

Williamson County Master Gardener Journal

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Dedicated to growing with Williamson County

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Master Gardeners Honored



Tommi Young completed her Master Gardener certification.



Patty Hoenigman received her certificate for completing Oak Wilt Specialist hours. Patty will also be the chairperson for Oak Wilt.



Congratulations to Chuck McKelley for completing MG hours.



Collene Sweeney completed her Master Gardener certification.

Photos by Grace Bryce

Good Bugs, Bad Bugs

Collene Sweeney

Before you execute that bug, it deserves a fair trial. Is this a good bug or a bad bug? You may be killing a bug that is working hard in your garden controlling unwanted pests. Wizzie Brown loves her bugs and believes that if a bug is a pest, it is just a matter of perspective. A pest is something out of place. Everyone loves ladybugs, but in the fall when they gather in huge numbers to overwinter in a house or garage they can become a pest. They bite, stain fabric, and at times, dive bomb you. This is not the pretty picture of a ladybug on a leaf in your garden. She enlightened us with a wonderful presentation on the good guys and the bad guys.

The truth is that only 5% of bugs are considered pests. The other 95% are constantly working behind the scenes to eradicate the bad guys. And without knowing, people spread pesticides that generally are indiscriminate in what they kill. Why kill 100% when only 5% are out to get your plants? Armed with some simple knowledge, it is better to know just what you have in your garden. You may not have to do anything; just let the good bugs continue their work.

Ways to prevent the bad guys from taking over is to check your plants regularly and learn the signs that a bad bug is really at work in your garden. Sometimes it is so easy to just pick off the culprit and end his days there and then. As a child, I was mesmerized by an aunt that could catch and behead a grasshopper in a nanosecond. To this day, my mother catches grasshoppers, pulls off their hind legs, and feeds them to her garden spiders. Her girls are the biggest I have ever seen.

Wizzie shared with us a huge assortment of good bugs and their beneficial contributions to our environment. From the large mantids and spiders to the microscopic nematodes, they are here to help take care of our plants. This list would go on and on, so let's take a look at the real criminals. Aphids and white flies can be controlled with simple methods such as high pressure water and crumpled tin foil mulch. The reflective tin foil lights up the underside of the leaves where they hang out, not pleasant for an aphid or white fly. Learning what a lady bug larvae looks like and allowing it to do the job of devouring aphids for you is a great alternative. The nocturnal vandals such as the cutworms require you to make an inspection of your garden with a red film over your flashlight. These can be stopped with a protective collar around their plant victims. Squash bugs can be lured under wooden boards or cardboard and then dispatched at your will.

Sometimes just keeping garden debris under control can keep these critters away. Hand picking is always an option. Proper watering and fertilizing will keep your plants stress free and deter spider mites. Knowing the life cycle of these insects helps with locating egg masses and taking care of your problem before they even hatch. This is just a small sample of what can be done to control these bad bugs without having to resort to potentially harmful chemicals. When you do have to resort to a back-up plan of chemicals, please choose wisely. You may be killing the good guys.

Wizzie listed these books as some of her favorites. *Natural Enemies Handbook* by Mary Louise Flint, *Texas Bug Book, The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* by Howard Garrett and *Garden Insects of North America* by Whitney Crenshaw. She is also involved with fire ant management and has been instrumental in reducing their populations in many neighborhoods.

Wizzie Brown may be reached at ebrown@ag.tamu.edu. Her phone number is 512-854-9600. For more information you may check out: http://aggiehorticulture.tamu.edu/lawn_garden/pest.html; <http://www.sel.barc.usda.gov/selhome/bugs.html>; <http://greenopolis.com/goblog/joe-laur/good-bugs-bad-bugs-and-plants-they-love-and-hate>.

Upcoming Special Programs

Grace Bryce

Saturday, June 18: Bruce Leander will present "Fine Art Nature Photography" at the Extension Office from 10-Noon. (This was originally scheduled for May 7th at the Library) Save the date!!!

