

Williamson County Master Gardener Journal

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Dedicated to growing with Williamson County

MAY/JUNE 2012

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The President's Corner

Grace Bryce

Hi Everyone,

Spring has come and gone, and we have been blessed with more rain than 2011 ever saw. I must say I've enjoyed seeing green instead of brown. The vegetable gardens sure are happy. I'm hopeful that this summer will not be as dry or as hot as last summer.

As many of you know, Dustin Coufal, our County Extension Agent left us as of June 8th. I appreciate the support he has given WCMGA during the year and a half he's been our CEA, and we wish him the best. We will miss him.

We have several Master Gardeners who have completed specialist trainings. Please congratulate our new specialists:

Jessica Woods - JMG Specialist

Cindy Stone - JMG Specialist

Marlyn Hooper - Plant Propagation Specialist

Liz Grieder - Vegetable Specialist

Sandra Pikoff - Rainwater Harvesting Specialist

Janet White- Rainwater Harvesting Specialist and Oak Wilt Specialist

Congratulations are also in order for our JMG people! They won 4 out of 6 awards from the state this year. I'm so proud of all of our JMG groups and leaders and the amazing job you have done in Williamson County.

Here are the awards:

The Williamson County Junior Master Gardener Program received the JMG County Program of the Year.

Chase Heffernan of the Georgetown 4H JMG received the Junior Master Gardener of the Year.

Hutto Discovery Church, led by Patsy Bredahl, received the JMG Group of the Year Award.

The JMG Extension Educator of the Year Award is given to an individual who has facilitated the development and implementation of the JMG program throughout the county. We are proud to say that Carol Hoke received this award.

Volunteer opportunities are growing along with our volunteer numbers. I still need a "Go To" person for equipment; a point person for the Help Desk, and we need to identify a couple of Garden Fair coordinators for 2013. If you are interested in any of these jobs, please let me know.

Thank you all for all you do! What a wonderful group we have!

Grace



April and May In the Demo Garden

Chuck McKelley

April in the Garden

We had a great Spring Fair in March, and many of the visitors toured the vegetable demonstration garden. The demo garden crew had a great time talking with the visitors and answering questions about vegetable gardening in Williamson County. We had a bit of excitement too. It seems that a rattlesnake decided that the culinary herb bed would be a great place for a Saturday afternoon sunbath. We called the sheriff to take care of the critter, but by the time the deputies arrived the snake had found a good hiding place and refused to come out. So we are a bit wary when we work in the garden these days.



We harvested asparagus for most of the month of April, but when we reached the point where three-quarters of the spears were 3/8-in in diameter or less we stopped harvesting and let the plants “fern out”. We won't harvest anymore until next year.

Most of the raised beds have been switched over to late spring and summer veggies. For the most part that means tomatoes, peppers, eggplants, tomatillos, squash and beans. We planted many varieties of tomatoes, quite a few varieties of peppers and eggplants and two varieties of tomatillos from transplants the first week in March. We planted yellow squash as well as several types of patty pan and zucchini from seed at about the same time, and we had had so much rain that the plants grew rapidly with an abundance of squash.



This year we decided to demonstrate growing veggies in containers because many of the garden visitors say that they would like to grow vegetables but lack the space for a dedicated vegetable garden. The container plants are doing well for the most part. One of them is a bit unusual. We have two small varieties of determinate tomatoes growing in a bag of composed cow manure. We punched several drainage holes in one side of the bag and cut two holes in the other side in which to plant the tomatoes. We added a tablespoon of Epsom salts to each plant to provide the magnesium that the compost lacks and placed a tomato cage between them for support. So far they are doing well, and we are looking forward to harvesting some compost tomatoes later in the season.

We have several types of perennials growing in the veggie demo garden. They include blackberries and globe artichokes. Blackberries grow wild in central Texas, and the climate and soil here is somewhat similar to that of the area around the Mediterranean where globe artichokes are native. So both of them do well here.



