

# Williamson County Master Gardeners March/April 2017



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# President's Message

## By Jane Bowman



Good Evening Gardeners,

I have just had a very enjoyable day. I went outside around 7:30 this morning and came in around 6:30 this evening. I did take four breaks during the day. Spring definitely seems to have arrived— it's time to clean, prune, plant and of course, weed. I was able to do all of them today.

In my vegetable garden, I noticed I have summer crooked neck squash ready to open its first female blossom. The tomatoes are setting blossoms, sugar snap peas are about to climb the trellis and heads of romaine lettuce and spinach are ready to pick again. My peach tree and blackberries are in bloom. I so enjoy this time of year. I needed this day of therapy time. I want to encourage you to take a day and enjoy whatever it is you like to do to relax.

Our Master Gardeners are off to a busy time preparing for our Spring Garden Fair and Plant Sale at the Show Barn in San Gabriel Park. We have some great things planned for the community. They are invited to come out and enjoy the day with us learning about gardening, plants and herbs and taking part in other activities.

We have started some straw bale gardening in the demo gardens. Come out and learn with us as we work on this project and then visit the other demo gardens too. The plants are all responding to the warm weather and they seem to change daily.

Don't forget the end of April is the Master Gardener State Convention and then the awards luncheon. The Annual Awards Luncheon will take place at 12:30 PM, Monday, May 1st in the elegant Frances Anne Moody Ballroom in the Moody Gardens Hotel in Galveston. Make your reservations for the Moody Gardens Hotel.

Emails were sent out about all the places to get continuing education credit. Be sure to record your volunteer and education hours in the month you earn them.

With the filming of our Demo Gardens by Central Texas Gardener, we are getting all kinds of inquiries from other areas. Our Facebook and Pinterest accounts are soaring. We have had requests from other garden clubs and Master Gardeners to come and tour our gardens.

Keep the contacts coming. If you talk to someone face to face or on the phone, and you talk about any aspect of gardening, you can count it as a contact. Record this on one of your volunteer times. Go back in and edit an entry you have already done and add the contact. We have other contacts from meetings, public speaking, JMG events and publications which all get counted as ways we are reaching our communities.

I am working with 4 people who are transferring their membership to WCMG. Two of these were in the past week. Please introduce yourself and make them feel like they are "home".

See you in the Gardens, Jane Bowman, President

# So You Think You Wanna Be a Texas Master Gardener Specialist?

## By A. J. Senchack

So. You think you wanna be a Texas Master Gardener Specialist? Ok, let's start with a few questions. What expertise or subject are you interested in or most qualified for? How far are you willing to travel? How much are you willing to pay out-of-pocket? How do you plan to use your newly-acquired expertise? How flexible is your schedule? How long are you willing to wait until the right or desired specialist training comes along? Months? Years? These are just some of the considerations that went through my mind as I pondered my decision to pursue a TMG Specialist designation.

Since becoming a certified TMG in 2011, I have been curious about what this here Texas MG Specialist designation is. I realize many of you have already claimed the enviable status of Specialist (or two), and even more of you have at least explored the Specialist Program. However, it appears as if an estimable number of us in the WCMG chapter have done neither. Thus, I thought it might be worthwhile to write a two-part series on the *TMG Specialist Program*. This first or current article attempts to build a gateway to understanding what a Specialist designation means, entails, and demands.

A second article in a following issue of the *WCMG Newsletter* will describe my personal journey in attempting to reach a Specialist designation---that is, to be referred to in the politest of circles as "*AJ Senchack, Master Gardener Specialist -Earth•Kind® Landscaping*" person. Of course, if this article gets stinky reactions or bad press by y'all, then the editor will most likely be forced to can the next installation!

So, let's examine what the TMG Specialist Program asks and demands of us before we can be known as a TMG Specialist.

### The TMG Specialist Program

**Purpose.** The *purpose* of the TMG Specialist Program is "...to provide advanced training whereby a corps of Master Gardeners can obtain a specialization which *supports or expands specific county educational programs of the Texas AgriLife Extension Service.*" The italics are mine because, at that point, it was not very clear to me what "...*specific* county educational programs" means exactly. Ok, this seemed abstract enough to lead me to further question what exactly a Specialist designation does say about me and what I supposedly can/can't do---as a specialist on a specific subject or ability.