"I will present keys to taking better pictures for those that want to improve their photography and some more advanced topics like High Dynamic Range and Focus Stacking for more advanced or aspiring photographers. Something for everyone....and lots of pretty pictures.

My specialty is close up and macro but also intimate landscape and landscape. I will show some landscape images from recent trips to Death Valley, Big Bend and South America but most of the images will be from the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. Oh, plus a few from my work with Texas Gardener Magazine."

Mr. Leander earned a B.S. in Biology from Springfield College, an M.S. degree in Zoology with a minor in Neurophysiology from Texas Tech University and an M.B.A. from the University of Wisconsin. His previous experience includes positions in a number of companies in the life science industry including Amersham Corporation and Pharmacia Biotech. He joined Ambion, Inc. in 1998 as president and worked nine years until they were acquired by Applied Biosystems in 2006.

Mr. Leander remained through the integration period with Applied Biosystems and retired in September 2007. He spends his time advising and tinkering in the biotechnology industry and aspires to serious amateur status as a fine artist and photographer. His business card reads: Biotechnology, Art, Photography, Golf

Saturday, August 13: Patty Leander will present "Fall Vegetable Gardening" at the Georgetown Public Library, from 10 - Noon.

Saturday, October 29- Emsud Horozovic will present a program on trees at the Extension Office from 10 - Noon.

Please check the website for more information or updates: <http://txmg.org/williamson/Special-Events/>

Our May 9th Master Gardener monthly meeting will feature Juanice Davis from It's A Jungle nursery in Austin. Her presentation is "Growing Orchids 101".

Please see the calendar for more information about monthly meetings: <http://txmg.org/williamson/calendar/>

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.

In My Garden



Each year the poppies just get better and better.

Photo by Susan Courtney

Master Gardeners Volunteer at San Gabriel Presbyterian Church

Rebecca Caldwell

Ninety volunteers showed up at San Gabriel Presbyterian Church on a Saturday morning at 8:00 a.m. Our Cub Scout, Venture Scouts and five Master Gardeners and MG Interns were all part of a tremendous work party.

We had a total of eleven major projects, and by 2:00 p.m. we had completed ten! Tonya Shaw and Cathy Sariego worked with the front line crew trimming back 20 crape myrtle, pulling out rubbish left from the Williams Drive street widening, transplanting yaupons and barberries, raking out 8 yards of top soil, and putting down new weed barrier.



Linda Zazula finished with the pots and then worked to eradicate weeds in a bed.



Debra Klaus works with another volunteer explaining what's a weed and what's not.

Refreshments and food helped to make this a very successful project. John Papich came by early in the day to see the project in action. He walked the whole campus and seemed to be duly impressed with the number of volunteers and the amount of work being accomplished. When a project like this comes together it really makes you proud to know you are a member of such a great team---Williamson County Master Gardeners.

Lynn Stude and Debra Klaus worked for hours in helping to remove the massive number of weeds that had taken over our beginning labyrinth. Their intensity and work ethic got another volunteer interested in assisting with the labyrinth on a regular basis.

Linda Zazula worked with an elderly deaf lady in planting new plants, (purchased from the MG Spring Plant Fair) into our outside planters. This lady came up to me at the end of the day and said, "Thank you so much for getting Linda to help me; I learned so much I never knew before." Sunday morning she came again to thank me for Linda's help.



Master Gardeners transplant plants into a redone bed area.

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.

Workday at the MG Rose Garden



Photos by Jack Grieder and Wayne Rhoden



A killdeer nest with eggs was a hidden surprise under a rosebush in the Master Gardener demonstration rose garden.

Was Grandma Right?

Backyard Medicine At Your Fingertips

Grace Bryce

Year before last, I had the pleasure of taking the Medicine Making class from Ellen Zimmermann, the founder and owner of the Austin School of Herbal Studies. I spent a wonderful day with three other students, and we learned about making herbal remedies.

