

# WILLIAMSON COUNTY MASTER GARDENER'S NEWSLETTER

October 1, 2018

## **THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE – All Rise**

Hi Everyone! Well, by now your garden has had a good soaking and should be looking bright and beautiful. If you are vegetable gardening, hopefully you have most of your fall crops in and are just waiting for a good harvest.

We have had another busy month, with all the usual activities, plus the field trip for MGs to College Station where we toured their new gardens (absolutely lovely) and learned about the fruit and vegetable improvement lab (turns out that kale has all the same nutrients that all the other cruciferous vegetables have so it's not a superfood after all – if you didn't get to go, you should have seen the disappointed faces). And then we toured the plant pathology lab, where we learned how disease diagnoses is done. When you are grumbling about the pitiful soil, heat, excessive or non-existent rain, or bugs in our area, you can feel sorry for gardeners in College Station who have all our problems, plus their water is so full of salt that when the sprinklers hit the trees on campus, the leaves die (just the ones that get wet). Thanks for organizing a super day, Kate, and thank you to all the drivers: Kate Whitney, Jim Williams and Steve Echols.

Plea for help: Patsy has a family emergency and has had to step down from the JMG Chair position, so we're looking for someone to help out by taking the leadership role for JMG. If you are interested, please let me know and I'll help you figure out what needs to be done.

Teresa Wilts  
President

## **THE AGENT'S MESSAGE – From the Corner Office**

I am so glad to be in Williamson County as the Horticulture Extension Agent! I have enjoyed the opportunity to meet so many of the Master Gardeners and visit the projects. The Williamson County Master Gardeners are doing outstanding work whether it's

teaching kids about plants through JMG, working in the demonstration gardens, or teaching workshops in the community.

This week I was adding some items to the VMS calendar and took some time to look at the volunteer hours that have already been logged in for 2018. You have contributed 10,258+ hours! That is an incredible gift to the Master Gardener program and to the residents of Williamson County, and I appreciate everything you do.

I am a second-generation Extension Agent; many of you knew my dad when he was in Williamson County. I am a self-proclaimed Extension nerd, but I love being part of an organization that creates educational programs to address locally-identified needs. Last year, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension updated our vision and mission statement, and I want to take some time share it with you.

Vision: Help Texans better their lives.

Mission: Through the application of science-based knowledge, we create high-quality, relevant continuing education that encourages lasting and effective change.

Capabilities: We provide programs, tools, and resources – local and statewide – that teach people how to improve agriculture and food production, advance health practices, protect the environment, strengthen our communities, and enrich youth.

This vision statement might be the shortest I have ever seen, especially from a big agency like Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, but I get excited every time I read it. We get to plan workshops, kids' programs, demonstrations, videos, publications, and all kinds of educational tools to help our fellow Williamson County residents to improve their lives.

I am even more excited because we have a team in Williamson County of Master Gardeners with years of experience in vegetable gardening, water conservation, computer skills, propagation, social media, native plants, ornamentals, children's programs, public speaking skills, and the list goes on! We have an amazing amount of talent in our group, and I look forward to working with you to help Texans better their lives!

-Kate

## **YOUR NEWSLETTER**

We want to thank Katherine Nickle for producing our newsletter over the past few issues. Now that school is back in session her available time is not what it was. We all appreciate her efforts and time. You may notice that this newsletter looks quite different from Katherine's very professional one. My excuse is that we need to get this out by the end of the month, so everyone is aware of the Nominating Committee recommendations prior to the October monthly meeting. Their slate is seen below. This will evolve into a more attractive publication with time. A bit less technical and a bit more social. We plan to continue the articles on monthly tasks in the garden but add in short features on specific vegetables, perennials, herbs, etc. We will also have a Tool Shed article on tools and maintenance. Since there is so much on the internet which is often good, sometimes bad and often questionable, I plan to feature a monthly gardening website that offers good information and entertainment. My favorite project will be "Aggies with Computers". This will be a guide to the many Texas A&M horticultural website which offer a wealth of information but are sometimes hard to navigate through to find those hidden gems. And, of course, recipes from the garden, bug of the month and probably an occasional botany article for all the nerds. These are just a few plans and I am open to any ideas you may have. The main goal is to have an informative, monthly newsletter that we can all participate in and enjoy. Now I'm off to do more Microsoft Publisher tutorials.

