

Williamson County Master Gardener Journal

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Kids Haul Rocks and Have Fun With the Master Gardeners!



"Wildflower seeding at Tippet School was an awesome experience. As each class came for their contributed time and duty, their energy level seemed equal to the task to be accomplished. With a good rain the efforts will be worth the planning and energy expended. I look forward to participated in future projects at this school. Thanks to all who helped," Grace Bulgerin. See the full story beginning on page 12.

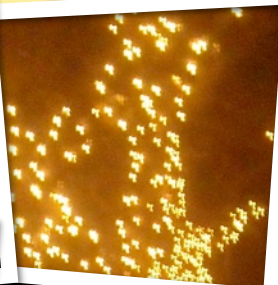


Wayne Rhoden received 2008 Texas Recreation Parks & Recreation Society (TRAPS) Region 5/7 Individual, Conservation, Service Club, and Commercial Award. Left to right, County Judge Dan A. Gattis, Wayne Rhoden, Jim Rogers, Susan Blackledge and Commissioner Valerie Covey.



What A Party!

WCMG 2009
Awards Dinner



From Bob's Blog

Some Williamson County Master Gardeners may not know that our County Extension Agent, Bob Whitney, has a web log ("blog," sort of an internet diary) at <http://theagriculturalist.blogspot.com/> Here are some recent highlights:

Monday, December 8, 2008

Upcoming Events to Note:

Beltwide Cotton Conference in San Antonio January 5-8. This is the largest cotton conference in the world and well worth attending considering how close it is.

Central Texas Cow Calf Clinic to be held at the Milano Livestock Auction in Milano, Texas.

The clinic will be held on January 9 starting at 9 am and lasting till 3 pm. Excellent information for beef producers on forages and cattle.

Tree Pruning and Training Seminar to be held on January 12 at 6 pm at the Extension meeting room at 3151 SE Inner Loop in Georgetown.

This is a Williamson County Master Gardener sponsored program featuring Rob Grotty with the Texas Forest Service. Rob will also cover information on Oak Wilt Disease.

Vegetable Production Shortcourse to be held at the Williamson County Grain meeting room in Taylor, Texas on January 22. The meeting will start at 9 a.m. and continue through lunch. 2 pesticide credits will be offered.

On January 28 the Professional Grounds Conference will be held in Belton Texas at the Bell County Expo Center. This is a fantastic conference with presentations on turf, landscape plants, trees, irrigation and School IPM. The conference starts at 8 am and goes till 3 pm and includes a trade show. 5 CEU's will be offered.

Taking Care of Poinsettias

Although the poinsettia is among the most traditional symbols of the Christmas season, it was cultivated by the Aztecs of Mexico long before the introduction of Christianity to the Western Hemisphere.

Poinsettias were first introduced into the United States in 1825 by Joel Robert Poinsett. While serving as the first U.S. ambassador to Mexico, he had occasion to visit Taxco, south of Mexico City, where poinsettias grow wild on the hill-sides. Poinsett, a botanist when he wasn't a poli-

tician, had some plants sent to his home in Greenville, South Carolina. After supplying his greenhouses, Poinsett also distributed plants to various botanical gardens and to some friends including John Bartram of Philadelphia. John Bartram gave them to a nurseryman friend, Robert Buist, who saw the potential for commercial sales and began production of what became the largest greenhouse crop grown in the U.S.

Poinsettias are normally grown for sale at Christmas time but by control of photoperiod and temperature they can flower almost any time. Many who buy plants want to keep them from year to year and this is a good thing, but there are some problems.

Poinsettias are quite sensitive to light. They need at least 11 hours and 45 minutes of darkness to cause flower bud initiation and you can get a quicker response if the hours are increased to 14 or 15. The problem is that exposures of light even as low as less than 2 foot-candles will nullify the effect of darkness. Homeowners who try to grow poinsettias from year to year and grow them indoors will unfortunately discover that common house lights at night will not allow flower initiation.

The other problem homeowners have growing flowering poinsettias is temperature. Poinsettias require night temperatures of 62-64 degrees F to ensure the most rapid development under the correct photoperiods in late September and October. Most homes are kept at 68 F or better and without low temperatures the plants just keep growing leaves and not flowers. After 10-14 days of the correct photoperiod and temperature you can then raise the temperature to 67-68° to favor bract development.

Why can't we keep these wonderful plants and have flowers every year? I think you can see that it is not the plant but the way we try to grow the plant that prevents flowering.

Sunday, December 21, 2008

Pecan Varieties: Where Do They Come From?

In the preface to Dr. Tommy Thompson's book entitled *Pecan Cultivars - Past and Present*, he says there are over 1,000 pecan cultivars (varieties) and he documents 1,012 in his book plus 44 hican cultivars. Of all these cultivars we only

truly know the parentage, at least one parent, of 156 cultivars leaving all the others to be called natives or seedlings. Needless to say, we don't know a lot about the pecans we so dearly love to eat and grow.

Basically there are three categories used currently to identify pecan cultivars. The first is Native Cultivars. These trees and their resultant nuts have by chance been planted by flood waters, birds, squirrels, etc. and have grown up and flourished in the environment in which they grew. Natives are by no means always small and hard shelled, in fact we have several named varieties today that started out as just chance seedlings known as natives. Consider the Burkett pecan tree grown throughout Texas; it started as a single tree found in Callahan County. There are literally hundreds of named cultivars that started out as native pecans but over time the person who owned the tree named them and then propagated them because they were good pecans. Most of this naming of natives happened prior to 1920. Since then we have used controlled crosses.

The second category of pecans is Seedlings. These pecans originate from a nut planted by man, where only one or neither parent is known. The planted nut could be from a native or an improved cultivar, but when it was planted they really didn't know what kind of tree or pecan that it would make. For instance, the Western variety is one of the largest planted pecan varieties in West Texas and New Mexico/ It is a San Saba seedling, meaning it was a nut planted from a San Saba pecan tree by E.E. Risien. We know that the female parent is a San Saba pecan but we don't know where the male pollen came from so it is called a seedling. Schley and Mahan are both like this, too, where only one parent is known. In some cases we don't even know what one of the parents is but it was planted by man from a favorite native pecan tree and grew up to be good trees such as Stuart or Success.

The last category of pecans is Pedigreed Cultivars. This category is made up of pecans where both parents are known because some form of pollination control was used in producing the seed nut. Basically, the female nutlets are covered so that no pollen can get to the pistillate flower cluster and then when it is receptive male

pollen from another tree is brought over and fertilizes the nutlet. This cross results in a nut with the genes from two identified cultivars. This nut is planted and grows up into a tree and if the nuts from this tree are of exceptional quality and the tree doesn't suffer from any problems then the nut may be released with an official name.

This may sound like an easy process but it is anything but easy. It takes years to know if a cross will be of the quality growers need and expect. For instance many pecan varieties can do extremely well as young trees, such as Cherokee, but as they get older their bad qualities begin to show up such as overbearing, dark kernels, and poorly filled nuts. Pecan breeders don't know this until they grow the trees 20 years or more. Basically the process involves making lots of crosses between the two varieties so that there are lots of nuts produced from the same two parents. These nuts are planted and grown until a fruiting bud or limb can be taken from the small tree and placed on a large tree. This step bypasses the long process of growing a small tree till it produces nuts. These grafted or budded limbs are carefully marked with the number of each tree that they came from and then when it produces nuts they are evaluated for quality and size. Of all the crosses with the same parents there may be only one or two that have good nut quality, but if they do, then those trees that did make the first hurdle are further evaluated for production.

Just imagine how hard it is to know which cultivars to cross! There are trillions of possibilities and even if you identify a cross that seems like it might be good you have to make hundreds of crosses of those two parents before you might get one that works. For instance Forkert and Jackson are full siblings, same parents crossed at the same time. Forkert is considered a commercial variety with 49 nuts per pound and grading 62% kernel - excellent. Jackson on the other hand has 38 nuts per pound meaning it is a bigger pecan but it only grades 52% kernel. The Jackson tree is considered a "trash" tree producing "trash" nuts because they're not filled out. These two trees are from the same parents but totally different. This difference is what makes pecan breeding so very hard and time consuming.

Moving House Plants Indoors Can Create Problems

The recent cold weather has forced all of us to bring our houseplants inside and many times when the house plants come inside so do the problems. My wife has already had a problem on her African violets with citrus mealy bug insects and I'm sure there will be some other aphids appear on the other porch plants that are now houseplants. Anytime we put plants outside for the warm months they do very well but they also have an opportunity to pick up many insect problems. Outside predators, beneficial diseases, and cultural practices like a good rain or water shower do a good job keeping the harmful bugs from being a problem.

