

# Williamson County Master Gardener Journal

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From the Williamson County Extension Agent

## Amazing Accomplishments A. Zan Matthies Jr., M.S.

Master Gardeners,

I apologize for missing the monthly meeting held on February 20, but I was involved with another educational program on that night. I did have an opportunity to visit with the Executive Board during their scheduled meeting prior to the monthly meeting. I would like to bring you up to date on what I discussed.

First, I would like to say I am very proud of the accomplishments of the Williamson County Master Gardener Association. In 2007, the program was initiated and trained its first class. In addition we developed a number of program activities based on localized issues of Williamson County. These include community outreach, development of a Junior Master Gardener Program, and developing a network of partnerships with other organizations. These are great accomplishments and your story needs to be told. This leads me to discuss a new medium of communication for us to be able to tell the story of the Williamson County Master Gardener Association. I have developed a spreadsheet for use by you to help us tell our story. This accountability process is currently under review by the Executive Board and will be tested by selected members. After we have determined it is the instrument we want to use, a training will be conducted at our next monthly meeting.

Second, advanced educational opportunities. In May, we will have the opportunity to tour the Dell Diamond Infield with the grounds keeper. I have been informed they completely replaced the infield and would be happy to give a tour to the Williamson County Master Gardeners. I will have this tour scheduled by late March.

Finally, I would like to congratulate each of you who has completed your certification requirements and are now Williamson County Master Gardeners. As always, feel free to contact me anytime with any questions or concerns you may have.

Zan

## June 11-14, 2008 - Junior Master Gardener Specialist Training



Williamson County Extension  
Williamson County Master Gardeners

### A Date to Remember

Please save the date of June 11-14,08. Junior Master Gardener Specialty Training will be held at the Williamson County Extension Office in Georgetown, Texas. Costs are being calculated and an application will be available soon.

Contact: Neil Cochran, JMG Coordinator Williamson County

## Monthly Meetings

**Williamson County Master Gardeners hold monthly meetings at the Williamson County Extension Office, 3151 SE Innerloop Road, Suite A, Georgetown on the third Wednesday of each month at 6:00pm. Master Gardeners and the public are welcome to attend.**

### A Master Gardener's Musings

## You're A Garden Artist

**Gaye Kriegel**

Perhaps you've never thought of yourself as an artist. I'd like to convince you otherwise and show you how your yard is like a canvas and plants are the pieces of your collage. The result incorporates the elements and principles of art that apply to beautiful paintings, decorating, and yes, even gardens.

Let's begin by reviewing what every first year art student learns: the elements and principles of art. Then we'll go one step further and learn how they relate to gardening. You needn't be frightened. Most likely, you have innately been influenced by this information whether you could articulate the verbiage or not. And before you mutter about artistic freedom and resisting rules, please take the time to understand these guidelines before you consider breaking them. There are reasons why they have existed for centuries.

**Key Point:** Use the elements of art to express the principles of art.

The artist chooses elements of perhaps paint, paper, or clay and arranges them into artwork, whereas the garden artist chooses specific elements or features of perhaps flowers, trees, or rocks and then arranges them based on the same principles of art to ensure a successful, beautiful, memorable result.

Principles of Art	Applied to Gardening
Shape – two dimensional outline of an object	Consider the silhouette of a plant: conical, weeping, upright, spreading, rounded
Form – three dimensional totality of a shape encompassing its volume, mass.	Study a plant’s mature width, height, and circumference. Form can also be open like a climbing rose or dense like a cypress.
Line – a continuous mark, sometimes an outline; can be an actual physical line or an implied line that draws the eye between objects	Most likely your house has angular lines that can be softened with gently curved lines of foundation planting beds. Driveways, sidewalks, and fences are other obvious physical lines to design around.
Color – consists of three parts: hue or name of the color, intensity or strength of the color, and value or lightness/darkness of the color	Every principle of art can be expressed through the use of color in the garden!
Texture – how it feels; perhaps smooth or rough, slick or sharp	What delight plants provide in their variety of texture from glass-like pigeonberries, to fuzzy lamb’s ear, to the rough bark of an oak tree.
Space – distance around an object or in between objects, negative space	We must plan ahead not only for the mature size (space required) for a plant but its planting distance (negative space required) from other plants, houses, sidewalks, fences, neighbors, and power lines.
Value – lightness or darkness	You’ll achieve more visual impact by including value change in your yard by having light, bright areas and well as cool, shady areas.
Emphasis – having one or more points of particular interest or focal points that attract attention	If everything in the yard attracted the same amount of attention, it would be boring. A focal point could be a water feature, arbor, sculpture, or a striking plant.
Balance – Stability is produced by the even distribution of visual weight where no one thing is overpowering. Whether symmetrical or asymmetrical, there is the illusion of equality.	If you had 3 mid-size trees planted to the left of your house and no trees to the right of your house, there would be a visual imbalance. Balance could be obtained by repeating 3 mid-size trees on the right (symmetry) or by planting 1 large tree on the right (asymmetry).