The row garden is where we grow vegetables with a fairly long shelf life that can be donated to food banks and similar organizations. Right now we have potatoes and onions that will be ready for harvest before too long. We also have planted some beans and squash. Soon we will plant southern peas in the space that was planted with green manure over the winter. We have some tomatoes planted in the row garden as well. They're a little more perishable than the rest of the row garden veggies, but vegetable gardeners always want to grow tomatoes.

May in the Garden

May was a month of maintenance and harvest in the veggie garden. A lot of the team's time was spent feedin', weedin' and waterin'. Many of the plants in the vegetable garden went through a vigorous growth spurt in the early part of the month so we fed them frequently with a liquid fertilizer that contains fish oil emulsion, seaweed extract and molasses. The first two are there to feed the plants and the last is to feed the microbes that live in the soil and make the nutrients available in a form that the plants can use. Many seeds that were planted early in the month, like beans and squash, have sprouted and needed to be hand-watered frequently for the first week until their roots system had grown mature enough so that they could reach the water delivered by our network drip irrigation lines. Some plants, such as the herbs, tomatoes and tomatillos, are growing so rapidly that they have to be trimmed back nearly weekly.

We harvested fruit and vegetables all month too. The strawberries have been fruiting, and the blackberries are producing fruit now too. We have also harvested a lot of squash, cucumbers and onions over the last couple of weeks and a few tomatoes and peppers as well.





Many folks are not aware of the fact that, in addition to the raised vegetables beds, we also maintain a row garden which produces vegetables for donation to area food banks and similar organizations. During May we donated over 100 pounds of green beans, squash and potatoes to The Caring Place in Georgetown. We will soon have onions to donate as well. In addition, we tilled the green manure under in May and expanded the row garden so that we could plant Southern peas, pumpkins and watermelon.

The warmer weather of May brought insect problems to the garden to a greater degree than that which we experienced during the cooler months. Our squash has been killed back a good bit by squash bugs, which are a problem on all types of squash, cucumbers and other related vegetables. We have been combating them with a spray consisting mostly of water with a little bit of dish soap and canola oil. It is not harmful to the plants, or those who eat them, but it does the squash bugs in quickly. We have also been plagued by cucumber beetles. Unfortunately, they are harder to kill in an environmentally-friendly manner.

We've done a bit of experimenting in the vegetable garden, and May has shown us what has worked and what hasn't. We have three beds that are intended to be easier to use for those with physical disabilities. One of them is constructed of concrete blocks. We don't have any irrigation running to the little pockets in the concrete blocks that make up the walls of the bed, but we planted parsnips in them, just to see if they would grow. That experiment didn't work out so well. We got really nice parsnip tops, but no roots to speak of. So we pulled those out and replanted the pockets with santolina and Blackfoot daisies, both of which are xeriscape plants and can deal with the lack of water. They won't produce anything to eat, but they make the bed look nicer. We also have a planting table designed to meet the Americans with Disabilities Act requirements for wheelchair knee space. That hasn't worked real well either. We will refill the table with a planting medium that holds water better than the current one and then replant to see what happens. One experiment which turned out well involved growing tomatoes in a bag of composted cow manure supplemented by a little bit of Epson salts to add magnesium. We had seen this on the web site of a manure provider and thought we'd see if we could duplicate their results. So far I'd have to say that it has been very successful as we have harvested a couple of handfuls of Sprite grape tomatoes from one of the plants, and the other one has tomatoes which are beginning to ripen too.



We will continue to maintain the garden and harvest vegetables throughout the coming month. Master gardeners will be in the demo garden every Tuesday morning, weather permitting, from 9:00 to 11:00. The garden, which is on the north side of the Williamson County Extension Office at 3151 SE Innerloop Road in Georgetown, is open to the public. Anyone is welcome to stop by to check out the garden or to ask gardening questions of the veggie garden team.

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.

Gardening Tips for June

Winola VanArtsdalen

We are just a blink away from the high heat of July and August, so be sure to take time to count your garden blessings this month! The gardening process itself is enjoyable, but take the time to step back, take a deep breath, and just enjoy the results of your labor.

Landscape planting/maintenance:

Be sure everything is mulched, ready for the July/August heat blast. Mulch improves the soil texture, adds nutrients as it breaks down, and keeps out weeds.

