours, the group sat down to a dinner of lasagna, salad, bread, and dessert.

The TMG business meeting began:

### Old Business:

Betty Mucha began the meeting with thanking Cindy Stomberg and her helpers for organizing the dinners. Betty then told the group about the TMG scrapbook that D'Ann Welch and Olivia Ross is completing.

Betty asked if there were any changes to the newsletter or minutes, no changes discussed. The newsletter and minutes stand as is.

### New Business:

Fire Wise Landscape Training: 11 people from the TMG group are registered. The notice for the training will now go out to the state of Texas and public.

This two-day training will be held in Johnson City at the Hoppe Room of the County Annex Building, and the dates are July 20 – 21, 2012. The training will be done by the Texas Forest Service, and require at least 30 class members. The class is offered to the Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists first, with any remaining spaces offered to the public. The cost will be \$100.

There is a scholarship offered from the Blanco County Master Gardeners to help with cost, if needed.

Part of completion of this training, will be to volunteer speak, evaluate, and/or write articles for the public regarding Fire Wise Landscaping, which is required by each participant to receive the certification of completion. Upon completion of the volunteer hours, the participants will receive certification, and will hopefully be available to educate other groups in our communities.

Betty asked for volunteers to help with catering and setup at the Fire Wise 2-day event.

Pat Owens took charge of taking names of volunteers for all upcoming events to be held by the Blanco County Master Gardeners.

Peggy Welch discussed more on community education events in the fall that will include lectures and presentations on several topics, like plant propagation, rainwater harvesting, and other topics of interest to the community. There will be a scheduled advance training class in January 2013.

Betty reminded the group of the Blanco County Fair and Rodeo in August. Betty asked the group to think about volunteering for the outside exhibit, the inside decoration of the table and the plant booth.

Carol Rankin asked for volunteers for the Peach Festival in Stonewall this weekend, June 16, 2012 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. The booth will be at the elementary school in Stonewall and it will consist of helping the children with planting seeds in decorated pots.

Betty told the group about Joanne Fischer authoring an article in the local newspapers about the volunteer re-beautification garden completed by the Blanco County TMG Group at the Blanco State Park.

An informational supplement regarding the Malta Star Thistle plant was passed around to each table. This plant is very aggressive.

The meeting adjourned.

Minutes prepared by: Georgia Carroll-Warren

**July Meeting Minutes**  
Tuesday, July 10, 2012 at 12 p.m.  
Wildseed Farms, Fredericksburg, Texas

The noon meeting on July 10th was held at Wildseed Farms in Fredericksburg. We gathered under the covered porch outside the cafe and John Thomas, the founder of Wildseed Farms, talked to us about the business and how it started. Mr. Thomas is a 5th generation farmer/rancher from Eagle Lake and he began growing coastal bermuda grass for landscapes in the Houston area some years ago, as an alternative to the much more expensive St. Augustine sod. This business grew into a turf grass seed venture, and then, when he decided that wildflowers would look nice in with the grass, and couldn't find enough native seeds, it grew again into a wildflower seed business.

He still has 1500 acres near Eagle Lake for growing plants and gathering seeds, but expanded into the Hill Country in 1983. The first years in Fredericksburg, the fields of poppies and other wildflowers on the highway drew so many visitors that the farm bought large wagons to take visitors through the fields of flowers and Mrs. Thomas sold t-shirts and gift items out of the barn. Wildseed Farms has grown considerably since then. They now have 80 employees, a catalogue that is mailed out to a million people each year, and a call center to handle catalogue orders and questions. Wildseed Farms is starting trials now for vegetables, and they continue to develop their flower seeds. Mr. Thomas encouraged us to return for the free 2-hour Fall planting seminar held every year on the patio. This year, the classes will be held on September 14, 15, and 16 from 2 - 4 p.m.

Our business meeting was led by Betty Mucha.

Pat Owens is in charge of the preparations for the Firewise Training on July 20-21 in Johnson City and Pat told us that Cerise Spivey is the coordinator for Friday, and Jim Meadows for Saturday. If you are bringing food for the training, please let the coordinator for that day know. A motion was made and seconded to give \$15.00 gift cards to each of the 6 speakers at the training. Susan Hamm has arranged Firewise training for the Johnson City Women's Club, and this will be an opportunity for master gardeners to teach what we have learned.

Betty requested volunteers for a committee to brainstorm ideas for the fair and rodeo booth--Carol Rankin and Karen Casey volunteered, and Jim Meadows said he will help with any construction necessary. The theme this year is "Salute to Volunteers" and the dates are August 16-18, with cleanup on the 19th. Susan and David Hamm and Donna Sultemeier are in charge of the outside decorations.

Peggy Welch gave an update on the community classes, to be held on October 20th at the youth show barn in Johnson City. There will be 4 classes: plant propagation, rainwater catchment and irrigation, firewise training, and Earthkind plants. The cost will be \$15.00, and that will include lunch for the participants.

Peggy also asked if the master gardeners could act as advisors for a proposed community garden in Blanco. A motion was made and seconded that master gardeners would advise and educate, if this is approved by Todd Swift. She also mentioned that we might want to consider selling rain barrels or burn barrels as a fundraising activity.

Finally, Diana Blackburn said that there are 2 spaces available at the state master gardener meeting to be held in College Station on August 4th. Please let Jim or Diana know if you would like to attend.

Following our meeting, we had lunch in the cafe and toured the grounds of Wildseed Farms--absolutely beautiful!

The meeting adjourned.  
Minutes prepared by: Karen Casey

## More Firewise Photos



Mark Wobus shows pictures of one of the three Oakland fire disasters over decades—where people repeatedly rebuild frame houses in wooded areas with curvy mountainous roads. Will we never learn?



Lunch-Yum!

And breaks, too!



Pat and Robert Edmonson conferring



Power point presentations were the key to the day. Patrick Allen makes it look easy.

Johnson City and Round Mountain fire personnel had a panel.



*(I apologize that I didn't get a picture of Todd!)*



The group did risk assessment at President Betty Mucha's home. Look at the cleared back lawn area. Good job!

Jim Meadows and Karen Casey did yeoman service. Karen provided for recycling paper and plastic.



Look at the great shirts!  
Groups prepared presentations. This group did one on how to present Firewise ideas to a homeowners association.

The CLASS



### *A note from your editor*

*Dear Gardeners,*

I apologize for my absences this spring and summer—Except for the one time I was ill, I have been on the road.

In fact, I will miss the August meeting because I will be in Europe, and I will miss the Sept. meeting because I will be with Peggy and Henrietta at A & M for the Landscape Design school.

I hate to miss such good programs and field trips, and I will appreciate anyone's sending me pictures for the newsletter. In fact, I will have to ask someone to send out a Sept. newsletter or meeting notification as I do not return till Sept. 3. Is there a volunteer?

*Mary*