Principles of Art	Applied to Gardening
Movement –Directs the eye	Create enough visual intrigue that not only do someone’s eyes get enticed into the garden but they can’t help but walk in to explore.
Rhythm – repeating elements such as shapes or colors or lines	You can help fill your space and create visual impact, yet avoid too much confusion, by repeating elements. For example, repeat space by planting a row of crape myrtles, repeat color by choosing 5 different plants that all bloom red, or repeat form with a mass planting of a dozen liriopse.
Variety – differences created through various elements such as different forms or different sizes; breaks repetition	Your garden is exciting when there are a variety of plants to attract attention. Too much of even a desirable plant can be boring, but with so many extraordinary plants to choose from, this should never be an issue. It is particularly easy to choose plants with a variety of form and color.
Proportion – relationship of objects to each other by relative size	A common oversight to yards is having tall trees and low-growing flowers or shrubs with no relationship in between. Easy remedies include small trees like yau-pon, mountain laurel, and loquat; larger bushes like beauty berry, desert willow, and pomegranate; or by growing vines on trellises.
Contrast – opposing elements such as light to dark, rough to smooth, or opposing colors on a color wheel	Any contrast attracts attention. Contrast adds interest and excitement but should still fit comfortably into the whole. For example, a white stone Victorian sculpture is excellent contrast with formally groomed hedges and although it would also contrast with desert cactus, a better choice there would be a skull.
Unity or harmony – when all parts work together; perception that all elements relate or fit together, like a puzzle.	By the time you’ve applied all the other art principles to your decision-making, rest assured you will have a garden of harmony that we’d all like to visit.

To explore each element and principle of art fully would fill a book, but I hope this article served as a brief introduction to start you thinking and applying this information to your yard, your canvas. These guidelines will help you focus your plant choices and simplify your decision-making as you assemble your collage. Most importantly: enjoy the process and remember that beauty is still in the eye of the beholder.

Native Substitutes for Invasive Plants

**Alternatives**

**Christine Powell**

I have always loved Bamboo. Obviously, as a child I thought I could have my very own bamboo grove with my very own Giant Panda—what child hasn't? However, I learnt at a very young age the problems that bamboo could present to the gardener. The garden my father looked after for a living had a very large pond. I can still see it in my mind's eye, a wonderful expanse with ducks and moorhens, songbirds and butterflies, duck weed and water-lilies... and a dense growth of bamboo around the sides. My father hated it. He fought it, a lone warrior who could never win the battle. He struggled with it every day of the fifty-plus years he worked in the same gardens. I can clearly remember his utterances every time a garden show on TV suggested someone put bamboo in a garden—I am too



*Some of the last—I hope—new shoots of bamboo (above) this week in my garden. Hopefully I can extract it without disturbing the heart-leaf scull cap and standing cypress.*

*Bamboo escaped from captivity and growing in a narrow strip of land. At least it is contained (left).*



*Now this (below) is how bamboo should be used. This was taken a few years ago at the San Diego Zoo.*



much of a lady to share them with you, but know he did not have a good word for the genus *Phyllostachys*.

In the gardens my father worked, the bamboo was a novelty put there by some long-past traveler but in recent years it has become incredibly popular with the general masses. In fact, when I moved to Georgetown sixteen years ago the house we bought had bamboo in the garden. I don't remember seeing it when we viewed the house so I think it may have been trimmed to the ground before we arrived—it was definitely there when we moved in! I think it had probably been just two small clumps when originally planted but when we moved in it was spreading. Through the years we cut it, dug it, or just ignored it. Nothing worked well but we thought we at least had a hold on it.

