

A photograph of a vast field of bluebonnets in full bloom, stretching towards a line of green trees under a clear sky. The text is overlaid on the middle of the image.

Williamson County Master Gardeners Spring 2016 Newsletter

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President's Message

By Jane Bowman



Greetings Fellow Gardeners:

I want to introduce myself to you as your new president. Many of you have expressed your appreciation to me for being willing to be president and devote my time to the association. Thank you for this encouraging vote of support.

I grew up in a small town in south/central Illinois where it was common to have a garden for growing your own vegetables and fruits. We also gathered wild asparagus, morel mushrooms (the BEST!), blackberries, persimmons, river bottom hickory nuts, walnuts, fresh spring greens and sometimes chiggers. We grew all our vegetables, canned many of them and stored the root vegetables in straw with soil heaped up over the top during the winter. I learned a lot of gardening from my parents, especially how to weed and thin plants. Now, since I have retired, I try to grow many of my own vegetables and fruits to eat fresh or to preserve.

Williamson County is a very different gardening climate and coping with the weather and soil is a challenge. I enjoy taking classes about gardening and sharing with others as well as learning from them in the garden. I recently attended classes at the Mother Earth News Fair in Belton. One of the presenters said to think about compost as a "soil conditioner". It has some nutrients like a fertilizer but not enough to feed your plants during the growing season. You still must feed plants according to their individual needs.

I am so thankful for the rain we just received near the end of February. I have been using my rain water for some time, so I was delighted to get some help from nature.

There are many fantastic gardeners in our association with a wealth of knowledge. I encourage you to learn from each other, fellowship with each other, and take care of yourself. Please email or call me if you have ideas or concerns. I look forward to a fulfilling year of working and gardening together to help our community.

Jane Bowen, WCMG President

Meet Cooper Terrill!

Williamson County's new Agriculture Extension Agent

By Ann Harmon



Over the past several months there has been much speculation as to who would replace the former Williamson County Agriculture Extension Agent.

Would he or she focus on agriculture or horticulture? Could we have only a part time agent with maybe some help from a horticulturist serving another county? Could it be months before anyone showed up?

I recently had the opportunity to interview our new Agent, and for those of you who have not had the pleasure, I would like to introduce you to Cooper Terrill.

Cooper is a hill country local who grew up in Fredericksburg, Texas and was active in agriculture from a young age. He graduated from Fredericksburg High School and attended Texas A&M University where he earned both a Bachelor of Science and a Master's degree in animal science. Cooper focused his research at Texas A&M on animal behavior where he studied stress related hormones and genes. With experience in both cropping systems and livestock he became a consultant in livestock facility design before taking the Agriculture Extension Agent position in Falls County.

Cooper remained in Falls County for three years where the 4-H program grew to new heights under his tutelage and agricultural production continued to improve in the area. Things improved for Cooper as well. He recently became engaged and is due to be married in May of this year. When offered the chance to come to Williamson County he felt there was no better place to start a new life with his fiancée.

Relaxed and casual yet very much in charge, Cooper responded to my interview questions with enthusiasm:

Since you officially took over here, you had been working to finish up in your prior position. Are you still commuting or settled in at this point? “I am now on board 100% but I still have not found a place to live so I am still driving back and forth.”

Do you feel that this job will be different? In what ways? “Yes, there is more diversity in Williamson County and more opportunity to expand existing programs and develop new programs”.

What do you see as opportunities here that you would like to develop? “I would like to expand existing programs and the office. 4-H for example; I had a very good 4-H group in Falls County and would like to see that program grow here. Stiles Farm which was left to A&M, and the new Exposition Center could provide opportunities to build programs and expand participation in the Community as well.”

Given that we have a strong Master Gardener program in our County how do you see Master Gardeners supporting your goals? “Master Gardeners is so strong here and I don’t feel they get enough recognition. I would like to see this program grow and would like to see our gardens here become a showcase for Extensions throughout the area.. I would also like to include Master Gardeners in programs we will be developing and events in the area. “

What do you see as your interaction with Master Gardeners? Collaborative? There was some discussion of collaboration with another agent who is a horticulturist. Is that still in the works and, if so would it mean you would step back in favor of other more Ag pursuits? “No, frankly I would like to have the time to get out in the garden with you all once a week. I really like what you’re doing here. In fact, I had an inquiry from another Agent who wants to start a Master Gardener program in his County and wanted to know if I knew of an example. I told him all I have to do is look out my window here.”

