

A photograph of a field of bright orange cosmos flowers. The flowers are in various stages of bloom, with some fully open and others as buds. The green leaves and stems are visible throughout the scene, creating a dense and vibrant floral display.

# Williamson County Master Gardeners

## May/June 2017

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# President's Message

By Jane Bowman



Good Evening Gardeners,

I was shopping in the Walmart at Georgetown today. While I was standing in line, a lady came up behind me. I turn and noticed she had plants in her cart and I looked at one and didn't recognize it. She made a comment to me about how she didn't know what it was, but it would look good in the spot where she wanted to put it. I read the tag and told her that it was a tropical and said not to get below 50 degrees. She then noticed my Master Gardener shirt. She said "Are you a REAL Master Gardener?" I couldn't help but smile and I introduced myself and gave her a card and invited her to our monthly meetings.

Let's take the opportunities around us to let the community know we are here and available to give out information on gardening.

Since my last letter, we have had a very successful Spring Garden Fair and Plant Sale. A Very Special Thank You to all of you; you worked very hard and we all pulled together to get the job done. There are many talented Master Gardeners with a wide variety of skills in our association, and we have so much we can learn from each other. Take some time to get to know each other as we work and volunteer together. (FYI-we did get the Georgetown Community Center next year! No more dust!) A new idea I gained from the Galveston MGs: They have a couple of tables at their plant sale where they sell garden related craft items. I think we can easily incorporate this idea into ours. So you have plenty of time to get busy and make something to donate to our craft table for the Garden Fair on April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

Five of us attended the Texas Master Gardener State Convention and we brought home two awards. One award was for the newsletter under the Written Education category and one was for Education Programs.

Several of you volunteered and hosted a very successful MG Booth at the Poppy Festival. Thanks to Darlene and Loyce for being Co-Chairs for this event.

Several Specialist trainings are being held around our area. Check them out on the Texas Master Gardener State website for Specialist trainings and see which ones you would like to attend. It is important for you to check the calendars on VMS. It is also a reflection on all of us when any of the events are not supported and we do not have representatives in these community events. Please check your schedule and try to commit to at least two or three each month. The VMS keeps a tally of the hours you put into it, so check it out and be careful to have the required continuing education and volunteer hours by the end of October.

While I was in Galveston, I went to the Galveston MG Garden. I met several really nice Gardeners and we exchanged several ideas. It is fun and interesting to see what other MGs are doing. So while you are traveling, try to check some of them out. I really think you will enjoy it. Let us know what fun things they are doing.

See you in the Garden,  
Jane Bowman  
President

## Important JMG Information

By Cassie Ferguson

I am Cassie Ferguson and I am the 4-H Youth Development county agent now working with the Junior Master Gardener program. Together, Andrea Fonseca, the Horticulture county agent and I will support the Junior Master Gardeners program.

**There are two important upcoming events this summer for Master Gardeners who want to work in the Junior Master Gardener program:**

Volunteer training will be on June 2, 2017

Teacher/Leader training on June 26, 2017

Both trainings are from 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. in the County Extension Office training room.

### **JMG and JMN 'Youth Summer Day Camp'**

Junior Master Gardeners and Junior Master Naturalists will be teaming up for a 'Youth Summer Day Camp' on June 27, 2017, at the County Extension Office. The Junior Master Gardener portion of the day camp will be from 8:00 a.m.-noon, and the Junior Master Naturalists portion of the day camp will be from 1:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m. Information about these events is posted on the VMS, and the County Extension Office will be advertising these events in the community.

For more information please stop by Cassie's or Andrea's offices and get to know us!



## ***Cycad Scale***

***by Wizzie Brown***

The cycad scale is a little known pest in Texas that can cause major problems for cycad lovers. It has been identified in South Texas up to Central Texas. Heavy infestations of this scale insect can quickly cause mortality.



Mature females are about 1-1.5 mm long (~1/16") and are pear-shaped but will conform to the shape of the plant. Adult females have a white cap that when flipped over reveal an orange insect. Males are smaller than females, 0.5 mm long, but also create a white cap.

Females lay over 100 orange eggs that hatch usually in 8-12 days depending on environmental conditions. Cycad scales have overlapping generations, so populations can build very quickly.

Damage first appears as chlorotic spots, but left untreated the fronds will turn brown from desiccation. Cycads with large populations often appear white from the covering of scales. Dead scales do not readily drop off the plant, so the scales must physically be removed by using high pressure water sprays.

Check all plant material before purchasing/ trading to make sure it is not infested. Look over the whole plant and especially the underside of fronds as the scales like to settle there to feed. You may need to use a hand lens since the insects are very small. High population levels of cycad scale will cover the entire surface of the plant, including the roots.



