

# MG Grapevine

<http://scmg.tamu.edu>

Vol. XXXIX No. 2 February 2022



**The next SCMG Association meeting is  
Thursday, February 3, 2022  
At 11:30 AM at  
Tyler Rose Center**

**MG Grapevine Staff**  
Mary Jo Madden, Editor

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## Garden Winks

Just when we thought our lives would be back to “normal”, Covid 19 came back with a vengeance! For the last two years we have endured, creatively changed the way we do things and successfully overcome what most of us really didn’t want to ever face. We have grown, just as many of our frozen flowers grew back last year. It wasn’t easy, sometimes it wasn’t even pretty but we did it and we will do it again this year!



Thank you all for the warm reception at the induction in our January meeting. I am honored and proud to be a part of this BOD. I give you my promise I will do my very best for all of you. I am not perfect and each one of us is different. Your feedback and comments will always be welcome and appreciated, the good and the bad! Growth and improvement come from healthy teaming. It definitely takes a team!

We are off to a great start with an incredible new Class 29. As has been mentioned, it is a large energetic group. The class started January 6<sup>th</sup> and will end March 31<sup>st</sup>. They will need all of our help but at this time we are working hard to keep things safe for everyone with social distancing. There is limited space due to the number of students so there is no room for auditing at this time. However, mentoring is an important part of getting our classes through our program and certified. Please consider volunteering for this rewarding opportunity. Our current interns are so awesome and with their shorter runway in the internship, they are proving it can be done! The current mentors that have facilitated their work are also to be applauded. It really does take a team!

Our Botanical Garden work is also well underway in the cold, rain and even wind! Winter kill is being pruned and removed. Oxalis is rampant and giving us lots to do in all gardens! Get your hours in the gardens and feel the love of nature and friendship while doing it! Who knows who might be touring our beautiful gardens? And don’t forget about the Greenhouse work! (Continued on page 4)

## February Membership Meeting

This month we will have Shelby Marvin, the Director of Keep Tyler Beautiful, come in to talk to us about KTyB programs and projects. Plus, how we can partner with her department to reach out to the community using our unique knowledge and skills to compliment Keep Tyler Beautiful events which are focused on conservation, recycling and making the city a healthy environment for all the people, critters and plants that call Tyler home. We hope to see everyone there or join in on Zoom.

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*Elizabeth Waldrop*



## BLT Greg Grant

We continue to have ongoing confusion about the BLT program and its relationship with the Learn, Grow, Eat, Go (LGEG) program and the Junior Master Gardener program, so I'll address it here.

Amy Shively is the Better Living for Texans (BLT) Agent in our office. This is a federally funded position and very different from our typical county agent positions. She's not a horticulture agent, an ag agent, a 4-H agent, or a family and consumer health agent.

Better Living for Texans (BLT) is a nutrition education program for adults and children that are SNAP participants and SNAP eligible. The BLT program helps people make healthy meals, improve their physical fitness, save money at the grocery store, grow their own foods, and adopt better food safety habits.

This means that when it comes to school gardening program or any other school program Amy works with, they school must be a Title 1 school. This is a designation based on the number of low-income students who are considered at-risk for school achievement. To be considered a Title 1 school, a minimum of 40% of the students must qualify for free or reduced lunch.

Others that the BLT agent can work with are:

- Families that participate in the Head Start Program
- Families of children who participate in the Summer Food Service Program
- Families who participate in the Women Infants and Children (WIC) program
- Families who participate in Commodity Food Distribution site programs
- Individuals receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Benefits

- Individuals living at housing authorities
- Individuals receiving food from food pantry or soup kitchens
- Children in schools where 50% or greater of the individuals receive free/reduced meals
- Neighborhood where at least 50% of the residents live at or below 185% poverty level
- Employees of grocery stores (in low income areas)
- Employees of businesses that hire/pay minimum wages
- Christian Women's/Men's Job Corps Food pantries
- English as a Second Language (ESL) students

So, as you see, the BLT program isn't a school gardening program or even a gardening program at all. The BLT agent has very strict guidelines on both who they can work with and what they can spend their federally funded dollars on.

The Learn, Grow, Eat, Go program is a subset of the Junior Master Gardening program. These are programs that all agents and Master Gardener programs can implement with any school or children's program they wish. However, they are generally funded either entirely or partly by some entity other than BLT.