We are a very casual and friendly group and would like you to feel comfortable joining in. For example, the Herb Trial Group is having lunch in the garden on our all hands workday (March 15). We would be happy to have you come by if you wanted to. “Yes, I would like that if I am in the office.”

Would you also be interested in providing a message for our newsletter on a bi-monthly or perhaps quarterly basis? “Yes.”

Cooper says he has always been involved in local communities and looks forward to working with volunteer groups here such as Master Gardeners. He would ultimately like to grow our Williamson County program to the forefront of Texas Extension programs. This writer thinks he will do just that.



Gardeners Who Cook

Wayne Rhoden's Stuffed Cabbage



Stuffed Cabbage Rolls

1 Large head of cabbage, cored
3 Tablespoons of butter
2 Medium onions, chopped
1 Pound lean ground beef
1 Cup cooked white or brown rice
½ Teaspoon allspice
1 28 Ounce can tomatoes

1 8 Ounce can tomato sauce
1 6 Ounce can of tomato paste
1 teaspoon Salt
½ teaspoon garlic salt
1 teaspoon thyme
Sour Cream

Preheat the oven to 350° degrees. In a large pot, steam the cabbage for 10 minutes or until the leaves are softened enough to peel away. Cool; separate leaves, gently shake off moisture and set aside. Melt butter in a skillet and sauté onions until they are golden. Remove half of the onions to a bowl containing the ground beef. Mix in the rice and allspice gently with your hands. To the remaining onions in the skillet, add the tomatoes and juice, tomato sauce, tomato paste, salt, and seasonings. Simmer for 15 minutes. Place a small amount of the meat mixture on each cabbage leaf. Fold the leaf over to enclose the meat and, starting at the stem end, roll up. Place rolls, seam side down, in a buttered baking dish. Cover with tomato mixture and bake, uncovered, for 1 hour. Serve with sour cream.

Serves 8

Master Gardeners On the Move

The Mother Earth Fair

By Ann Harmon

On February 20 – 21 Belton, Texas welcomed the Mother Earth News Fair to Texas for the very first time.

Homesteaders, small farmers, beekeepers permaculture enthusiasts, mushroom cultivators, vegetable gardeners and a plethora of backyard livestock enthusiasts flocked to the Bell County Expo to see what it was all about. Master Gardeners, always curious and interested in anything gardening, appeared from various States and many Texas counties including a contingent from our own WCMG.

There was plenty to learn pertaining to gardening, with speakers on twelve stages presenting every 1 1/2 hours. We could not cover it all but made a valiant attempt to get to as many educational opportunities as possible.

Mushroom Cultivation in Southeastern Climates was popular with our attendees as were



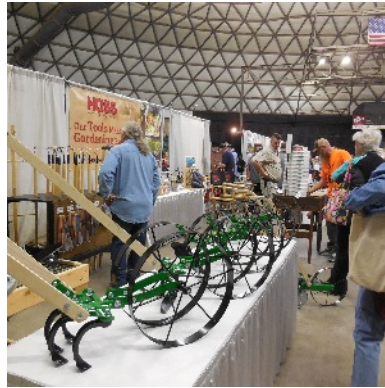
presentations on Sustainable Gardening, Pest Control, Edible Landscaping, Soil Restoration and Composting.

Discussions also included using heritage seeds and collecting seeds from the previous year's garden to develop more specifically adapted plants.

Of course, there was much more to see at the fair such as livestock exhibits and small scale farm equipment displays.

A hall full of vendors were on hand selling everything from apple corers to Azomite and wellness to worm castings.

You could also find pottery, canning supplies, flour, honey, and even a company selling composting commodes (NOT recommended by master gardeners). Representatives from various seed companies gave away seeds and catalogues, and Mother Earth News held a book fair.



Contingents from the Central Texas Master Naturalist program, Texas Native Plant Society, and Texas Farmers and Gardeners Society were all represented. There truly was something for everyone and we hope more master gardeners will take advantage of this opportunity should Mother Earth News venture back to our area again.

JMG Corner

Junior Master Gardener News

Naumann Elementary School

February 21st was a big day for Cedar Park's Naumann Elementary. With the help of parents, teachers and the JMG group, they created their first two raised bed gardens.