Once inside though, these pests can grow and multiply quickly in a warm environment free from disturbance. Here is a list of major house plant insects and signs of damage to look for. Aphids are tiny soft bodied insects that are from lime green to yellow in color. They suck the plant juices through a piercing sucking mouthpart. The damage will show up as yellow, discolored leaves and you can usually find the insects on the new growth. Taking the plant outdoors on a warm day and spraying with strong blasts of water works well or you can use a spray of water and vinegar on a regular basis. A pyrethrin based insecticide is the safest chemical control.

Mites are a particularly bad problem if you get them. These very tiny insects on the undersides of leaves will suck out the chlorophyll leaving white spots on the leaf surface. They are hard to control, but strong water sprays on a regular basis do help. I use products containing Neem but check labels for the mention of spider mites before purchasing an insecticide.

Snails and slugs love house plants because we usually keep the soil moist and the pot full of dead leaves. You can know if you have problems by the characteristic silvery streaks left on leaves from their travels. The best method of control is hand picking them off. You can buy a prepared slug bait or use diatomaceous earth or even beer in a lid. They're heavy drinkers!

Mealybugs are beautiful insects, unfortunately they are harmful. Mealybugs look like very tiny balls of cotton. They move very slowly and suck out plant juices at the stems and leaf bases

which cause wilting. Mealybugs can be dabbed with a Q-tip dipped in alcohol or sprayed with citrus oil, or neem oil. Diatomaceous earth can be spread on the leaf and stem surface.

Scale insects can be seen as small bumps on the surface of the stem. They really look natural until sufficient numbers are reached so that you notice them. The first stage of scale insects are called crawlers when they hatch from the egg. These crawlers move along the stem until they locate a good location to feed and then begin to secrete wax in tufts around their body. These waxy tufts form the "scale appearance" that resembles the bump on a stem. Scale is somewhat hard to control because this wax forms a fairly good barrier to other insect predators and to some insecticides. Using an oil based spray like citrus oil will smother the scale giving good control. Be careful anytime you use an oil based spray because they can be harmful to the plant if the oil is too heavy.

Have you seen small gnats flying in the house? This can be a common problem with house plants. Fungus gnats are small flies that are blackish with long legs. Since they're flies, they only have two wings. The larvae are maggot-like and live in the soil of potted plants; these are the real problem since they eat plant roots. Overwatering may be the main problem and a simple way to get rid of the gnats is to reduce the water supplied to the plant by only watering the plant when the soil is dry. Reducing the water supply will get rid of the larvae and so will eventually reduce the adult gnats seen flying around. There is no good way to get rid of the adults that are already present.

One last house plant problem is not insect related at all. Remember that heaters do a great job protecting from the cold but they also dry out the air. Keeping house plants away from vents and also spraying with water occasionally will keep them much healthier. Another trick is to buy a spray form of anti-transpirant to keep the leaf from releasing too much moisture in the dry winter time.

Mistletoe: Friend or Foe?

Talking about mistletoe (*Phoradendron sp.*) this time of year usually reminds of the Christmas season, presents, stealing a kiss, etc. but unfortunately that is all the pleasurable thoughts

most have of mistletoe because it is a parasite for trees all the rest of the year.

A parasite is an organism that derives its survival from another living entity. In this case mistletoe is the parasite and trees are the living entity on which it must survive. In this area we see most of the mistletoe on American elm, cedar elm, hackberry, and blackjack oak. For some reason these trees seem to be easy hosts for mistletoe to grow in. Mistletoe is dependent on the host tree for all water and dissolved minerals. It is however, a chlorophyll containing plant which manufactures the sugars and starches needed in its growth and development.

Mistletoe stems bear conspicuous green, leathery leaves which persist for several seasons. Nutrients and water are supplied from an absorbing system called haustoria which develop in the bark and wood of the host tree. Flowers are born in the leaf axil and produce the familiar, nearly clear, whitish berries in late fall and winter. These berries are very poisonous to humans so don't let children play with mistletoe.

Within the tough outer coat of the berry is a single seed which is embedded in a sticky pulp. Birds feed on this sticky pulp and discard the seeds which stick to their bills, feet or other parts of the body. In this way the seeds are carried to other trees or other branches of the same tree and deposited on the bark. When conditions are right the seeds germinate send-

ing root-like structures into the host plant and another parasite is developed.

There are no sure-fire ways to control mistletoe. You can break it off but it will eventually grow back. It is recommended that you cut a limb at least 12 inches past the mistletoe to insure that you get all the roots. This of course could really make your tree look bare if you take all the mistletoe out. There are no chemical controls that are currently effective. Weed or brush killers are not recommended because they can move the chemical into the tree through the mistletoe. Mistletoe seldom kills a tree, but it can weaken its host so that it becomes infected with other tree diseases. Having said this, the potential that mistletoe will severely harm a tree is minimal.

Lichens

I get calls all the time about lichens on trees and the supposed harm they are doing. Lichens are the leafy, grey-green looking growths that appear on the bark of trees. Lichens are an example of a symbiotic relationship between algae and certain fungi and as such are capable of producing their own food. The effect of lichens on a tree are only slightly detrimental, owing mostly to their appearance which can be "crusty" looking. These are not parasites like mistletoe but are called epiphytes since they derive their nutrition from the air and not from the plant they grow on. Lichens can indicate a problem with the tree they are growing on. They need sunlight to grow so it may indicate a thin or thinning, unhealthy tree but not because of the lichens. If you still insist on taking them out then spray your tree with copper compounds which are deadly to fungi and algae.

Monday, December 29, 2008

Lessons to Learn from the Drought

I received an article from the Noble Foundation that discusses the three lessons we should learn from the drought... or should I say should have learned from the drought. The rains in August/September helped a little but unfortunately our problems continue and will continue mostly as a result of these three lessons.

Number one, "with no plan in place, producers hoped for the best then waited too long to react." Waiting led to a severe depletion of forage resources and in most cases damaged the very resource that can help see us through a drought. Because there was no plan or even an early discussion of worst case scenarios this led to severe culling in August. In most cases producers would say to me, "you don't understand, I have been building up my herd for years and I can't sell them now." Remember that you not only build your herd but you build your range and pastures. As we have overgrazed the bare spots are now being invaded by noxious weeds like nightshade, broomweed, and ragweed and it will take years to recover these areas. No one would suggest selling all the animals but as was said by many in the drought of 2005, you should only plan for a drought by only using 70% of your potential forage resources in any one year.

Number two, "too often this year, the focus has been on figuring out how to rough them through" rather than maintaining adequate body condition (BCS 5). Producers that use palpation as a way to determine pregnancy and ultimately cow culling are seeing much lower conception rates; in fact, some might say disastrous! As cow condition slips, cows don't breed or they lose their calves. Only a bred cow has a chance to pay off their drought debt at some point in their lifetime. You must keep your cows in Body Condition Score "5" year round or expect to see reproduction go south. Number 3, "emergency feeding and marketing were, and continue to be, nightmares in herds with year round calving." When you are in supplementation or even full feeding situations like we are in, it is impossible to economically or efficiently feed dry cows and nursing cows together. They have completely different nutritional needs. Add in the problem of calf ages all over the place and weaning/marketing is even more messed up. Define your breeding season and stick to it. In this area spring calving, fall weaning fits our forage base but whatever time you choose **STICK** to it.



LBJWC

Greenhouse Update—December 28, 2008

Duffy Banfield

There has been much activity in our greenhouse. It has been a very positive experience for all of those that are involved in this WCMGA project. We have done everything from cleaning, sweeping soil from the floor, hosing down the floor, organizing, propagating, graduating our “babies” from 4” pots to the one gallon pots, spraying for those pesky gnats. And, thanks to all who were willing to do the boring task of washing all the pots... standing on concrete for several hours and running a brush over the pots to clean them and then rinse them...whew!!!! We have a great team and no one ever complains. Bob Whitney joined us recently and he earned his keep, didn't you Bob? You are a positive clamp in our world. Thanks to you and Wayne for delivering the soil and one gallon pots.

We have propagated over forty-one different species of Texas native and adapted plants. Most have all been graduated to the one gallon pots. Our Earth-kind roses are flourishing!!!! These roses are just beautiful specimens. I was telling my Dad about them at Christmas and he handed me a “big bill” to buy one of every kind. I also think we need to have a plant sale for the teachers at Georgetown High School before the community plant sales. That event was very profitable last year and it is a good-will thing. We will be very selective from here on out as to the plants that we will graduate. We have at least three tables of four-inch pots of cuttings that have been propagated and we will choose only the best of the rest to graduate into the one gallon pots. What is left we can donate to any gardening projects in Williamson County...churches, schools, Berry Springs, etc.