Ellen inspired me to go on to become a Certified Natural Health Professional and to enroll in a Master Herbalist school. Natural health has always been a part of my life, so it is no wonder, I have gravitated to this path, and I am doing what I love. My granny used many remedies. When I was growing up, my mom gave me vitamins. I know she gave me vitamin C which wasn't so bad, but those chewable mineral tablets just had to go under the couch cushions. Yuk! Mom also took homeopathic nerve tonic tablets, which she also gave to all four of us kids. With four of my own, I also appreciate homeopathic remedies and Bach Flower Remedies. My great-grandma controlled her blood pressure with regular chiropractic adjustments. As kids, it was a big treat to drive her to Corpus Christi for an adjustment because we got Tiger's Milk bars from the health food store. My family was always in touch with Mother Nature in many ways.

Ellen Zimmermann has a wonderful five acre herb farm, which is south of Austin. She actually has a little soil there even though she is on the Edward's Plateau.

During the Medicine Making class, we spent the morning learning about organic gardening for herbs and harvesting plant material for teas and tinctures. We got to know the plants in the garden and taste some of them. Ellen collects rainwater and uses drip irrigation for her herbs. She also has some chickens for pest control. We made fresh tea from the herbs we harvested and also enjoyed some other teas. We learned about making decoctions, which are "teas" made from roots, stems, barks or seeds, the hard parts of the plant. We had a wonderful pot luck vegetarian lunch and got to know each other a little better.

It is amazing to see what we already have in our kitchens as remedies. Ginger comes to mind. It is great to help with digestion. If you develop a mild headache across your forehead after a meal, ginger may be helpful. It is commonly sold as capsules in the grocery store and usually a dosage of three will take care of it. The fresh root can also be sliced and boiled for tea. It will help with respiratory problems and inflammation. I have gargled with ginger and cayenne pepper in warm water for a sore throat. The heat from the pepper increases lympho-



Ellen's garden

cytic migration to clean up any infection, and the ginger helps to reduce the inflammation. Ginger is also good for motion sickness. Ginger candies are sold for this purpose. Another remedy to throw out there for motion sickness, is to tape an aspirin to your belly button. Please let me know if you try this and it works. :)

In the afternoon, we explored making tinctures. Tinctures are made from plant material and a menstruum. Plant material can vary depending on the plant and which parts are used for what. For instance, for lavender, *Lavandula angustifolia*, the medicinal part of the plant is the flowers. According to *Gardens Ablaze*, "Lavender has been used for centuries as an herbal remedy, and does indeed appear to have anti-septic, anti-bacterial, anti-fungal, anti-inflammatory, anti-convulsive, and last but certainly not least - anti-depressant - properties. Internally, lavender is believed to be of benefit for a multitude of problems, including stress, anxiety, exhaustion, irritability, headaches, migraines, insomnia, depression, colds, digestion, flatulence, upset stomach, liver and gallbladder problems, nervousness, loss of appetite, and as a breath freshener and mouthwash. Inhaling the essential oil in some cases has been reported to work as well as narcotics for inducing relaxation and sleep, easing symptoms of de-



Ellen is giving the garden a little drink.



Ellen prepares a tincture.

pression, and reducing headache pain. For inhalation purposes, boil 2 cups of water, add 2 drops of essential oil, and inhale the steam. Externally, lavender oil is one of the safest essential oils and can be used full-strength on the skin. It works wonderfully and can be applied directly for cuts, scrapes, wounds, burns, bee, wasp, and insect stings, rashes, muscle aches, rheumatism, arthritis, cold sores, canker sores, blisters, bruises, athlete's foot, and rubbed directly into the temples in case of headache or migraine." <http://www.gardensablaze.com/HerbLavenderMed.htm>