Christina Legrand and Jennifer Stein, parents of children attending the school and JMG leaders were key in the coordination and planning of the garden project. The bed structure is constructed of cinder blocks which the JMG group used as a fundraising opportunity. Families purchased cinder blocks from the JMG group, decorated and then returned the blocks to the school.



Naumann Elementary will be scheduling a planting day for later this spring. The school community will once again come together to plant seeds and transplants into the beds.

Other JMG News and Opportunities

JMG will participate in the Georgetown Poppy Festival. They will provide hands on activities and information on the Junior Master Gardener program. The festival runs from April 21 through April 23.

May 14 , Our own Patsy Bredahl & her Hutto folks will be putting on their successful Hutto Home and Garden Show 9 am to 4 pm. JMG activities will be provided for the families. This was lots of fun last year! Sign up on VMS if you would like to help.

Contact Arlene Boyer if you would like to help with these events or would like more information on Junior Master Gardeners.



Squash Vine Borers

by Wizzie Brown

Are you planning on planting squash this year? Or perhaps, you've already planted your squash. BEWARE the squash vine borer! Squash vine borers attack summer squash, winter squash, pumpkins and to a lesser degree cucumbers and melons.

The squash vine borer is a moth that resembles a wasp. Adults are about ½ an inch long with an orange abdomen marked with black. The front wings are a metallic green and the hind wings are clear, but the hind wings are folded under the front wings while the moth is at rest. Larvae are creamy white with brown heads and can be almost an inch in length when fully grown. Eggs are round, flat and brown.



Eggs are laid singly at the base of desired plants. After about a week, eggs hatch and larvae bore into the center of the plant stem. Larvae continue boring and feeding through the center of the stem which causes the plant to wilt and eventually die.

Larvae remain within the plant for about 4-6 weeks. When they emerge, they burrow in the soil to pupate.



If you have previously had squash vine borers, try to avoid them attacking your plants the following year. You can try planting more resistant varieties such as butternut squash varieties, acorn squash or 'Tatume' squash. Monitor squash plants every couple of days and squish any circular brown, flat eggs that you encounter.

Utilize row cover to protect the squash. Row cover should be anchored so that insects cannot crawl underneath it. Also, make sure to remove row cover while the squash is blooming so squash will get pollinated and be able to set fruit (or you can hand pollinate). Get row cover on early in the season so you do not inadvertently trap the moth in with your squash.

If you notice your plant wilting and it's not from lack of water, you can attempt surgery on the vine to remove the borer(s). Use a sharp knife to slice open the stem lengthwise and locate the borer(s), remove and then bury the vine under moist soil and hope that it takes root.

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

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Gardening Tips

By Winola Van Artsdalen



Spring 2016

PLANTING: You can still plant container grown trees, shrubs, and perennials, but more vigilance and water will be needed than for fall plantings. Be sure to hand water these rather than running an irrigation system for that whole zone of lawn.

Bring container plants outside gradually into brighter light. If you do not change to fresh potting soil, pour water over the soil to wash out the salts. Do not leave the saucer below plant, as salts will be re-absorbed. You can add a little expanded shale to potting mix for both drainage and moisture retention.

Mulch container plants. You can add some human hair to help keep deer away. I have had success with this, but you do have to refresh periodically.

Annuals: Like turf, limit annuals, using only as needed. Annuals do give color, but they use much water and fertilizer, unless you use natives like columbines and some adapted toughies like poppies.

Perennials: Now is good time to divide. Dig up the whole crown and keep only young, healthy starts. I also go around looking through turf to find starts of plants like penstemon and asters that have escaped beds and come up in the turf. These are great for filling in bare spots!

DRAINAGE: It is most unusual for us in Central Texas to have enough rain to worry much about drainage, but it can happen! For the unusual event, you can take a pitchfork or some other tool with fairly small tines and pierce the soil for air holes. If drainage is a continuing problem, add compost and an amendment such as expanded shale for better drainage. Adding compost to a problem area, can make a huge difference; enough to stop run-off that is washing away topsoil.

TRIMMING REMINDERS:

Evergreens: late winter before new growth

Roses: mid to late February or March

Subshrubs like *salvia greggii*: before new growth, May and July or early August

Wait for spring blooming bushes/vines until after they bloom.

