WILLIAMSON COUNTY

GARDENING

March 2019



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Cover:

WCMG Veggie Demo Garden

Photo by Sonia Schuetze, MG 2016



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

Contact Us



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THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It's that time of year again. Plant Sale, Plant Sale, Plant Sale!

This year's event will be taking place on April 6th, the first Saturday in the month of April. Things are coming together nicely for the event. Wayne Rhoden will be kicking the event off at 8:00 am with his plant presentation over the different types of plants being offered at the event. Wayne's presentation will run up until the start of the plant sale at 9:00 am. There is a tentative plant list available on the Master Gardener website that lists over 100 different types of plants. This list is only tentative because we still don't know what the growers have been able to grow from our list. The plants we sell are all from local growers and sometimes the growing conditions for some of the plants don't work out. They also have plants that are not listed that we might offer at the sale. I hope to get that final list before the sale and post it on our website. The pricing should remain the same as last year, 1-gallon pots for \$8 and the smaller 4-inch pots for \$3. The pricing includes tax, so it should be easy to do the math.

Along with Wayne, three of our Master Gardeners will also be speaking on three subjects; 9-10am Wendy Odlum will have her presentation on 'Starting Plants From Seeds', 10-11am Dorothy Bentzin will have her presentation on 'Drought Tolerant Plants' and at 11-12pm Val Black will do a presentation on 'Roses in Central Texas'. We will have our usual great booths again this year around the Community Center, Help Desk, Junior Master Gardeners, Vegetable Garden, Herb Garden (they will have the BEST samples made with herbs for you to try) and several others will all be there. 4-H will be in the kitchen area with a variety of food items throughout the day. Be sure and stop by and help support them.

Thanks to everyone who has already signed up to help with the event on VMS. As we get closer to the event, there will be a couple of individual volunteer requests emailed out to help handle some pre-sale items.

Just in case anyone didn't see my email about the monthly meeting location: we have not changed location for the meeting. It is still at the same location as in the past. The Williamson County officials are still working out some details. We have the current training room reserved for the foreseeable future, and we aren't being forced out of it.

Happy gardening, everybody! Tommy King President









Congratulations to Our New Master Gardeners from the 2018 Class

Steve Craig

Cheryl Cutliff

John Gardner

Colette Grier

Dale Hill

Phyllis Kamm

Nancy Knickerbocker-Penick

Victoria Lew

Liz Sheehan

Deborah Spanel

Mike Voss

The AgriLife Extension Office has Moved

Our offices have moved to the new county building at 100 Wilco Way, Suite AG201. It is still off SE Inner Loop but now closer to Leander Road, 1460. It is the gray-brown two story brick building and the offices are located on the second floor. The monthly meeting next Monday, March 11th will still be in the Training Room at the old location as will Hands On In The Garden on Saturday, March 30th. Once everybody is all moved in and settled an open house is anticipated.



Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays this gardener from the swift completion of his appointed rounds.

From The Corner Office

Kate Whitney

Williamson County AgriLife Horticultural Extension Agent

Master Gardeners, can you believe we are already starting into March 2019?! Spring is in the air, and I can certainly tell that people are ready to be outside and in the garden. I love seeing the trees start to bloom and how the roadsides are starting to green up, even if they are just weeds! I've spotted bluebonnets on my hikes around the local parks lately, and it won't be long until they start blooming.

Our Master Gardener activities slowed down (but only a little bit) during the winter, and it feels like we are gaining momentum as we head into spring. The Help Desk is hopping with questions about weeds, pruning, and lawncare. The Help Desk Team is growing, and they have a lot of collective knowledge about horticulture. Maybe we should start a contest called, "Stump the Master Gardener Help Desk?"

Our Green Thumbs Up Gardening Series is off to a good start at the Round Rock and Cedar Park Libraries. The speakers have done a great job for our first two months, and I think our numbers will continue to grow as we head into spring. Be sure to promote those classes to your friends and neighbors. You can find a list of the upcoming topics at: https://williamson.agrilife.org/green-thumbs-up-gardening-series/.

