

WILLIAMSON COUNTY

GARDENING

December 2019



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Cover:
Drought Tolerant Demo Garden

**Photo by Jim Williams,
MG 2017**

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Williamson County Master Gardeners are on Facebook with information about programs and events.

All Rise

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Master Gardeners,

I need to update/provide everyone with a couple of new items affecting our association.

Item #1 - New Slate of Officers for 2020

The slate of Officers, announced in October by the Nominating Committee for this coming 2020 year, has changed. Due to personal reasons, Val Black will be unable to fulfill her position as President in 2020. The Nominating Committee and the Board of Directors asked me to continue as President for the 2020 year. I accepted their request and the Board approved that change for 2020. This change in leadership also affected the role of Past President, which I would have filled. Since I am remaining President, this meant that Teresa Wilts, current Past President, would need to remain in that role for another year. However, also because of personal reasons, Teresa has stated she would be unable to fulfill that role in 2020. The Nominating Committee and the Board of Directors asked Wayne Rhoden to fill the Past President position for the 2020 year. He accepted their request and the Board approved that change for 2020. Loyce Engel will fill the Vice President's position as was earlier announced by the Nominating Committee and accepted by the Association.

Item #2 – State Master Gardener Conference for 2021

The State MG Program Coordinator, Jayla Fry, contacted Kate several months ago asking our chapter to host the State Master Gardener Conference in 2021. The original host county is no longer able to host and Jayla has often asked our chapter to host. Typically, the hosting county is selected a couple of years in advance of the conference to allow a few years to plan and coordinate everything. The shortened time frame was initially a big concern for us. However, beginning in 2021 the majority of the planning will be handled by the State office. Kate, Wayne Rhoden, Loyce Engle and I reviewed the contracts and met with Jayla to fully understand our commitment. Basically, we will be responsible for finding tour options, providing hospitality and managing the silent auction at the conference. We even have the opportunity to earn money for our chapter since we get 10% of the fees collected and 100% of the silent auction. The Board voted this last week to accept the agreement for hosting the MG State Conference in 2021. It was also decided that Loyce Engel, with her background in working with large confer-

ences, would be the chairperson/leader for this project.

The first thing we need to figure out is a theme for the conference. Loyce has set up an online document that each of you can fill out with your ideas for a theme. The link is provided:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1ctZCTQnP8EozYZhVfUptpuNOUriOc8hMME87Hyq7At8/edit?ts=5dd58fio>

If you have any questions on either of these issues you may contact me. If you want to help Loyce Engel with the conference, please contact her directly.

Thank you,
Tommy King
WCMGA President

Congratulations to the New Master Gardeners from the 2018 Class

Carolyn Connolly

Steve Craig

Cheryl Cutliff

Paul Denton

Amy Fenton

John Gardner

Lora Green

Colette Grier

Olympia Guyton

Monica Henry

Dale Hill

Phyllis Kamm

Nancy Knickerbocker-Penick

Victoria Lew

Kelly Linder

Christine Luchini

Barbara Ragaglia

Mandy Richardson

Julie Roccaforte

Jennifer Rosas

Liz Sheehan

Deborah Spanel

Susan Stone

Mike Voss

Cecilia Weisberg

Rebecca Wright

Angelina and Friends

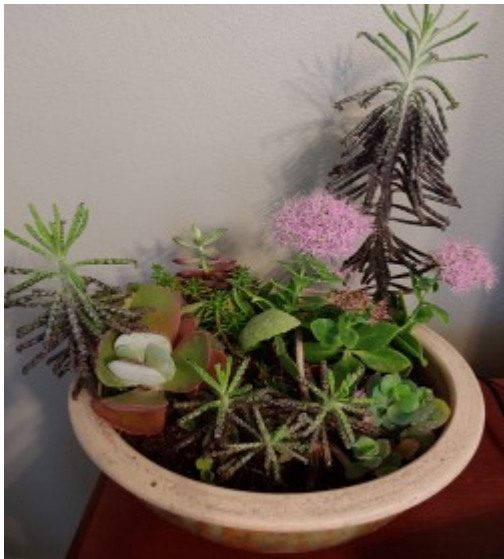
by Alice Stultz, MG 1996

If you want to send someone a lovely, living floral display try a “European Dish Garden”. Angelina Stonecrop (*Sedum rupestre* ‘Angelina’) is a cute little sedum that spreads and multiplies. It does well as a ground cover and in hanging baskets. It multiplies rather rapidly but is not as invasive as some ground covers such as frog fruit (*Phyla nodiflora*). Tiny, yellow star shaped flowers appear in late summer. It is great on dry slopes and with colder weather will turn yellowish orange. It likes full sun but does well in shade and is a nice addition to a “European Dish Garden”. Angelina and kalanchoe make a nice combination especially when bringing inside the cold sensitive kalanchoe for winter.