Groundcovers: Cut back close to the ground in early spring.

Fall-blooming plants: Trim to make bushy, but stop by end of July.

TURF:

Dig weeds now while they are easy to dig and before they grow larger and stronger.

After the last freeze, aerate when moist and spread top dressing (one-half to one inch organic, fine compost). If you spread top dressing, skip spring fertilization, as that would be too much nitrogen.

Fertilize Bermuda and St. Augustine in late March to early April after second mowing and Buffalo and Zoysia in late April to early May.

TREES:

Paint wounds on oak trees any size any season, but do not prune oaks February through June or any time of mild weather, as the beetles that spread the disease are most active then.

Spring sometimes brings a high population of oak leaf rollers, nuisance worms falling from trees. Their number depends on the previous winter's weather and populations of natural predators--trichogramma wasps, a gnat-sized nonstinging wasp. Successful applications of treatment are difficult and purchasing the wrong type or spraying in wrong area could cause harm to butterfly larvae. Healthy oak trees will usually survive even if defoliated by multiple generations of oak worms, but weakened and stressed trees are more susceptible. If you are concerned, it would be best to seek professional treatment.

Remember the best way to learn about gardening is to volunteer! You not only learn how the plants at this garden are planted and maintained, but from fellow workers telling their experiences. This is true both in gardens and at Joss Growers.

Source: *Texas A&M AgriLIFE Extension Service*

Save The Date

WCMG Monthly Meetings

April 11, 2016 6:30 p.m. Social . Meeting 7:00 p.m. Topic: Fungi In the Garden

May 9, 2016 6:30 Social . Meeting 7:00 p.m. Topic: Attracting Monarchs

Educational Opportunities in Our Area

Round Rock Nursery

April 2 10:00 a.m. Salsa Garden Workshop Join us for a fun workshop with Jennifer Flowers to learn how to garden in smaller spaces. You'll be surprised how easy it is.

April 3 1:00 p.m. Edible Container Gardening Limited space? Not sure about how to do it? In this workshop, we'll show you how to plant up a beautiful garden. Don't miss it!

Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center

The Wildflow Center has both free and for fee classes. For details on for fee classes check their website.

The Natural Gardener

Spring Break until May 7. See the website in April for new classes beginning May 7.

Red Barn Nursery

No scheduled classes until Fall

Hill Country Water Gardens

April 2 10:00 a.m. Xeriscaping Central Texas

April 9 10:00 a.m. Color Container Gardening

April 16 10:00 a.m. Perennials for Central Texas

Monument Cafe

See The Monument Market Blog for April class details. No class April 2.

Georgetown Garden Club

April 22 - April 24 Plant Sale at the Georgetown Poppy Festival

Zilker Garden/ Travis County Master Gardeners

April 14, 2016

Rainwater Harvesting for Landscape Use - Ed Parken

10 a.m. to noon at Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service- Travis County, 1600- B Smith Road, Austin, 78721

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service-Travis County is offering monthly public seminars on Dealing with Drought in the Landscape. Learn ways to help your landscape and garden perform while conserving, preserving and protecting our water resources.

Details: <http://centraltexashorticulture.blogspot.com/2016/01/dealing-with-drought-in-landscape.html>

Cost: \$10/seminar for early registration; \$15/seminar for late or on- site

Register: <https://agriliferegister.tamu.edu/TravisCounty>

Register by Phone: 979- 845- 2604

Contact: Sue Carrasco, 512- 854- 9610 or sacarrasco@ag.tamu.edu

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Jeanne Barker

Mary Sexton

This issue of the *Williamson County Master Gardener Newsletter* was made possible because of the contributions of the following Williamson County Master Gardeners and Interns: Jane Bowman (president), articles by Wayne Rhoden, Wizzie Brown, Gail Williams, Winola VanArtsdalen. , Catherine Nickle & Ann Harmon (co-editors), and Sandra Roberson & Cathy Reidel (proofreaders).

If you would like to contribute to the May 2016 *Williamson County Master Gardener Newsletter*, please send your submission to Ann Harmon at aharmon@sonic.net by May 1, 2016. Questions? aharmon@sonic.net. As you garden, volunteer and learn, please take a moment to share your experiences with other gardeners. Thank you!



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