Jim Williams

## **WCMG ANNUAL AWARDS BANQUET**

Mark your calendars for our annual Awards Banquet for Thursday, December 6<sup>th</sup> at the Georgetown Country Club. Same as last year. Tickets will go on sale at the October and November monthly meetings. Price is yet to be determined but will be by the October meeting. Bring your checkbooks, no credit or cash. If you have any special dietary needs please let them know when you purchase your ticket.

## **NOMINATING COMMITTEE**

The Nominating Committee consisting of Steve Echols, Rusty Dean, and Loyce Engle has developed a slate of officers for 2019. All nominees have agreed to serve:

\*President - Tommy King

\*Vice President - Val Black

\*Secretary - Alice Stultz

\*Treasurer - Sandra Roberson

Any additional nominations from the floor will be accepted at the October monthly meeting. If there are no additional nominations at the October monthly meeting, then the slate shall be approved by acclamation at the October monthly meeting. If any positions on the slate are contested, then the individuals running for those positions will be elected at the November monthly meeting by written secret ballot.

## **WEBSITE OF THE MONTH**

The Redneck Hippie by Linda Wall <http://www.theredneckhippie.com>

Many of you know Linda Wall as the delightful horticulturalist at the Natural Gardener who staffs their help desk and does many of the free lectures there. She is a wealth of good gardening information and is a great writer of gardening, beekeeping and farming lore and experiences. Wandering through all the stories on her website is sure to make you smile while you learn some great information.

On her homepage you will find her latest article which is currently on bees.

Click on

**“Tutorials & Other Helpful or Humorous Posts”**.

Class Handouts -Here you will find many of her Natural Gardener class handouts.

Gardening – Many great gardening tips and stories.

Country Life – About cool country stuff

**Links I Like** has many great links for sites for gardening country life, knitting, cooking and beekeeping with many sites specific to Central Texas.

Look on the right side of the homepage and you will see her **Blog Archive** list. It is full of interesting stories filled good gardening information and great recipes.

## **TIMELY TIPS by Winola VanArtsdal**

Paint all wounds on oak trees any time, any size immediately.

Average earliest frost date for our area is November 15 but can be earlier. Be sure all beds are well mulched, but mulch must be kept away from stem/trunk of plant.

Buy supplies for frost covers now while available in stores. Spraying plant foliage with seaweed improves freeze resistance, but it must be done before sunup or after sundown.

We can cut back on watering when temperatures lower but watch that new plantings have moisture.

Divide old bulbs and perennials, remembering that herbs and bulbs, especially, need good drainage.

Consider planting naturalizing bulbs that return every year ie., *Leucojum aestivum*, often called "Summer Snowflake"™ and *Narcissus "Grand Primo"*™. They can be planted under deciduous trees, as they will get light during the winter, but they must not be overwatered. Plant them with the basal plate on bottom and the pointed end on top, and they should not be too deep.

The best way to learn gardening is by volunteering. Berry Springs offers a great opportunity for you. There are over two dozen flower beds and several natural areas that always need TLC. Susan Blackledge is willing to work with your schedule to train you on taking care of these areas, so that you can then volunteer when it is convenient for you. Contact her @ [susieblackledge@gmail.com](mailto:susieblackledge@gmail.com) or 512-930 0040 to discuss and to coordinate.

It would be fun to get together with a few of your new-found friends, or old friends, in Master Gardeners to do this. What a fun way to have time together and much better for the waistline than going out to lunch!

## **AGGIES WITH COMPUTERS!!**

There is so much on the A&M websites it boggles the mind. Getting through it can be disorienting. We are going to attempt to make the process a bit friendlier by taking a monthly tour through some of the sites. I think the best approach would be for the reader to print off this one section and then go to the website and follow along. My plan is to begin with our own Williamson County site which will take us a few months. Then

we will attack the Aggie Horticulture site. In a few years we may be able to get through them all.

Extension Education in Williamson County <https://williamson.agrilife.org>

Let's begin by clicking the Horticulture tab where you will see the following sections;

Vegetables & Herbs  
Fruit & Nuts  
Trees  
Earth-Kind Landscaping  
Soil  
Turf  
Bees, Entomology, Etc.

Click on **Vegetables and Herbs** to learn everything you ever wanted to know about veggies and herbs in Williamson County.

Growing Herbs in Texas covers all aspects of herb gardening, has many links to national & state websites and many color pictures of herbs with descriptions, cultivation, harvesting and use information.

Home Vegetable Guide covers all aspects of vegetable gardening. Table 7 is an excellent diagnostic resource for garden problems with identification of causes and corrective measures. Table 8 is an extensive planting guide covering 40 vegetables and gives recommended spring and fall planting times.