The Demonstration Garden looks great! The Herb Garden is getting a remodel, and I look forward to seeing the new design. We have some great educational programs focused on what's happening in the Demonstration Garden. The Hands on in the Garden topics planned for this year are very interactive. Stephanie shared some photos of the tomato starts from the January class on Facebook this week, and we look forward to seeing how they do over the coming months. We also have a series of Lunch and Learns planned that will highlight a fruit or vegetable each month with tips for growing and cooking healthy food.

These are just a few of the great things that are happening around the county. The JMG groups are ramping up for spring, Speaker's Bureau is getting a lot of requests, we have clean-up days for many parks and gardens, the Plant Sale is quickly approaching, and many more that I don't have space to talk about. I'm proud of everything the Williamson County Master Gardeners are doing to promote good horticultural practices and serve the residents of Williamson County. The AgriLife Extension vision is "Help Texans Better Their Lives" and our programs are helping to achieve that vision.

If you aren't sure how to plug into any of these activities, please give me a call at 512-943-3300. I promise I'll put you to work (and we'll have some fun while we're at it)!

-Kate

What's happening in the Veggie Demo Garden?

March is Tomato Time!

by Judy Ebaugh, MG 2017

This month the WCMG Vegetable Demonstration Garden will be planting tomatoes. They will be provided by master gardeners *Teresa Wilts* and *Judy Williams*, who have been growing them from seed with tender loving care. In preparation, we have already begun turning the soil 8'' - 10'' deep, and amending it with compost, molasses and cottonseed meal. So when it is time, we will be ready to go!

According to TAMU, Williamson County's average frost-free date is March 7^{th} , and the recommended time for planting tomatoes is between March 1st and April 26th. The ideal soil temperature is 70 - 90 degrees. Therefore, we will be waiting with excitement for the first window of warm weather that will allow us to put tomatoes in the ground!

In general, tomato transplants should be 6"- 8" tall when planted, in holes that are at least 4" deep. However, if Mother Nature makes us wait too long for warm weather, the tomatoes may be taller. If so, we will dig our holes and closer to 10" deep and 2' wide. This will allow us to plant the longer stems horizontally in the hole, and grow a larger root system, as pictured below:

The Demo Garden will be putting the following "fertilizer recipe" in each hole before planting:

- 1 Tablespoon of Epsom salt (to prevent blossom end rot)
- 1 Tablespoon of mycorrhiza (for root development)
- 1 handful of cornmeal (anecdotally reported as effective fungicide)

ch hole before planting:

2 shovels full of compost (must have organics!)

2 handfuls of cottonseed meal (for nitrogen)

1 handful of dried molasses (for microbe development)

Figure 2. Plant tomatoes slightly deeper than they were first growing (A). If the plants are leggy, set them as shown (B).

After planting, the tomatoes will be covered in mulch and organically fertilized every few weeks throughout the season.

Our rows have full sun, but are very exposed to the wind and cold temperatures in the spring. Therefore, we will be prepared to cover our tomatoes for a month or so until the heat is here to stay. The support system that has worked best for us is 5 foot tall cages made from concrete reinforcement wire. They are sturdy enough for the monster-sized plants, do not require the tying up of vines, and can easily have shade cloth clipped onto them. If you come to the garden, we can show you how to make them!

The eight varieties we are growing this spring are:

Early Slicer Tomatoes

Celebrity- Semi-determinate 7-8 oz. red, (V, F, TMV, nematodes) 65 days

Manitoba- Determinate 3"-4" heirloom red, 65 days

Cherry Tomatoes

Super Sweet- Indeterminate red cherry, (VFN) 65 days **Sun Gold Cherry**- Determinate yellow cherry, (TMVF) 65 days

Later Slicers

Celebration- Determinate 8 oz. red, competitor of Celebrity, (VFFT) 72 days

BHN 602- Determinate 10-20 oz. red, (F,TSWV,VW) 70-90 days

Porterhouse - Indeterminate red, record-breaker 2-4 lb. fruit. 85 days

Sauce Tomato

Roma- Determinate 3" long sauce tomato (V,F) 73 – 80 days

The **Celebration** and **Super Sweet** tomatoes were selected by our Extension Agent, *Kate Whitney*, because those varieties have had little exposure in Williamson County. We can't wait to find out how they grow! The other varieties were selected to produce a steady harvest throughout the season. So when do you think we will harvest the first tomato, and what variety will it be? Make a guess and follow the WCMG Facebook page to find out at https://www.facebook.com/wctxmga/

