

~ Bluebonnet Master Gardeners ~

## *The Blooming News*

Winter 2017

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### *Letter from the Past President*

Brrr. This winter is setting up to be colder than last winter, I think, we've already had several days of near to freezing weather. Pastures are brown, I see lots of hay being towed to pastures where animals await. My horses and donkeys sport a thick furry coat of hair as though they were expecting the colder weather. Christmas is just a week away, and a new year is just around the corner. Where has the year gone?

Master Gardeners have been busy, with over 7,000 hours of volunteer work being contributed. Texas A&M considers our time worth \$21.79 an hour, making our contribution to the county and state worth over \$153,000. That's several state employees. We have a new demonstration garden in Bellville, worth many hours, thanks to Garry and Pete, gardens in Sealy,

thanks to Renee; much time has been spent on the kids camps in all four counties, and Lunch-n-Learns in Brenham and LaGrange. The intern class this year had over 30 students. Kudos to Carol and Ellen and all their helpers for those. Gardens in Brenham and Columbus have also benefited from volunteer time. Along the way, we have had many good programs to help keep up our education requirements and to keep us informed of current research and information. We look forward to next year and informative programs.

With our new year comes new faces on the Board of Directors. Harold Pieratt will be taking over the reigns as president and Mitzi Reneau will be our new first vice president. Luther Moore will step in as 2<sup>nd</sup> vice president. Kathleen Lackey will continue as secretary and Christy Schweikhardt will remain as treasurer. Harold will be appointing new committee members so this will be my last newsletter as past president. Pete Berckenhoff is your new past president. The newsletter author has yet to be named.

New class open house will be Jan. 11 at the Extension office in Bellville. 10:00 am to 12:00 pm. Everyone is invited to come and meet new intern prospects and bring snacks. (1 vol hour).

*Faye Beery*

*The color of springtime is in the flowers, the color of winter is in the imagination.*  
*Terri Guillemets, from The Quote Garden*

*"The Poop on Poo"*  
*By Jay White*

This is information excerpted from an article in *Texas Gardener*.

Prior to WWII, animal manure was the way to fertilize crops, and it wasn't until after WWII that commercial fertilizers became available. Manure is organic matter that is derived from animal feces or from a crop grown to be tilled back into the soil. Manure is **NOT** feces, it is the solid parts of feces or dead plants that are left behind after time, temperature and microbes have done their work. ("Wet, fresh animal feces can harbor bacteria and viruses). **It is a good idea to have a soil test done to determine the need for fertilization before applying it to your garden.**

Fertilization is the process of providing essential nutrients to plants. Plants require 17 separate nutrients to thrive. Hydrogen, oxygen and carbon come from the air or soil. The other 14 are divided into three categories. Macronutrients, nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium are the three elements plants need most. They are listed on every bag of commercial fertilizer as NPK. Secondary nutrients, calcium, magnesium and sulphur are required nutrients needed in smaller quantities. Trace minerals, boron, copper, chlorine, iron, manganese, molybdenum nickel, and zinc are required in very low amounts.

Mr. White suggests caution in using manures. Know where your fertilizer comes from. Plants can suffer herbicide burn. Alfalfa is

Carry dung into the quarters of your Kitchen-Garden, and spread it upon the ground, and trench up the quarters, laying the earth in ridges, that it may be mellow'd by frost, and be fit for use when the season for cropping them comes on, for if you do not get your ground in readiness at this season, you will have too much business hurrying upon you in the spring.

Philip Miller, *The Gardeners Kalendar*, 1732



usually not sprayed for herbicides, so manure from a pasture that uses alfalfa grass is usually safe.

While most organic gardeners feel that synthetic chemicals damage soil, water and air, and food grown with them can damage our bodies, most research supports the conclusion that plants cannot tell where nutrients come from. If you have access to organic fertilizer, you don't have to buy commercial fertilizers. It is also difficult to over use organic fertilizer. You don't have to worry about applying too much and burning plants. Nitrogen is only used when it is in one of two ionic forms: ammonium ( $\text{NH}_4^+$ ) or nitrate ( $\text{NO}_3^-$ ). If it is not available in one of these forms, it is not available for the plant. Organics are slow release fertilizers and do not act quickly as their forms are more stable and more resistant to leaching, and are not even available until they have been released by the micro-organisms, invertebrates, and insects in the soil. They are also low levels of nitrogen. (If your soil is poor and has low levels of nutrients and you want fast action, a commercial fertilizer may be a good beginning until you



can get an organic program going.) Nitrogen in commercial form tends to "follow the water" and is leached out in frequent watering. Organics also tend to make soils drain better and improve texture.

Rabbit manure is the only manure that can be used raw in the garden. There is little chance of passing on diseases to humans from rabbit manure. It is also high in nutrients having an NPK of 2.4- 1.4-.6. Sheep, chicken and horse manure are also good manures to use. Chicken manure is high in nitrogen and can burn also, so be sure it is composted well. Sheep has a high concentrate of potash, so know your soil conditions. Horse manure is similar to cow manure, however, horses have only one stomach, so they can pass on more weed seeds that cows or sheep, which are ruminants.

Last, but not least, urine is a useful organic fertilizer although not technically a manure. It has an approximate nutrient content of 11-1-2.5, (so when the electricity goes out you know where to go).

Our January chapter meeting is our award ceremony and will be held at Grace Community Church in Bellville. See you there!

*Faye Beery*

## *Board of Directors*

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**Dilettante gardeners love the spring and summer; real gardeners also love the winter.**

**Anne Scott-James**  
***Down to Earth***

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