Water more deeply, less frequently. Water your lawn and garden when needed to prevent plant stress, which should not be more than once a week. Soak soil to a depth of 4" in flower beds and turf 6-8". Water in the early morning to avoid disease problems.

You can still plant hot weather "color" such as sunflowers, cosmos, and Blackfoot daisies checking daily for needed water/protection until established. Summer bulbs can be planted until July 1.

If you are saving flower seeds, remember to choose from your best specimens. Keep seeds dry and at an even temperature.

"Deadhead" or remove seed structures and cut back annuals and perennials to promote reblooming.

Weeds are going to seed right now, too, so water the night before and get out there early to pull/dig.

Oak wilt warning: From February to July is the worst time to prune oak trees, as conditions are best for spread of the fungus by the nitidulid beetle. At any time of year, remember that wounds, any size, must be painted immediately.

Turf:

Check lawns for insect activity.

Watch for chinch bug damage (usually brown irregular patches in full sun area). Check for tiny insects in nearby area still green.

Insects/disease:

Watch for powdery mildew. Control with an approved fungicide or remove infected plants.

Grasshoppers: Chemical spray strong enough to kill grasshoppers will kill everything. It is best to use Nolo bait or use row cover to protect plants from them.

White flies: You will know you have white flies when you touch a plant and tiny flies fly out. They spread quickly from an infected plant, so it is best to inspect new plants and isolate until you are sure they are clean. Inspect all plants regularly and remove by hand older leaves heavily infected. White flies have developed resistance to some chemicals and usually require repeated applications. You can try neem oil or insecticidal soap, carefully following directions on package.

Landscape Planning: Start planning for fall landscape changes. Poorly adapted plants – get rid of them! I had an ornamental pear tree removed for just this reason. There too many wonderful native/adapted plants to waste time and resources with these ill-adapted specimens.

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.

Round Rock Farmers Market

Janet White

It's a lazy, sunny Saturday at the Round Rock Farmers Market. This long established market which formerly met in the parking garage downtown has grown in the number of vendors; these same farmers now join ranks on the Scott White parking lot on University Saturday mornings from 9 a.m. to 12 noon. WCMGA mans a space there on 2nd and 4th Saturdays. Brochures were made available to interested patrons who liked to stop by and talk about the success or lack there of in their own gardens. It was a fun, interesting morning.



The vendors are area farmers with picture quality produce freshly harvested. This market saw more varieties of beets, carrots, eggplant and heirloom tomatoes to tempt the palate. Shallots and onions of all colors were still dressed in shiny, dry skins just waiting for the chopping block. Bring your own bags and take home farm fresh produce.

Other products are becoming plentiful at the market, as well. You'll see everything from handmade soaps, fresh eggs to range fed beef cuts. Even the tamale vendor has a variety of tamales available for purchase. The bread vendor offers tasty samples of his wares, with sweet, chocolate, cherry bread to savory pepper, parmesan loaf. The berry vendors offered colorful selections of jellies and jams. Hmm . . . can't you taste the jams and jellies on that freshly made bread? Now where's that freshly brewed cup of java!

It was a fun 3 hour session, and the only thing lacking was a fiddler making music. I'm sure that will be coming soon. Cat McGrath has organized this effort and welcomes you to sign up and show up for a pleasant, mellow Saturday morning.



Berry Springs Park and Preserve News

Susan Blackledge and Alicia Shamblin

Harvesting Bluebonnet Seeds

Oh What A Beautiful Morning(s), on Tuesday & Thursday, May 1st & 3rd, 2012, when we gathered together to harvest bluebonnet seeds to nurture during the coming summer months and plant in the Fall. The seeds will be planted on the new Nature Trail that is being developed on the west side of IH35. Alice George, a neighbor graciously allowed us to harvest on her land.



Left to right front: Judy Currier, A.J. Senchack, Cindy Stone, Grace Bulgerin, Sterlin Barton GWMN, Alicia Shamblin, Cathy Sariego; left to right back: Carrie Pitt, Robert Hoehn GWMN intern, Merrilyn Barton.
No tea or coffee.....Just flowing happiness as we worked and enjoyed friendly conversations. Volunteers not pictured Sabra Brown, Raymond Wahrenbrock, Linda Reed, and Angelica Fuller.