If an infestation is found, dispose of heavily infested plants by double bagging. If plants do not yet have high numbers of insects, prune heavily infested areas and discard in sealed bags. Pruning tools should be thoroughly cleaned before pruning other plants.

Treatments of cycad scale include horticultural oils, insecticidal soap, systemic pesticides or contact pesticides. Oils and soaps should have multiple applications. Oils should be applied in the morning or evening when temperatures are cooler. Systemic pesticides, active ingredients such as acephate or dimethoate, should be applied as a soil drench so the chemical is taken into the plant from the root system. Contact pesticides include active ingredients such as carbaryl or pyrethrin. When using contacts, care must be taken to thoroughly cover the plant so that all insects are treated.

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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# Williamson County Master Gardeners Plant Sale and Garden Fair

by Ann Harmon

In January, when preparation for the Plant Sale and Garden Fair began, April seemed a long way off. However, for the next three months serious planning and preparation took place as this event is the Williamson County Master Gardeners' primary source of income.

Organizing, arranging and sometimes rearranging ensued. Committee Chairpersons ordered plants, borrowed tables and carts and secured an army of volunteers and vendors. Near dawn on Friday morning, March 31, we finally converged on the Williamson County Show Barn to set up for the most ambitious WCMG community education and plant sale yet.



Thanks to the planning and organizational skills of Steve Echols, set up on Friday went very smoothly. The huge barn was subdivided to create areas for the plant sale, vendors and community education efforts. Tables and chairs arrived and setup began. Garry and Jane Bowman arrived with welcome coffee and bagels to fuel the setup team. By noon, all was ready to receive the plants and allow vendors and exhibitors to bring in their wares. Early Friday evening with plants in place and demonstration and vendor areas ready, the set up teams headed out to get some rest and the barn was once again quiet.

April 1, 7:30 a.m. You could feel excitement in the air as volunteers arrived to prepare for the plant sale and vendors and exhibitors begin to appear. The 4-H members began poultry and egg judging as part of the morning activities.



A group of 4-Hers and parents also set up a food concession offering hot food, drinks and desserts for sale.



Hundreds of beautiful plants were showcased on racks and tables down the center of the barn, filling the air around them with competing scents. Many showed off a riot of colorful blossoms.



Garden Fair activities included vegetable gardening information, Junior Master Gardener and 4-H program information, an introduction to the Master Naturalist program, herbal foods and craft demonstrations, a rose information table and Joanne Dieterich's wonderful backyard chickens. The Master Gardener Speaker's Bureau set up for hourly gardening presentations throughout the day, and vendor booths with products for gardeners, yard decorations and services extended the length of barn.

As the 4-H Poultry show got underway, a speaker could be heard beginning his talk. As we looked up from our own preparations, the doors opened and people hurried in to look through the plants. Soon they were pulling wagon loads of selected plants as they perused the vendors' wares and enjoyed the varied and entertaining learning opportunities. Many were pushing strollers with little ones who seemed especially excited by the chickens. The noise level and dust rose and we all knew it would be the most successful plant sale and garden fair yet!



# MG Social Event: A Visit to the *Central Texas Gardener* Set

## By Radhika Baliga

From garden tours to nursery visits to crafting sessions, WCMG Social events are a fun way to get some great inspiration for your garden and catch up with fellow gardeners. In April, MG's Viki Strauss and Jodie Beach put together a unique opportunity for us to view a taping of the wildly popular TV show, *Central Texas Gardener (CTG)*. We took home loads of gardening tips, ideas for future MG outings, and fun facts about the show.



In-studio segments of *CTG* are recorded at the historic KLRU Studios on the U.T. Austin campus. The segments are recorded twice a month, just weeks before they are slated to air. There's no need for a spoiler alert in this article. By the time this newsletter makes it to print, avid *CTG* viewers would have already seen all the content that was taped during our visit.

At the top of our day, we saw the “Plant of the Week” and “Question of the Week” segments with Travis County Agent Daphne Richards. Daphne explained that she writes her segments right before heading to the studio to keep the topics fresh in her mind. She doesn't rehearse her script and there's a special reason for that. It makes her segment feel more like a natural conversation with the viewer. A serious fan in the audience asked Daphne if her favorite rose is the Sharifa Asma. And, indeed, it is one of Daphne's top picks. This rose not only has a fantastic fragrance, it also has sentimental ties to her mother. Do plants in your garden connect you to special people, places, or memories?

Next, we watched the taping of “Backyard Basics.” Trisha Shirey and her guest, herbalist Ellen Zimmermann, talked about Texas native plants with medicinal uses, like passion vine (anxiety reducer), agarita (liver cleanse), blackhaw viburnum (cramp reliever), and echinacea (immune booster). The ladies had more information to share than would fit into the allotted time. When alerted by the camera crew, Trisha wrapped up the presentation quickly. Did Trisha and Ellen inspire you to design a medicine-themed garden for your yard? Trisha also filmed another segment about organic pest control techniques for the spring garden. I should have heeded Trisha's advice to protect squash plants with mesh or tulle but I didn't. Just a short week later, I'm spotting dozens of squash vine borer eggs on my plants. Ack!

