



December 2014

## **Gardening Tips That Save Money and Time**

by Marilyn Cranford, Somervell County Master Gardener



Does saving money and time in the garden sound good? Hey, I'm with you! With all we have to do every day, gardeners are very clever about coming up with ways to save on the work and expense of growing plants. Through the years, I've found many, and here are a few of my favorite money or time-saving tips on tools, plants and supplies.

**#1 BUY INEXPENSIVE WATERING TOOLS:** Don't buy high-priced watering tools, such as wands, nozzles or sprinklers. Even the expensive ones will spring leaks, so save your money and buy cheap ones instead. Replace worn rubber washers where the tool connects to the hose to minimize leaks, and buy a good brass hose connector. The shutoff lever saves you trips back and forth to the faucet, and brass means it'll hold up for many years.

**#2 PAY NOW, SAVE LATER:** Good quality tools can make tasks easier, and they'll go more quickly. But you don't have to pay a lot for every tool you use. Do invest in well-made trowels, spades and pruners – the tools you use most often. You'll save yourself the frustration and loss of time of fixing bent, broken or non-working parts. Buy from companies that stand behind their products, just in case.

**#3 GO FOR BROKE:** When you shop for bagged mulch or soil, ask for broken bags. Employees usually pull damaged ones off to the side, and stores are often more than willing to get rid of them at a reduced price. While you're at the store, look for chipped or cracked terra-cotta or glazed containers, as well. You can get several years' use from a slightly damaged pot and often the plants will hide any defects.

**#4 SPOT-TREAT WEEDS:** If you don't have a lot of broadleaf weeds in your yard, don't apply weed killer to the entire lawn. Instead buy liquid ready-to-use with a hose-end sprayer and spot-spray weeds rather than applying granules with a drop spreader. You'll save time, and the liquid spray works better anyway.

**#5 DON'T THROW OUT YOUR POTTING MIX:** Anyone who plants up large containers knows how expensive it can be to fill one with potting mix. Well, unless your plants had disease problems during the year, you don't have to empty your big pots completely at the end of the season.

Remove just the top 8 to 12 inches of mix – the depth the roots of most annuals will reach. In spring, use a trowel to loosen up the mix left in the bottom of the pot, refill it with fresh mix and plant!

**#6 KEEP 'EM TOGETHER:** A good way to save money on tools is to not lose the ones you have. Keep the hand tools you use most often in a lightweight cleaning tote. Totes with openings are easy to clean with a spray of the hose.

**#7 START PERENNIALS FROM SEED:** Want a lot of perennials but don't need them right away? Save money by buying seeds and starting your own plants right out in the garden. For the best selection buy seed online. Coneflowers (*Echinacea purpurea*), pinks (*Dianthus*), salvias (*Salvia* hybrids) and blackeyed Susans (*Rudbeckia* hybrids) are all easy to sow. Some plants will bloom the first year, but most will take two to three years to reach full size and bloom. If you're willing to wait, you'll save big.

**#8 WHAT'S THE BEST BUY?** You might think that you'll save money at the garden center by buying small plants rather than large ones. However, that's not always the case. So compare the plants and prices before you decide. Purchasing a large plant that can be divided into several small ones will give you more plants for less money.

I hope at least one of these tips will leave you with a little more spare change in your pocket and the time to enjoy it. Happy Gardening!

## Donna Hagar Elected President of Texas Master Gardener Association

On Saturday, December 6, 2014, local Somervell County Master Gardener, Donna Hagar, was elected 2015 President of the Texas Master Gardener Association during the quarterly Board of Directors meeting held in College Station. Donna became a Master Gardener in Somervell County in 2007 and served as President of the local association from 2008-2012. Donna was co-chair of the 2011 Texas Master Gardener Association State Conference, held in Glen Rose in April 2011.



Donna has fulfilled the duties as a member of the Board of Directors of the Texas Master Gardener Association as a representative from Somervell County since 2008. She took over the TMGA Newsletter editor position in 2008 and went on to serve on the TMGA Executive Board, first as Treasurer, 2011-2012 and then 2<sup>nd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President 2013-2014 respectively.