Norma Beissner did a lay-out of the greenhouse...table count, outside perennial bed,

etc. Jeanne Holmes and Teresa Robinson counted all the plants in one gallon pots on one table...one hundred and sixty-four per table. As of now, we have 1315 in one gallon pots. We also have many one gallon pots that are on the floor of the greenhouse. My plan is to move these from the floor to a table to make handling easier.

OK...this is the serious part. These plants will be fertilized, watered, and nurtured in anticipation of our 2009 Spring plant sales. Please help with these activities when you can. I know some of you have your greenhouse hours in but we can always use another opinion/idea. If you can't be at the greenhouse, just send me an e-mail with your idea/s. We will need everyone's help as these plant sales become a reality. It is a money-maker for the WCMGA and an opportunity to expose our expertise to the community. The plant sales are so much fun. So, plant it in your mind that we will need help hauling the plants to the sales, plant cashiers, information givers, booth set-up, and just having fun while we enrich our community with our knowledge and strength in the gardening world.

We will need tables for our plants, some expertise on arranging the plants in our booth, and any other ideas that will make us “shiny.” We are planning a greenhouse meeting for everyone sometime in January. We will announce the date/time/place well in advance. We want you to bring your ideas and together, we can all make this a huge success. I will go the extra mile to make sure everyone is happy and having fun in the greenhouse and that our plant sales have merit...oh no..I meant to say make money!!!!

Thanks to Walter Hoke for installing the water hose “wrappers.” It is great to have a place to wrap the hoses so that they do not become a hazard. He also donated a soaker hose for the outdoor perennial bed. Once we trim that all back, we will place the hose so that all we have to do is plug in the water. Also, Teresa Robinson decided that we needed a first aid kit (I wanted a thirst aid kit!!!) so I went to Wal-Mart today and we have a first class first aid kit...total cost to us was \$9.42.

Grace Bryce took some recent greenhouse photos (action photos) but I do not know how to take them from a CD to e-mail them to Christine. Thanks to Grace for doing this. Sorry I don't know how to do the rest.

Grace Bryce and Jane Williamson—thanks to you both—for the ingenious/innovative signage you did for the greenhouse. Even if you don't want to or have time to volunteer right now, please stop by and take a look.....just visit. The signage is so cool and the High School let Grace and Jane use their laminator so the signs are water-proof. We always have the support of Paul—the grounds maintenance engineer. He is so helpful and always does it with a smile.

Jared and Walter have offered to power-wash the greenhouse after all the graduating into one gallon pots is done. It will make the greenhouse look “pristine” when the teachers come in to buy big!! Jared and Walter, we can work together to plan the day...thanks!!

What is more valuable than Gold? Diamonds. Than Diamonds? My friends at WCMGA...

Thanks to all of you,
Duffy Banfield

Master Gardeners Field Trip

Gardeners Conference

Clyde Adley

The 2008 Central Texas Gardeners Conference was hosted at the Texas Disposal Systems site in Buda, Texas on November 8th. The Master Gardeners of Comal, Guadalupe, Hays, and Travis Counties sponsored the conference.

The speakers this year were Judy Barrett, "Heirloom Annuals and Vegetables: Oldies and Goodies;" David Will, "Naturalizing Bulbs;" Dr. William C. Welch, "The Roots of our Gardens;" Dr. Tina Cade, "Elements and Principals of Landscape Design;" and Sean Watson, "Collecting and Saving Seeds."

Judy Barrett is the founding editor and publisher of *Home Grown, Good Sense Organic Gardening for Texas*. She discussed heirloom plants including petunias, vegetable varieties available and some seed sources. She also suggested some unusual varieties that work well in the garden, such as banana cantaloupe. Her presentation was accompanied by some striking photographs from her own garden, including a variety of Orange Cosmos she planted as an experiment to see if they would work in her area. They thrived. Seeds were available at the conference with instructions to "plant in spring and stand back."

David Will's presentation on heritage bulbs included suggestions for the three best daffodils—Fortune, Carlton, and Unsurpassable. He also suggested bulbs for different areas of the yard and suggested where they would perform best, such as planting amaryllis on the north side of the house at the roof drip line. Some interesting options suggested were planting gilea under oaks where they will bloom in the shade, and over-seeding St. Augustine grass with muscari, also known as blue bottles or grape hyacinth. The muscari will keep the lawn area looking green in winter, and provide blooms in early spring if you don't mow the grass early. He suggested Scott Ogden's book *Garden Bulbs for the South* as a good reference, and vendors were present to supply the bulbs he mentioned in his talk... if you got to the table quickly.

There was a tour of the facility, home to several species of exotic animals (right), the active landfill area, and the compost rows with an explanation of how they are handled. The compost is maintained so that it remains quite hot, with machines to turn the compost that also cause the decomposable plastic bags to rise to the surface so they can be cycled through the process to break down more quickly and completely. The recycling center ended the tour, with descriptions of plans for the near future to improve the process. The tour was limited to 50 people, and quite good, worth arriving early to get a ticket.

The day ended with an interactive session by Sean Watson from the Lady Bird Johnson Center. He discussed collecting seed throughout the state, and some of the processes involved to clean seeds. Some tips were given on collecting seed from your own garden, as well as some favorite heirloom vegetable varieties and resources.

Suggested Resources (from Judy Barrett and Sean Watson combined): Rene's Garden Seeds, Sustainable Food Center in Austin, Seed Saver Exchange (seedsavers.org), Natural Gardener, Native Seed Search - based out of New Mexico, Gardens, Barton Spring Nursery.

WILLIAMSON COUNTY MASTER GARDENER JOURNAL



Advanced Training Opportunities

Just a few of the many places to look for advanced training opportunities. Remember to check out local clubs and associations like the NPSOT. These groups have monthly meetings, usually with a speaker. Check local newspaper listings for upcoming events and if you are not sure if it will count just contact one of the Board members for advice. The Go Native U classes usually involve a fee but most associations and clubs are free or accept donations.

GO NATIVE U

Go Native U is an informal education program designed to teach adults about the **sustainable use and conservation of native wildflowers, plants and landscapes**. It is a great way to get advanced training while you learn about the benefits of native plants in a fun and interactive environment. Most classes are held at the Wildflower Center's beautiful campus in south Austin. I have included a brief outline of most of the classes below but please go to <http://www.wildflower.org/gonativeu/> for more information and sign-up details.

Certificate in Native Plant Gardening

Native Plant Gardening: Design (Class 1) - Proper design will help ensure a successful native plant garden. In this class you will learn how to create a list of goals for your landscape, analyze your site (soils, light, water, drainage, slope, traffic patterns, neighboring conditions, etc.) and perform an inventory of existing features. You will also learn about base maps (what they are and how to create and use them) and designing a garden layout and conceptual plan. We will also discuss how to incorporate existing plants and other features into a fresh design and how to find resources or professional assistance. To further develop your landscape plan, consider special topic, Design Studio for Your Native Plant Garden, upon completion of this class. **Plants (Classes 2 & 3)** - Choosing the right native plants for your garden is both art and science. In these two classes you will learn about common and botanical names, basic garden ecology, plant requirements, and how to create a planting plan. We will also introduce native plants that will thrive in your garden and learn their characteristics. **Installation (Class 4)** Now that you have plants and a plan, you are ready to install your native plant garden. In this class we will cover site preparation (clearing, weeds and weed management, soil additives, earthworks, drainage), irrigation, best planting times and techniques, and mulches and mulch application. Where to go for additional resources and professional assistance will also be covered. **Maintenance (Class 5)** - A common misconception about native plants is that once they are in the ground they require no maintenance. Topics will include basic plant morphology and physiology, selecting the right tools for the job, watering guidelines and water conservation, fertilizers, soil additives, mulches, pruning, trimming, mowing, grooming, cold and heat protection, gardening hazards and gardener's health. **Pests (Class 6)** - This class will introduce you to native plant diseases, garden pests, insects and weeds. In addition, you will learn about beneficial insects and their interaction with pests as an important part of understanding the ecological systems of our gardens. Topics will include basic identification, determination of threat to the garden and environment, integrated pest management, treatment and safety. Proper plant cultivation techniques to reduce pests and where to go for resources and assistance will also be covered. (For a certificate of merit in native plant gardening, participants must complete the entire sequence of six classes).

Certificate in Sustainable Landscapes

Sustainable Landscapes: In this **introduction (Class 1)**, you will learn how landscape practices on a small scale at your home or office can help make positive change in the environment and support local and global sustainability efforts. The class will cover broad, long-term sustainability goals for small sites and will review strategies and resources you can take home and begin using immediately. Techniques for homeowners to make use of **Water (Class 2)** on-site and imitate natural water cycling. These include filtering water through raingardens, bioswales and pervious paving, capturing and re-using water on your site through rainwater harvesting, and collecting air conditioner condensate and "graywater" from indoor sources. These methods are beneficial on both small and large sites. They help retain rainwater and prevent runoff, and reduce your use of clean, drinking water for landscape irrigation. The important role **soil (Class 3)** plays in a sustainable landscape. Topics will include creating a healthy rooting environment for plants and re-use of yard waste as compost/soil amendments to improve soil health. These methods reduce the need for resources such as fertilizers and irrigation and help prevent landscape trimmings from entering the municipal waste stream. In **Plants (Class 4)** we will discuss techniques to maximize the benefits of vegetation to small-scale sites. Discussions will include strategic plant selection to reduce home energy costs, the role of vegetation in removing pollutants and reducing flooding, and opportunities to reap the physical, mental, and social benefits of nature. **Materials (Class 5)** are a necessary component of almost every landscape project and should be considered when thinking about sustainability. Proper selection and use of materials can help reduce landfill volumes and greenhouse gas emissions and help minimize the urban heat island effect. In this session will discuss the important components of materials selection and opportunities to reduce consumables, reuse and recycle and minimize waste. (For a certificate of merit in sustainable landscapes, participants must complete the entire sequence of five classes).

SPECIAL TOPICS

Gardeners and Global Warming—This pilot class will educate gardeners about the impacts of global warming, and how they can take actions in their gardens, homes, and communities to limit those impacts. It is based on the National Wildlife Federation's Gardener's Guide to Global Warming, and will provide relevant information for gardeners in the this region. Course is free but registration restricted to those with Resident Status.

The Botany of Food Plants—Learn about how the plant world is organized by learning about the plant taxonomy and morphology of food and medicinal plants. We will explore the origins, history, wild ancestry, domestication, and lore of the major groups of food plants. You will meet the local native Texas cousins of these plants and develop an appreciation for grocery store botany.

Botanical Adventures with Austin's Native Plants—Learn the science and lore about the native plants of Central Texas in a series of field trips around Austin. You will learn how to recognize and identify wildflowers and other native plants and learn which plants are edible or useful. In the initial classroom meeting, held at the LBJWC, you will get a basic botanical background, including how to know what characters to use in plant identification. Then, we'll head out to the field to various parts of Austin, and apply our knowledge. Hiking/walking shoes and outdoor clothing recommended. Expect light to moderate walking with occasional uneven levels. Cate Bergman has a Master's degree in plant biology from UT, has studied botany in Texas and North Carolina for 10 years, and has led numerous groups on native and edible plant walks.

Floral Arrangements with Native Plants—Bring your wildflowers inside and expand your appreciation of native plants by learning the basics of how to collect, prepare, and arrange them. You will have the opportunity to create a floral design during class. Wildflowers will be supplied by the Center.

Design Studio for Your Native Plant Garden—Building upon the introductory design class on how to design your native plant garden, this course will allow you to take the principles and skills acquired and spend time applying them in a studio environment. The majority of the class time will be spent drawing while the instructor will be individually assisting you throughout the day. After the first class you will be asked to continue working on your concepts and develop them further for the next meeting. The second class will begin with an informal sharing session to respond to everyone's process and learn from one another. Then, the rest of the day again will be focused on producing drawings that continue to investigate your design process in order to have a clear design when you finish.

Other classes can be found at several local nurseries:

The Natural Gardener has classes on Saturday mornings at 10:00 a.m. unless otherwise specified. Classes are subject to change. Please call first to confirm. Classes are held outdoors so please dress for the weather. Seating is limited - you are welcome to bring your own chair! <http://www.naturalgardeneraustin.com/weekly/index.html>

January 10: Jim Kamas, Texas A&M University Asst. Professor and Extension Fruit Specialist, presents "Growing Fruits, Nuts, and Berries in Central Texas." This will be Jim's seventh year presenting his very popular workshop here on fruits, nuts, and berries. Jim covers all aspects of home orchard production, from variety selection to pruning and harvesting. He is the Central Texas specialist, having studied and worked in horticulture since his days at Texas A&M University in the late 1970's. There is so much information to cover; this class is approximately two hours long.

January 17: Roger Igo, Groundsmanager, and Pamela (Sweetpea) Hoover, Assistant Groundsmanager of the Natural Gardener, present "Pruning Grape Vines." For the best health and productivity, grapes require an intricate pruning and training program. Come learn the proper timing and techniques for pruning these luscious food-bearing plants and shop for the proper grape varieties for our area.

Omas Garden Pflanzen, Kelleen has seminars Saturday at 10:00 am <http://www.omasgartenpflanzen.com/seminars.htm>

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

<http://www.hillcountrywatergardens.com/seminars.html>

<http://www.forevergardens.net/>

The Austin American Statesman publishes a list of seminars and events once in the spring and again in the Fall. Check out there Saturday gardening calendar (also available on line).

Texas Gardener's Seeds also has upcoming events: <http://www.texasgardener.com/newsletters/>

Texas Master Gardener Association is another source: <http://www.texasmastergardeners.com/>

New Year's Resolutions from Native Plant Gardeners

Happy New Year! And along with the New Year come good intentions. I spoke with two of the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center's long-time gardens volunteers, Kelly Cunny and Brigid Larson, and here is their Top Ten Resolutions list, which will surely keep them engaged this year.

As well as nurture a backyard wildlife habitat, provide water for feathered friends and collect rainwater. We resolve to

1. Keep our tools and gear clean and in working order (although adamantly NOT organized — we want to be realistic in our expectations)!

2. Share native plants from our gardens with neighbors we don't know. We can't think of a better icebreaker.

3. Earn Wildlife Habitat Certification from the National Wildlife Federation. (For information, go to:
<http://www.nwf.org/backyard/>).

4. Everywhere we go, visit many, many public gardens such as the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. (Free admission in January! See www.wildflower.org for details.)

5. Volunteer at a public garden. We love gardening, of course, but a variety of organizations offer many different opportunities, from working in the gift store to leading tours or working with children. It's all fun!

6. Cut flowers from the garden to bring to a friend.

7. Maintain a birdbath even in winter, mindful to always keep it full and clean.

8. Join a local garden club.

9. Be more environmentally sensitive gardeners by starting a compost pile, returning plastic pots to a receptive nursery, turning Christmas trees into mulch, installing rain barrels, and avoiding planting invasive species in our gardens.

10. Introduce a child to the wonders of nature.

For more information about Texas native plants, visit the Wildflower Center's website at: www.wildflower.org.

About the author: Andrea DeLong-Amaya is the Director of Horticulture at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin.

Taken from the Neil Sperry Website

(<http://www.neilsperry.com/articles/2008/12/16/wild-about-texas.html>)

Do you have any gardening New Year Resolutions to share? I do! I intend to have more fun in the garden and volunteer more...away from the computer! What' yours?



Junior Master Gardener Specialist Training 2009

Come join **Bexar County Master Gardeners** in beautiful San Antonio, Texas on *Wednesday, February 25 through noon Friday, February 27*, to learn new ideas and techniques that will help you implement or grow effective youth gardening programs in your school class, JMG® club, after-school program, 4-H youth gardening project, home school or any group of interested young gardeners.

Hector J. Hernandez
Youth Gardening Coordinator
Texas AgriLife Extension Service
3355 Cherry Ridge Drive, Suite 208
San Antonio, TX 78230-4018
(210) 467-6575, Fax (210) 366-0535
hjhernandez@ag.tamu.edu

Submit registration form along with personal check or money order to the hosting facilitator:

Bexar County Master Gardeners
Attn: Angel Torres
3355 Cherry Ridge Drive, Suite 212
San Antonio, TX 78230-4818
(210) 467-6575
E-mail: matorres@ag.tamu.edu

[Information 1](#)
[Information 2](#)
[Registration](#)

January 10, Travis County Master Gardeners Association

Rainwater Harvesting and Waterwise Gardening

January 10, 2009, 10am- Noon

Zilker Botanic Garden

Come enjoy a free seminar on capturing rainwater and lowering water usage in your landscape. This session will cover all the basics of building a non-potable rainwater harvesting system. In addition, learn how to design beautiful gardens designed for lower water usage. Don't be misinformed, xeriscaping is not "zero-scaping" Vendors representing tank and gutter companies will be available to answer specific questions. City of Austin representatives will be available to answer rainbarrel, permit and rebate questions. This seminar is presented by the Travis County Master Gardeners Association, a volunteer arm of the Texas A&M and Travis County AgriLife Extension Service. For more details, see <http://www.tcmastergardeners.org>

A Master Gardener Explains

Ginkgo Biloba Tree

Annette Banks

If you want to set your landscaping apart, you may want to consider planting a ginkgo tree. You will not find the ginkgo on the recommended listing for Williamson County trees, but eventually, your tree may appear on a list of the most interesting trees.

I recently served as a docent at the Griffith-McClain home during the Georgetown Heritage Tour. I was intrigued by the number of visitors who indicated that their interest in seeing the home was enhanced by their enjoyment of the ginkgo tree on the front lawn. After the home tour, I set out to learn a few things about the remarkable ginkgo; soon I was aware that a thesis could be completed on the subject.

The ginkgo biloba tree, sometimes called the maidenhair tree, can also be found in research under the alternate spelling of ginkgo. Its name is literal in that the Japanese word, ginkyo, means silver apricot and refers to the tree's fruit, which is eaten in the Orient. The Chinese derivation is yin kuo, which means silver fruit.

Biloba refers to the middle split of the tree's fan-shaped leaves. The leather-like smooth leaves are alternately placed along long branches and cluster at the tips of short side shoots. The veins are not cross-connected; they fan out from the base. The leaves seem to drop almost simultaneously at the first encounter with cold weather.

The ginkgo is the only living gymnosperm that sheds its leaves in the autumn.

Note: Pines, firs, and spruce are other examples of gymnosperms.

The ginkgo needs to age before it becomes a stately tree. The branching pattern is credited with a slow-growing process. It develops a combination of long and short branches, growing at right angles to the trunk and to the larger branches. In an irregular growing process, the tips of larger branches sometimes become slow-growing while the tips of the shorter branches change to faster-growing, larger branches.

The ginkgo biloba is a very durable tree. After the atomic bombing of Hiroshima in 1945, there was devastation of humans, buildings, and plants. However, some ginkgo trees survived. Even today, two of the surviving trees are growing there. This durability makes the trees long lived. They can have a lifespan of 600 or more years. A discovery of an ancient tree, believed to be 2,800 years old, was made in Qinhuangdao, located in north China's Hebei Province.

In many botanical circles the tree is labeled as a living fossil; it is deemed the oldest living seed plant in the world. It is the only survivor of the ginkgoales family, dating back to the Mesozoic era, 270 million years ago during the time of dinosaurs. The tree was prominent during Cretaceous times, 144 million years ago. It could be found in North America, Europe and Asia at this time. It became extinct in North America around 7 million years ago; and in Europe about 2.5 million years ago.

In 1691 a German botanist and



A Ginkgo Biloba tree in a cemetery in Winston Salem, North Carolina.

Photo: Eddie Mueller

physician, Engelbert Kaempfer, discovered some ginkgo trees in the monastery and temple gardens in China. Buddhist monks had continued to cultivate the trees since the 1100s, planting them near the pagodas. The seeds of these trees allowed the spread of ginkgo biloba trees to Japan and Korea, then to Europe from Japan, making their way to America in the late 1770's. Most of these trees were male.

Even today, it is advisable to plant male trees, which produce cones. The female produces fruit. This odorous fruit is the reason for the male being more desirable for your planting. The fruit drops, and the fleshy outer coverings emit an extremely offensive odor. This covering is slightly toxic and can cause damage to painted objects upon which it falls.

The large nuts within the fruit are considered a delicacy in native China and throughout the Orient. The taste is compared to that of pine nuts. The nuts' culinary uses are numerous; they are used in soups, as well as vegetable, rice, and stir-fried dishes. The nut is thought to aid with digestion, improve circulation, and minimize or prevent mental deterioration that comes with aging.

Today, there is considerable research being done on the extract from the ginkgo biloba tree. As with the Chinese beliefs, today's research is focusing on the blood circulation benefits and its help in regulating the tone of the blood vessels. Worldwide, there has been some encouraging



A Ginkgo Biloba from the Illinois Arboretum. Photo by Greg Lopatka



extract testing for treating early symptoms of Alzheimer's disease, stroke prevention, tinnitus, vertigo, macular degeneration, and many more health conditions.

Another interesting use for the tree is the practiced Oriental skill of creating bonsai trees. The tree's unique leaf structure adds a bonus for the tiny bonsai presentation. The unique fan-shaped leaves are a bright green, which turn into a vivid yellow in the autumn before they fall to cover the ground with a blanket of gold.

Medicinal and bonsai uses aside, the tree offers a pretty landscape addition. It is a picturesque tree, which can reach heights of 50' to 80' with a span of 30' to 40'. Since it is a slow growing tree, it could be a special gift to future generations.

If you choose to plant a ginkgo, know that they are not readily available in this area, so you may need to research sources for one. 'Autumn Gold' is the recommended male cultivar. The ginkgo trees should be planted in full sun to partial shade. They are tolerant of soil condition, but they demand good drainage. They are disease resistant, pollution tolerant, and are recommended for zones 4-9.

In Texas you can view ginkgo trees in various locations. The largest one is thought to be in New Boston near Texarkana; it is 72 feet tall and located on Ellis Street. Richard Hubbard, the U.S. Minister to Japan in the 1880s, was responsible for two of the state's best-known ginkgo trees. One was given to Austin and planted on the grounds of the Governor's Mansion. Hub-

bard also gave a tree to his good friend, Col. John Brown of Tyler, who planted it in his yard. Brown's property was acquired by the city and used as the site for the city hall, where the ginkgo remains on the grounds. Tyler has numerous other ginkgoes. There are several trees at the Fort Worth Water Gardens and one on the grounds of the Alamo in San Antonio. The University of North Texas at Denton has two trees. UT in Austin has several trees near the greenhouse.

Interesting note: Frank Lloyd Wright was a promoter of the ginkgo tree and helped build American interest for the tree. The bookstore housed in the Oak Park, Illinois museum, which was the personal home and studio of Wright, is named the Ginkgo Tree Bookstore.

Festive Cauliflowers

I thought it was rather fun this Christmas that there were several hues of cauliflower available at farmers markets and in some of the more avant-garde grocery stores. As we learnt in our basic vegetable class to get a white cauliflower takes work. My father used to grow a lot of cauliflowers when I was growing up and I must admit I never saw him wrap them to protect them but I guess he must have since I only ever saw white ones. On a trip to the Angel Valley Organic Farm Stand just before Christmas I saw they had three varieties of cauliflower for sale – white, orange, and purple. The orange and purple achieve their respective colors naturally, but the white requires a little human

intervention to stay pure. In a cauliflower's infancy, when the head is just beginning to form, the plant's wrapper leaves protect it. As it grows larger it pushes the wrappers aside, leaving the cauliflower open to the sun. A white cauliflower reacts to sun exposure in much the same way as a fair-skinned human. It tans. And like a fair-skinned human of, say, German heritage who longs to replicate the olive tone of her French-blooded husband by trying out one of those self-tanning lotions, the resulting color isn't terribly appealing. A white cauliflower unprotected from daily sunshine eventually turns a rather sickly yellow-brown.

To prevent this, the larger leaves are pulled together to form a sort of tent over each emerging cauliflower and cinch the bundled foliage with twine. The cauliflower continues its growth in darkness, thus retaining its snowy hue. It seems like a lot of work to me just to have a white vegetable. Aren't we told that we should eat vibrant colored fruit and vegetables. Perhaps the industry should market these "new" cauliflowers as special and particularly healthy! For more information on Angel Valley Organic Farm go to <http://www.angelvalleyfarms.com/index.html>

Junior Master Gardeners

Update from Pickett Elementary School...

Christine Davies



Volunteers from the Williamson County Master Gardeners, the Native Plant Society, Pickett hundred and sixty 5th grade students joined together to take part in Wildflower Planting and Gardening Day on December 12th. Christine Powell and two NPSOT members, Agnes Plutino and Marilyn Perz came out a few weeks earlier to pick out possible sites for a wildflower meadow. Pickett had procured wildflower seeds from the LBJ Wildflower Center program and from several other sources. Once the site was agreed upon, all that was needed was the manpower and expertise to carry out the plan!

Our students were divided into teams and given tasks. In a short two hours we formed a rock wall to define the planting area, gently raked the soil, mixed seed with sand, and dispersed the seed into our area. Other tasks that our "green teams" completed were to tear up groundcover to make way for a Pioneer planting garden, dead-headed our display gardens (two of which were planted by WCMG), trash collection around the school, mulching, and removal of weeds from several beds.

I found it truly rewarding to work with the children and hope that there will be a use for our services at Tippet in the future. The children were so enthusiastic and interested in working to beautify their school. The afternoon passed so quickly that I was a little disappointed when the students went home.

Jane Williamson

Let me express my thanks and gratitude to our volunteers to take time out of their day to patiently work with our students. This was the first time many of the students had the opportunity to work in a garden and they WANT MORE!!! The impact of something so simple is not measurable now; however I'm sure we cultivated a few future gardeners.

NEXT STEPS:

Now, here is the good news...I have received permission from administration to initiate an "Adopt a 5th Classroom Garden" program. Each fifth grade class will come up with the theme of the garden that they want to plant, we will enlist the help and support of their parents, and after ripping out all of the remaining ground cover we should have seven more connecting display gardens on our campus. We intend to use as many native plantings as possible and make these gardens a part of our curriculum planning. We hope that the Master Gardeners and NPSOT will continue their partnership with Pickett so we can make our campus the standard for outdoor classrooms in Georgetown.



Junior Master Gardeners

Are You Smarter than a 5th Grader?**Agnes Plutino**

I learned a very valuable lesson this Fall. I am not smarter than a fifth grader! Christine Davis, a long time member of our chapter of the NPSOT, is a Fifth Grade Math and Science Teacher of the gifted and talented students at Dell Pickett Elementary in Georgetown. Christine contacted me recently and asked if we could visit the school and help them decide an appropriate place for a wildflower meadow. The school was the recipient of one hundred packets of wildflower seed from the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center Seed Grant

Program. This program is a partnership between the Wildflower Center and Native American Seed in Junction, TX. The Seed Grants go to Texas schools that support the Wildflower Center's mission to increase the sustainable use and conservation of native wildflowers, plants, and landscapes. Seed grants can be used to establish native plant communities in outdoor classrooms, to enhance existing wildflower sites, or in other educationally directed projects. I contacted Christine Powell. She lives just across Leander Road and is familiar with the area. Christine is also a Master Naturalist, Master Gardener, Wildflower Center Docent, and Editor of our Chapter Newsletter, just to name a few of her talents. I'd give her the title "Master Blaster." I've yet to find anything that she can't do.

Then I was lucky to find Marilyn Perz free that day. Marilyn is a great companion to have with you when you are on a mission.

We met Christine Davis, Marie Camp (another fifth grade teacher), and Brenda Jirasic (the Vice Principal) on Thursday 20th November 2008 after school. We walked the entire school grounds and found the perfect spot for a wildflower meadow. The main grass in this area appears to be buffalo grass. This will be a perfect companion for the wildflowers. We discussed several different methods that can be used in getting this meadow established. We will leave that up to the teachers. They will be calling on us to help. If you are interested you can let either myself, Christine Powell, or Marilyn Perz know. Christine Davis and Marie Camp both went through the Junior Master Gardener Program for teachers. Now, thanks to the them and the Williamson County Master Gardeners, Pickett Elementary is home to some very beautiful display gardens at the entrance to their school building. Pickett is also home to a karst feature (Cave) which is protected under the Williamson County Conservation Foundation. That is a whole other project all on it's own. I hope, if you are ever invited to a school, for whatever reason, that you will go. You will be glad you did.

Natively yours, Agnes Plutino



Master Gardener Basics

Back to the Basics**Winola VanArtsdalen**

The Back to the Basics series reviews gardening techniques used throughout the year. In this mid-winter issue, we discuss planting seeds indoors.

PLANTING SEEDS INDOORS

With the holidays behind us, it is time to dream about the coming gardening season, make your plans and roll up your sleeves! Hopefully, you have already done your soil amendments at this time, and your soil is in good condition. Always keep your priorities in order—think about condition of the soil, first, and then what to plant. Your ultimate success or failure begins with the soil. Next, you need to determine the best varieties for your area, the disease resistant varieties and ones that do well in your micro-climate. Your local county Agri-life Extension Agent's office will have this information and the average date of the last freeze in your area. With your soil in good condition, your schedule planned, and your plants chosen, you are now ready to start those plants!

The simplest, cheapest way to raise large numbers of plants is with seeds, and many plants need their seed started in small containers before transplanting to your garden. To sterilize containers, wash them thoroughly in a solution of one part bleach and five parts water. You need a soil-less or peat-like mix. You want no fertilizer at this time, because it can burn the tender seedlings. An excellent planting medium is to use 50% vermiculite and 50% sphagnum peat, or you can buy a bagged sterile, loose medium such as Pro-Mix or Sunshine Mix. To pre-moisten the potting mix, put it in a large tub, add water lightly a little at a time, and toss gently. Let it sit a few minutes until evenly moist. Now, fill the pots or flat almost to the top and tap hard to settle. Press the potting medium down firmly.

After having carefully read the directions on the packet for any seed preparation needed and the planting depth, poke a hole in the soil with a pencil to the correct depth for seed or scatter the seeds over the surface. After spreading the seeds, lightly press them into the soil medium and cover the seed to specified depth with potting mix. Moisten with a spray bottle, and keep moisture constant during germination. As needed, water gently or let sit in pan filled with water for several hours. They need a warm spot, 60–75 degrees, (on refrigerator, hot water heater, or commercial heating cable.) Seed packet instructions will tell you whether this plant needs light to germinate. If it does not need light, I cover the tray with several

layers of wet newspaper to keep even moisture for germinating. If it needs light, I use clear plastic.

After germination, when cotyledons, or seed leaves (first small, round leaves), appear, uncover and move the container to a bright spot. After the first true leaves appear above or between the cotyledon leaves, you can fertilize weekly with half-strength fertilizer, but not a high nitrogen fertilizer. If you have seeded in a community flat or put several seeds per pot, you will need to thin by removing extra seedlings or clip with scissors close to the soil. Seedlings need sunlight or 14-16 hours fluorescent lights. Remember that the seedling must have oxygen. Not only must the planting medium be loose, it cannot be over-watered. If you over-water, there will not be pore space for needed oxygen.

Transplant carefully when root system has developed so that pots are “pot full.” Water prior to transplanting. Dig with knife or wooden plant label, and hold the plant by the leaves, not by the stem. (Think about it. The plant can develop more leaves, but damage the stem and all is lost!) Bring the soil to the roots gently. It is better to transplant your small plant to a larger pot to develop a larger root system before putting it into flower or garden bed.

To ease your tender new plant into adjusting to conditions in the garden, you want to slow the growth, to “harden off.” Start hardening at least two weeks before planting in the garden. Stop fertilizing and gradually lower the temperature and relative humidity while reducing the amount of water, but do not let it dry out. Choose a cool or cloudy day for planting, or plant late in the afternoon to help it adjust to brighter light. Mulch at least two inches, whether it is a container plant or planted in the garden, and you can now enjoy the fruits of your labor—many beautiful, thriving plants from a small monetary expenditure and a large investment in tender, loving care!

George Whiting has been experimenting with some propagation of his own. “I have attached a picture (right) of some Chinese Cabbage I started from seed about 10 days ago. I cut out bottom of an HEB plastic egg crate and put it under fluorescent light with heating pad underneath. The baby cabbages are ready to transplant!” Is anyone else having success with their propagation endeavors?

Send us your story. Thanks, George.



Name that Plant

People Names in Plant Names, Part VII

Bill Ward

Ten or twelve years ago when I was becoming more aware of native plants, I heard that our Hill Country “cedar” is “ash juniper.” I already knew it is really a juniper, not cedar, but I wondered why the “ash”? It is not ash-gray and it looks nothing like an ash tree. Of course, I soon learned it is spelled “Ashe,” after William W. Ashe. Something similar happened when I first heard about “lacy oak.” The leaves didn’t seem lacelike to me. Yes, I know now; it is “Lacey” for Howard George Lacey, who discovered the oak on his ranch near Kerrville.

Okay, I quickly learned that a lot of native plants are named for people, but I was fooled again when I first heard about the grasses called “muley.” I’d heard of muley cattle such as polled Herefords, but not hornless grass. Needless to say, as soon as I looked up Lindheimer’s muhly I could see it is in a genus named after G. H. E. Muhlenberg.

Gotthilf Hunrich Ernst Muhlenberg lived from 1753 to 1815. He was born into a prominent Pennsylvania family, and his father and brothers were influential patriots during the Revolutionary War. Like his father, G. H. E. Muhlenberg became a Lutheran minister. Because of his family’s involvement in the Revolution, Muhlenberg was on the British hit list.

While he was hiding out away from Philadelphia during the Revolution, Muhlenberg became interested in botany. He made extensive plant collections in and around Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, and subsequently exchanged letters and specimens with eminent botanists of America and Europe. During his study of grasses and sedges, he discovered a bog turtle he named *Testudo muhlenbergii*. Today, that turtle (*Clemmys muhlenbergii*) is ranked as federally endangered and has been the

center of major efforts for land conservation in the Northeast. Through his extensive collections, Muhlenberg made major contributions to botany. He is responsible for two genera and at least 143 species of vascular plants. Many plants have been named in his honor. For example, among our local flora are several species of muhly grass (*Muhlenbergia*) and Chinquapin oak (*Quercus muhlenbergii*).

Howard G. Lacey (1856-1929) was a well-educated English aristocrat who immigrated to the United States when he was twenty-six. He settled in Kerr County, where he ranched for nearly forty years. In addition to goat ranching, he became interested in natural sciences. Unencumbered by wife and children, he spent a great deal of time studying the natural history of Central Texas.

Lacey became a respected authority on the flora and fauna of the Texas Hill Country. He worked closely with the Smithsonian Institution, British Museum of Natural History, Audubon Society,



Above: *Texas mandrone*, *Texas smoke tree*, *silk-tassel tree*, *cedar sage*, and *zexmenia* germinate all grow well beneath *ashe juniper*, refuting the rumor that nothing grows under these trees. *Ashe juniper* (*Juniperus ashei*) is immune to cedar-apple rust. It invades disturbed sites. It certainly isn’t all bad and it should be found in a riparian Central Texas situation.

Left: In the fall, *gulf muhly* (*Muhlenbergia capillaris*) creates a stunning pink to lavender floral display. It functions well in meadow gardens and as a good general garden plant which looks fabulous when grouped together. It should be burned or raked out in early spring.

Images courtesy LBJWC

National Geographic Society, and the American Ornithological Union. When ill health took Lacey back to England in 1919, he donated his collection of Hill Country plants and animals to the Witte Museum in San Antonio. Besides the Lacey oak (*Quercus layceyi*), three species of small mammals also are named for Lacey.

William Willard Ashe was born in North Carolina in 1872. As children, Willard and his brother explored and collected specimens in the woods and fields around the family's antebellum estate. His collections reportedly required a two-story building by the time Ashe entered the University of North Carolina at fifteen. In graduate school at Cornell, Ashe specialized in botany and geology, earning the M.S. at age twenty.

After graduation, Ashe was a Forester for the North Carolina Geological Survey and also did work for the US Geological Survey and the US Bureau of Forestry. In 1905 he was employed by the US Forest Service and became an early advocate of creating national forests east of the Mississippi. Ashe served as Secretary of the National Forest Reservation Commission and worked to coordinate forest-land acquisition. In his personal research, Ashe concentrated on woody plants, and he published over five hundred and ten plant names. One species of hawthorn and a species of oak he named *margaretta* after his wife Margaret. There are not so many names of women in the scientific names of native plants. Well, that sounds like a topic for a future column.

"Bug" of the month

Our "bug" this month is the ermine moth (*Atteva punctella*), also known as the Ailanthus webworm. I first noticed them on my fragrant mistflower last year and they came back this year to the same mistflower. Since they are a beautiful moth (see picture), they are easy to spot on the white flower. It is about one inch long. It is thought to be native to South Florida and the tropics where its original larval host plant, the Paradise Tree (*Simarouba glauca*), grows readily. Another tree called Tree-of-Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*), originally from China, has been widely introduced to the US and the webworm has jumped to this new host plant (giving it its common name, Ailanthus webworm). I did not think about this when I first saw the moth but remembered that one of my neighbors planted a Tree-of-Heaven last year. I will have to check to see if it has any caterpillars on it next year.

The larvae produce nests on the host plant by pulling two or three leaflets around a network of loose webbing. Then they consume the leaflets. The caterpillars have a wide, light greenish-brown stripe down their backs and several thin, alternating white and olive-green stripes along their sides. The adult moth visits

flowers and is a pollinator. It does not survive cold winters but migrates north each year, so it is commonly seen in summer throughout the continental US, and occasionally eastern Canada. There are many more ermine moths that cause problems on apple and cherry orchards. These are very destructive but the Ailanthus webworm is not considered a pest in this area.

Wayne Rhoden
Entomologist Specialist



Meet Your Master Gardeners

Patsy Bredahl

Each month we will be spotlighting one of the Master Gardeners in our group. Getting to know each other is something that we don't really seem to have time to do, so hopefully, this will be a way to make some more "connections" with the people in our group.

Good things do happen to good people. Patsy Bredahl's life story reads like a modern day "happily ever after" story. She grew up in cotton-farming country, Cotton Center, Texas, near Lubbock. The school in Cotton Center had about 200 students (in all!) from first grade to twelfth grade. When she was thirteen, the family moved to Lubbock. When she was 18, she met Ken (then twenty) who was stationed at Reese Air Force Base in Lubbock. They married eight months later and have now been married forty-five years. There are also four boys, three daughters-in-law, and ten grandchildren. This Christmas Day, as most Christmases, all of them will spend the day together—nineteen in all, just enjoying being together and being a family. It just doesn't get much better than this!

Patsy and the two older boys traveled with Ken during his military career (luckily, Ken was home when the younger two came along.) They were in the Philippines, Las Vegas, Lubbock, Austin, and Okinawa. During his fourteen-month tour of duty in Vietnam, Patsy lived with her parents. Ken and Patsy enjoyed the military life and obviously so did the boys since all four of them enlisted although none of them were "career military." One fond memory is that when they were on Okinawa, they all rode dirt bikes out on the jungle trails. Patsy rode right along with Ken and the boys. When they ended their military career, they moved to the Austin area and have been here ever since.

As if raising four boys weren't enough, Patsy went back to school when the boys were older, and became a pediatric oncology nurse. She did that for twenty-two years and says that even though it was hard, she still misses it. After the military career, Ken has continued to work at various jobs, retiring occasionally, but always going back to work again. They now live in Hutto where helping to landscape and renovate their lovely little church has also kept them busy. Patsy also hopes to help the church start a community garden on the extra twenty acres that they have.

Although Patsy spent her early years on a cotton farm, she really became interested in gardening when she landscaped the



Patsy and Ken on a recent trip to Alaska.

yards of the homes where they lived. Taking the Master Gardener course seemed to be a natural way to continue her interest in gardening. From the Master Gardener course, Patsy and her sister Juanita are developing the very important Junior Master Gardener program. They are hoping to work with more schools in Georgetown and Hutto. They will help the schools plant gardens and also work with after-school Junior Master Gardener programs. In addition, she is also helping Boy Scouts satisfy some of their requirements. Combining a love of gardening with a love of children is surely a winning connection for Patsy and gardening and children!

Everyone who is a Master Gardener will understand exactly what Patsy means when she says, "I still get excited when I see the seeds break through the ground and start growing." Ah, a true gardener!

Submissions?

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Treats from the Master Garden

It's Bowl Time Again—Get out the Chips and Dips

Margaret Seals

The tree is back in the attic or awaiting a haul to the compost pile, the champagne corks have been popped to celebrate the New Year, and now it's time to claim your seat in the TV room for the Bowl games. In Texas, chips are usually the corn tortilla type. The dip is standard: melted Velveeta cheese with a can of RoTel tomatoes and green chilis mixed in. Now, I'm not knocking this tradition, for Heaven knows I've downed a tub or two of the stuff myself, but if you are looking for an upgrade this year to something a little different, read on.

Have you ever tasted a homemade potato or tortilla chip? Well then, you know what I'm about to suggest: forgo those over-salted, bagged varieties from the store, and make your own. Just slice the potatoes thinly or quarter fresh tortillas and toss them into some hot canola or peanut oil (or a mixture of the two) until they turn a golden brown. (I do this in my big iron Dutch oven.) Remove them with a slotted spoon to a layer of paper towels where they can drain for a moment. Then serve, fresh and hot with whatever dip you have prepared.

Other quick and easy homemade chips can be made from frozen wonton wrappers. You will need to thaw these before quartering them and tossing them into the hot oil. Or, if you want to cut out some calories, lightly coat the wonton wrapper quarters with non-stick cooking spray, place them on a baking tray and bake them

about 8 minutes at 350 degrees. Pita bread makes good dippers too. Quarter the pitas; brush them with olive oil, place on a baking sheet and bake at 450 degrees turning them after 5 minutes for about 7-8 minutes total baking time.

If you really want to get fancy, buy a skinny loaf of French bread (French sticks they are sometimes called). Slice it about 3/8 inch thick straight across making little rounds. Brush with olive oil or butter, place on a baking sheet and bake at 350 degrees for 10 minutes then turning them for another 10 minutes of baking. Remove when golden brown on both sides. Plain white, sliced sandwich bread also can be fancied up when you remove the crusts, slice it diagonally into 4 "points" and toast it in your oven under the broiler. Butter it first or brush it with olive oil for a better flavor. You can also sprinkle a bit of chopped, fresh rosemary on the toast to add another flavor twist. And don't forget garlic salt or a dash of black pepper for other tastes. Bagels can be sliced thinly and baked or fried too.

If you are tired of the chip routine or want to offer a healthier alternative, head for the vegetable bin and make some celery and carrot sticks. Green and red bell pepper strips (make them at least 3/4" wide) will also hold up to dips if they are fairly thin. And everyone loves lettuce wraps these days. Iceberg lettuce leaves make a great "pocket" for heavier dips.

Now that we have the "chip" part out of the way, here are a few ideas for dips: For the tradition bound group of dippers who demand that tub of Velveeta/RoTel, here is a tasty way to jazz it up. This is called:

Picadillo Dip

1 lb lean ground beef
1 small onion, chopped
3/4 C chopped pimento
3/4 C slivered almonds, toasted in the oven
1 t salt
3/4 t black pepper

2 t garlic powder
1/2 t dried oregano
4 oz can chopped, black olives
4 oz can mushrooms, drained and diced
1 10 oz can RoTel diced tomatoes and green chilies
1 lb Velveeta Cheese
1 C golden raisin

Brown the beef with the onion in a Dutch oven. Drain meat of grease and rinse under hot water. Rinse out pan and return meat and onion to the pan. Add all remaining ingredients and mix well. Heat to almost boiling, and then reduce heat and simmer, stirring often for about an hour. Serve hot. (This dip can be made a day ahead of time and reheated in the microwave.) Serves 20, or 10 teenage boys.

My friend Sara passed this dip recipe on to me a couple of years ago. It always makes a hit, and is very easy.

Green Olive Dip

1/2 C olives from jar of green salad olives with pimentos (they are already chopped)
8 oz cream cheese, softened
1/2 C mayonnaise
1/2 C chopped pecans
2 T olive juice from the jar of green salad olives with pimentos
Mix ingredients above together and refrigerate for an hour or so before serving.

This is a great “fix ahead” dip that can be served in a bowl or spread on those baked French bread rounds or pitas:

Artichoke Spread

1 15 oz can of cannellini beans, rinsed and drained

1 9 oz package of frozen artichoke hearts, thawed and well drained

1 clove garlic quartered

1 t finely shredded lemon peel

1 T lemon juice

Dash of cayenne pepper

1 green onion top, chopped for garnish if desired

Combine all ingredients except green onion tops in a food processor. Cover and process until nearly smooth. Transfer to serving bowl and refrigerate for up to 2 days. Serve chilled for dipping or spread on baked French bread rounds. If desired, sprinkle chopped green onion tops on top of dip or spread rounds for garnish before serving.

Another “spread” that is a bit different can be made with Jarlsberg or baby Swiss cheese.

2 C grated Jarlsberg or baby Swiss cheese

$\frac{3}{4}$ C mayonnaise

1 T minced red onion

1 T fresh, chopped parsley

Season with Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper.

I lived on the Texas Gulf Coast for many years, and no Bowl Game party (or any other party for that matter) was complete there without a shrimp dip. Everyone knew a guy who shrimped, so the seafood used in these dips was usually right off the boat. In Central Texas, we are not that lucky, but there are opportunities to buy fresh shrimp occasionally. I usually stock up when I see “never before frozen” wild Gulf shrimp appear in the stores. Never mind that it is really “pricey” compared to what I am used to paying, it’s one of those things I just can’t live without now. I clean and cook it, and dice some just for making dips through the coming months. Then I freeze the bags of cooked shrimp. Whenever Bowl time is here, I drag a bag out of the freezer and in a quick thawing time, I’m ready to make dip. Here is my favorite recipe:

Shrimp Dip

1 8 oz package of cream cheese, softened

1 C Thousand Island salad dressing

$\frac{1}{2}$ C mayonnaise

1 jar diced pimentos

$\frac{1}{4}$ C minced green onion tops

10 dashes of red pepper sauce (or less if you don’t like it hot)

1 T Lowery’s seasoned salt

1 t prepared horseradish

2 lbs cooked, cleaned and diced shrimp

Cream the first 3 ingredients together, and then add the rest. Makes about 6 C.

Hope you enjoy the Bowl games this year and your favorite team wins!

2009 Texas Master Gardener State Conference April 23-24 & 25, 2009 Marshall, Texas.

Make plans to join us for the 2009 Texas Master Gardener State Conference that will be held in beautiful East Texas.

For more information:

Harrison County Master Gardener Association
c/o Extension Office, 102 West Houston
Marshall, TX. 75670
(903) 935-8413

See this link for more information:

<http://tcaaa.tamu.edu/09statemeeting.htm>



President's Column

New Year, New Challenges**Wayne Rhoden**

Welcome to the New Year. I know that all of you are excited to begin a new year of volunteer work. Everyone is rested, if you can call the holiday rush resting, and anxious to see what the New Year holds for us and Texas Agrilife Extension Service. Your board will be meeting before the monthly program to plan volunteer opportunities and fun projects for the year.

One of the opportunities you have this year is to serve as a board member. Some of the board positions will be open for new volunteers to fill. Many of the board members have doubled up to fill the positions since we did not have enough certified members to fill them. One is the fundraising chair. This will be one that you can step right into and help us raise funds this year. I know we plan to have a plant sale but we need more than that to bring money into our treasury to fund projects and help Junior Master Gardeners in the schools. Even in hard times like we face this year, there are still companies that wish to donate funds and we want to be ready to accept those funds.

We will also try to update our by-laws this year to correct some name changes and to rearrange the board positions to more closely fit with our goals.

Nancy Moore and I will be meeting to establish our budget for the year and to do so we need you to let us know of any areas that you think we need to fund for the year. Please let the current board members know of any expenses you feel we need to fund.

I am looking forward to adding some projects this year. One that I really think we need is a vegetable demonstration garden. Hopefully we can find a good place and get it started right away. More and more of the community want to grow their own vegetables and we need to showcase the ones that grow well in our area. It needs to be accessible to the public so they can come visit it at any time. If you are interested in working on such a project let me know.

Wayne

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"New Frontiers" in horticulture and gardening

March 22-26, 2009

The Las Vegas International Master Gardener Conference will address issues that gardeners everywhere face -- water conservation, proper plant selection, soil enrichment, pest control -- while also presenting new concepts in environmental stewardship and "green" technologies. Since what is old has become new again, we will also explore historical and traditional plants and methods.



Williamson County Master Gardener Association Officers for 2008

Officers:

Wayne Rhoden, President:	mgardener@suddenlink.net	(512) 869-8016
Juanita James, Vice-President	jjames20@sbcglobal.net	(512) 341-7116
Nancy Moore, Treasurer:	nancy3610@att.net	(512) 215-9697
Jeanne Barker, Secretary:	jubarker@yahoo.com	(512) 608-1296

Standing Committees/Chairpersons:

Programs/Education:

Publicity:	Patsy Bredahl	pbredahl@austin.rr.com	(512) 217-0693
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Membership/Volunteer Opportunities:

	John Papich	texasjayp@yahoo.com	(512) 863-4098
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Awards:	Margaret Seals	marjim@suddenlink.net	(512) 863-4127
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Class Training/Facilitation:

	John Papich	texasjayp@yahoo.com	(512) 863-4098
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Jr. Master Gardener Coordinator:

	Patsy Bredahl	pbredahl@austin.rr.com	(512) 217-0693
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	Juanita James	jjames20@sbcglobal.net	(512) 341-7116
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Fundraising:

Greenhouse Manager:	Duffy Banfield	villaparkcats@sbcglobal.net	
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Ad Hoc Committees:

New Class:	John Papich	texasjayp@yahoo.com	(512) 863-4098
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Newsletter Editor:	Christine Powell	xtinepowell@verizon.net	(512) 863-8250
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Newsletter Layout:	Christine Powell	xtinepowell@verizon.net	(512) 863-8250
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WCMG Website:		http://grovesite.com/mg/wcmg	
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Webmaster:	Christine Powell	xtinepowell@verizon.net	(512) 863-8250
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Mailing address:	3151 Inner Loop Road, Suite A, Georgetown, TX 78626		
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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 6:00pm. Master Gardeners and the public are welcome to attend.