Rain Water Harvesting

Adrian Grimmatt (Crew Leader), Mike Harper (pictured in photo on the left), Carol Parsonage, Janet White, Susan Blackledge recently completed the rain water harvest project. Adrian accepted to lead and complete the project that had been started last year. He overcame obstacles to take the barrels off of the Park Office porch and then designed, built and painted a new deck to support the two rain barrels. He restructured the rain gutters and installed gravity flow sprinkler heads to water the front beds. It took lots of muscle, brainpower, serious diligence, but the work is done. Much learning occurred. Thanks to all for doing this work for Berry Springs Park.



Some lessons learned: Plan before starting; Always glue and seal PVC pipe. Use a source of water with good water pressure to check the operation of the dripline; Water tight connections need a good mechanical seal and can not rely on RTV alone. A serious problem with the initial installation were the leaks that were occurring where the two barrels were connected at the bottom. This problem was resolved by adding a rubber sheet gasket to the outside of each barrel at the connection point. Doing this provided enough additional pressure to stop the leaks.

WILLIAMSON COUNTY NAMES NEW DONKEY “AMIGO”

In case you haven't heard, Amigo is the name chosen for Williamson County's newest donkey who resides with half-brother, Poco, at Berry Springs Park and Preserve. The name for the one-year-old donkey was first submitted by Adrian Grimmert of Georgetown. Williamson County Parks and Recreation received approximately 200 name suggestions for the donkey, and park staff felt Amigo, which means friend, best fit his friendly personality.

Mr. Grimmert is quite familiar with the park and its resident donkeys as he is a Master Gardener who has volunteered his time at the park since last fall. The Master Gardeners volunteer at the park planting flower beds, pulling weeds and doing other gardening tasks. For being first to submit the winning name, he received a free camping certificate for one weekend (subject to availability) which includes two nights, one campsite, one bundle of firewood, and a bag of carrots to feed the donkeys.

Berry Springs Park and Preserve is located on 300 acres off of C.R. 152 north of Georgetown. The park features a playscape, a large picnic pavilion, a birthday pavilion, fishing, camping and miles of hike and bike trails. For more information, visit <http://parks.wilco.org>.



The East Texas Arboretum and Botanical Society

Chuck McKelley

Recently my wife and I made a trip to the East Texas Arboretum and botanical garden (<http://www.eastexasarboretum.org/>) in Athens.

The arboretum is composed of over 100, mostly wooded, acres. The woodland area contains over two miles of hiking trails. In addition there is a beautiful botanical garden with formal and informal garden areas, a pond, a historic house and several other buildings.



The botanical garden contains many varieties of plants, quite a few of them native to the East Texas area. Although none of the gardens were designated as a formal butterfly garden, many of them contain both wildflowers and cultivated varieties that seem to draw butterflies.



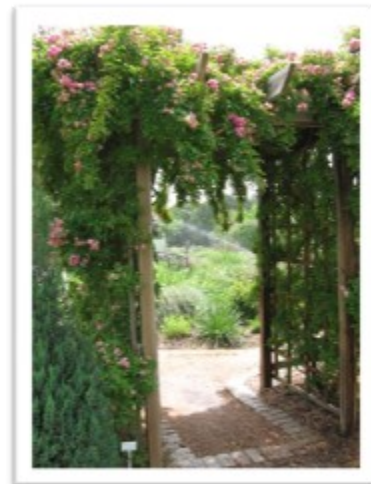
The landscaping includes some rolling hills and the meandering paths in the botanical garden abound with beautiful vistas and “Kodak moments”.

One of the interesting items on the grounds of the botanical garden is the Bushrod W. J. Wofford house, a restored 1850 dogtrot-style house that is listed in the National Registry of Historic Buildings. The house was moved to the botanical garden site from elsewhere in Henderson County. Today it is used as museum and to showcase a typical 1850's kitchen garden.



One part of the botanical garden that I found especially interesting was the Henderson County Master Gardeners “Dream Garden”.