Angelina with a kalanchoe

Autumn Joy sedums (*Sedum spectabile* ‘Autumn Joy’) multiply and bloom in the fall in the garden. Yellow and red blooming kalanchoe in pots must be moved inside during winter cold spells. Recently other varieties of kalanchoe came to my attention at Barbara Wright’s nursery in Briggs, Texas while labeling plants for the WCMGA Spring Plant Sale.



Kalanchoe, Angelina, and pink blooming Autumn Joy sedum

Kalanchoes have different textures and dimensions compared to the Autumn Joy sedum and dainty Angelina. The Angelina will later cascade over the pot, the kalanchoes and the Autumn Joy sedum will grow bigger leaves and to a height too large for this container. However, for a month or two this winter, the dish garden will warm the table with its display.

Maybe next year I will add Pencil Plant, *Euphorbia tirucalli*, and Ghost plant, *Graptopetalum paraguayense*, cuttings to the dish garden mix. They can root in the dish garden and be transplanted into the outdoor garden when spring comes. Angelina will be a dainty filler and I will hunt for a different kalanchoe or two.

Growing Meyer Lemons: The Secret is Persistence!

by Jean Legan, MG 2013

Seasoned gardeners know that unexpected challenges arise in the garden when you're least prepared to manage them. This is especially true in Central Texas where heat, cold, drought, insects, and wind are major obstacles to successful gardening. Despite harsh environmental conditions, adapting and managing these elements often produces surprising results. I experienced this firsthand when I planted a Meyer lemon tree in my newly landscaped front-yard garden!

The Meyer lemon (*Citrus meyeri*) is native to China and was introduced to the United States in 1908 by Frank N. Meyer, a worker for the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The lemon tree was grown mostly in California, Florida and Texas until it was connected with citrus viruses. In the 1950s, a California grower discovered the virus-free strain of the Meyer lemon tree. By 1975, it was certified by the University of California and released as Meyer Lemon or *Citrus x meyeri* "Improved".



Meyer lemons' hardiness and ornamental characteristics make it an attractive fruit for growers and home gardeners.

The Meyer lemon is sweeter and less acidic than regular lemons, with a thinner, edible, deep yellow skin, and a distinctive floral scent. Most importantly, the tree needs full sun exposure for at least six hours per day.

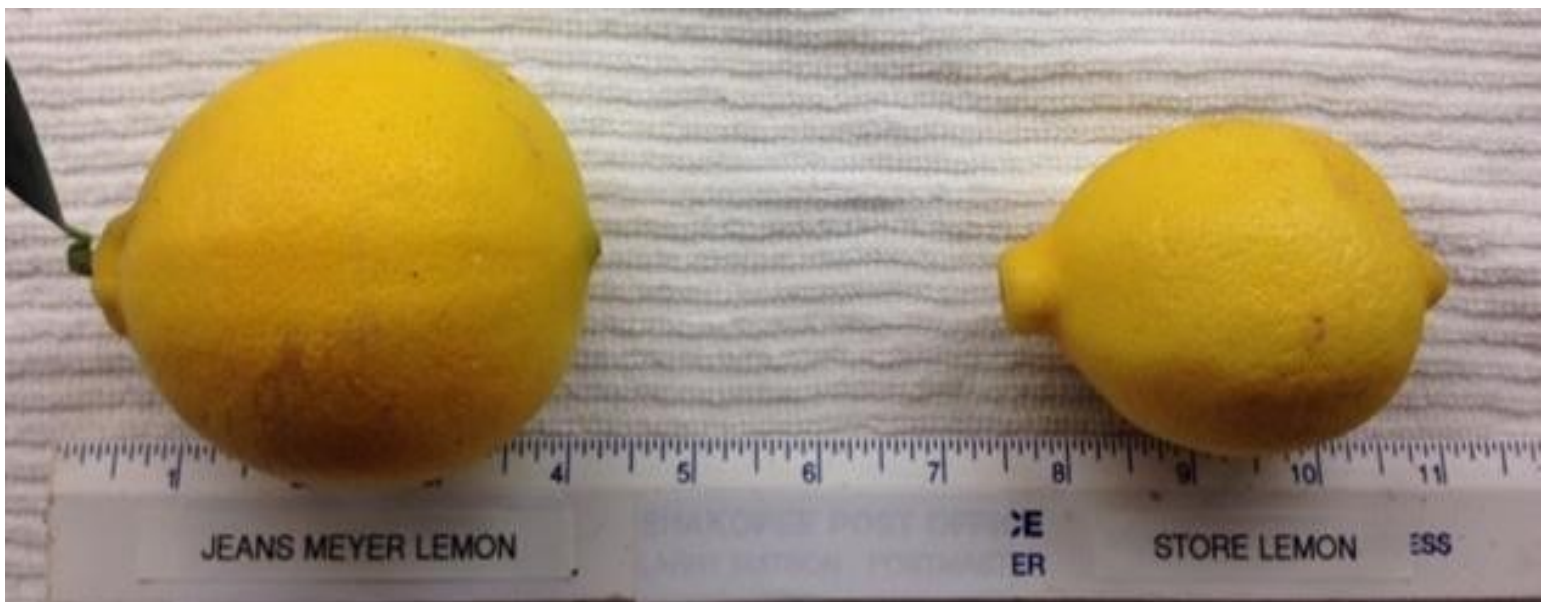
In May 2014, I planted my "improved Meyer lemon" tree, fed it with specially formulated citrus fertilizer, and watered it with in-ground drip irrigation. The tree developed more like a bush than a tree. Two years after planting, no blooms or lemons developed despite fertilization, irrigation, sunshine and prayer! The bush grew to 8 feet by 8 feet in size, filling out the front yard raised bed.

