

Williamson County Master Gardener Journal

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Dedicated to growing with Williamson County

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Inside this issue

Page 2

A Message from the President

Page 3

Fire Ants - A Hot Topic

Page 5

Oak Wilt Warning

Page 6

Painting a Picture at Berry Springs

Page 8

First MG Meeting of the New Year

Page 10

Berry Springs Cleanup

Page 11

Greenhouse Update

Page 12

JMG "Discovery Gardeners"

Page 14

2010 Association Officers

Master Gardeners Start the New Year at Berry Springs



Edgar Neflen, Jeanne Holmes, Susan Blackledge, JoAnne Williams and Bob Whitney plant pecan trees.



Jim Rodgers, Director of WILCO Parks & Recreation, speaks to Master Gardeners.

The President's Corner

Winola Van Artsdalen



What a busy, exciting time for Master Gardeners! As the new year begins, we find ourselves planning for a **greenhouse plant sale** March 12, another at **Market Days** on the Square March 13, and a HUGE event, **Master Gardeners Spring Plant Fair**, at the Extension building April 17. Wow! We will need every one of you to help with these events. If you have a particular area where you want to work, send a note to Annette Banks, awbanks!@suddenlink.net or let me know. WE WANT YOU! We need every single one of you to consider yourself a vital member of the publicity team. Be looking now to choose sites where you can post a flyer, and we will be sending it to you. Without publicity, all our efforts will bring little return. With all of us working together, we can do great things!

Have you tossed aside your New Year's resolutions by now? I have a suggestion for you. Each year I choose one topic I want to study. Previous years included such subjects as native plants, herbs, oak wilt, propagation, soils, and, this year, it is diagnosing plant health. Choose something you want to learn more about, and you may just open your eyes to a whole new world!

While, out in the garden, a few tips with help from a fellow MG, Marlyn Hooper--

Master Gardener Marlyn Hooper shares some gardening tips.

Always make sure plants are well watered before a freeze. Remember, our average last freeze date is mid-month.

Plan your new gardens now in this slow gardening time of year.

Check the leaves of your houseplants for insect problems like scale, mites and mealy bugs.

Flush your potted plants twice with water to get rid of salt build-up. Be sure to empty water from drip tray, or the salt will be pulled back up into plant's soil again. Check to see if plant is root bound and might need to be moved to a larger pot.

February is ideal time to prune fruit trees. Prune roses on Valentine's Day most winters, but you might watch and wait a bit this extra cold year.

Would you believe aphids have already been sighted in our neighborhood? So much for the freeze killing all the bugs! If you find any, wash them away with a jet stream of cold water.

For warm season grasses like ours, wait until lawn is green and growing to apply fertilizer.

And one last tip, "When weeding, the best way to make sure you are removing a weed and not a valuable plant is to pull. If it comes out of the ground easily, it is a valuable plant." --Author Unknown

Fire Ants - A Hot Topic

Clair Hall

On a cold, rainy Monday afternoon in December, approximately 50 Master Gardeners and others gathered in the extension classroom to learn more about an especially HOT topic: Red Imported Fire Ants. Wizzie Brown, a Texas A & M Program Specialist in IPM (Integrated Pest Management) for the Austin Metro Area, gave a fact-filled presentation on the characteristics of the species, its effects on the environment and remedies for its management.

Characteristics

The Red Imported Fire Ant (*Solenopsis invicta*) first made landfall in the 1930's at Mobile, Alabama, by traveling from South America in the cargo hold of a ship. By the 1950's the ants had migrated to Texas. Now there are colonies throughout the state. The typical Texas colony has 100,000 workers with multiple queens, each queen laying up to 1,000 eggs every day. The queens live between 2 and 5 years. All workers in the colony are sterile females and live 6-18 weeks. The winged males die soon after mating. Males are distinguished by their larger thorax (to accommodate wing muscles) and smaller head. Females, on the other hand, have larger abdomens to accommodate reproductive organs.

Ms Brown likened the fire ant mound to an iceberg, part of it above ground and part of it below. Below ground lays the nest chamber, foraging tunnels and tunnels to the water table. It is important to understand this structure because bait will not be picked up if placed on top of the mound. The ants are looking for food at the end of their foraging tunnels, at least 12 to 24 inches from the center. She reminded everyone that although the ants are not visible in summer, they are in the ground waiting for the heat to subside. Later, as they build mounds, cement sidewalks and foundations are favored because these lend heat to the mound.

Effects

Fire ants also favor electrical equipment for an, as yet, undiscovered reason. They have been found in air conditioning units and telephone boxes. Additionally, there is speculation that native quail may have fallen victim to the imported fire ant.

Interestingly, Ms Brown pointed out that the fire ant sting actually creates a sterile pustule. If left alone and not scratched, there is usually no problem. It is the scratching that can lead to infection. Members of the class suggested home remedies such as rubbing alcohol, ammonia, bleach and aloe vera. Research hasn't identified any proven remedy, so Ms Brown suggests individuals use whatever works for them.

Management

Ms Brown discussed three methods of managing fire ants: Individual Mound Treatment, the Two-Step Method and the Once-A-Year Method. **Individual Mound Treatment** includes granules, drenches, dust, bait

and organics. She pointed out that while granules and dusts must be spread over the mound, baits must be spread in a 1 to 2 foot radius.

The **Two Step Method** is perhaps the least toxic and most cost-effective method. Step one is to treat the entire yard with a fire ant bait product annually (or semi-annually). If mounds appear subsequently, the individual mounds should be treated with more product. Bait is made up of defatted corn cob grits coated in soybean oil. It is the oil that contains the active ingredient that kills the ants. The active ingredient may be a metabolic inhibitor, a nerve-active insecticide or an insect growth regulator. If using bait, keep these tips in mind:

- Bait must be fresh, not rancid.
- Outside temperature should be between 70 and 95 degrees F.
- Grass must be dry.
- No rain forecast for 8 hours after application.
- Never mix bait with fertilizer.
- Always use a hand-held spreader (unless the product specifically calls for a push-type spreader.)

The final method is a **Once-A-Year** treatment with a product (such as *Over n Out*) containing fipronil. This type of product is more expensive but should be effective for 12 months. It must be applied early in the year before the ants become active.

Wizzie Brown noted that most “home remedies” for fire ant control (such as flour, sugar and grits) only cause the ants to move their mounds elsewhere. Of all the home remedies studied thus far, citrus oil appears the most effective with a 60% kill rate.

The phorid fly has been introduced in parts of Texas and Florida. A Central America native, the phorid fly attacks the fire ant by laying its egg in the fire ant thorax. The pupae then moves through the ant to its head which eventually falls off. Unfortunately with 100,000 ants in a typical mound, the phorid fly can have only a limited effect.

For more information and additional publications on this topic, visit <http://fireant.tamu.edu>.

STOP THE SPREAD OF OAK WILT!



DO NOT TRIM OAK TREES FEBRUARY THROUGH JUNE!

Management of oak wilt is best accomplished by prevention.

SEAL ALL WOUNDS ON OAK TREES -
ANY SIZE, ANY SEASON, IMMEDIATELY!

(The beetle is the size of a gnat, and has been photographed on a wound within 15 minutes!)

Rule #1: Cut, paint; cut, paint.

Rule #2: If you can't paint it, don't cut it!

*Remember, especially avoid wounding oak trees, including pruning,
from February through June!*

(Think Valentine's Day through Father's Day---Give Dad a break!)

For more information regarding trimming, trenching, and/or tree treatment for oak wilt: Texasoakwilt.org
or Bob Whitney, Williamson County Agri-Life Extension Agent, 512-943-3300 email:
rwhney@ag.tamu.edu

Painting a Picture at Berry Springs Park & Preserve

Susan Blackledge

Berry Springs Park & Preserve is happy to report the undertaking of restoring one of three (3), thirteen (13) acre tracts of prairie at the park. The first 13 acres of prairie was sowed with native wildflowers and grasses. The seed mix was purchased from Native American Seed and is called the “Native Trail Mix” (Item #1811). The mix includes 5 varieties of native grasses and 28 varieties of native wildflowers. Some varieties of seeds were concentrated or added to the mix to create pockets of color to enhance the wildflower show we hope to experience this spring and fall. The natives will provide habitat, nectar and food for many creatures of the wild such as songbirds and butterflies.



Aerial photo of irrigation lines and prairie restoration

The process of the restoration included mowing the prairie in order to successfully spray a systemic broad spectrum herbicide to eradicate Klein grass, KR Bluestem and other undesirables. Next the ground was lightly tilled to prepare the soil to receive the seed and to expose, freeze or dry unwanted roots. A seed broadcaster was used to spread the seed. Afterwards the area was gently dragged to lightly cover the seed. A watchful eye on the weather was kept to make sure work was completed in order to ensure Mother Nature's tears to water the seed was spot on. The results of our efforts will be determined this spring and fall.

Pecan tree planting for the future is part of the prairie development as well. The plan included the digging of a well in 2009 for irrigation and extension of water resources in areas where there were none. Next came the mapping of the location of 103 native pecan trees and their irrigation. Site locations selected for the young pecan trees are along the parks concrete and granite trails in the most northern developed areas and pastures. The trees will shade the trails, provide new varieties of pecans and will extend the existing mature orchard. Four varieties, Pawnee, Caddo, Nacona and Kanza, were selected and planted in groups along the trails. The varieties will be carefully watched to see how they adapt to different soil types in the areas where they were planted.

In the nick of time before the Arctic blast hit on Wednesday, January 6, all 103 trees were planted with the collaborative efforts of WILCO Master Gardeners, WILCO Parks and Recreation staff, Bob Whitney and volunteers. Many thanks to our beloved Williamson County Extension Agent Extraordinaire "Bob Whitney". From start to finish Bob was there for us. We were guided with site selection, tree varieties, and hands on supervision of how to properly plant the trees. This was a successful effort of WILCO's Extension agency giving a helping hand to WILCO PARD for the enhancement of Williamson County. The new trees will provide an outdoor classroom to demonstrate the adaptability of the different varieties.

Plans for the future include two more wildflower/native grass areas of equal size adjacent to the area just planted at Berry Springs. We look forward to a beautiful spring.



Susan Blackledge hard at work

FIRST WCMG MONTHLY MEETING OF THE NEW YEAR

Nancy Blansett

What an outstanding way to start the New Year! An estimated crowd of 80 enthusiastic members filled the meeting room. Sandy Lawrence and John Papich collected dues and updated information sheets. New directory pictures were to be taken after the meeting and also in February.

Paul Lawrence, program chair, started the meeting with announcements and recognitions. New and returning committee chairpersons were introduced.

Programs/Education.....	Paul Lawrence
Communications.....	Clyde Adley
Membership/Volunteer Opportunities.....	John Papich
Awards.....	Norma Beissner
Class Training/Facilitation.....	Jo Anne Dieterich
Jr. Master Gardener Coordinator.....	Juanita James
Fundraising.....	Annette Banks
Greenhouse Manger.....	Brenda McIndoo

New and returning chairpersons are announced.



Members visit before the monthly meeting.

Paul was very pleased to announce that Jane Williamson has stepped forward to be our newsletter editor. Way to go, Jane!

Hank Belopavlovich stepped forward to thank the organization for its support through his recent medical procedures. New certifications were recognized: Mike Harper, Don Markette and Jean Macher-Japco. Two class members, Marlyn Hooper and Hank Belopavlovich were previously certified before the training classes ended.

Wayne Rhoden presented the evening's program, consisting of three parts: a clever Safety quiz, a Building a Raised Bed Garden PowerPoint by Johnny Beck, Bell County, and a Home Greenhouse Construction PowerPoint.

The last portion of the meeting was reserved for installation of officers for 2010. Nancy Blansett officiated, using herbs as the connecting theme. She reminded the membership of their responsibilities to assist, advise and support their board's chosen policies and work with them in common service.

New officers
installed at
monthly
meeting.

Master Gardener Association Officers for 2010



Winola Van Artsdalen, President; Sandra Lawrence, Treasurer; Jeanne Barker, Secretary; Walter Hoke, Vice-president; Wayne Rhoden, past-President

Berry Springs Cleanup Planned

Berry Springs Annual Spring Cleaning is set for Saturday Feb. 27th. Work will begin at 9 a.m. We will meet at the Tonkawa Pavilion located on the top of the hill across from the restrooms. Bring your hand clippers, hand weed claw, loppers, rake, and hoe if you have them. Bring a beverage to carry. This year we are coordinating a Pot Luck luncheon/snacks. If you would like to contribute please contact Elizabeth Grieder at elizabeth.grieder@earthlink.net. She will be organizing food/beverages so we have a nice variety. Every year we have a great time while we work. If you are interested in composting materials bring something to tote the materials home with you. We have trash bags that we can provide.

Volunteer hours are abundant at Berry Springs. We are trying to coordinate projects Tues., Wed., Thurs. 9 a.m. to noon and 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Please call ahead to the park phone @512-930-0040 if you would like to work. Availability of park staff depends on other projects we have going on. Our ultimate goal is to get you to be familiar with the park so you can work independently thus making volunteering more convenient. The park is an excellent outdoor classroom to learn all about gardening, trees, aquatic vegetation, wildflowers, native plants, and invasive plants .

If you have questions please contact Susan Blackledge, Park Manager @ 512-930-0040.

Liz Grieder and
Sandy Lawrence
at last year's
park clean-up



February Greenhouse Update

Brenda McIndoo

There was a bit of a lull at the greenhouse over the holidays as we all enjoyed friends and family and probably too many parties with food and drink. All the plants had been bumped up to 1 gallon pots and fertilized. Lots of cold weather with very little sun meant that we didn't have much work in the greenhouse as we waited for the plants to grow. But during the last couple of weeks there have been a number of days with lots of sun and look at our plants now!

With the plant sale only a few weeks away, the plants are checked each week for any signs of insects or disease, and flowers are cut off and plants are trimmed to encourage fuller growth. Shortly before the sale, the plants will again be fertilized and allowed to bud. Hopefully with more sunshine and some TLC from our great greenhouse workers each week, we'll have a greenhouse overflowing with healthy flowering plants by mid-March.



The next task for our volunteers is to research the information on the plant varieties that will be for sale and to see that each pot has a label with the correct growing information printed on it. Each plant variety will also have a picture and information about the plant for the customers to read as they browse and shop.

There are currently 49 different varieties and approximately 1900 plants in the greenhouse. This includes 4 varieties of EarthKind roses, hardy begonias, different-colored coleus, flowering vines, and many varieties of perennials for this area.

The schedule of greenhouse hours is emailed on a weekly basis and is also included in the calendar on the WCMGA website. We try to take a mid-morning break and enjoy coffee, tea, or hot chocolate and often Teresa Robinson treats us to a baked snack as we socialize and talk about future ideas for the greenhouse. It's a great way to get to know our members, to learn about plant propagation, and to add to the success of the greenhouse. Please give back to the MG organization and join us on either a Wednesday or Saturday work day.

JMG “Discovery Gardeners”

Patsy Bredahl

Our "Discovery Gardeners" of Hutto are still going strong. We have a group of ten Junior Master Gardeners meeting at the Discovery Center of Discovery United Methodist Church of Hutto on Wednesday afternoons from 4:00 - 5:00 pm. These kids are so interested in learning and so energetic that you just can't help feeling young, happy and energetic when they walk in the door!

We also have three mothers that attend the class with their kids. These mothers are so helpful and say they are learning a lot too. It's the first JMG class that I have helped with that a parent has attended. I love it!

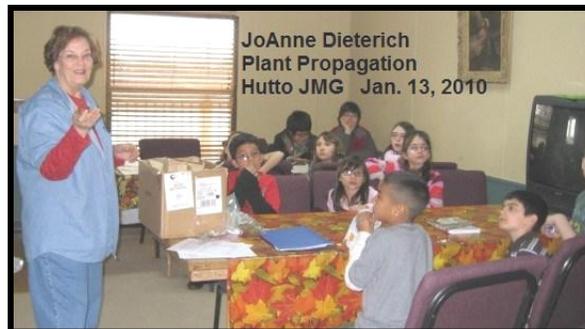
Sherry Miller, an intern but soon to be Master Gardener, as well as Master Gardeners Bonnie Sladek, JoAnne Dieterich, and myself work together to plan and run the classes. I want to thank them so much. I sure couldn't do it without them!