Obviously, I needed to dig deeper at this point. What I learned is that being a Specialist includes "...administration of projects, training of Master Gardeners, clientele presentations, and/or applied research and demonstrations." More specifically, specialist training qualifies and prepares me to make presentations at Master Gardener monthly and intern training meetings, to address public programs such as HOAs and garden clubs, to participate in TV/radio interviews, and other similar activities.

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The basis for this article draws on bits 'n pieces as well as mouths full extracted from the Texas AgriLife Extension Service and the Texas Master Gardeners Association's "Training Information" found at <http://txmg.org/training10/training-information/> and the <http://mastergardener.tamu.edu/master-gardener-specialist/> websites downloaded January 2 and 3, 2017, plus conversations with various AgriLife Extension staff.



Nevertheless, and this is important, the primary purpose of the Specialist Program is *not* to designate “experts” in a field of study or topic; rather, it is designed to identify Master Gardeners who have *received special training* or are “knowledgeable enough” to support specific county educational programs or projects. Specialist training, therefore, appears to be designed to *empower* a Master Gardener with the sufficient knowledge and skills required to effectively support various AgriLife-related programs or projects. Moreover, further reinforcing this careful distinction between being an expert and being knowledgeable, you are pronounced to be “designated,” not “certified,” as a Specialist in an area of expertise. Interestingly, in my research for this article, I occasionally found folks using the word “certification” inappropriately on occasion. Ok, I apologize; that was way too legalistic or arcane.

**Training Requirements.** Other than being a certified Texas Master Gardener, who is currently in good standing, you also need to receive a minimum of 16 hours in special training in a seminar on the particular topic or field of your choice, such as vegetables or irrigation. The total number of training hours depends on the subject matter and the level of expertise sought. Normally, training will include formal in-classroom training, field trips/tours, mentoring by experts, and self-directed study. Importantly, following completion of the formal training requirement, you also have to complete a minimum 20 hours of volunteer service in your designated program or expertise to obtain the title of *Master Gardener Specialist*.

To me, there seems to be no formal structure required of a training program. (Moreover, any expert or group of experts can apply to offer a Specialist program.) Nevertheless, it appears as if most training programs follow a similar design: the *first day* covers a full menu of seminars (usually 4-5) that are lectures and presentations with PowerPoint slides, handouts and exercises that are presented by experts in the field. Perhaps, as no surprise, these experts largely seem to be employees of the State’s AgriLife Extension Service or a university such as Texas A&M. The *second day* continues with lectures but a half-day field trip is taken, e.g., to a nearby botanical garden or to a demonstration, e.g., an illustration of different irrigation methods. That evening, everyone enjoys themselves at a festive dinner located at some special venue. A *third* (usually half) *day* wraps up the training program and is distinguished by outside visitors invited to talk about how the Specialist expertise has been applied to a specific setting. The visitors are normally involved in creating and/or managing the specific project that represents the application of the training’s knowledge. For example, they may discuss an applied demonstration garden in a public space as well as its value to the community, such as at the Georgetown Public Library grounds, or a rain garden at The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center Parks and Gardens in Houston. The best news for you, perhaps, is that you are not required to pass a Final Exam to receive the Specialist designation ! Woohoo!

**Post-Training Volunteer Service Requirement.** Ok, you’ve been trained—now what? Sorry, you’re not through yet. Upon completion of the Specialist training, a Master Gardener is expected to be “...a local county resource and contribute volunteer service by training other Master Gardeners and the public.” Evidence of this requires you to complete a minimum of 20 hours of volunteer service, within one year, in a *designated program or project* before you are granted the title of Texas Master Gardener Specialist. In other words, you need to document and report volunteer service hours to the Specialist training coordinator of the specialty you chose. To report hours, you first speak with your County Agent to determine what will qualify as appropriate service related to your training. IMPORTANT: What can actually be utilized as approved hours is up to your County Agent to decide.

The form to report your hours and have them approved by your County Agent is found at <http://txmg.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/blogs.dir/1/files/Specialist-Project-Approval-Form.pdf>. Then, you send your hours for approval to Ms. Jayla Fry, State TMG Specialist Training Coordinator, 255 HFSB, College Station, TX 77845-2134.

While these hours are used to gain Specialist designation, they are also used to evaluate the effectiveness of the Specialist training effort. The training coordinator keeps a roster and records of all hours and reports all qualifying specialists to the State Master Gardener Coordinator. Specialists will then be given certificates at the State Master Gardener Conference.

By the way, what is a “designated program or project?” Apparently, there is a lot of flexibility here. Basically, what counts as an “appropriate project” is up to you and your County Agent. Examples of what I am doing for my Earth•Kind™ designation is writing newsletter articles about the Earth•Kind™ training program and working in our Earth•Kind™ Rose and Herbal Research Demo Gardens. Other examples are creating educational media such as a web page or blog for our WCMG website, designing interpretative panels for parks and demonstration plantings, and conducting information booths at our local Farmers’ Markets or festivals, such as the Master Gardener Plant Sale and Garden Show.

Finally, a bonus. Upon successful completion of your training and volunteer service hours, you are also eligible to be reimbursed \$50 of your original training cost. All you need to do is fill out the proper form found at <http://txmg.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/files/Specialist-Reimbursement-2015a.pdf>. Where and to whom this gets mailed is again to Ms. Jayla Fry, who is cited above.

**Types of Specialist Trainings and Titles:** Figure 1 gives you a good idea of the many Specialist programs available to you. In addition, there are a number of other training opportunities that don’t carry the Specialist designation. The “Earth•Kind™ Training for Master Gardeners” is a set of on-line podcasts that TMGs may select and receive three-hour credit toward re-certification Continuing Education credit. Each podcast is worth one-hour of credit. “Landscape Design Study Courses” give you more in-depth training in landscape design that goes beyond the Master Gardener intern training curricula. Each course is typically approved by our Master Gardener chapter to qualify for 12 hours of Continuing Education to qualify for the Continuing Education requirement that allows us to maintain our annual MG certification.

**Figure 1.**  
**Specialist Training Programs**

Rainwater Harvesting  
Tree Care  
Citriculture  
Composting  
Earth-Kind® Research  
Oak Wilt Specialist  
Irrigation Efficiency  
Entomology  
Junior Master Gardener  
Earth-Kind® Landscaping  
Plant Propagation  
Vegetables  
Home Fruit, Southern Texas  
Greenhouse Management  
First Detector (Invasives)  
Texas SuperStars® Plants

**Costs.** The typical cost seems to run \$200-\$225 for the typical Specialist program, which includes most of your meals and break snacks. One or two programs are a bit more expensive, while a few are less expensive. For instance, the Entomology Specialist training seminar costs \$325, but it lasts for an entire week. The First Detector—Invasive Plants, on the other hand, only costs \$50, but lasts only one day.

If a program is offered in our area, then the training is your actual cost, for which you get a manual, a packet of brochures and pamphlets. If you're fortunate, as I was with my Earth•Kind™ Landscaping training, your coordinator will also load all of the seminar's PowerPoints and handouts on a memory stick (aka thumb drive) and mail it to you.

If a training program is not within daily commuting distance, then you will also be out for lodging and gas money, as I was. For example, I stayed at a motel in Rosenberg, TX for my three-day training period. En toto, seminar included, I laid out about \$500, which is a pretty stiff cost for most folks. This means you will need to be vigilant and watch for local Specialist trainings near the Georgetown area. Unfortunately, it does not appear as if Specialist trainings are held very often in our area, and the particular training offered may not be the one your are interested in. Moreover, the time/date schedule of Specialist trainings is not known very far ahead in time. The best place to look for them is in the monthly Texas Master Gardener Association newsletter.

This article has become rather detailed, so I hope you have found it informative nevertheless toward your Specialist dream and endeavor. Please feel free to contact me about any questions you might have—I have gone through the entire process. But, for now, it's time for you to get out there and **SPECIALIZE!**



# Spring Cleaning and Garden Chemicals

## By Radhika Baliga

While you tackle your spring cleaning tasks, take a few minutes to look at the garden chemicals (fertilizers, pesticides, etc.) stored on your property. Are you finding chemicals that you don't use or need anymore? Unused or partially used packages of garden chemicals that you'd like to dispose of should be treated as household hazardous waste (HHW). Do not dispose of these chemicals in the trash or dump them down a drain. Within our county there are numerous ways to ensure we are all being environmentally conscious and safe with our garden chemicals. Properly dispose of hazardous waste items by taking them to your area's drop-off site or collection event. See the guide below for details. For tips on transporting these items safely, please visit :

<http://www.mytexashhw.com/guidelines/>.

To learn more about pesticide use in home gardens, join us for our WCMGA May Monthly Meeting. Our County Agriculture Agent, Cooper Terrill, will teach us some tips on using garden chemicals. The presentation will be on Monday, May 8, 2017, from 7pm-8pm in the Extension Office at 3151 SE Inner Loop, Georgetown. The meeting is free and open to the public.

## Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) Drop-Off Procedures by City

### Austin Residents

Free HHW drop-off location is at 2514 Business Center Drive, Austin, 78744.

<http://www.austintexas.gov/dropoff>

### Cedar Park Residents

Semi-annual free HHW clean up event is on Saturday, March 25, 2017, at the Gupton Stadium Parking lot from 10am-2pm.

<http://www.cedarparktexas.gov/departments/public-works/resource-efficiency-division/household-hazardous-waste-free-cleanup>

### Georgetown Residents

Pick up a voucher at the city's utility billing office at 300 Industrial Ave. or collection station at 250 W.L. Walden Dr. that allows you to drop off HHW for free at the Williamson County Recycle Center.

<https://recycle.georgetown.org/household-hazardous-waste/>

### Hutto Residents

Pick up a voucher at the city's utility billing office at 401 W. Front St. that allows you to drop off HHW for free at the Williamson County Recycle Center.

<http://www.huttotx.gov/index.aspx?NID=561>

### Leander Residents

Drop off HHW at Williamson County Recycle Center. Fees apply.

<http://www.leandertx.gov/utilities/page/garbage-and-recycling>

### **Liberty Hill Residents**

Drop off HHW at Williamson County Recycle Center. Fees apply.

### **Round Rock Residents**

Free HHW collection events are held at the city's Deepwood Recycling Center at 310 Deepwood Dr. on the 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of every month from 3pm-6pm and during the annual spring collection event April 22, 2017, from 8am-12pm. \$10 appointment-based service also available.

<https://www.roundrocktexas.gov/departments/utilities-and-environmental-services/solid-waste-recycling/household-hazardous-waste-disposal/>

### **Taylor Residents**

Drop off HHW at Williamson County Recycle Center. Fees apply.

<http://www.ci.taylor.tx.us/269/Recycling>

### **All Williamson County Residents**

The county's HHW drop-off location is the Williamson County Recycle Center at 495 CR 156 Georgetown, Texas.

Fees apply if your municipality does not have a voucher system. Call 512-864-3240 before you head out since weather conditions can force closures.

<http://www.mytexashhw.com/>



# Gardening Tips

By Winola VanArtsdalen



Our average last frost date is March 15.

Remember that the best time for planting in the south is in fall. If you plant now, be prepared to cover if there is a frost and to provide shade from hot sun later in summer if needed. The key to healthy plants and gardening success begins with soil preparation of 1/3 to 1/2 compost and amendments for drainage such as decomposed granite and expanded shale. Use native or adapted plants, putting the right plant in the right place. Mulch and water deeply and infrequently. Working with nature in this way will give you more time to relax and enjoy your landscape!

If you “layered” plants by burying some stems last fall, transplant them now; but be sure to keep them evenly moist until established. Summer and fall-blooming perennials can be divided now and transplanted to other spots in your landscape or shared with friends.

Groundcovers should be trimmed close to the ground in spring to encourage thicker growth.

Weeds take up nutrients needed by your plants; dig them when they first start to come up. If you mulch well, there will not be as many weeds.

Avoid wounds on oak trees susceptible to oak wilt. The nitidulid beetles are most active February through June.

When you move container plants outside, be sure to progress slowly acclimating them into their new environment. Place plants in protected outside areas for a few weeks and then move to locations with full exposure.

Look for places to change to drip irrigation. You will not only save water, but the water will go to the roots where needed not onto the leaves which may cause fungus to develop.

## **Turf:**

After the last freeze when soil is moist, aerate with a machine that removes plugs and follow with a top dressing of compost.

