

~ Bluebonnet Master Gardeners ~

## *The Blooming News*

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### *Letter from the President*

Here we are in the heat of summer again. Our gardens have had cold, dry, too wet, now heat to contend with. It's a miracle anything is growing, but we

should never underestimate the magic and power of plants. The weeds seemed to have had greater success than some of the vegetables, but the veggies are hanging in there with a lot of attention and support. The ability of plants to grow in adverse conditions never ceases to amaze me. I will never forget the line from Jurassic Park: "life will find a way". Right behind all that persistence from plants comes the gardener.

A gardener never fails to get up early to take advantage of the cooler morning and watch the sun rise, pull weeds, fuss over a new plant, feed, water, harvest some goodies, and come back in the cool of the evening to start the process all over again.

I am delighted to know so many people who fit into that category!

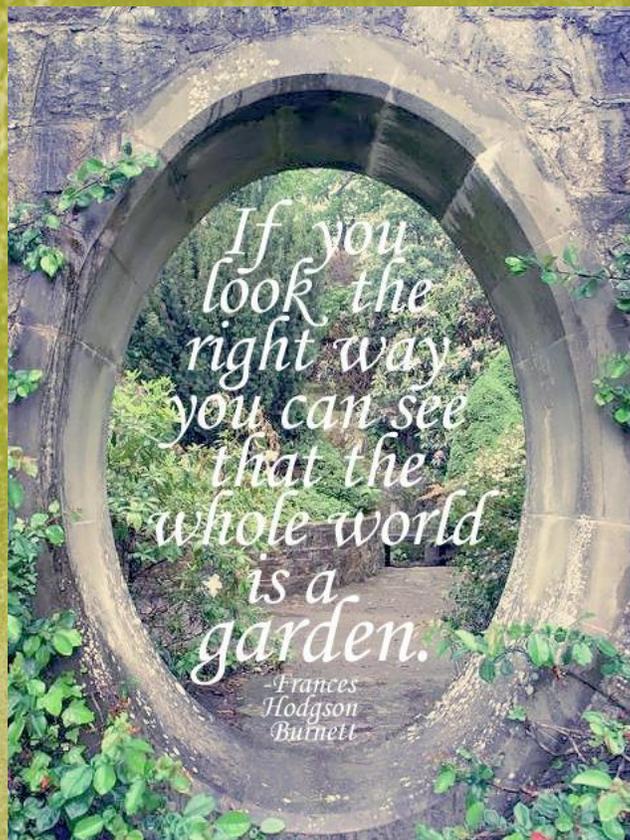
*"The greatest fine art of the future will be the making of a comfortable living from a small piece of land." ~ Abraham Lincoln*

## *Letter from the President, continued*

I have started a Facebook page for Bluebonnet Master Gardeners. It's an open group right now, and I need to have everyone start putting some info on it, or ask questions, or participate with pictures, etc. I'm going to let other FB groups know that it is available so that we can have more community participation.

Our next meeting is at the quilt museum in LaGrange and we will be visiting the Heritage Gardens there. See the BMGA e-mail for details. Hope to see everyone there.

*Faye Beery*



*"I love spring anywhere, but if I could choose I would always greet it in a garden." ~ Ruth Stout*



A good article from *Organic Gardening Magazine* by Beth Hanson (excerpt) Plants require at least 16 chemical elements to grow and complete their life's work. Carbon, oxygen and hydrogen come from the air and water. The other 13 are found in soil. If they are present in a water soluble form, they are easily accessed by plants. Nutrients are sometimes locked away in insoluble forms and not as readily available to plants. One of the factors that influences that availability is soil pH.

pH stands for "potential hydrogen" and is the measure of balance between concentrations of two kinds of electrically charged particles, Hydrogen ions ( $H^+$ ), and negatively charged hydroxyl ions ( $HO^-$ ) which react with one another. In soils that have more of one than the other, nutrients are bound into forms that plants cannot absorb while making some other nutrients

## PH Matters



available at high concentrations. Soils that have equal quantities of each are considered neutral.

Alkaline soil contain more hydroxyl ions and acidic soils contain more hydrogen ions. The pH scale ranges from 1 to 14, with 7 being neutral. The scale is log rhythmic, with a tenfold difference in acidity or alkalinity. Macronutrients dissolve more easily in neutral to alkaline soils, most micronutrients are more soluble in soils with lower pH. Beneficial soil microbes are also most diverse and active in neutral to acidic soils, and bacteria are less active in acidic soils leaving nitrogen unavailable to plants due to less organic matter. Excessive rainfall can lower the pH by washing minerals out of the soil. Lower rainfall can result in alkaline soils, common in the western parts of Texas and the US.

Having your soils tested is a good way to make sure you have the best soil for the plants that you wish to grow. The complete article can be read in the June/July 2014 edition of the *Organic Gardener*, page 56.

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*"Tree planting is always a utopian enterprise, it seems to me, a wager on a future the planter doesn't necessarily expect to witness."*

*~ Michael Pollan, Second Nature: A Gardener's Education*

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