At our first session in 2010, we had the kids divide in groups to design a backyard incorporating not only plants but other features such as basketball courts, playscapes, and barbecue pits. What great ideas they all had incorporating ideas from knowledge they had gained from the class.



JMG class learns from Master Gardeners.

January 13 and 20th, JoAnne and Charlie Dieterich presented classes on propagation. The kids learned about seed and plant propagation. They made seed pots. JoAnne kept their attention so completely that they had a hard time moving from one project to another because they were so interested in each.



Winola Van Artsdalen came to present a second class on botany, January 27. She had presented a class in the fall on monocots and dicots. This time she taught the kids about plant parts. Winola put together a great flip chart showing plant parts which she explained to the kids. Then she had the kids take real flowers to look at the parts. Linda Zazula, a Master Gardener intern, came with Winola to assist and learn. She cut up a strawberry to show the kids the inside and the seeds on the outside. Of course, the kids wanted to eat those strawberry slices. Who

wouldn't! So they each washed their small slice and ate them.

Winola is a retired school teacher. How lucky were her students! Any child having her as a teacher was given a great gift! She had everyone of our JMG kid's undivided attention. In fact, when the hour was up one of our youngest, an eight year old boy said, "It's been an hour already?" Now that is a sign of a good class when you can keep ten kids from 8-11 years so interested that they forget about time.

We are looking forward to three more months of gardening activities with these ten wonderful kids.



Williamson County Master Gardener Officers for 2010

Officers:

Winola Van Artsdalen, President	jimwin@verizon.net	(512) 863-4923
Walter Hoke, Vice-president	swhoke@gmail.com	(512) 869-1948
Jeanne Barker, Secretary	jubarker@yahoo.com	(512) 608-1296
Sandra Lawrence, Treasurer	swlawrence@austin.rr.com	(512) 351-9678
Wayne Rhoden, Immediate Past President	mgardener@suddenlink	(512) 869-8016

Standing Committees/Chairpersons:

Programs/Education	Paul Lawrence	pwlawrence@austin.rr.com	(512) 351-9678
Communications	Clyde Adley	cadley+mg@gmail.com	(512) 918-8024
Membership/Volunteer Opportunities	John Papich	texasjays@yahoo.com	(512) 863-4098
Awards	Norma Beissner	norma@beissner.org	(512) 535-6584
Class Training/ Facilitation	JoAnne Dieterich	crdieterich@yahoo.com	(512) 778-6690
JMG Coordinator	Juanita James	jjames20@sbcglobal.net	(512) 341-7116
Fund Raising	Annette Banks	awbanks@suddenlink.net	(512) 868-8223
Greenhouse Manager	Brenda McIndoo	browndog1986@verizon.net	(512) 868-9212

Monthly Meetings

Williamson County Master Gardeners hold monthly meetings at the Williamson County Extension Office, 3151 SE Innerloop Road, Suite A, Georgetown on the second Monday of each month at 6:30pm. Master Gardeners and the public are welcome to attend.

Master Gardeners Learn with Field Experiences

Learning is an integral part of being a Master Gardener, and nothing beats hands-on experience. Planned field trips help Master Gardeners become more knowledgeable.

An excursion is planned for 2:00 pm, February 18 to Joss Growers. Joss Growers, a family-owned wholesale nursery, is located off Highway 29 between Georgetown and Taylor. The nursery specializes in new plant trends and native and drought tolerant plants. Members will meet in the Extension office parking area and carpool to the nursery. If you are interested in visiting Joss Growers, please contact Teresa Robinson as parking is limited at the nursery.

Additional field trips are being planned. Teresa has done an excellent job of setting up field experiences but would like help with ideas of other sites to visit. Anyone with an idea for a field trip within a 100-mile radius of our area can contact Teresa Robinson at terobin@suddenlink.net.

Newsletter Submissions

Thank you to those Master Gardeners who submitted articles, pictures, and ideas for this newsletter issue. If you would like to contribute to the *Williamson County Master Gardener Journal*, please send your submissions to Jane Williamson at jawilliamson516@yahoo.com by the 25th of the month. As you garden, volunteer and learn, take a moment to share with other gardeners.