The sign says that the purpose of the Dream Garden is to “demonstrate, research, educate, apply and maintain”. I found this to be interesting in light of our desire to expand our own demonstration garden. The Dream Garden is entered through a rose-covered arbor.



Although the Dream garden contains mostly flowers and does not have an extensive vegetable garden as our own demonstration garden does, it is very nicely landscaped and well-planted and is a beautiful sight to behold.

Athens is about a three-hour trip from Georgetown; close enough for a long day trip but even better for a weekend trip. It is located not far from the Cedar Creek Reservoir recreational area and the Canton First Monday Trade Days. The East Texas Arboretum and Botanical Society site is less than five minutes from the square in downtown Athens. It is open seven days a week except when there are special events being held there. Summer hours are 7:30 AM to 7:30 PM. Fall and winter hours are 8:00 AM to 6:00 PM. There is a two dollar charge for each person over twelve years old.

Williamson County JMG Recognized

Carol Hoke

On Friday, May 4, 2012, Williamson County Junior Master Gardeners were awarded four of six possible 2012 awards at the state Master Gardener Meeting in San Antonio, Texas. During an award luncheon, Karin Wallace, with Texas AgriLife Extension Service, Department of Horticultural Services at Texas A & M, reported the results of the panel of judges. The following awards were presented along with brief comments made about each recipient:

Junior Master Gardener of the Year: Chase Heffernan. Chase has been involved in 4H for several years, and the JMG curriculum ignited a passion in him for learning more about horticulture. Not only does Chase have a hunger for information, but he is quick to assimilate it and help others learn as well. He is a leader; works well with his peers and enjoys educating those younger than him. He has been certified as a Junior Master Gardener and is working on certification as a Junior Wildlife Gardener. Chase has built two raised beds at Ford Elementary School to meet the requirements of his Eagle Scout Project. He meets weekly with children in the after school program teaching them to care for the garden. For the past two years he has been in the 4H JMG program led by Carol Hoke.





Group of the Year: Discovery Gardeners Golden Ray, Hutto, group leader Patsy Bredahl.

Discovery Gardeners have a passion for learning about gardening, nutrition, and being good citizens through volunteering in their community. This group has been involved with working in the community with their service at the community garden, working with other youth at Hutto's second Saturday and the Farmer's Market.

The group leader is Patsy Bredahl. Patsy is an incredible and innovative mentor for the JMG program and youth. She is always expanding the opportunities not only in the group settings but in the community at large so that the youth can visualize and appreciate the concepts of gardening.

JMG Extension Educator of the Year: Carol Hoke, Williamson County. Carol became a certified JMG specialist in 2011, and has led the JMG group for two years. She spearheaded a training of 23 Williamson County teacher/leaders, giving a two day class to further their knowledge of the JMG Program and to formulate ideas to obtain funding and volunteer support from the Williamson County Master Gardeners. She held the first JMG spring break camp with over 30 students participating throughout Williamson County. She has worked with the Williamson County Native Plant Society to provide two grants to local schools to provide funds for planting native plants and gardens.

Carol sets an example for all of the youth by treating them with respect and through her demeanor shows them that adults are concerned about them and their future.



JMG County/Community Program of the Year: Williamson County Junior Master Gardener Program, Williamson County, Texas.

The Williamson County JMG Program has been in existence since 2007. The program has impacted approximately 600 youth through their programming efforts. The JMG committee works tirelessly to promote gardening for youth whether they are in the traditional school setting, home schoolers, or 4H clubs. They have participated in a number of science fairs and educational days throughout the school year.

Through the work of the JMG committee, all schools in the Round Rock ISD will have JMG curriculum in their schools beginning in the 2012-2013 school year; for a total of 32 schools!

We are so excited to receive these awards and want to say a special thanks to all the Master Gardeners. Each and every one of you that has participated in a JMG activity, takes a part of these awards with you and hopefully you will feel as much pride and excitement as each of the award winners.



Williamson County Master Gardener Officers for 2012

Officers:

Grace Bryce, President	bryce.grace84@gmail.com	(512) 868-9191
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Winola Van Artsdalen, Past President	jimwin@verizon.net	(512) 863-4923

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