**Bottom line:** Any member of the Smith County Master Gardener program that wants to help Amy with her LGEG programs at Title 1 schools certainly may and will most definitely receive volunteer hours for doing so. I encourage members to do so.

However, if the Smith County Master Gardeners want full control over the schools worked with, curriculum, number and placement of beds, crops grown, and types of purchases made, the SCMGA will have to plan, fund, and implement the LGEG or Junior Master Gardener on its own.

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### “Above and Beyond Master Gardener Spotlight”– SCMGA – January 2022

Jeff Brown and Iverson 'Ivy' Greening are the SCMGA Spotlights for January! These two guys, one a master gardener and the other an intern who will soon be certified, have put in hard work, early morning hours and long days in the Shade Garden to help the Rose Garden Maintenance crew repair the beautiful fountain there. The process involved meeting the maintenance folks in the garden very early in the morning, draining the fountain and using tractors and heavy equipment, taking apart the fountain. Cold mornings at that! The original thought was that the fountain had a cracked bowl but once it was apart other issues were found, including a broken pump and internal broken parts. Snowmagedon likely caused some of the damage according to Jeff. In the process of repairing, there were other challenges like a flat tire on the tractor needed to lift the heavy sections. It was impressive to watch but as I did, I thought out loud how blessed we are to have guys in our association so willing to help with this but also so talented and skilled to know how to help. Gardeners wear many hats! The fountain will not be filled with water again until the cold weather gets past, but when it does, thank these guys for the helping hand in getting it going again!

Thanks Jeff and Ivy! You are blessings and spotlights for our group!

*Belinda Kromer*



## REPORTS FROM THE GARDENS

### Heritage Rose Garden



With February comes Valentine's Day and the reminder that it is time to do the Spring pruning of the roses. And since this is the Heritage Rose Garden we have lots of roses to prune! All roses do not get pruned exactly the same way so join Greg Grant on February 15 for his popular rose pruning workshop and learn the differences.

As we mentioned earlier in the fall, we are working on preparing beds for new plantings by removing an invasive plant called "artemisia vulgaris" or common mugwort that has invaded numerous areas. The plant was introduced to the garden a long time ago before it was realized how invasive it was and attempts over the years to eradicate it have been unsuccessful; so, we took some drastic measures. John Craddock built us a large sieve and we dug out soil and sifted it to remove the roots of the artemisia. This month we're working on covering the sifted area with cardboard and pine straw. This is an organic method of weed control. We still have areas that we need to eradicate the artemisia so, as the saying goes, "our work is never done!"



*Debby Watkins & Henry Burch*

### Griffin Elementary

Griffin elementary is getting ready for spring planting! The Griffin Elementary garden club met on January 7th. We had students from pre-kindergarten through 5th grade. The teacher did a lesson on "what you should have on your plate," how much grain, fruits and vegetables and protein. We brought pizza and kale salad and discussed where these foods fit in on what should be on our plates. The master gardener did a brief lesson on why plants freeze, as everything in our gardens had frozen during the holiday with the exception of radishes.

We talked about the kale plants that they had at home. Several still had them. Out to the garden, pulled up radishes. We discussed our next meeting, what we will plant in February, getting the beds cleaned up and what we are going to plant in the remainder of our pots. **Katy Barone** gave us stepping stones. The art club meets the same time we do and we hope they will help with painting to



spruce up our garden areas. The principal sent an email telling how nice the gardens have looked and said he has had a lot of positive comments. Spring should be an exciting time.

*Becky Wade*

## **IDEA Garden**

With temperatures dropping from 75 to 25 in just a few hours, the IDEA Garden took quite a hit early in January! We lost several annuals including Stock and some snapdragons. Many ornamental cabbages lost their frilly new growth and even the dianthus got nipped. A good watering prior to the sudden temperature drop, and the application of frost cloth, surely would have prevented a lot of this damage. It has been a hard lesson but one we won't forget when the next serious cold spell is forecast.

On the bright side, we have begun work on revamping the rainbow border. Over time the yearly additions of mulch have raised the soil level making it difficult to keep tidy beds in the narrow space between the fence and the curb. The many bulbs planted in the border have multiplied until it is difficult to plant annuals without disturbing them. Cypress knees from a big tree in the Rose Garden have popped up all along the lower third of the border. Some of our perennials are overgrown while others have declined. The renovation work has begun, just working a small section at a time.