A few years ago we brought a piece of land, sight unseen, behind our house. When we eventually managed to venture onto our new expanded lot we saw just how the bamboo had expanded. It was

formidable. Nothing less than a machete was enough to brandish a trail through it—and sometimes that wasn't enough. It had crept over the hillside and into the rock crevices and was moving across the meadow. The only reason it hadn't taken over Georgetown like kudzu ate the South was that my neighbor with access had been mowing it down on all the flat bits. The job now fell to me to tackle it. And I have. It has taken me several years but I think this year will be its last. I said that last year but apparently I lied. This will be its last! How have I got rid of it? Cutting, pulling, digging, and, oh yes, a lot of those same utterances my father used!

So what is it about bamboo that makes people plant it even after they have been warned? Do they really think a leopard changes its spots? No, they just really cannot believe it can be that bad. Believe me, it can.

Golden bamboo and other invasive bamboos are perennial reed-like plants that can reach heights of 16 to 40 feet. The canes (stems) are hollow with solid joints

and can be one to six inches in diameter. Plants arise from branched rhizomes. Infestations are commonly found around old homesites but rapidly expand in size. Bamboo can form dense, sterile, monocultures thickets that displace native species and once established, it is difficult to remove. As we all know bamboo is native to China. It was first introduced into America in 1882 in Alabama for ornamental purposes. Luckily, it rarely flowers or seeds or the problem could be far, far worse.

*Phyllostachys* is one of the strongest and most useful. Growing rigidly upright, this bamboo is one of the best for hedges and for planting next to driveways and walkways. It will basically grow in any soil and most conditions.

To remove, cut plants as close to the ground as possible and repeat for several growing seasons as plants resprout. Eventually, the energy in the rhizomes is exhausted. However, I have found this isn't enough. You need to dig and remove all the roots. If you must plant then it is recommended you use a three-foot deep barrier enclosing the plant to prevent it spreading. Good luck with that!

So what is the alternative? I have two but there honestly isn't anything else like bamboo for that totally dense barrier. These are prettier and will keep the wildlife happy but if you really love the idea of gardening with a machete these are not for you.

*Muhlenbergia dumosa*; Bamboo Muhly, provides a totally unique look for the garden. The chartreuse, very finely textured foliage creates a soft, billowy appearance, providing a wonderful foil for bold succulents and cacti but is just as happy in the back of a border. It is these fern-like leaves and a lacy texture giving it a bamboo look, hence the common name. It is a fast growing warm season perennial grass native to Southern Arizona and NW Mexico and is considered an evergreen, as it retains its leaves down to the mid 20sF. The growth habit is upward to slightly



arching, and it can attain a height of three to six feet tall making it a good substitute for bamboo. You will not miss the runners. Bamboo Muhly will tolerate some drought but looks its best on a moist well-drained soil. Although flowering in the spring, the flowers are not ornamental like others in this genus. This is an excellent grass to use as a backdrop, a specimen, or in a container. Happy in full sun or light shade, it is originally from an altitude of seven to eight thousand feet. This one is non-invasive because it is a clumper and spreads very slowly from underground rhizomes; it does not seed well but it can be propagated from seeds or by division. Bamboo Muhly is fast growing, as well as drought, insect, and deer resistant. The bamboo muhly is also a great place for butterflies to hide from predators. In my book, that makes it perfect for my garden.



*Ilex vomitoria*; Yaupon holly, is a picturesque upright single- or multi-trunked shrub or small tree growing 12-25 ft high. The tiny white flowers, which appear in April and May, prove to be a favorite with insects. Female plants produce prodigious amounts of bright red persistent berries much loved by the Northern Mockingbird (amongst others). The pale gray bark is marked with white patches. The ornamental twigs with their shiny, simple, dark evergreen leaves and numerous red berries are favorite Christmas decoration. The tree can be grown as an ornamental or trimmed into a hedge. Occasionally a Yaupon holly can be found that is growing upright from the base much like the *Ilex crenata* or Japanese Sky Pencil (left). Looking much like an exclamation mark in the landscape a series of these could form a beautiful and sophisticated fence or barrier.