Dandelion, *Taraxacum officinale*, is another wonderful herb. According to the University of Maryland Medical System, "Dandelion is a rich source of vitamins A, B complex, C, and D, as well as minerals such as iron, potassium, and zinc. Its leaves are often used to add flavor to salads, sandwiches, and teas. The roots can be found in some coffee substitutes, and the flowers are used to make certain wines. In traditional medicine, dandelion roots and leaves were used to treat liver problems. Native Americans also used dandelion decoctions to treat kidney disease, swelling, skin problems, heartburn, and stomach upset. Chinese medicinal practitioners

traditionally used dandelion to treat digestive disorders, appendicitis, and breast problems (such as inflammation or lack of milk flow). In Europe, herbalists incorporated it into remedies for fever, boils, eye problems, diabetes, and diarrhea. Today, dandelion roots are mainly used as an appetite stimulant, digestive aid, and for liver and gallbladder function. Dandelion leaves are used as a diuretic to stimulate the excretion of urine." <http://www.umm.edu/altmed/articles/dandelion-000236.htm>

It is important to know your herbs and what they can do and how you will use them. Herbs have been used for centuries. The Ebers Papyrus dating back 1500BC is one of the best preserved records of the medical insights of the ancient Egyptians. Chinese medicine and the Vedic texts go back even further, and all used herbs for medicine. Every year I have herbs, some people call them weeds, that come up in my back yard. I don't pull anything up until I know what it is and what it can do. I have had common plantains, cleavers, and shepherd's purse to



Passion vine is allowed to dry before tincturing.

name a few. Every year is different. As herbalists, we do not harvest unless there is an abundance;; we harvest with respect and to insure there will be future plants of the same kind. Because of drought, these abundant plants can change each year. We harvest with respect and gratitude for the healing energy of the plant.

The menstruum, which is used to macerate the plant material in a tincture, is usually alcohol (either vodka or Everclear), but can be vinegar or glycerin. Sometimes brandy or rum are used to cover the taste of the herb. Different strengths of alcohol are used depending on the herb and the components to be extracted. Glycerin is more useful for certain herbs. Tinctures typically sit in the dark for 6-8 weeks before they are ready to use. Tinctures have a ten year shelf life and are very concentrated, so are a good thing to keep around.

Cold oil infusions are another preparation. Organic extra virgin olive oil is commonly used, but other oils can also be used. The plant material, such as calendula flowers, is submerged in the oil and put in a sunny place for two weeks. The cold infusion is then ready to use as an oil or to be made into a salve or ointment. To make the salve, beeswax is added to the oil with gentle heat. Other ingredients can be added for preservation and or healing properties. Vitamin E oil



Ellen chops herbs for teas.



Ellen harvests some Lemon Balm, *Melissa officinalis*, for tea

can be added as an anti-oxidant and for healing, but also helps in preserving the preparation. Tea Tree oil is anti-fungal, but also helps as a preservative of the salve. Knowing the herbs and how to combine them is a critical thing to understand in preparing these remedies. Also knowing the contraindications is important.

I have many books I consult when formulating remedies. As Ellen said, you could spend several lifetimes becoming an herbalist, there is just so much to learn. If you have been thinking about taking some of her classes, I would say it is well worth it. Herbalists do not diagnose, treat or cure any disease. This information should never take the place of a licensed physician. Herbal education can be used for good health and should be used responsibly. The natural health approach looks at the whole person and through education can help improve the health of the person.

Ellen Zimmermann is an excellent teacher and has a wonderful garden to see.



Ellen Zimmermann presented Growing and Using Local Herbs for Everyday Health at our monthly MG meeting, April 11

These are a few of my favorite herb books:

Alternative Medicine, The Definitive Guide ISBN: 978-1-58761-141-4

The Book of Herbal Wisdom, Matthew Wood ISBN-13: 978-1-55643-232-3

The Complete Herb Book, Jekka McVicar ISBN -13: 978-1-55407-365-8

The Little Guides- Herbs, Geoffrey Burnie, ISBN: 1-875137 76 9

Medical Herbalism, The Science and Practice of Herbal Medicine, David Hoffman ISBN-978-089281749-8

The Medicine Maker's Handbook- A Home Manual, James Green ISBN 978-0-89594-990-5

Practical Herbalism, Philip Frichey ISBN: 1-885653-22-0

(Rosemary Gladstar's books are on my wish list.)