We would love to have some extra hands with this job and new ideas are more than welcome. Come join us

and you might even get to take home a healthy piece of something you have just the place for in your garden.

Anne Pattullo



Need VMS instructions for entering your hours? Mary Hamlin put together a great document with step by step instructions, and you can find it in the members section of our web site. Here's the link: [Members - Resources \(txmg.org\)](https://www.txmg.org/members-resources)

## **Garden Wink (continued)**

Mary Jo continues to train on the Help Desk and that area of our work is also off to a great start this year! It is especially great for those who need the indoor hours. Watch your emails for new schedules and go to signup genius to sign up! In-person Library Series is back this year. This first one is behind us but five more to go every third Friday of the month through May with the exception of April which is the fourth Friday! Great speakers have been lined up for our community's enjoyment! KETK will be doing live brief interviews with speakers and our own master gardeners the week of each event! It is our plan to make you tube videos available from the events due to the Covid limitations and social distancing needs.

A big thank you to R&T Quality Nursery in Lindale, TX for their donation of three Dogwood trees for the January library series door prizes! I highly recommend a visit to this nursery. It is well stocked with fruit, shade and nut trees and grape and berry plants! They sell to both retail and wholesale buyers! Master gardeners do not get a special discount but the prices are very fair.

Oh yes, and we have a great new home being prepared for our SCMGA office in the Cotton Belt. The floors and walls are being cleaned, painted and prepared for our move in. It won't be long now!

Never a dull moment for SCMGA. Let the winter gardens grow and the spring bulbs bloom – fingers crossed for no more snowmageddon! Have a blessed month!

Belinda Kromer



## Caldwell School

The Caldwell garden Learn, Grow, Eat and Go! program is off and running. In early January Master Garden volunteers gave a lesson with 4<sup>th</sup> graders on selecting a site for a rain gauge. We were impressed by their good reasoning and team work.

Fall cabbages were harvested and cooked up by the classroom teacher. Yum! Coming next the MG volunteers will lead a hands on soil science lesson to teach the students about soil composition and it's impact on plant growth. In February the children will plant red potatoes, onions and other winter vegetables.

Katy Barone



## Shade Garden

We are keeping things tidy in the Shade Garden during these winter months. Some of the Wednesday volunteers have been refurbishing some of the wooden benches to improve their looks as we get ready for spring.

The Shade Gang is grateful to the efforts of **Jeff Brown** and **Ivy Greening** for orchestrating the repair and straightening of the fountain. It looks fabulous! Thanks also goes to **Brooks Kerr** who kindly donated a 'Princess' dogwood to our garden.

While January has been a quiet time in the Shade Garden, the bluebirds have been active picking out their real estate, the camellias are brimming with buds and many winter bulbs are beginning to make an appearance.

Katy Barone



### ZOOM link for February Membership Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88003775322?pwd=Zk51OVhiTUIMMDIzOG9lenMyTkI5QT09>  
Meeting ID: 880 0377 5322      Passcode: 760802



**REPORT FROM BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING January 20, 2022**

The January 2022 Board of Directors Meeting was held via Zoom.



The following were the highlights of items discussed:

- The Search for Excellence Awards documents are in final edit with Greg.
- The new Master Gardener office space is expected to be ready by month end.
- School gardens need an increased budget next year and work will proceed on developing a budget by August.
- Ideas for assisting Master Gardeners with technical challenges were shared.
- Plans announced for additional improvements in Public Relations and Social Media.
- A member will be spotlighted each month in the Grapevine newsletter and at the monthly meeting.