The leaves contain caffeine and American Indians used them to prepare a tea to induce vomiting. Tribes from the interior traveled

## Espalier

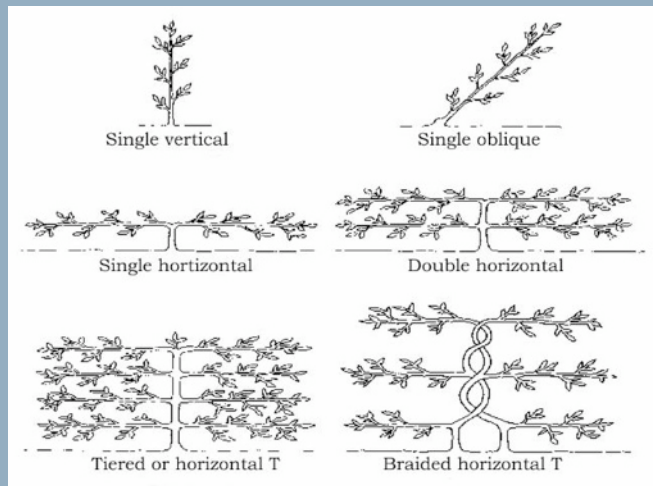
An "espalier," (pronounced "es-PAL-yer") is any plant trained to grow in a flat plane against a wall, fence, or trellis. The word espalier also may be used to describe the technique of training a plant to this flat plane. A French word, espalier is derived from the Italian spalliera, which means "something to rest the shoulder (spalla) against." The Romans originated the technique, but later generations of Europeans refined it into an exacting but rewarding art. Espalier has considerable merit in today's garden. The practice originally was used in the old world to conserve space. The English located espaliered fruit trees against a wall with a southern exposure for cold protection. Today, espaliers are used mostly for decorative accents in the landscape.

An espalier is a living sculpture in the garden and is especially effective against a blank wall to relieve the monotony of a row of shrubs. An espalier is also a good choice for a narrow area where spreading shrubs or trees cannot be easily maintained. With landscape spaces becoming smaller around single family dwellings, an espaliered plant may have considerable appeal. More than one espalier design is seldom used in a given landscape.

Courtesy of UF/IFAS <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/MG273>

(Above) Espalier fruit tree at Standen, West Sussex, England May 2006. Courtesy Graham Bould.

(Below) Espalier hedge designs. Courtesy of UF/IFAS



to the coast in large numbers each spring to partake of this tonic. Frequently found in low woods, hammocks, and sandy pinelands in East and South Central Texas, it is happy with poor drainage and can cope with most soil types. Preferring part shade, it has a low water use but likes a moist soil. The Yaupon is a very versatile plant, moderately deer resistant, and readily available. However, nursery plants are typically female (fruiting) and are propagated by cuttings. You must have both a male and female plant to have berries. The male must be the same species as the female and bloom at the same time. It is a good late winter source of food for many bird species and fruit-eating mammals. The tree is also a perfect nesting site for many small birds and a larval host for the Henrys Elfin butterfly. Although slow-growing and tending to be thick and twiggy, careful pruning creates an elegantly-shaped plant. I think it would be wonderful to try and train some Yaupons to form a narrow entwined espalier fence that could serve the purpose of bamboo... without the invasive characteristics.





## Addicted to Composting

**Patsy Bredahl**

It was in the fall of 1998 that I took up composting. Most Saturday mornings were spent watching gardening shows on HGTV and DIY. I understood that without good soil a garden was doomed to failure. What better way to achieve good soil but with compost?

I wanted to find out more about composting before I began. So I went on a search for a book on composting. There are many good books out there with a lot of good information on composting. But one book really caught my eye because of the title, "Let It Rot" by Stu Cambell. How appropriate because that is what happens when plant material decomposes. I read that book cover to cover. I'm sure I got some strange looks from people when I took it to read while waiting for an appointment. I enjoyed that book as much as any novel I'd ever read!

There are numerous methods of composting. The three bin system is probably one of the most efficient methods to

compost. The first bin holds your raw material. The second bin holds the compost material you are currently working on. When it is completely composted you place it in the third bin. This method is for someone with plenty of room plus excess energy. Since I have neither, this was not the method I chose.

I decided to go the slower way. I found a good size plastic bin that

snapped together at one of the big box stores for \$75. It wasn't too ugly and I found a place in the back corner of the yard behind the shed to hide it. With this method all I had to do was add garden waste and produce from my kitchen that was past the point of human consumption. I had to turn the pile a few times a week and keep it moist but not wet.

We had an abundance of leaves at our South Austin home. The main component of my compost was leaves for the carbon portion of my compost. For the nitrogen portion I mostly used vegetable waste from left over produce. I also used a store bought compost activator.

There are several good compost activators to help get your compost cooking. You can just leave some compost from your last batch and mix it in with your next batch. Blood Meal and animal manure are good nitrogen sources to get compost going quicker.