Finally, in the spring of 2016, my lemon bush bloomed with dozens of fragrant pink flowers. Meyer lemon trees can bloom in the early fall as well as in the spring. The Meyer lemon tree is self-pollinating, but highly fragrant blooms attract pollinators. Bees were all over this bush! I continued to apply citrus fertilizer or liquid fish emulsion on a regular basis. In November 2016, my first crop of lemons arrived!!

Unfortunately, November weather was not cooperating, and the season's first hard freeze was upon us! The improved Meyer lemon tree is more tolerant of cold than most lemon species. It does well at temperatures below 20° Fahrenheit but needs to be protected during prolonged, hard freezing weather. The fruit appeared to be “close to ripe” so I decided to pick the lemons before the hard freeze arrived. Almost 70 pounds of lemons were harvested and finished ripening on my kitchen counter with ripe apples nestled inside their storage containers.



The size of each lemon was particularly striking. I measured a Meyer lemon (left) compared to a store-bought lemon (right).



After harvesting the “almost ripe” lemons, multiple cold fronts recurred bringing hard freezes to Central Texas. The bush froze despite being covered and warmed with an incandescent lamp. In the spring, the dead growth demarcated itself and I performed a radical prune on this poor bush! Remarkably, the shrub survived and grew back in 2017--but produced no blossoms or lemons.

Unfortunately, the same frigid, winter weather pattern repeated itself in late 2017 and the bush froze AGAIN! I was already a seasoned citrus gardener and knew how to resuscitate the bush in the spring. The plant regrew in 2018 without blossoms and lemons. At that moment, I understood the advantages of having a Meyer lemon tree planted in a mobile container!!

My gardening luck improved in 2019 when the lemon bush generated a plethora of fragrant lemon blossoms in the spring. A prolific crop of marble-sized lemons developed on the bush. The Meyer bush will self-thin allowing smaller fruits to drop off. However, to prevent branches from snapping off, citrus experts recommend manual thinning of fruitlets in dense lemon clusters. Remaining lemons developed and turned yellow in early November—just about the time our season's first Arctic blast headed our way!

I protected the bush with a string of incandescent light bulbs and a Planket cover.

Some lemons were ready—or almost ready—for harvest so I plucked them off the bush before covering it. The fruit is now ripening, with the help of a ripe apple, in a storage container on my kitchen counter.



It will be interesting to see how (or if) lemons remaining on the bush will ripen after the cold weather subsides! Stay tuned for the outcome in our January 2020 Newsletter!



Cameras in the Demo Gardens

Photos by Sonia Schuetze, MG 2016



Let the Lettuce & Spinach Trial Begin



From Garden to Table

by Radhika Baliga, MG 2015

This winter, when you find yourself with lots of romaine lettuce and you're in the mood for something other than salad, try this stir-fry recipe.

Stir-Fried Romaine Lettuce

By Radhika Baliga

Serves 4 as a side dish

Ingredients

- 1 Tbsp avocado oil or other neutral cooking oil
- 3 large garlic cloves, peeled and roughly chopped
- 1 lb of romaine lettuce, cut into 1" pieces, washed and thoroughly dried
- $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp coconut sugar (or granulated white sugar)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp ground white pepper
- 1 Tbsp sherry (or rice wine)
- 1 Tbsp coconut aminos (or liquid aminos or soy sauce)
- 1 tsp toasted sesame oil
- salt to taste



Directions

1. Pour avocado oil into a wok or large skillet over medium heat.
2. Add garlic to the pan and stir-fry until it turns golden brown.
3. Add the lettuce in batches, stirring constantly for 1-2 minutes, or until the lettuce is wilted.
4. Sprinkle in the sugar and pepper and stir to combine. Next, add the sherry and coconut aminos. Stir-fry another 30 seconds.
5. Taste for seasoning and add additional salt if necessary.
6. Turn off the heat. Pour in the sesame oil and stir to combine. Transfer to a serving bowl and enjoy immediately.