2011 Spring OPEN HOUSE

In honor of National Herb Day, please come and visit EZ Herbs on:

Sunday, **May 1st** from 2-5:30pm. Enjoy a garden tour (formal tour every hour on the hour), delicious herbal teas, herbal snacks, information on the Austin School of Herbal Studies and a visit to EZ Herbs herb shop.

<http://www.ezherbs.net/EZ-Herbs-open-house-2011.htm>

The Army in Red

Janet White



Each morning I faithfully blast the Caldwell pink rose bushes with a stream of water forceful enough to knock off the aphids. There seems to be quite a crop of aphids on the stems near the rose buds.

Today I began seeing red spots before my eyes. To my delight the ladybug army in red is beginning to do their work, and they have their work cut out for them!

Coccinellidae is the scientific name for the ladybug, lady beetle, or ladybird beetles. This name was assigned to the beetle because it means “little red sphere”; *coleopteran* means “sheath-winged” which also applies to the ladybug.

In the Middle Ages in Europe, crops taken over by insects were dying. People were beginning to starve when the farmers prayed to the Virgin Mary to help them with the insect problem.

The farmers became even more upset to find additional insects on their crops. The new insect was a little red beetle with black spots on their back, an army in red which actually began devouring the harmful insects. These beetles became known as the “beetles of Our Lady”, eventually shortened to ladybug.

Another crop was heroically saved in the 1800’s in California when orange and lemon farmers began having problems with insects destroying whole groves of trees. The insects were Australian scale insects. So the farmers imported Australian ladybugs to fight the battle. Within two years the orchards were free of the scale bugs, and the entire orange and lemon industry was saved by the army in red.

A particular species of the ladybug called *hippodamia convergens* will be identified by two white dashes on the back of its body above the hard wing casings. This species of ladybug will eat a ton of aphids in no time, and they will protect your garden for a long period. Other species of ladybugs will eat only about 50 aphids per day.

The life cycle of the ladybug is much like the life cycle of the butterfly. With the ladybug there are also four stages: the egg stage, the larva stage, the pupa stage and the adult ladybug stage.



Ladybug eggs with newly hatched larvae



Larvae stage



Ladybug pupa on a leaf

Female ladybugs lay their eggs on the underside of leaves to be protected from flying predators and from the weather. The eggs look similar to yellow jellybeans except that they are tiny.

As the eggs hatch, the larvae will come looking for food such as tiny mites or aphids. The mother had carefully laid her eggs in such a place abundant with the proper food for the newborn. The newborn larva resembles a tiny alligator and in days they will molt or shed their skin. This molting will continue as long as they are growing.

In a couple of weeks the larva will begin to look like a shrimp. It attaches itself to a leaf for several days to begin the final metamorphosis into a ladybug. As a new ladybug, coloring is pale until the shell hardens and turns a bright red.

Facts about ladybugs:

Ladybugs are an excellent form of pest control without chemicals.

Not all ladybugs have spots.

Ladybugs clean themselves after a meal.

Ladybugs come in several colors, like pink, yellow, white, orange and black.

There are over 300 types of ladybugs in North America.

Ladybugs make a chemical that smells and tastes bad so predators won't eat them.

Ladybugs hibernate in large groups in cold weather.

They are considered as good luck in some countries.

The bright color of the Ladybug warns birds not to eat them.

The spots of the Ladybug fade as they get older.

To all MGs and Interns

who worked and contributed so much to the success

of the 2nd Spring Garden Fair -

our heartfelt Thank You!

We couldn't have done it without you!

Kris and Ingrid

Beautifying Hutto

Patsy Bredahl



Hutto City Hall has a more attractive landscape now, thanks to the combined efforts of the Hutto Green Team, the Keep Hutto Beautiful Commission, and Williamson County Master Gardeners.

Kauai's National Tropical Botanical Garden

Claire Hall

Last month, I visited one of the most beautiful gardens on Kauai, the McBryde Garden located on the southern portion of the island near Po'ipu Beach. On what was a sugar plantation until the 1970s, the McBryde Garden encompasses about 170 acres and is dedicated to preserving native plants, research and educating the public. The luxuriant Lawa'i River runs through the property.