The recommended carbon to nitrogen mixture is 30:1. It doesn't have to be exact-after all who is going to stand there and measure everything. A general rule is that if it is breaking down too slowly, you probably have too much carbon or you are not keeping it damp enough. If it is smelly, you either have it too wet or you have too much nitrogen.

My Husband once accused me of over buying fruits and vegetables so some would be left for the com-

post bin! I don't think I ever did that but it does cut down on the guilt when the produce in the refrigerator deteriorates past recognition. It can go into the compost instead of the trash and into a landfill.

In November of 2006 we sold our house in South Austin. We had thought about simplifying and moving to an apartment. So I gave my green plastic bin to a good friend and fellow gardener.

But then we decided that apartment life was not for us. We bought a house in Hutto, near all our Grandkids.

I was having deep withdrawal symptoms from not composting. I had been interested in trying a compost tumbler. So we spent a little more than was practical and bought a small compost tumbler through mail order. I also keep a garbage can nearby to store the raw material for the tumbler. With the tumbler, the best way to compost is to fill it up all at once and turn the handle at least five turns a day. It is an easy way to compost. No turning with a pitch fork or shovel.

I believe that the less waste we can put in our landfills, the better our environment. The ore rich compost we can put back into our gardens, the richer our soils, the less fertilizers we will need and the happier our plants will be. I'm glad to be addicted to composting!



The purpose of this course is to provide advanced training whereby Master Gardeners can obtain specialization in rainwater harvesting. For more information visit: [http://rainwaterharvesting.tamu.edu/training\\_gardener.html](http://rainwaterharvesting.tamu.edu/training_gardener.html)  
Taylor Blackburn coordinates the MG trainings in rainwater harvesting. TBlackburn@ag.tamu.edu

- 2008 Menard, Texas - June 17-19,
- 2008 Kaufman, Texas - July 16-18,
- 2008 Conroe, Texas - Sept 11-12

# HEB Partners with Jr. Master Gardeners in Spring Plant Sale

Texas grocery giant, H E B, will be selling tomato and pepper transplants (Cherry Tomatoes, 444 Tomatoes and Jalapeno peppers) around the middle of March in collaboration with the Texas Jr. Master Gardener program to booster awareness and funding of the JMG Program in Texas Schools. H E B will donate up to \$25,000 to the program during this campaign. While the transplants are on sale, Texas Master Gardeners will be on hand at H E B stores to answer questions about the JMG program, and will present activities for youngsters that teach them about plants. This is a pilot program and will determine H E B's future involvement with JMG, so please support the venture by purchasing plants when you see the advertisement about specific dates that will come from H E B. If you would like to volunteer for this event in your area, please contact Neil Cochran, Texas JMG Coordinator. (ncochran78628@yahoo.com ).