*Mary Jo Madden, Past President/Parliamentarian*

**Greenhouse Update**

The greenhouse is back in motion again. We've been busy repotting plants, starting new cuttings and hoping that winter stays mild. There has been a shifting of plants as some definitely require more water than others. A plant that receives too much water is just as susceptible to an early demise as one that is watered too little. Monitoring the greenhouse regularly is the best way to stay ahead of these issues. I brought our soil mixing supplies to the greenhouse so we will be mixing our own potting soil. It is much easier on the pocketbook and works well for most plantings. I switched over a few years ago to bagged soil to make life a little easier, but recently the price has gone up so much that I reverted back to mixing my own as well. I wanted to thank Mary Beth McCown for helping me keep up with our inventory. She worked to inventory everything that we have started this year. She put



everything in a spreadsheet so we know exactly how many plants of each type we have. I really appreciate her help with this documentation. You're the best Mary Beth. I couldn't do any of it without all the great volunteers to come to help with the work in the greenhouse. It's a community project and I hope the volunteers working with me enjoy the work and are learning new things in the process. I just wanted to say thanks to all the wonderful volunteers who take the time to complete the required work and become Smith Country Master Gardeners.

*Debbie Taylor*





The new 2022 SCMGA Board, left to right, Janet Burns, Belinda Kromer, Andie Rathbone, Elizabeth Waldrop, Henry Burch, Debby Watkins, Lyn Benson, Mary Jo Madden and Susan Seale. (Not pictured: Mary Cantrell, Lynn McGinnis, Terri Gerber and Lucinda Morgan)

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## **VMS Update**

We've had several people ask why the calendar in VMS was not working. It is now, and it has all the 2022 information we have to date. Items will be added as we get them. Unfortunately, the VMS calendar is set up as a list, not a page with days in boxes, but it's what we have. And as a reminder there is always a monthly calendar in the Grapevine.

*Mary Hamlin*

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## **From Our Historian**

We started the year with a zoom / in person January meeting. Our newest slate of officers was introduced- minus a few. Due to Covid a few of us have missed our workdays on the garden but we all hope things will be back to normal asap. The class has met 3 times and is moving along nicely.

We had the first of the library series last week. Our speaker was the city arborist and she did a great job.

*Lucy Morgan*



## Social Media

The SCMG Facebook page had a successful year in 2021. We ended the year with 10,195 followers, up from 8,733 at the beginning of the year. Each month our posts reached an average of 66,902 people and 12,132 people engaged (liked, shared or commented upon) per posts every month. Again, thanks for all your help in making this possible, and if you see anything that would be interesting to post, please pass it along to me.

The top five posts on the page were:

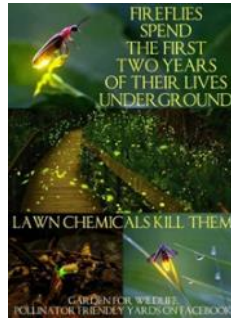
Andie Rathbone



April 16 - Reached  
70,038 people



January 29 – Reached  
60,507 people



June 7 – Reached  
53,318 people



January 26 – Reached  
35,639 People



April 21 – Reached  
26,518 People  
Dollar Store Greenhouse  
Gardening Hack

## New Class and Mentor News

Class 29 is moving forward with 26 students. We are trying a hybrid in-person and online learning format to best serve the group during the recent COVID surge. It's a bit rough around the edges, but we aim to improve our delivery each week.

We are still short mentors for Class 29. If you've been waiting for everyone else to have a chance, wait no longer! We need YOU! Please contact Heather Stephens to ask questions and volunteer at [heather.e.stephens@gmail.com](mailto:heather.e.stephens@gmail.com)

There will be a Mentor Training on March 4th from 9-11 a.m. and mentors will meet the students on March 31st for a picnic at the Tyler Botanical Garden.

Heather Stephens



## HELP DESK UPDATE



We moved! The Master Gardener Office/Help Desk has moved to room 117, ahead of schedule! Thanks to **Skyler Shively** for making it happen!

MaryJo





## Education Dispatch

This year has started off with a bang and we are already getting requests for us to set up at events and we are making plans for some of our own.

We have been asked to partner with the Goodman Museum on their revival of the Artisan Flower Market on April 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>. We will be doing demos and setting up an education booth and I would love to hear from some enthusiastic souls who might be able to help with that. They are looking for about half a dozen short demos or programs over the course of the Market and we want to be involved as much as we can. If you want to volunteer, please let me know at [seven-crows87@hotmail.com](mailto:seven-crows87@hotmail.com). Or call or text to 903 805 0768.

I have also scheduled a program in March for the City of Tyler that I will be presenting at City U an enrichment program for employees of the City of Tyler about using house and office plants and plant keeping for stress reduction. We also hope to work with Keep Tyler Beautiful on some of their projects this year.