Raised Bed Garden is a very complete publication with everything you need to know to site, construct, plant and maintain a raised bed garden.

Recommended Vegetables for Williamson County is an extensive list of the vegetable varieties recommended for Williamson County.

Vegetable Gardening in Containers covers most aspects of the subject. It recommends particular vegetable varieties that adapt to containers and recommends the size of container for particular plants.

Vegetable Planting Guide for Williamson County seems mostly for production growers and includes a Spring and Fall planting guides with lots of seeding information.

What Causes Blossom Drop on Tomatoes is a good explanation of how and why tomatoes fail to set fruit and how to manage the problem.

Now click on **Fruits & Nuts**

[Chilling Accumulation & Its Importance](#) is a good article on chill temperatures and includes a calculation for Williamson County.

[Fruit & Nut Recommendations for Williamson Co.](#) covers many varieties for planting in the county and some planting guidance.

[Growing Olives](#) is a short paper, "Thoughts on Growing Olives" by Jim Kamas which is mostly about the difficulty of growing olives in Texas.

[Homeowners Fruit & Nut Spray Schedule](#). This covers peaches, plums and pecans with a spray guide for each one.

The links on [Pecan IPM](#) and [Texas Pecan Pest Management Newsletter](#) are quite informative but haven't been updated for a few years.

With **Trees**, we will finish this session

[Keys to Diseases of Oaks in the Landscape](#) is a very thorough article on problems with oaks. Many pictures and explanations. For any oak tree issues I would go here first.

[Mistletoe Not Just For Romance](#) is an informative article on mistletoe and how to try and manage it.

[Tree Care After a Storm](#) covers what can and cannot be done. It addresses how to assess tree damage and whether to save or remove trees based on the age and damage of the tree.

[Tree Planting Guide for Williamson County](#) is a very good guide for the homeowner covering landscaping, avoiding problems, selecting trees and purchasing them. Guides for planting and guidance for pruning.

[Vertical Composting](#) instructs on how to drill holes around the tree's root zone and fill with compost to improve soil quality and aeration. This work particularly well in compacted clay soil. This would be a good technique to use on aging perennial beds where you want to add some nourishing amendments but deep tilling is not practical.

[Winter Tree Care](#) is a short article on things to do to protect trees from the effects of winter weather.

Certified Arborist is an ISA search engine for certified arborists sponsored by treesaregood.org

Texas Tree Selector is the Texas Tree Planting Guide from the Texas A&M Forest Service. Excellent site where you enter the characteristics for the type of tree you want, and it gives you recommendations on the trees that fit your criteria. Also a good section on Tree Planting and Care.

Oak Wilt Booklet very extensive educational article on Oak Wilt and covers treatment including infusion.

Oak Wilt Brochure

In the next newsletter with will complete the topics under the Horticulture tab but feel free to continue on your own. After that we will look at the Publication tab.

## FROM GARDEN TO TABLE

It's cilantro time in Central Texas. I had a large stand of cilantro last winter that came up from prior years seed. I was too lazy to clear out the last cilantro plant and it went to seed and laid there a few months. I was pleasantly surprised with a small lawn of cilantro. It went through every freeze without any cover and just kept producing until it went to seed again in May. So, what could I do with all this fresh cilantro? Pesto!

I have become addicted to this pesto. Spread some on your morning breakfast tacos for a great start to the day. Mix in mayo for sandwiches and burgers. Combine with butter for steamed veggies.

It freezes well in ice cube trays and thaws quickly when needed.

**Cilantro Pesto** from Pestos! Cooking with Herb Pastes by Dorothy Rankin

1 ½ cups fresh cilantro leaves, or 1 cup fresh cilantro leaves plus ½ cup fresh parsley leaves (for a milder pesto)

1 large garlic clove (chopped fine or use a microplane)

¼ cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese

3 Tablespoons lightly toasted pine nuts (4-6 minutes in 315 degree oven until tanned but not browned, watch closely)

1 teaspoon grated lime peel (don't substitute lemon zest, the lime flavor is central to the flavor)

5 Tablespoons olive oil  
Salt and freshly ground pepper

Combine the cilantro (or cilantro/parsley), garlic, cheese, pine nuts, and lime peel in a food processor or blender. Process to mix. With machine running, slowly add the olive oil. Season to taste with salt and freshly ground pepper and process to the desired consistency. Let stand for at least 5 minutes before serving.

Educational programs of the Texas AgriLife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, sex, disability, religion, age, or national origin. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating.