

# Williamson County Master Gardeners July/August 2016



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# President's Message

By Jane Bowman



Greetings Fellow Gardeners,

We are all busy volunteering at the different Master Gardener projects and activities. Remember to record your hours promptly in VMS so you don't forget. When you talk to community members about Master Gardeners or gardening in general, please add these contacts as you record your hours. There is no set amount of time that you have to spend talking to others. To add the contacts to a previous entry, use the 'view hours' feature in VMS. Contacts and volunteer hours are reported to A & M and are also used in reports for our county. I sincerely appreciate your giving of your time to volunteer for our organization. Thank you so much.

Please work throughout the year to fulfill your education commitment of 12 hours once you are certified. First time interns are required to get 15 hours their first year. The newsletter provides a list of opportunities for continuing education hours. In addition, Specialist Training classes can be found at <http://txmg.org/training10/training5/specialist/>. This website is constantly updated with information on various training throughout the state. The 2016 Southern Region Master Gardener Conference, comprised of 13 states, will be held in Arlington, Texas from November 1<sup>st</sup>-Nov. 4<sup>th</sup>. (<http://2016southernregionmg.com>) There will be many opportunities to attend classes on a variety of topics. Ask around because you may be able to share expenses on travel and lodging with someone else from our association. I always enjoy the camaraderie of being with other gardeners!

Williamson County continues to grow, grow and grow and our water is precious. Take advantage of your opportunities to make compost and help conserve our rainwater. WCMGs know these two resources are priceless. For Mother's Day, I asked for new compost structures. I received 10 stackable frames made out of cedar. These are lightweight and easier to use than most compost bins. One similar to mine is out in the Demonstration Garden. I have been turning my compost and am very pleased with the results. This saying sure fits: **You know you are a Master Gardener when...you can give away plants easily, but compost is another thing!**

There are new areas being developed in our WCMG association. I personally am working to develop a TECH Team, a Fall Bulb Sale, and the Saturday 'Hands on in the Garden' series. A new website is in the works. There will be a new column on our website addressing plant, insect or weed of the month. These topics will address questions from our Help Desk and some will be authored by A.J. Senchack. If you have other ideas, please share them with me. As we work together, we can reach more of our community and teach them about gardening.

We should know if we will receive our grant by the end of the month. I want to encourage you to take care of yourself and enjoy your friends and family. Volunteer in an area of interest to you. I will see you in the garden.

Jane Bowman,  
WCMG President

# Gardeners Who Cook

## Roasted Cherry Tomato Salsa

by Radhika Baliga

Do you have cherry tomato plants that just won't quit, even in the heat of the summer? Then you'll have to try this salsa. I've tested this recipe with Sungolds and large red cherries with equally good results. I hope to see you in the Vegetable Demonstration Garden soon. Enjoy!



### Roasted Cherry Tomato Salsa

**Yield:** about 1-1/2 cups

#### Ingredients:

1 lb. cherry tomatoes  
1 jalapeno, stemmed and sliced in half lengthwise  
Small handful of cilantro leaves  
2 T. finely chopped red onion  
2 tsp. lime juice, from 1 lime  
Kosher salt and ground black pepper, to taste

#### Directions:

Preheat oven to 425 degrees F (400 degrees F convection)

Arrange the tomatoes in a single layer in a large, non-reactive baking dish. Add the jalapeno halves to the baking dish, and place them skin sides up. Place the baking dish in the oven and roast the tomatoes and jalapeños until the skins are lightly charred, about 30 min. Set roasted vegetables aside to cool slightly.

Transfer the roasted vegetables (skins, juices, and all) and cilantro to a mini food-processor. Pulse until the salsa reaches a consistency that suits your liking.

Pour the salsa into a small mixing bowl. Add the chopped red onion, lime juice, salt, and black pepper. Stir to combine. Taste and adjust the seasoning. Serve immediately with tortilla chips.

# A Tip to Reduce Summer Angst: Mulchify Your Landscape

By AJ Senchack, Ph.D

Ya just gotta love August.... if you live in Santiago, Chile, where its mild, dry southern winter in the Andes produce very manageable, daily 40-60 degree temperatures. (We just got back from a month in Santiago to celebrate and be with our new grandson, Mateo Andres. Pictures upon request.) Returning to Austin, though, we were formally greeted with an impenetrable wall of heat and humidity as we exited the airport door. Hello, Georgetown summer!

Of course, my thoughts went immediately to how well our landscape survived while we were gone. A friend had taken care of my potted plants. Check √! Hmm, the yard was only fair-to-middlin' from its twice weekly watering. Just a semi-check √. What did clearly stand out was the results of a valuable spring preparation that you might emphasize next year.

**Mulch, mulch, and then mulch some more.** I love mulch, whether of the “home-grown” variety generated from your compost pile of yard trimmings or from purchased bags at the big box stores

. What a fantastic multi-tasker and great time saver is mulch. Your upfront, early spring effort of spreading a 3-4” mulch layer pays such huge summer dividends. Your immediate gratification, garden areas instantly appear dressed up and attract neighbor’s envy. More importantly, mulch conserves moisture, suppresses most weeds (my favorite!), and insulates plant roots and soil from our killer summer sun. If modestly scratched in, organic material also helps keep soil loose and friable at a more even temperature, plus it promotes a livelier playground for valuable soil critters such as earthworms and other beneficial organisms.



Moreover, as your mulch breaks down, you reduce or eliminate the amount of amendments and fertilizer that need to be added to your soil. As you learned in your MG training class, Georgetown soil is awful but generally endowed with sufficient amounts of phosphorous and potassium. That means nitrogen serves as a useful soil additive---enter stage right, the lovely and talented mulch to fulfill that role. In fact, I have gravitated toward heavily-mulched Earth-Kind® and antique roses for many reasons, but one is that I never fertilize or fungicide my roses anymore. So, remember: mulch is all about the soil, and soil is all about successfully cultivating a beautiful, healthy garden.

One last thing: Do you need a lot of mulch? Then purchase mulch delivered in bulk from a local supplier (there are several in our area). Or, if you are from Texas then you must have a pick-up truck, so visit Georgetown Solid Waste and Recycling Services recycle center, and load up all the mulch you want---a much better bang for the buck than buying bags of mulch. (For additional information on Georgetown’s free mulch availability, call Texas Disposal Systems, (512) 930-1715). Of course, you’ll still need to wheelbarrow the mulch to its final resting place once you get it home, which is not much different from hauling bags of mulch to their proper place, cutting open and dumping them. If I end up buying bags of mulch, then I usually pay the relatively small delivery fee to have them neatly stacked in my driveway by a person much stronger and durable than me. This sure beats buying bags 10 or so at a time, loading ‘em into my car trunk, driving ‘em home, unloading and stacking them over three or four more car trips. And, did I mention enjoying the smell of “forest floor” in my car during the week?

/Remember: It’s never too late to add mulch to the summer landscape!

# Master Gardeners In The News



## Georgetown Drought Survivability Study

By Val Black

*One of the objectives of the Williamson County Master Gardeners Association is to assist the Texas AgriLife Extension Service in teaching good horticultural practices to county citizens. The Georgetown Drought Survivability Study provided us with an opportunity to work with the City of Georgetown in the collection of information for this study. A group of Master Gardeners, including this editor, rated 480 plants weekly from August 2015 to November 2015 and registered data for the city.*

*At the beginning of the study Master Gardeners made informal predictions about which plants would make the top 10 list of survivors. Like all gardeners we each had our favorite plants and our own opinion about how they would grow. Interestingly, most of our predicted selections made the top 10 lists for both the 6" and the 12" beds.*

*The results of the study were to be provided to citizens of Georgetown to assist them in future plant selections for their homes. How many of the top 10 winners do you have in your yard? – Sandra Roberson*

The purpose of the Georgetown Drought Survivability Study (GDSS) project was to determine drought tolerance of 40 popular local species of native and adapted perennials under the restrictive and mandatory irrigation schedules required by the State when Drought Contingency Plans are in place, and to determine the differences in stress and recovery periods experienced by plants in different soil depths during this period. The GDSS was part of a larger Drought Survivability Study that was conducted by Texas A&M Institute of Renewable Natural Resources with funding from San Antonio Water Systems, City of Austin, City of Georgetown, and the San Antonio River Authority. The Georgetown Utility Systems Conservation Department and Williamson County Master Gardeners worked together to make the study a success for Williamson County.



The major feature of the planting site was the drought simulator. Although only 1/5 the size of the simulator used at the San Antonio study site, it was quite impressive. The Georgetown simulator was actually a pool enclosure measuring 24 x 48 x 9 ft., constructed of US grade aircraft quality aluminum alloy.

There were seven, one-piece, seamless, polycarbonate glazed panels engineered to telescopically close and open on a monorail tracking system. The enclosure and plants at the GDSS were fully funded by the Georgetown Utility Systems Conservation Services Department.

The study was organized using three raised planting beds, each measuring 8' x 40'. Two raised beds, 6' and 15' deep, were located within the drought simulator. The third bed, also 15' deep, was outside the simulator, serving as a control bed. All three beds contained four plants, of each selected species, located in the same position within each bed. The raised beds were located on the Edwards Plateau. The plants received irrigation for three months giving them time to get established. They were also mulched to help maintain moisture and to control weeds.

On July 1, water restrictions to the plants in the simulator began. The telescoping simulator was closed during periods of rain. The control bed received water once a week and was exposed to the elements in full sun.

Once a week, on the same day and time, eight to ten Master Gardeners collected data on 480 plants. Four Master Gardeners rated the appearance of each plant. There were five categories of appearance (1) lush (2) stable (3) wilt (4) leaf drop and (5) dead.

An important element of the study was to relate soil moisture levels and infrared foliage temperatures to changes in appearance due to water stress. Weekly, Master Gardeners used infrared sensors to collect and record measurements of soil moisture levels and foliage temperatures. This was where we really felt like scientists! It was very impressive to see how the affects of plant surface temperatures and soil moisture readings directly correlated to the appearance ratings of the plants. On September 31, the team cut back any dead vegetation and started watering them again to see which plants would recover. Many of the test plants were able to come back after three months of these extreme drought conditions.

The goal of the study was to provide the residents of Williamson County with a more specific list of plant choices for landscaping in the Edwards Plateau. Residents would also know how each specific plant would react to the drought restrictions implemented by the local water purveyors. We hope this helps residents with varying soil depths decide the best plants for their landscapes with drought and water restrictions in mind.

Attached are the results of the study with a sample graph for the 15 inch control bed which received water every week. A high total appearance rating indicated the plant's ability to survive the extreme drought conditions in the study. The top ten plants for each raised bed were as follows:

### **15 inch control bed (watered weekly)**

1. Skeleton-Leaf Goldeneye Daisy
2. Gregg's Mist Flower
3. Mexican Mint Marigold
4. Guara (pink)
5. Artemisia
6. Mealy Blue Sage
7. Turk's Cap
8. Flame Acanthus
9. New Gold Lantana
10. Red Yucca



**6 inch bed (water restricted)**

1. Skeleton-Leaf Goldeneye Daisy
2. Gregg's Mistflower
3. Guara (pink)
4. Red Yucca
5. Mexican Mint Marigold
6. Turk's Cap
7. New Gold Lantana
8. Artemisia
9. Mealy Blue Sage
10. Flame Acanthus



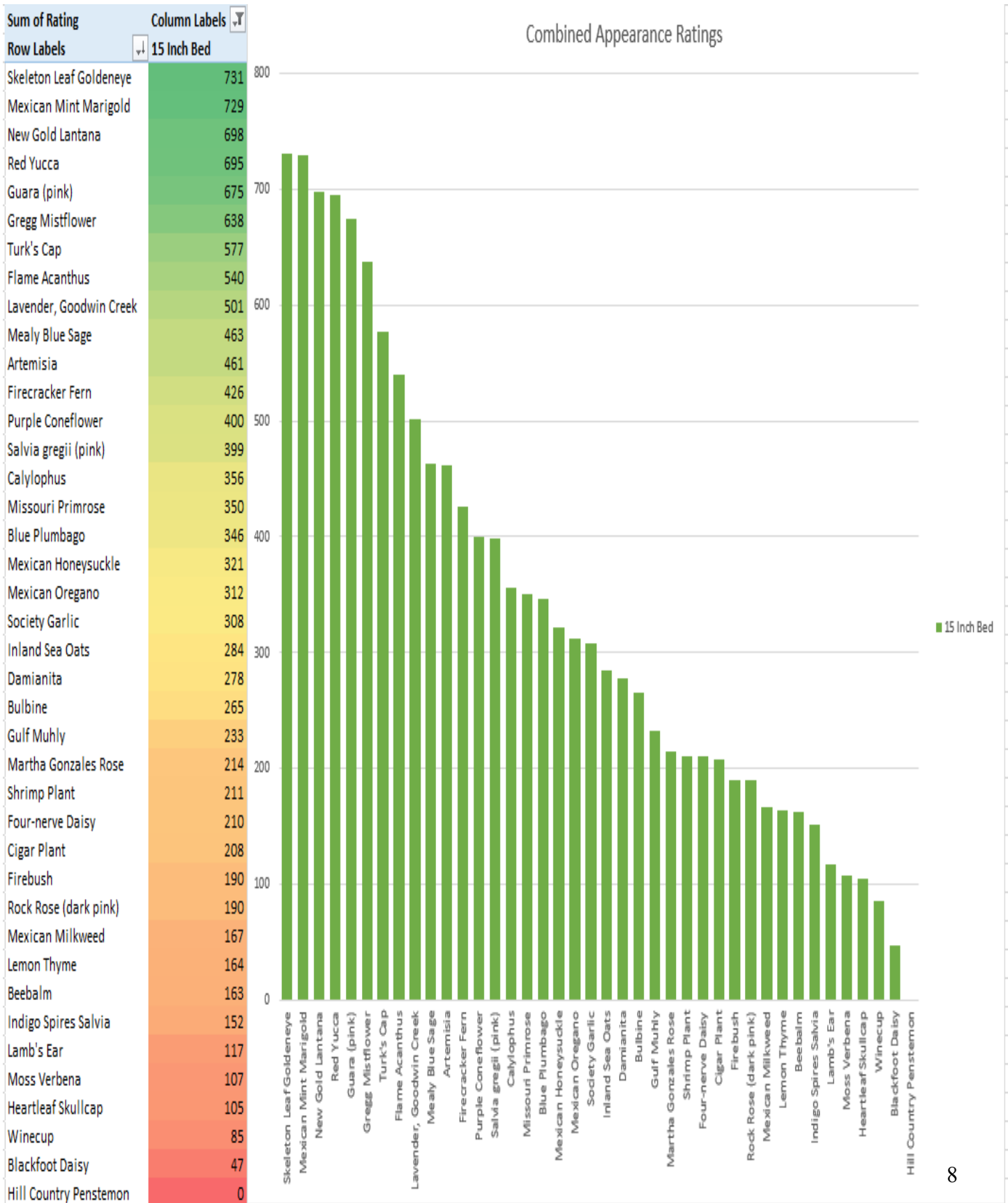
**15 inch bed (water restricted)**

1. Skeleton-Leaf Goldeneye Daisy
2. Mexican Mint Marigold
3. New Gold Lantana
4. Red Yucca
5. Guara (pink)
6. Gregg's Mist Flower
7. Turk's Cap
8. Flame Acanthus
9. Lavender, Goodwin Creek
10. Mealy Blue Sage





# Combined Appearance Ratings





# *Fleas*

*by Wizzie Brown*



Fleas are ectoparasites and females require a blood meal to produce eggs. After feeding on a host, females can produce about 30-50 eggs per day that fall off the host animal and into carpeting or other areas of the home or outside in areas where the animal frequents. Larvae feed on organic matter as well as partially digested blood excreted by the adult fleas. After fleas pupate, they hatch out of the cocoon in about 2 weeks, but pupae can remain dormant for up to 5 months waiting for a host. (Photo by Roger Molla)

A proper flea management program has multiple parts. Fleas should be managed on the pets as well as in the environment. Grooming the animal with a flea comb and/ or regular bathing can help reduce flea numbers. A veterinarian should be consulted about flea control products for pets; there are numerous products on the market that work well when used according to label instructions. When you find fleas on a pet, you need to treat the pet and any areas where the pets frequent, inside and outside the home. Treatment should be targeted to areas where the pet likes to hang out.



Fleas found around or in homes that do not have pets may be coming from wildlife. Attic and crawl spaces should be inspected for wildlife activity. Wildlife should be removed with traps and after removal, the area treated with an insecticide labeled for fleas and sealed so that wildlife cannot move in again.

New homeowners may also have problems with fleas shortly after moving in if the previous owners had pets with fleas. Fleas can remain dormant for several months and become active again when they sense vibrations from hosts. Inside, vacuum thoroughly and regularly, getting under furniture and along baseboards to reduce flea eggs, larvae and pupae. Place the used vacuum bag in a sealed plastic bag and throw away in an outdoor garbage can, at least once a week so fleas do not hatch out and re-infest the home. Target pesticides to areas where the pets frequent.

Full sun areas do not need to be treated as fleas will not remain in these areas.

When treating for fleas, you need to treat at least two times. The second treatment should occur 10-14 days after the initial treatment.

For more information or help with identification, contact Wizzie Brown, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist at 512.854.9600. Check out my blog at [www.urban-ipm.blogspot.com](http://www.urban-ipm.blogspot.com)

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# Gardening Tips

## By Winola VanArtsdalen



### July/August 2016 Master Gardener Tips

#### **Turf:**

Keep lawn mower setting higher during drought. Keep mower blades sharp and do not remove more than 1/3 of the top at a time. Leave clippings on turf to return nutrients to soil.

Never spread compost in hot weather, as it is high nitrogen and could burn turf.

#### **Perennials:**

“Dead head” or clip back dead blooms to leaf or leaves. Clip seed heads of any plants you do not want to spread. This is the last chance to cut back fall-blooming perennials, like aster, that are setting buds.

#### **Trees:**

Paint all wounds on oak trees susceptible to oak wilt any time, any size, immediately. There is no need to apply pruning paint to other trees.

#### **Fertilize:**

Do not over fertilize in hot weather. Let the plants rest. You can give flowers and vegetables an early morning foliar feeding with liquid seaweed, as the potassium helps plants resist stress.

#### **Insects:**

Watch for aphids and spider mites, and, if needed, spray them off with a hard blast of water. Be sure to get the undersides of the leaves.

Aphids and other insects can create sooty mold on plants, a fungus that develops from their secretions. Wash off the insects and the leaves. Remove damaged leaves and put in the trash.

**Watering:** Check your watering system to be sure working efficiently. If you will be away, give instructions to someone for your system. For information see: <http://aggiehorticulture.tamu.edu/earthkind/files/2010/10/audit.pdf>  
If in drought, use precious water to save your major investments—trees and bushes! Healthy turf will come back.

## Keep close watch!

Dig weeds to keep plants from having to share water with them. Watch plants for signs of stress that tells you when they need water: Some plants, like American beautyberry, may wilt during period of heat, but revive and be healthy when fall rain comes, so check instructions for individual plants at time of purchase or online. If only a few plants need more water, hand water or run a soaker hose to them.

Take care of the gardener! Working early in morning is best. Stay hydrated and remember protection: sunhat, sunscreen, and mosquito prevention.

**Prep:** Start planning the fall garden. Clean up debris in the vegetable garden. Apply 3-4 inches of compost to future beds. Keep mulch on beds and containers for more even temperature and moisture retention.

Collect seeds from summer blooming plants. Let dry indoors and store in a dry place with even temperature.

Consider your choice of plants. Are they adapted to our climate and soil conditions? Do they help wildlife? This is a good time of year to look around neighborhood to see what is surviving.

Enjoy your summer-blooming natives!



Esperanza, *Tecoma stans*, often called “Yellow Bells.”



Pride of Barbados, *Caesalpinia pulcherrima*. Pulcherrima means “very pretty.”