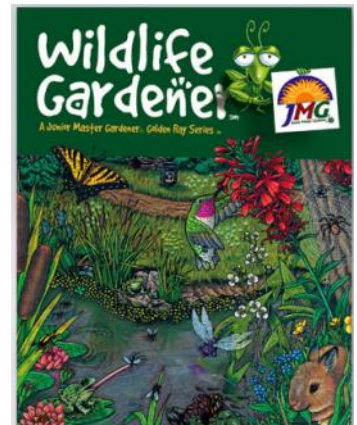
We are planning on holding three workshops this year, two for the public, and of course any Master Gardeners who would like to come, and one for kids. We are still working on getting those scheduled, but it looks like our first one will be in May. It will be 'Fixin ta Garden in Texas'. We will be presenting this one mainly for new gardeners or those new to the area. We will discuss our soil, weather, pathogens and critters, all the bounty and difficulties that East Texas can throw at a gardener and how to make the most of the good and mitigate the bad.

Our workshop for the kiddos will be in June, (we think) and will be an amazing program that **Katy Barone** is adapting from the Jr Master Gardener curricula called "Wildlife Gardener". It is 5 sessions (every morning for one week), chock full of activities, observations, and projects to help kids identify, preserve and develop backyard habitats for beneficial species. It is going to be fun! I personally am very excited about Lizard Lair Day. As we get more things about the dates and places firmed up, we will let everyone know and start asking for volunteers.

Our third workshop will be in July or August and will focus on creating mini meadows and adding natives to the home landscape in a way that is both good ecological stewardship but also is focused on good garden design. I am still toying with the title, I am inspired by Frost's "fences make good neighbors" idea. Maybe "How Your Yard can Save the World while Not annoying the Neighbors"...

I know many other great educational opportunities will be coming down the pike as the year goes on. I am really happy we can share our knowledge and love of gardening with East Texas in fun new and old ways and hope to see all of you at our events.

Elizabeth Waldrop



## From Bulbs To Blooms

Our bulb sale is based on selling bulbs that have been proven to be hardy in the South. When possible, we like to use local sources for our bulbs. As you are driving through Tyler and the surrounding area this spring, summer and fall, keep an eye out for blooming bulbs. If you see a yard or field that has a nice clump, please stop and take some photos. Email them to [SmithMGEvents@gmail.com](mailto:SmithMGEvents@gmail.com) along with the address and the owner's name if you know it. We aren't expecting to harvest 100's of bulbs from one location. For many of our local bulbs, if we can harvest 5, 10, 20 bulbs, that would be wonderful! We're looking for named daffodils, Johnsonii amaryllis, spider lilies, named varieties of crinums, named varieties of iris, butterfly ginger, rain lilies... You get the idea - we're open to virtually any identifiable bulb! You don't have to know what the variety is. If you can get good photos, we will figure it out. This aspect of locally-sourced bulbs truly takes our entire membership's participation.



Brenda Strong

## **Note from the Treasurer's Office**

Just a reminder that dues must be paid by January 31st. If you haven't paid yet you should be receiving a reminder or two before the month's end that will allow you to pay online with a credit/debit card. Otherwise you can bring cash or a check to the AgriLife office or mail a check to the Assistant Treasurer, Lyn Benson, at 3595 CR 427, Tyler, 75704. Checks should be made out to SCMGA.

There is a new 2022 reimbursement form that will be required for all new reimbursement requests and is available on the Members – Resources page on the web site, VMS, and the AgriLife office. It is an online fillable form so if you download it from the Members – Resources page you can fill it out online and email it to the Treasurer along with any receipts. All reimbursement requests must be authorized by the Project Coordinator and sent to the Treasurer, either by email to [tlgerber@suddenlink.net](mailto:tlgerber@suddenlink.net), or by mail to Terri Gerber 5620 Cedar Hill Cir. Tyler 75703, or left in the Treasurer's box at the AgriLife office.

*Terri Gerber and Lyn Benson*

## **Programming Committee Report**

**Master Gardeners at the Library** series for Friday, February 18th, at 11:30 AM. Seating spaced. Library encourages masks but not mandated.