We closed out the day watching two interviews hosted by Tom Spencer. The first interview was with cactus whisperer Darrell Dunten from Living Desert Ranch in Spicewood. According to Darrell, one of the beauties of growing cactus is that you can leave them unattended for two weeks and they'll look just the same when you return.



When I heard him say that, I wondered why I don't have cacti in my garden! I'll need to visit Darrell in Spicewood and fix that in short order. Did you happen to catch the tip on using bamboo skewers as moisture meters for your cactus?

We talked with Tom in between interviews and were delighted by his sense of humor. He mentioned that, decades ago, Austin gardeners relentlessly asked about two topics – St. Augustine lawns and azaleas. From the breadth of topics covered by *CTG* in recent years, we can see that the local gardening scene has certainly come a long way.

Next, was an interview with Jeff Breitenstein with the Austin Daylily Society. Jeff gave us lots of reasons to plant daylilies – they can be incorporated into xeric landscapes (protected from deer, of course), they make great pass-along plants, and they also make for some fun at-home hybridization projects.

I'd be remiss if I didn't mention producer, editor, writer, and narrator, Linda Lehmusvirta. While she had important duties behind the scenes in the control room, Linda was a warm host and made her way into the studio several times to entertain our questions and talk about the evolution of *CTG*. Did you know that Linda has been with the show since it began in the late 80's? As MG's, I think we can all find a kindred spirit in Linda, since one of her missions is to help others avoid the gardening mistakes she's made. She talked about upcoming episodes with such zeal and energy, I could have stayed and talked with Linda for hours on end.



Thankfully, she's graciously left the door open for us to visit again. After we left, Linda still had lots of work ahead of her. She would have just one more day to edit all the recorded footage and send the episodes off to KLRU.

The *CTG* team worked like a well-oiled machine. I was surprised to learn that there are only a few members on staff full-time while the rest of the crew is free-lance. There was a lot at stake on taping day but everyone functioned with calm and ease. Impressively, of all the segments we viewed, only one wasn't filmed in a single take. This re-take was needed because a shadow fell on a guest's face. The *CTG* crew pulls out all the stops to make sure its guests are seen in the best light (pun intended).

I hope to see you and your garden featured on the *CTG* one day. Keep submitting your questions and pictures to the show. And if you've never seen the show, you absolutely need to go online and watch the episode featuring our county's Demonstration Gardens.

Don't forget to check VMS for more fun and exciting activities organized by the WCMG Social Committee. Until next time, in the words of Tom Spencer, "I'll see you in the garden."

# Gardening Tips

## By Winola Van Artsdalen



### May/June Tips 2017

#### **Flower Beds:**

Keep beds mulched to help control weeds and retain moisture. If you put in new plants, mulch well and watch to water as needed until established.

Most of those spring blooming flowers that were so fresh-looking and beautiful will wither in the summer heat, but those loving the hot sun like lantana, Esperanza, and pride of Barbados will come alive! Blackfoot daisy is my personal favorite, but it hates overhead watering! Disease resistant salvias are vibrant almost all year, with only a brief winter rest. Look around neighborhood and at display gardens to see what your landscape might need in future for continuous color.

Be aware that next month will be latest to trim fall bloomers like asters, so be sure to keep shaped now.

Walk through garden daily to watch for any problems and to just enjoy! Carry clippers with you to remove faded flowers and to prevent unwanted self-seeding. Watch for pest and disease problems.

If slugs are a problem, set out a plant saucer or a stone and collect snails under it the next morning. You can add beer or fruits to it if you like, but, in my beds, I find they are attracted just by darkness and moisture.

Keys to avoid problems with pests and diseases begin with good soil preparation, air circulation, and a variety of native/adapted plants. Having water available will invite beneficial insects to your garden, as well as planting herbs and plants with daisy-like blooms, (zinnias and fall aster), and umbrella-like blooms, (yarrow and fennel).

#### **Turf and Irrigation:**

May to early June, fertilize St. Augustine grown in full sun. In absence of rain, you may need to irrigate ½ inch of water every seven to ten days depending upon soil depth, wind and sun. Probe into the soil to determine if moisture depth is reaching roots rather than just feeling the surface.

If you are away, be sure to give access to a neighbor for your sprinkler system in case of problems.

#### **Trees:**

Avoid wounds on oak trees, because the beetle that carries the fungus is active now. If wounds occur from natural causes or for fire prevention, be sure to paint immediately!

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

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

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



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