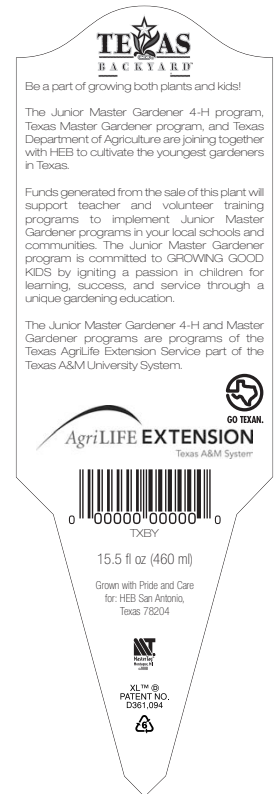
Option 1



Option 2



Option 3



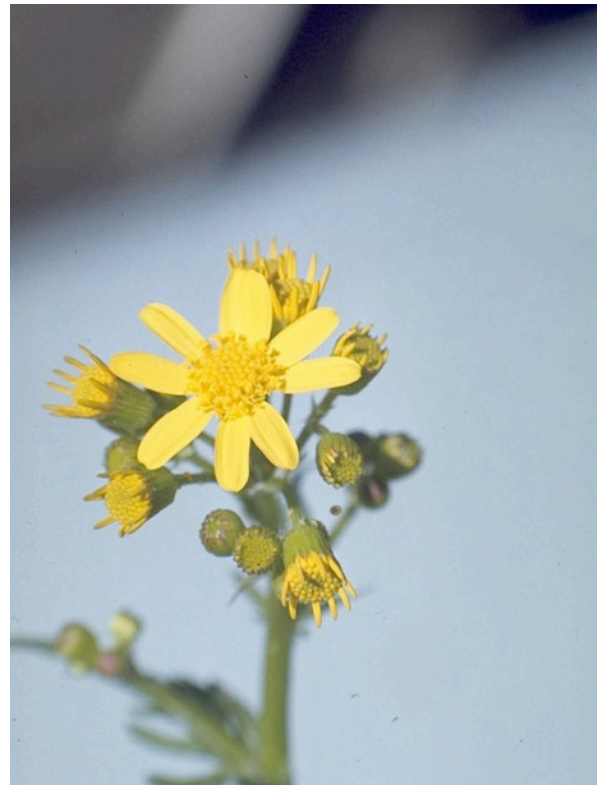
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# Plant of the Month



*Packera obovata*, Golden groundsel

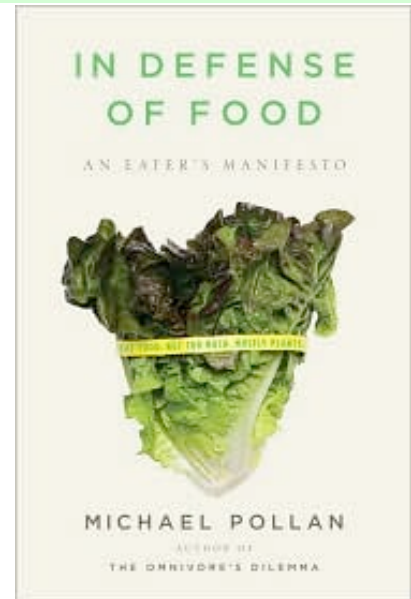
This is a wonderful little plant that will brighten any shady corner. One of the very first flowers to bloom in late winter to early spring, it is invaluable to those early pollinators that venture out on the sunny days. Golden groundsel, like many plants, has several common names (Golden groundsel, Round-leaf groundsel, Roundleaf ragwort) but this is my favorite—it really is gold in the garden. This perennial member of the aster family is a great year-round ground cover as it forms rosettes with several runner-like stolons terminating in similar rosettes. These stolons allow the plant to spread quickly to form a wonderful evergreen ground cover. Slender flowering stems rise to one and half feet above the rosettes of oval leaves. These yellow flower clusters can be few to many-headed and occur on slender pedicels. Although fairly common in the south, as you travel north this versatile little native becomes rarer. Having said this, the plant is native in thirty-one states and parts of Canada. In our region it grows on the calcareous rock slopes and rich woodland banks. Usually common in the limestone soil of the Edwards Plateau to North Central Texas, it also likes moist well-drained loam clay. Moist humus-rich soils are most preferred. So few plants seem to give us color in the shade or part shade, but golden groundsel is the exception. It should be cut back after blooming. Greatly loved by butterflies it is also coveted by deer! It makes a great alternative to Major and Minor vinca (bigleaf periwinkle and common periwinkle) both of which have escaped into the wild area of our state to become invasive.



## Book Review: In Defense of Food by Michael Pollan

Margaret Seals

Remember the guy with the camera on city streets during the late 30s and 40s? He would snap your photo as you walked down the street, dressed to the nines in your hat and gloves, and then ask if you wanted the photo for a small fee. Those cameramen don't exist anymore (except as paparazzi who are after shots of young and beautiful "stars"), but if they did, they might now be using wide-angle cameras since so many in our nation have become obese. What caused this wave of obesity since WWII ended? Could it have been government policy? (Ye gad!) That is just what Michael Pollan argues in his latest book about the Western Diet and its effect on the population, *In Defense of Food*.



Mr. Pollan, whose last book, *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, added to the current "eat locally/seasonally" conversation about our food, now gives his advice on making the right choices about eating. He narrows it down to, "Eat Food. Not Too Much. Mostly Plants." But, of course, you know it can't be that simple. We are too disillusioned from one government-issued Food Pyramid after another, arguments from myriad diet gurus about fat vs. carbs, and one "miracle ingredient" after another. How did we get in such a fix? Pollan argues that real food, actual food, food your great-grandmother would recognize as food, has gotten lost in the shuffle. Instead, we are bamboozled by food industry advertising and labels that guarantee "nutrition." Now that margarine has been fingered as one of the biggest contributors to our budging waistlines (it's the trans-fats in the margarine that did it), Pollan argues that we would have been better off with butter all the while.

Woody Allen's everyman, Miles, in his funniest old movie, "The Sleeper," finds himself awake after 100 years in a frozen state, and asks longingly, "Is bacon good for you now?" Well, this week, bacon might not be on the list, but butter, according to Pollan, has made it back for sure.

Among the other advice about eating well from *In Defense of Food* are these highlights:

- Avoid food products containing ingredients that are (A) unfamiliar, (B) unpronounceable, (C) more than five in number or that include (D) high-fructose corn syrup
- Avoid food products that make health claims
- Get out of the supermarket whenever you can (Buy Seasonally/Locally from Farmer's Markets)
- Eat well grown food from healthy soils
- Don't get your fuel from the same place your car does
- Eat Slowly
- Grow your own food if you can

*In Defense of Food* is a short read (at a mere 200 pages) with lots of information and a convincing argument.

Make yourself a salad of green, leafy plants and read it during lunch.

**(Regarding Gardening)** "Much of what we call recreation or exercise consists of pointless physical labor, so it is especially satisfying when we can give that labor a point. But gardening consists of mental work as well: learning about the different varieties; figuring out which do best under the conditions of your garden; acquainting yourself with the various microclimates—the subtle differences in light, moisture, and soil quality across even the tiniest patch of earth; and devising ways to outwit pests without resorting to chemicals."

Michael Pollan, *In Defense of Food*

Treats from the Master Garden

# Spring has Sprung!

Margaret Seals

In case you haven't noticed, Easter Sunday this year falls on March 23. Yes, it will soon be time to drag out the good tablecloth, and plan another family dinner. Where I grew up in Oklahoma, the Bridal Wreath (*Spiraea*) would usually be in bloom at Easter time, and we would cut long branches of the white blossoms, place them in the dyes after we had dyed the Easter Eggs, and let them take on the yellows, reds, blues, greens and purples of the dyes. The edges of the little white flowers will turn the color of the dye if you leave

## Veggie Stuffed Artichokes

- One medium artichoke per person
- 1 T oil
- 1 (10 oz) pkg Frozen Peas, thawed and drained
- 1 (8 oz) can sliced water chestnuts, drained
- 2 T white wine
- 1 T reduced sodium soy sauce
- ¼ t ground ginger

Washed and cooked the artichoke. Remove the choke removed keep warm.

Stir-fry the other ingredients in the oil until tender:

Stuff chokes with veggies and serve immediately.

Serve 1 C canola mayonnaise mixed with 2 T Worcestershire Sauce for a dip for the Artichoke leaves.

Recipe from a friend.

## Asparagus, Red Bell Pepper & Spinach Salad with Sherry Vinegar and Goat Cheese

- 6 T extra virgin olive oil
- 1 red bell pepper, cut into 1 by ¼ inch strips
- 1 pound asparagus, trimmed of tough ends and cut on a diagonal into 1-inch pieces
- Salt and black pepper to taste
- 1 medium shallot, sliced thin (about ¼ C)
- 1 T plus 1 t sherry vinegar

- 1 medium garlic clove, minced or pressed in a garlic press (about 1 t)
- 1 bag (6 oz) baby spinach
- 4 oz goat cheese, cut into small chunks

Heat 2 T oil in a 12 inch nonstick skillet over high heat until beginning to smoke, add red pepper and cook until lightly browned, about 1 minutes, stirring only once after about a minute.

Add asparagus, ¼ t salt and 1/8 t pepper; cook until asparagus is browned and almost tender, about 2

minutes, stirring only once about 1 minute.

Stir in shallot and cook until softened and asparagus is tender-crisp, about



1 minute, stirring occasionally. Transfer to large plate and cool 5 minutes.

Meanwhile, whisk remaining 4 T oil, vinegar, garlic, ¼ t salt and 1/8 t pepper in medium bowl, toss spinach with 2 T dressing and divide among salad plates.

Toss asparagus mixture with remaining dressing and place a portion over spinach; divide goat cheese among salads and serve.

From Cook's Illustrated Magazine.

## Succotash

- 2 Bacon Slices, cut crosswise into ¼ inch wide strips (1 T olive or canola oil may be substituted)**
- 1 T butter**
- 2 C fresh corn kernels (from 3-4 ears of corn) (or use frozen corn, thawed)**
- 1 lb fresh lima beans (1 ½ C) or 1 (10oz) pkg of frozen baby lima beans, thawed**
- ½ C diced, green bell pepper**
- 1 bunch scallions, cut crosswise into 1/3 inch pieces, keeping white and green parts separate**

- ¾ C heavy cream**
- ¼ C water**
- ½ t salt and ½ t black pepper**

Cook bacon in a 10-inch heavy skillet over moderate heat, stirring frequently, until crisp, about 5 minutes. Transfer bacon with a slotted spoon to a paper towel to drain, and then add butter to fat in skillet and melt over moderate heat.

If not using bacon, place oil in skillet, and heat to moderate level adding butter and melting butter over moderate heat.

Add corn, lima beans, bell pepper and white parts of scallions and cook, stirring 2 minutes. Add cream, water,

salt and pepper, then simmer, partially covered, until vegetables are tender, 10 to 15 minutes.

Dice cooked and cooled bacon, and stir in along with scallion greens and salt and pepper to taste.

Serve hot.

Note: Vegetables can be cut 2 hours ahead of time and chilled in a covered bowl. Chill green scallions separately. Recipe from Gourmet Magazine

them overnight, and they are beautiful in bouquets on your Easter table. We always had Lilacs to add to the mixed bouquet of pastel colored Bridal Wreath and sometimes Jonquils. Both of those flowers made the table sweet with scent of spring. Your kids will love making these bouquets if you are lucky enough to have access to some Bridal Wreath this year.

What to serve these days is always a dilemma when you are feeding a large group. Someone is always on a special diet either imposed by health problems or just to keep healthy. It makes meal planning a challenge to accommodate the various “no-nos” list of your guests while providing something tasty. Here are some suggestions for some side dishes that will go well no matter what meat you choose to serve, or if your gang is only eating veggies these days, some main dishes for you to consider. Just remember if choosing meat, the only bunny to be served on Easter ought to have chocolate ears.

Happy Spring, everyone!

## Roasted Sweet-potato fries

- 1½ pounds (2 or 3 medium) sweet potatoes**
- 1 t ground cumin,**
- 1 t coarse salt,**
- ¼ t ground black pepper**
- 1 T olive oil**

Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Scrub the sweet potatoes under cold water; pat dry.

Halve the potatoes lengthwise; quarter each half lengthwise.

On a large rimmed baking sheet, in the remaining ingredients until coated.

Arrange slices, cut side down in a single layer.

Roast, turning potatoes halfway through, until tender and browned, about 30 minutes.

Let cool slightly before serving.

Serves 4-6

Recipe from Martha Stewart's Everyday Food Magazine

President's Column

## Marching On! Wayne Rhoden



By the time you read this article we will have done our presentations and plant sale at the Georgetown Home and Garden Show. We did have a pre-sale at the greenhouse for some master gardeners and the teachers in GISD because we have been able to propagate plants using their greenhouse. That sale went well and we expect the other sale will go well also. We appreciate all of the volunteers who worked in the greenhouse propagating the plants so we will have some funds to do other projects in the county. If we have additional plants left after the March 1, 2008 sale we will be setting up at the Georgetown Market Days on March 8, 2008 and selling plants there. Come on out and support our association.

March in Williamson County is the time to cut back plants, cut grass, and fertilize your lawn. You can still divide some of your perennials. Hopefully we will have a mild March even though in the past we have had freezes until the last of the month. Records show that in April we have had temperatures as low as 33 degrees.

We certified 10 Master Gardeners at our last monthly meeting and have several more that are very close to getting all of their hours. We are in the process of setting up the next training class and will publish the application as soon as we have the speakers confirmed. We plan to have the orientation meeting on August 12 and start the class on August 19. We will keep you informed about the progress.

Wayne



Montgomery County Master Gardeners invite you to join fellow Texas Master Gardeners for the 2008 Texas Master Gardener Conference April 24-26, 2008 at the Lone Star Convention Center, Conroe, Texas. The 2008 Conference promises opportunities for sharing gardening interests, fun, educational activities and enjoyment of the numerous amenities offered in the lovely Lake Conroe area of Montgomery County.

Registration forms are available at:

For a great learning experience and a delightful time come to the 2008 Texas Master Gardener Conference. April 24-26, 2008 - Conroe, Texas.

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## Quote of the Month

When weeding, the best way to make sure you are removing a weed and not a valuable plant is to pull on it. If it comes out of the ground easily, it is a valuable plant.

Author Unknown