We had 53 at the Tyler Arborist January talk in person. It was recorded and is to be put on website or Facebook

*Paul Wick*



Photo by Lucy Morgan

## **Tech Committee**

Techno Gardens! Whaaaaat?

Yep, the Smith County Master Gardeners are forming our first official Technology Committee and we're looking for members! The Tech Committee will look at and evaluate our current technology to see if it's working and we'll also look at options that may help us work smarter, not harder! And don't forget fun too!



If you're interested in technology and you feel you can contribute something to this committee please contact me – Lynn McGinnis – [lynnmac@suddenlink.net](mailto:lynnmac@suddenlink.net) or you can call me 903-954-0181.

*Lynn McGinnis*

## **Learn Grow Eat Go Adding a School**

It has been confirmed we will be starting the Learn, Grow, Eat, Go program in **Chapel Hill**. There are 226 participating!!! This is my largest group of students. We will start with 5- 8 large raised beds and hope to increase the number of beds for next year. I will try to get as many as I can. I will talk with the lumber yard and get everything ordered. I hope we can start planting in February. If there are any Master Gardner volunteers that would like to help with the gardening portion, the school would be thrilled. The teachers and principal are very supportive and excited!! Contact me if you are interested. Thank you.

*Amy Smith-Shively*

[amy.smith-shively@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:amy.smith-shively@ag.tamu.edu)





## Need Help with VMS?

If you are struggling with getting your Volunteer and Continuing Education hours into VMS, we are here to help you! We have Help Desk volunteers in the office almost every day, and they can work with you to get those hours entered, using our second computer. So call us or take a look at the SignUp Genius schedule and plan to come by when we are there. We are in the new office space—Room 117. Here's the link to the SignUp:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054DA5AE2AAAF94-helpdesk1>

## Rose Pruning Workshop

**WHAT:** Once again Greg Grant is doing the very popular Rose Pruning Workshop. Join your fellow master gardeners to learn how “one size fits all” does not apply to pruning roses. Greg will talk about different types of roses and how to prune each. Greg will look at the different rose varieties in the Tyler Rose Garden and the Heritage Rose Garden and explain how the pruning methods differ. Then, you will have an opportunity to work on roses. Bring heavy gloves, loppers and hand pruners. You can enter into VMS three (3) Continuing Education hours (unless it happens to go a little longer and then you can count that time too.)

**WHEN:** Tuesday, February 15, 2022, from 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM. We realize that this is a garden work day but Tuesday afternoons are the only time that Greg is available. So, if you work in the garden that morning, go to lunch with your fellow gardeners and come back for the workshop.

**WHERE:** Meet by the picnic tables by the parking area next to the Heritage Rose Garden.

**QUESTIONS:** Contact Debby Watkins at [debbyjwatkins@gmail.com](mailto:debbyjwatkins@gmail.com).

**YOU MUST SIGN-UP!** <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054DA5AE2AAAF94-rose2>

Photo at right is the hardy crew of rose pruners in February 2021.



# February 2022

## Smith County Master Gardeners

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		<i>1</i> 	<i>2</i> Shade Garden workday 9:00	<i>3</i> <b>SCMG Meeting Tyler Rose Center 11:30 AM</b>  Class 29 Meets 9:00	<i>4</i> TMGA Meeting 9:00 Via Zoom	<i>5</i> Shade Garden workday 8:30 AM
<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>8</i> HRG/IDEA Garden Work- day 9:00 AM	<i>9</i> Shade Garden workday 9:00	<i>10</i> Class 29 Meets 9:00	<i>11</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>13</i>	<i>14</i> 	<i>15</i> HRG/IDEA Garden Work- day 9:00 AM  Rose Pruning Workshop 1:00 PM	<i>16</i> Shade Garden workday 9:00	<i>17</i> Class 29 Meets 9:00  <b>SCMG BOD Cotton Belt 10:00</b>	<i>18</i> Master Gardeners at The Library	<i>19</i> Shade Garden workday 8:30 AM
<i>20</i>	<i>21</i> <b>AgriLife Closed</b>  	<i>22</i> HRG/IDEA Garden Work- day 9:00 AM  <b>Grapevine deadline</b>	<i>23</i> Shade Garden workday 9:00	<i>24</i> 29 Class Meets 9:00	<i>25</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>27</i>	<i>28</i>					