References

Tomato 101 Online Course: https://agriliferegister.tamu.edu/productListingDetails/641

TAMU Gardeners Tomato Handout: https://www.plantanswers.com/Resources/Vegetable/E-517 tomatoes.pdf

Use of Cornmeal (a fun debate): http://gardenprofessors.com/cornmeal-myth-busted/

Use of Cottonseed Meal: https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/plantanswers/earthkind/ekgarden.pdf

Use of Mycorrhizae: https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/faculty/davies/research/mycorrhizae.htm

Tomato Disease Resistance Codes

V or VW– verticillium wilt TMV– tobacco mosaic virus

F– fusarium wild TSWV– tomato spotted wilt virus

FF- fusarium races 1 & 2

FFF- fusarium wilt 1, 2 & 3

N- nematodes

IN THE DEMO GARDENS

Results of the Broccoli and Carrot Trial in the Demonstration Garden

by Rick Halle, MG 2018

We trialed three varieties of broccoli and two varieties of carrots in the Vegetable Demonstration Garden this winter. The weekly photo journal and results have been documented in a word document that can be found at https://txmg-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/williamson/files/2018-Broccoli-and-Carrot-Trials.pdf

To summarize:

We found that Packman Broccoli produced the earliest (70days), with largest heads and side shoots; Arcadia Broccoli produced more volume and the plants were less affected by cold weather; Gypsy Broccoli suffered the loss of four plants early and the replacements never caught up to the other varieties. Gypsy suffered the most damage from cold and wind.

Both carrot varieties did well in our trial. Scarlet Nantes produced more volume and the carrots were more consistent in shape and size. Danvers Half Long seemed to have better germination but produced more carrots with misshaped roots.

We also planted some mixed carrot varieties. The seeds were broadcast planted instead of in rows, and despite efforts to thin them they still ended up crowded. Some carrots grew well, rivaling the row carrots, but others did poorly and were not of usable size until much later than the row carrots. It was fun to harvest red, purple, white, and orange carrots and they all had good flavor.









"I wandered lonely as a cloud That floats on high o're vails and hills,

When all at once I saw a crowd, A host, of golden daffodils..."

William Wordsworth felt spring in the air when he wrote "Daffodils". We had to memorize this poem in 4th grade. There is nothing like daffodils with their bright, cheery faces on a cold winter day to make one feel like spring will come.



As Master Gardeners, we don't talk about daffodils very often. They are a good bulb to plant in the fall to bring on spring the following year. Some varieties naturalize better than others. Recent fall picks by Better Home and Gardens were Tahiti, Thalia, Pheasant's Eye, Marieke and Pink Charm.(July 2017R1) I honestly prefer a large headed bright yellow. While living in Lexington, Kentucky, we loved to go by the horse farms in the spring as many had these planted in their fields by the roadside next to their scenic fences.

A close second to the daffodils are the paperwhite narcissus which bloom here from late November to February. They have a distinct scent and can be forced inside like hyacinths and other bulbs. Narcissus were introduced to my



garden when I was doing archeology work in the Centerville area of Texas. We had shut down for the day and were observing a man on a bulldozer in a vacant lot. He stopped his work and asked if we wanted any of the narcissus. Of course, we said yes and got out our trowels and began digging. I imagine his grandmother or mother had narcissus in their gardens. That was about 12 years ago and I have moved them to three houses and shared them with numerous people. After they bloom, they can be uplifted and divided. These lovely clusters of white blooms help me get through gloomy, cold winter days.