2019 Year in Review

Thanks to all the amazing folks who contributed recipes (or asked loved ones to contribute recipes) to the newsletter this year: Lynn Stude, Steve Craig, Brandon Craig, Jim Williams, Nancy Knickerbock-Penick, Carole Buckner, Nicol O'Malley, Kate Whitney, Teresa Wilts, Martha Baddour, Val Black, Lynn Harper, Mike Harper, Terri Behrman, Wayne Rhoden, Judy Williams, Sonia Schuetze, and Radhika Baliga. With all the new recipes shared this year, I think we know exactly how to throw the perfect Master Gardener potluck now.

January – Raspberry basil, lemon thyme, tangerine, oregano feta, and miso ginger salad dressings

February – Roasted red cabbage wedges with maple mustard sauce

March – Portuguese kale soup

April – Spiced beet salad

May – Zucchini garden chowder

June – Tomato peach salsa, Tomato gruyere bacon tart, Saucy green beans

July – Jalapeno poppers, Stained glass watermelon

August – Spicy eggplant dip, Squash casserole

September – Boiled okra, Chocolate eggplant cake

October – Sweet potato oatmeal cookies, Pasta with lemon and sweet potato greens

November – Fresh green peas hummus, Fresh peas veggie style, Blueberry and lemon, white bean bundt cake

December – Stir-fried romaine lettuce



Droughts, Floods and Northers

by Alice Stultz, MG 1996

Gardening anywhere has its challenges and rewards. I consider us lucky in Texas, generally, when it is minus 5 degrees in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and 80 here in early November. Texas has the gamut of temperatures, soil conditions and water issues.

A recent *Williamson County Sun* article by horticulture agent Kate Whitney summed up watering in Central Texas in the fall and winter. She noted that our lawn grasses are primarily warm-season grasses. Homeowners can save time, energy and money by not putting extra water on our lawns as these months are generally wetter. This will also reduce mowing chores. I have been reiterating her words to others. Recently we had lovely Texas Fall weather. A Norther blew in and the sumac turned red. The elm trees turned orangish yellow. Other trees put on a bit of a show. I think the gardens went from a very long summer to winter in a couple of weeks...typical Texas weather. "Brown is a color" to quote Tom Green, county horticulturist and friend, and our grasses will come back in the spring with a hiatus of no watering from fall to spring.

In Williamson County, Texas, we have Blackland Prairie soil, clay soil and rocky "soil", areas that get more rain than others (or appear to), and extreme dry spells. Soil and weather conditions challenge gardeners and keep us strong and healthy and creative in our gardening. The droughts, floods and northers keep us on our toes and in our boots and challenge gardening skills. Having lived briefly in another state, I realize that some places have more ideal conditions. However, I think I enjoy the challenge of living and gardening where we are.



Winola's Timely Tips for December

by Winola VanArtsdalen, MG 2007

Remember to do a soil test if you plan to make a new plant bed for next year whether a vegetable garden or to plant drought tolerant plants in place of turf. Remove weeds and grass, add recommended supplements, being sure to add compost, and granite sand or decomposed granite for drainage. Cover with mulch and you will have soil ready for good planting next year!

Be sure you have mulched all planting beds for a good-looking landscape as well as to maintain soil moisture, block erosion, and prevent rapid changes of soil temperature, which can damage roots. Do be sure to pull mulch away from the stems of all plants, including trees. If not, that extra moisture will cause serious damage to the stem/tree trunk.

Leave seed heads on both annuals and perennials. They are much appreciated by the birds, both the migrants and the stay at homers. Keep water out for birds, bees and butterflies.

This is the best time to plant shrubs and trees for them to grow a strong root system before the stress of next spring/summer. Recheck directions for planting bulbs.

Any potted plants brought inside for the winter will appreciate a spritz of water to help them adjust to their new environment.

All garden tools must be thoroughly clean and dry before putting them away for the season.

Remember that winter is the best time to trim evergreens, so clear your pathways and enjoy the season with cuttings from shrubbery such as hollies while you dream away with plans for next spring!



WCMGA EVENTS

December 5

2019 WCMGA Awards Banquet
Georgetown Country Club
6:00 pm until ?

December 7

Green Thumbs Up Gardening Series: Round
Rock
Round Rock Public Library
6:30 to 7:30 pm
“Weed Management” with Jim Williams

December 12

Green Thumbs Up Gardening Series: Cedar Park
Cedar Park Public Library
7:00 to 8:00 pm
“Weed Management” with Jim Williams

December 28

Hands On In The Garden
Old Training Room, 3151 SE Inner Loop
9:00 to 11:00 am
“Garden Friends & Foes Part 2-Critters”
with Stephanie Facey





**See You Next Month
As We Sneak A Taste**