Photos by Jim VanArtsdalen

# JMG Corner

## Zion Lutheran School

By Arlene Boyer

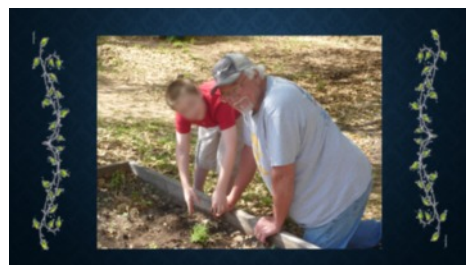
Student gardeners at Zion Lutheran School in Walburg completed another successful year of JMG activities with their teacher, Kelly David. This established JMG group meets through the seasons of the school year. In addition to traditional outdoor gardening, they participate in a variety of activities correlating with the “JMG Guide”, a resource with eight chapters of major concepts with numerous sub-topics.



Students made garden art out of recycled cans to make their garden look pretty. This activity comes from the chapter on “Ecology and Environmental Horticulture: Recycling.”

When learning about “Vegetables and Herbs”, the students used their herbs to make herbal bath salt mix for their moms for Mother’s Day. JMG encourages Service Learning Projects and this is a good example of a thoughtful giving of the students’ time and talents.

To learn about “Landscape Horticulture”, the students planted lilies around their building. With all the gardening, MG intern volunteer Mike Linebrink’s services were appreciated by the staff and students.



If you’d like to get in on the fun of JMG volunteering, please contact Arlene Boyer, JMG Chair, [boyera@flash.net](mailto:boyera@flash.net) – everyone will be happy to have you join them. See you soon!

# Save That Date !

## WCMG Monthly Meetings

### August

August Our speaker will be Stephen Bugerhoff who will talk to us about rain gardens.

### September

Our speaker will be Andrew Brazell. He was on central texas gardener and he is a prairie expert. He will be talking to us about pocket prairies and how we can have our very own small prairie to draw in the birds, butterflies and bees.

### October

Our speaker, Ken Cinco will teach us how to photograph gardens and create better flower pictures.

## Educational Opportunities In Our Area

### Save The Date: 2016 Southern Region Master Gardener Conference

Arlington, Texas November 1-4, 2016

For more information see: <https://2016southernregionmg.com>

### Round Rock Gardens, 901 Sam Bass Road, Round Rock

Tuesday, August 2 10:00 am: Composting 101

See the Round Rock Gardens website for upcoming events and classes.

[www.roundrockgardens.com](http://www.roundrockgardens.com)

## **Educational Opportunities In Our Area - Continued**

**The Natural Gardener** , 8648 Old Bee Caves Road, Austin

August 6, 10:00 a.m. Native Landscape Maintenance 101

August 13, 10:00 a.m. Heirloom Bulbs

**Monument Market**, 500 South Austin Ave., Georgetown

Schedule unavailable at publication. See website for details on classes. [www.themonumentcafe.com](http://www.themonumentcafe.com)

**Georgetown Garden Club**, 1101 N. College, Georgetown (Recreation Department Community Room) Meets the first Thursday of each month at 1:30 p.m. (no meeting June - August).

September 3 "Water Wrangling and Erosion"

Speaker: Elizabeth McGreevy, designer, planner and restoration consultant will show us how to create a sustainable, beautiful landscape. With Elizabeth's creative spirit and wealth of volunteer experiences, you will be thrilled with her ideas.

October 1 "God is Great, Weeds are Bad and Critters are Crazy!"

Speaker: Alicia Shamblin will show us native plants to be used in central Texas gardening and help us become more knowledgeable about soils, climate, and less watering.

**Round Rock Garden Club**, Meets at the Baca Center, 301 W. Bagdad Ave., Round Rock

Meets the first Monday of each month. 9:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.

See the Baca Center website for monthly speaker information. Cost for non-members \$1.

**Hill Country Water Gardens**, 1407 N. Bell Blvd., Cedar Park

Schedule unavailable at publication. See the website ([www.hillcountrywatergardens.com](http://www.hillcountrywatergardens.com)) for upcoming classes.

**Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center** 4801 La Crosse Ave, Austin

At publication no gardening classes were available. See the website ([www.wildflower.org](http://www.wildflower.org)) for updated information.



***Williamson County Master Gardener Association  
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