Tiny Grape Hyacinths are also a bulb that gets divided in the garden after they bloom. They are also a harbinger of spring. Their tiny bulbs are stacked up as they multiply and can easily be lifted out of the ground. I have planted them in the deer infested areas of our yard and they are being left alone among the cedar sage and society garlic. Maybe the garlic is keeping them safe or maybe the deer don't like them. They are sweet little late winter reminders of color to come in the garden.

by Alice Stultz, MG 1996



In the Herb Garden YARROW

by Alice Stultz, MG 1996

Yarrow (Achillea) is one of the perennial herbs in the herb demonstration garden. It is considered a native plant. Yarrow can be used as a flower in a meadow to attract butterflies. The flower may be cut and used in arrangements or dried.

Yarrow has tiny, tightly-packed flowers rising above clusters of ferny foliage. The flowers may be yellow, red, pink, white or a variety of shades of these colors.







Winola's Timely Tips for March

by Winola VanArtsdalen, MG 2007

Ah, the excitement of spring in the air! Better set your priorities and get a plan of action ready to go.

Oak wilt prevention:

Remember that your trees are your most valuable landscape investment. The beetle that spreads oak wilt is most active in spring, so look around your property to protect. Wounds can be made in nature, by branches rubbing, lightning, etc., but are most often manmade. When planning landscape projects that will require workers coming in with equipment, avoid scheduling in spring when beetles are most active. It is almost impossible to supervise construction every minute to avoid broken branches, vehicles backing into a tree trunk or roots, etc. and even harder to convince workers that wounds must be sprayed immediately!

Soil/beds prep:

Our average last freeze is mid-month. In this late winter/early spring period is a good time to see weeds and the easiest time to dig. If making new beds, a soil test is essential to know the needed amendments for your specific property. In general, you will need 3-4 inches of compost, and granite sand, expanded shale or other amendments to give good soil drainage. Refer to your soil test, but most beds in our area benefit from minerals added, too. I find greensand, high in potassium, particularly helpful. If you only want to refresh an existing bed, pull the mulch back and aerate with garden fork, spread 1-2"compost and replace mulch to keep out weeds and help moisture retention.. You can just scratch in 1-2" compost, then replace mulch. Be sure to pull mulch away from stems of plants, including tree trunks. The earlier you do the bed prep the better, as nature needs time for tiny organisms to do their work!

Planning:

Before rushing off to spring plant sales, walk around your landscape and do some planning. View your yard from different viewpoints, directly from front, from sides, and coming in the driveway, etc. Do you have some special, personal accents, (but not too many,) to draw eye through your landscape? Visualize the different seasons. Do you have areas of color for each season? Are there plants in front of bulbs to disguise their less attractive periods? Are there some favorites from family or friends that you can retain for keepsake plants?

Be sure you have good air circulation and meet needed sun/shade requirements. Have you invited wildlife into your landscape with native plants especially chosen to attract them? If you plan a large variety of native plants and herbs, you will find that they help you in keeping problem insects at bay.

Shopping:

Be sure to purchase plants from a reputable, local source, so that they will easily become settled into your land-scape. It is a great advantage to buy plants with fresh, healthy root systems at local plant sales where plants come straight from the grower fresh that morning! At our Master Gardener plant sale, master gardeners will be available to help you while shopping, and there will be a Help Desk to give further advice on any horticulture subject.

Turf:

Just as you spread compost in your flowerbeds, your turf needs nutrients, too, for growth and to aid water retention through the hot summer months. Spring is best time to aerate and follow with top dressing, which can be manure or a mixture of organic matter. If you do add top dressing, do not fertilize at this time, as it will be too much nitrogen and could burn the turf.

How many Master Gardeners does it take to plant a pecan tree?



Fruit & Nut Tree Workshop with Dr. Larry Stein

REJUVENATION PRUNING

Do your shrubs need it?

by Jean Legan, MG 2013

Rejuvenation pruning or radical pruning involves cutting a shrub close to or right down to the ground! Routine pruning techniques for deciduous ornamentals involve trimming some of the largest, oldest stems every 2 or 3 years. Unfortunately, many home gardeners forget about pruning until their landscapes become overgrown and unsightly. Proper pruning of older or overgrown shrubs can reinvigorate them and stimulate new growth. But, before you grab your pruners or hedge trimmers and wack away, it's important to identify which shrubs will tolerate rejuvenation and when to do it!