Four distinct gardens are featured at McBryde: Reading Palms Walk, Spice of Life, A Walk Among the Natives and the Canoe Plants of Ancient Polynesia.

There are over 2400 species of palm but only one is native to the Hawaiian Islands, the *Pritchardia*. It is featured in the **Reading Palms Walk**. The *Pritchardia* is a fan palm and exists nowhere else in the world. On the Islands, it developed into 23 different species. Hundreds of other palms are featured in this part of the garden, including the tallest palm, the Alexandra (*Archontophoenix alexandrae*), a favorite in resort areas around the world.

Spice of Life contains fruits and spices associated with the islands, such as allspice, betel nut palm, cacao, star fruit and black pepper. The commercial tropical flowers are also represented here. Shell ginger, pink ginger, and torch ginger grow beautifully alongside the bromeliads. Trees such as the monkeypod and balsa grow alongside a variety of ferns and mosses.



Waterfall along the Lawa'i River

A Walk Among the Natives reveals the wide variety of plants that existed before the islands were widely settled. A number of hibiscus along with a purple leaved *Vitex rotundifolia* (called pohinahina by the Hawaiians) mix with a relative of our sagebrush called 'ahinahina (*Artemisia australis*.) A great deal of research at McBryde is dedicated to locating and preserving these and other natives.

Finally, the **Canoe Plants of Ancient Polynesia** features the botanicals brought to Hawaii by its first settlers. These include sugar can (ko), coconut (niu), banana (mai'a) and noni (Indian mulberry). Polynesians also imported breadfruit, sweet potatoes, yams, and kalo from which poi is made. Some plants were brought as a source for weaving baskets (the hala), making cloth (the kapa), and for making canoes and bowls (the kou tree). A NTBG volunteer was available in this part of the garden to answer questions and give more information about these plants.

Coconut palm *Cocos nucifera*

Lawa'i River runs through the McBryde Garden

Speaking of Polynesian imports, we learned subsequent to our visit in the Gardens, that Polynesians also brought in pigs and chickens. Both have had significant effects on Kauai as chickens are now protected, and they wander at will all over the island. You can hear the roosters crowing at all hours of the day and night. Broods follow hens through parking lots and shopping centers. As for the pigs, Kauai now has over 300,000 wild boars! With a population of 60,000, this makes 5 boar for every man, woman and child. They are as big a menace on Kauai as here in Texas.

As for cuisine, very few restaurants feature chicken on the menu. We did find one restaurant that offered wild boar. It was quite tasty, and we were thrilled to try a local food. But our waitress explained that the wild boar they serve is flown in from California where it is farm raised!

All in all, the McBryde Garden was a highlight of our trip. It is one of three National Tropical Botanical Gardens on Kauai. For more information on the NTBG, visit their website at www.ntbg.org.

Gardening Tips

Winola VanArtsdalen

Tips for April

Planning and Maintenance

Be sure you have a minimum 1" compost and 2" mulch on beds, as well as 1/2" to 1" top dressing on lawn areas.

Trimming and Planting

Trim spring blooming shrubs and trees after bloom.

Divide fall blooming perennials. You can still plant Swiss chard, a beautiful, edible addition to your landscape. If you choose to plant portulaca, marigolds, zinnia, coleus, periwinkle and caladium bulbs, now is the time, but remember that native plants are both the easy on the gardener and earth friendly choice. Coreopsis, purple coneflower, Esperanza, Pride of Barbados and *Salvia greggi* are examples of natives that give beautiful summer color. Mexican mint marigold and asters are lovely fall bloomers, and Gulf Muhly grass will be beautiful in the fall, as well.

Watering

How much water is enough? Soak soil 4-6". To check irrigation systems, consider you need about 1" per week. If you have a sprinkler system, put out straight sided containers i.e. tuna cans, cake layer pans and run sprinkler. See how long it takes to accumulate 1" of water. Then divide that time by 2 and set sprinkler system for flowerbeds to run that length of time twice a week. You should water your lawn even less often. If you run more often for less time, you will have weak, shallow root system and make it more difficult for your plants to survive a drought. Also, consider that you want to avoid runoff. Watch to see how long, but usually you cannot run your sprinkler over ten minutes without having runoff, less time if there is a slope. In one part of my yard, I only run sprinklers 4 minutes at a time. Set sprinklers to alternate on for a period of minutes and then off for an hour, then on again until soil can hold water and there is no runoff.

Do you have areas of lawn that could be converted to more earth friendly flower beds? Do you have an area where there is not enough sun for healthy grass? Consider an herbal lawn. Creeping thyme, (not usually the variety used in cooking), is evergreen, grows fast and is cold tolerant. Mine is thriving here in my shady backyard.

The County Extension Office has a Lawn Maintenance Program sheet available on the wall outside the office. There is detailed information on this sheet regarding treatments for disease problems, fertilizing and mowing for each type of grass. It advises to fertilize Bermuda grass and St. Augustine grass lawns in late March to early April and Buffalo and Zoysia in late April to early May.

Weeds

To control weeds, keep soil covered with mulch. A covering that blocks daylight inhibits growth underneath it. It's critical to keep weeds away from seedlings just emerging, as they cannot afford to lose nutrients to weeds. Dig weeds now to keep them from causing multiple problems next year. If you see a weed, and you cannot dig it right then, at least pick off the seed-head.

Pests

Watch for aphids and use a hard water spray or insecticidal soap to eliminate.

For beetles, I keep a spray bottle with mixture of hand dishwashing detergent in water ready to pick up whenever I go into yard. This spray will dehydrate insects' exoskeleton.

Tips for May

Bed prep, planting and maintenance

If you have not done so, add several inches of mulch to reduce weeds, water needed, and to protect roots from high temperatures.

Hopefully, you are now being rewarded for your careful pruning in late March with your plants showing new vigor. You can now add colorful annuals along with hot weather plants such as basil and Mexican mint marigold. Try more than one kind of

basil, as you will find many varieties from the sweet to spicy, and some containing lemon or citrus oil. Do not let basil bloom that you plan for culinary use. When producing flowers and seeds, they are not producing the essential oils in the leaves that flavor food.

Pinch back asters, chrysanthemums and other plants where you want to encourage branching.

Once bulbs die back with yellow leaves so you know all nutrition went back to the bulb, then you can cut back.

Brighten your landscape with a tropical vine such as mandevilla in a container for blooms summer through fall. It will need a trellis, and you will have to bring it in this winter for protection, but the color will be worth your effort.

Container plants should be repotted with fresh, clean potting soil. Trim back roots of plants you want to stay in same size containers. If you add some expanded shale to potting soil to give better drainage, they will need watering less often. Sounds too good to be true, but I have tried it and it works!

Lawns

Be sure you are leaving grass clippings on lawn. Spread 1/4" to 1/2" high quality top dressing on lawn spring and fall. It will both give you deeper roots and reduce water needs.

Monthly, inspect your irrigation system for leaks, clogged emitters and cracked sprinkler heads. Water is a precious, threatened resource, and we must all do our part to preserve it. Remember that if you water more deeply, less often, your plants, including grass, will develop deeper roots and be better prepared to withstand drought.

Check to be sure that you are watering 4-6" deep. (Push a spade into the soil to measure how deeply the soil was moistened. You can tell because the spade will go through wet soil quickly and easily.) Research shows watering more deeply less often will make healthier plants and use less water.

Pests/diseases

Watch for spider mites. High pressure water sprays will often reduce mite populations. If not, spider mites hate seaweed, so try foliar feeding with seaweed in early morning. I have not yet tried it, but friends tell me aphids also hate seaweed.

Happy Gardening!

St. Richard's Gardens in Bloom



The gardens at St. Richard's Episcopal Church in Round Rock are thriving under the care and maintenance of Master Gardeners. The roses are blooming profusely. What a beautiful spot to relax or meditate. Visit soon!

Photos by Byron Stephens

Discovery Gardeners of Hutto

Patsy Bredahl

The JMG group, held at Discovery United Methodist Church of Hutto, ran from September 15, 2010—March 15, 2011. Several of the children from last year wanted to come back. In order for them not to be bored with the same curriculum, I decided to teach from the Golden Ray Series, "Health and Nutrition from the Garden". I believe we were the first group from Williamson County to teach from that book. I highly recommend it. In addition to gardening, the children learned about planning meals based on a well balanced diet. We had a class on shopping economically for different sized families. We had one class where the children made coleslaw from the cabbage and carrots that they grew. In another class they cooked a complete meal including a meat and vegetable dish plus a fruit salad.



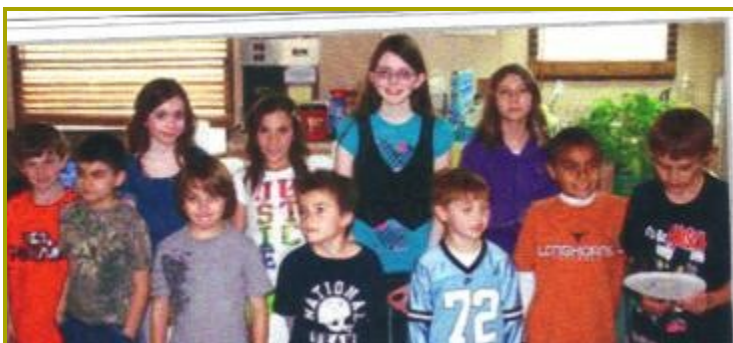
JoAnne Dietrich was my co-teacher. I know she would agree with me that we had as much fun as the children did. As anyone who has ever worked with children knows, the teacher learns a lot from the students. Often we would think that they were not listening, but then when asked, they would know the answer. They were a very energetic group, so weather permitting, we ways tried to spend part of the class in the garden.

Several have asked if they could be in the class again next year. I have invited them to

take turns helping with the class next year since the older ones could probably teach class.



The pictures were taken the last day of class. As you can see, there is a wide range of ages. There are two first graders, two second graders, one third grader, four fourth graders, one fifth grader, and one seventh grader. The older children helped the younger ones a lot. Several were siblings. Somehow it worked well. I know JoAnne will agree—they were all good kids and that is what JMG is about - GROWING GOOD KIDS!



Spring at Discovery United Methodist



Spring has arrived at Discovery United Methodist Church of Hutto. Thanks to several Master Gardeners, Interns, and Church Members, it is almost weed free and well-groomed.



Commemorative stone for Harry and Jackie Hanson who donated the ten acres where the Church is located

Photos by Patsy Bredahl

Get Your Feet Not



Williamson County Master Gardeners celebrated a successful Garden Fair April 2, 2011.





Photos by Grace Bryce and Janet White

Williamson County Master Gardener Officers for 2010

Officers:

Janet Church, President	churchjanet362mg@gmail.com	(512) 585-0996
Ed Myatt, Vice-President	emtatt@suddenlink.net	(512) 240-4493
Linda Zazula, Secretary	mgzazula@gmail.com	(512) 240-5139
Janet White, Treasurer	phillipsjs@sbcglobal.net	(512) 255-7672
Winola Van Artsdalen, Past President	jimwin@verizon.net	(512) 863-4923

Standing Committees/Chairpersons:

Programs/Education	Grace Bryce	bryce.grace84@gmail.com	(512) 868-9191
Communications	Clyde Adley	cadley+mg@gmail.com	
Membership/Volunteer Opportunities	Brenda McIndoo	airedale98@gmail.com	(512) 868-9212
Awards	Norma Beissner	norma@beissner.org	(512) 535-6584
Class Training/Facilitation	JoAnne Dieterich	crdieterich@yahoo.com	(512) 778-6690
JMG Coordinator	Carol Hoke	carolhoke@gmail.com	(512) 869-1948
Fund Raising	Kris Stanley	kstanley16@austin.rr.com	(512) 258-9078
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