## Master Gardeners Give Donation to Texas A&M Gardens and Greenway Project



On Saturday, December 6, 2014 Donna Hagar, presented a \$5000 check from the Somervell County Master Gardener Association to Dr. Doug Welsh, as a donation for the Texas A&M Gardens and Greenway project. This donation will be combined with funds from other Master Gardener Associations in Texas in an effort to raise \$100,000 for the naming rights to a portion of the Texas A&M Gardens and Greenway Project, specifically The Texas Master Gardener Earth-Kind® Garden.

The Texas A&M Gardens and Greenway project will be a premier teaching garden on the west campus of Texas A&M University.

As they strive to be one of the top ten universities in the nation, one thing that has been missing from the campus is some sort of garden or arboretum complex. The Gardens and Greenway project will not only restore and preserve the White Creek and surrounding riparian area but will bring to Texas A&M an outdoor classroom for all agriculture disciplines as well as a peaceful

sanctuary where everyone who attends or visits A&M can relax and learn.

Dr. Doug Welsh is leading the charge for the Gardens &Greenway project. Founder of the Master Gardener program in the state of Texas, Dr. Welsh knew that the Master Gardeners have carried the torch of the Earth-Kind® principles for decades. Having a Texas Master Gardener Earth-Kind® Garden is a befitting recognition for the continued efforts the Master Gardeners make preaching the gospel of the good news of Earth-Kind® throughout Texas. The Texas Master Gardener Earth-Kind® Garden will be a 3 acre portion of the whole 45 acre Gardens &Greenway complex, containing 14 separate gardens including an herb garden, butterfly garden, wildflower meadow, vegetable gardens and more.

The Somervell County Master Gardeners were one of the first groups to lead the charge in raising funds for the Texas Master Gardener Earth-Kind® Gardens. To date, over \$25,000 has been raised for this particular naming endeavor. For more information on the Gardens and Greenway project, visit [www.youtube.com/watch?v=M-RRz5VzRLs](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M-RRz5VzRLs)

## Master Gardeners Receive Awards



On October 24, Somervell County Master Gardeners met at Storiedbook Café for their award ceremony. After a wonderful meal served by the café, President Shirley Smith led the presentations. First, the Class of 2013-14 was presented their certificates of completion. Those receiving certificates were Linda Heideman, Katie Hunholtz, Christine Morgan, Sheryl Kleinschmidt and Earl Earp.

Receiving service pins were Bonnah Boyd, Kathy Singletary, Merlyn Cranford and Donna Hagar.

As pictured, Somervell County Master Gardeners President, Shirley Smith, presents a Service Award to Donna Hagar, Somervell County Master Gardener and the 2015 President of the State of Texas Master Gardeners.

# December Gardening Tips

by Bonnah Boyd, Somervell County Master Gardener

\*Cover flower and shrub beds with from 3 – 4 inches of mulch to prevent moisture evaporation and to modify soil temperatures.

\*Clean out warm-season flower beds, add an inch or two of compost and mix it into the soil.

\*Water the entire landscape at least once in December in the absence of significant rainfall to prevent freeze damage.

\*If a hard, prolonged freeze (24 hours or more) is predicted, cover freeze-sensitive plants with cardboard boxes or blankets.

\*Move tender container plants indoors near a very bright window to keep them healthy through the winter.

\*Mow winter weeds to keep them in check.

\*In areas of the vegetable or herb garden that are void of plants, pull winter weeds and plant a cover crop, such as cereal rye grain.

\*Cover crops reduce weed establishment and can be tilled into the soil later to improve the soil.

\*Use leaves from the trees to build a compost pile or as walkway materials. Continue to add leaves to the walkway as they press down with foot traffic.

\*Remember to provide water for the birds during winter.

\*This is a great time to plan next year's gardens. Try some new things. Add a new "feature" to your garden.