After the second mowing of grass in late March to early April, fertilize Bermuda and St. Augustine turf.

Fertilize Buffalo and Zoysia in late April to early May. If you use top dressing, skip this fertilization as it would be too much nitrogen.

## **Irrigation:**

Evaluate your water system now for most efficient use of this precious resource. If possible, water the roots of plants with a drip watering system to avoid leaving moisture on leaves. Hand water when water is needed by only a small group of plants. If you use an automatic sprinkler system, the best setting is OFF! Remember to water only as needed.

Be sure to take advantage of the many educational opportunities this month: plant sales, garden shows, and classes. Especially, do not miss the fun of helping with our April 1, Master Gardener Garden Show!



# Drippin' in the Herb Garden

By Martha Baddour

The Earth-Kind Herb field trial is a three year research project sponsored by Texas A&M University and undertaken by five Master Garden sites including the Williamson County Master Gardener Demonstration Garden. The purpose of the study is to determine which herbs can successfully be grown in the Earth-Kind system with minimal intervention. The project began in April 2015 when 136 research plants—varieties of rosemary, oregano, and thyme—and 62 buffer plants were installed in a new 60' x 40' plot in the Demonstration Garden.

Over the past two summers the Herb Garden has endured torrential rains and relentless dry periods which required weekly hand or overhead watering. The hand/overhead watering process was not only time consuming but it often resulted in uneven watering for the herbs and buffer plants.



In the Fall of 2016, we received approval to install a drip irrigation system for the trial garden plot. In November, a water valve line was placed and the major water line was installed around the Herb Garden.

In early December, the Herb Garden volunteers aka “Herbies” completed the installation of the drip irrigation system. This involved laying flat drip irrigation tape with 12” emitters down each of the rows and connecting them to the main water line. The system was then tested for leaks and is now ready for action!



This project has been a labor of love and many thanks to Teresa Wilts and George Prall for making the funding available and lending expertise in the design and layout. Also thanks to fellow Herbies, Sandra Roberson, Ann Harmon, Teresa Robinson, Alice Stultz, Gail Kelley, Jane LaComette, Jo Hoover, Marcy Echols, Cindy Doan, Heidi Schneider, and Radhika Baliga, for helping with the installation of the drip irrigation system.

Now if we could just come up with an automatic weed puller we would have it made!

# Two Hard Freezes in the Vegetable Demo Garden

**By Teresa Wilts**

After two hard freezes in the Vegetable Demo Garden this year, the vegetable gardeners were very disappointed to find nearly all our vegetables dead and dying. The picture below shows what happened to our vegetables this winter. This is the reason that the donations all of you made at the monthly meeting were so important!



We look forward to once again harvesting fresh vegetables to donate to our partner agencies: The Caring Place, The Annunciation Maternity Home and Heaven's Harvest where their clients receive fresh vegetables they would otherwise not have. Thanks to all who donated and helped us help them.



# Crane Flies

## By Wizzie Brown



Crane flies are a conundrum to most people and are often surrounded with misinformation. I find crane flies to be the insect I use to let me know that spring is coming soon.

Crane flies can be small to large insects topping out at about 1 inch with long, slender legs and a V-shaped suture on the thorax. Legs tend to break off very easily so you may often encounter these insects with less than their allotted 6 legs (see image). Adults can be mistaken for giant mosquitoes and may frighten people.

Crane flies are often referred to as “mosquito hawks” which is a misnomer. The name mosquito hawk is usually used to refer to dragonflies. It is sometimes also used to refer to a large species of mosquito that has a larval stage which feeds on other mosquito species.

Some people think that crane flies eat mosquitoes, but this is untrue. Adult crane flies feed on nectar or are non-feeding. Crane fly larvae are found in moist soil feeding on decaying organic matter. The larvae are wormlike and legless, without well-developed heads. Some species of the larvae feed on roots of turf grass or other plants. Crane fly larvae usually do not cause enough damage to be considered a pest, but with very high populations management may be needed.

In Texas, crane flies can become abundant in the spring. While the adults may be a nuisance when entering homes or disturbing outdoor activities, they do not cause damage and do not bite. Keep doors and windows closed and make sure screens are in good repair. Either turn off outside lights at night or use “bug bulbs” to reduce the number of crane flies that are drawn near the home because of light sources.





# **Choices for Continuing Educational Credit for** **WCMG**

## **Educational Opportunities In Our Area**

Monthly meeting of WCMGA –meets the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of every month. (except Dec.)

Specialist Trainings for Master Gardeners provided by Texas A & M sites

Texas Master Garden State Conferences, Southern Region Master Gardener Conferences and International Conferences of Master Gardeners.

Hands on in the Garden 3151 SE Inner Loop A, Georgetown, TX 78626 meets on the last Saturday of the month at the Williamson County Extension Office.

Travis County Extension Service <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/travis/local-extension-resources/calendar-2/> Sat

The Natural Gardener 8648 Old Bee Caves Road, Austin, TX 78735 512-288-6113

Georgetown Garden Club Georgetown Parks and Recreation Community Room, 1101 N. College, Georgetown, Texas 78626 <http://www.georgetowngardenclub.org/Pages/CalendarofEvents.aspx>

Native Plant Society of Texas Williamson County Chapter meets the second Thursday of each month, <https://npsot.org/wp/wilco/meetings/>

Round Rock Gardens 901 Sam Bass Rd. Round Rock, TX 78681 (512) 255-3353  
<http://roundrockgardens.com/workshops-events/>

Countryside Nursery and Landscape 13292 Pond Springs Rd Austin, Texas 78729 512-249-0100  
<http://www.countrysideaustin.com/garden-classes-and-events/>

Red Barn Garden Center 12881 Pond Springs Road Austin, TX 78729 512-335-8093  
<http://redbarngardencenter.net/special-events.html>

Country Water Gardens 1407 N. Bell Blvd., Cedar Park, TX 78613 512-260-5050  
<http://www.hillcountrywatergardens.com/calendar/>

Monument Market 500 S. Austin Avenue, Georgetown, Texas, 78626 512-240-4715  
<http://www.themonumentmarket.com/> Class fees may apply.

Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center 4801 La Crosse Avenue Austin, Texas 78739 512-232-0100  
<https://www.wildflower.org/classes/> Class fees may apply.

Austin Community College Continuing Education Program Single-session workshops and multi-week classes on topics like soils, pest management, landscape design, turf management and propagation. See online course catalog for details. Locations vary. Tuition and campus parking permit fees apply. Check with WCMGA membership for pre-approval on hours. <http://continue.austincc.edu/agriculture>  
<http://continue.austincc.edu/landscape>  
<http://continue.austincc.edu/schedule/program?program=Home%20and%20Garden&term=&location=>

Garden Club Meetings at Zilker Botanical Gardens 2220 Barton Springs Rd, Austin, TX 78746 512-477-8672 <http://www.zilker garden.org/aagc/clubs.html> See website for listings. Fees for parking and meetings may apply.

**Please Note:** When\_ you attend classes at these sites, programs that do not have to do with gardening or landscape will not apply towards educational hours. (EX. Making your own beer, bread or about specific presentation on products.) If you have questions, please email Jane Bowman = [squarefoot100@gmail.com](mailto:squarefoot100@gmail.com)

# ***Williamson County Master Gardener Association 2017 Board of Directors and Sub-Committee Chairs***

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**Speakers' Bureau** – Open

**Online Presence** – Garry Bowman

**Newsletter** – Ann Harmon

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Jane Bowman

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Teresa Wilts

Jeanne Barker

This issue of the *Williamson County Master Gardener Newsletter* was made possible because of the contributions of the following Williamson County Master Gardeners. Jane Bowman (President), articles by : Winola VanArtsdalen, Radhika Baliga, Wizzie Brown, Martha Baddour, A.J. Senchack and Teresa Wilts.

Editor: Ann Harmon. Copy Editors: Catherine Nickle, Sandra Roberson , A.J. Senchack and Radhika Baliga. Cover photo by Ann Harmon

If you would like to contribute to the May/June 2017 *Williamson County Master Gardener Newsletter*, please send your submission to Ann Harmon at [aharmon@sonic.net](mailto:aharmon@sonic.net) by April 25 2017.

As you garden, volunteer and learn, please take a moment to share your stories and experiences with other gardeners. Thank you!



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WCMGA is a volunteer program of the Texas A&M Agrilife  
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