By cutting a shrub down to the ground, you reset the growth cycle resulting in a smaller, younger plant that flowers prolifically. Then, in the next season, the shrub can be thinned for optimal beauty. With shrubs selected for colorful stems such as forsythia or honeysuckle, renovation pruning forces growth of new stems with vigorous blooms. Keep in mind, your shrubs won't bloom the year you prune but will the following year. Aggressive or invasive hedges including privet may grow 2-3 feet the following year. During the shrub's first growing season after the radical prune, it's important to keep it mulched, well-watered, and pest free. In central Texas, early spring is the best time to accomplish rejuvenation pruning.

The following list illustrates some of the more common central Texas shrubs amenable to rejuvenation pruning:

Dogwoods Butterfly bush Forsythia Beautyberry Privet Hawthorn

Honeysuckle Rose of Sharon Abelia Cherry laurel

Spotted laurel Sumac Barberry Lilac

Texas sage Viburnum

Evergreens should be pruned annually for shape and size in the landscape. Overgrown, large evergreen shrubs such as junipers should <u>not</u> be radically pruned because they cannot initiate new growth from bare branches. Older, overgrown evergreens may need to be removed from the landscape then new shrubs replanted.

If you're thinking about repairing or repainting a fence or trellis laden with thick vines, keep rejuvenation pruning techniques in mind. Your neighbors and shrubs will appreciate the landscape enhancements!

Rose Pruning at Our Lady of the Rosary

Photography by Sonia Schuetze, MG 2016



EMERALD ASH BORER

By Wizzie Brown

Travis County AgriLife Extension Program Specialist—IPM / Entomology

Emerald ash borer, often referred to as EAB, is an exotic pest from Asia. This beetle is a serious threat to ash trees. Emerald ash borer was accidentally introduced into the United States and was found in Michigan in 2002. It has now spread to 33 states, including Texas. In May of 2016, four beetles were found in a trap located in NE Texas (Harrison County). In 2018, the beetles were confirmed in two new counties, Marion and Cass counties.

Adult females lay eggs on the bark of ash trees. Once eggs hatch, larvae bore into trees under the bark and cut off the water and nutrient conducting vessels. Larvae are creamy white, legless with a flattened body. Larvae are 1-1 ½ inches in length when fully developed.

As an adult, emerald ash beetles are elongated and cylindrical, somewhat shaped like a bullet. Most notably, these beetles are bright, metallic green with reddish hues. Adults are small, about 1/2 inch in size. If the wings are removed or lifted, the upper side of the abdomen is bright coppery-red which can help differentiate this beetle from closely related species in Texas. Please note that there can be varying coloration- more blue or reddish instead of green.



Infested trees show canopy die back in the top one third of the canopy moving downward until the tree is bare. Epicormic shoots (leafy shoots coming off the trunk of the tree) may also be seen. Vertical fissures may appear on the bark and galleries may be able to be seen through openings. If bark is peeled off, serpentine galleries packed with frass may be seen. Adult beetles produce a D-shaped exit hole (1/8 inch diameter). Woodpeckers may cause damage to tees infested with EAB. Look for flaking bark and uneven holes caused by

If EAB activity is confirmed within an area, it is recommended that a systemic insecticide treatment is given to ash trees of high value. If more than 50% of an infested ash tree crown remains, then treatment with a systemic insecticide may slow the attack. If less than 50% of an infested ash tree crown remains, the tree should be removed.



For more information on emerald ash borer within Texas see the following site: https://tfsweb.tamu.edu/eab/

For more information or help with identification, contact Wizzie Brown, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist at 512.854.9600. Check out my blog at www.urban-ipm.blogspot.com

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Cameras in the Demo Gardens!

Photography by Sonia Schuetze, MG 2016



From Garden to Table

by Radhika Baliga, MG 2015

This month's recipe is a kale soup from MG Carole Buckner. Carole is known for her fantastic soups and has generously shared several of them with us at the demo garden over the years, like carrot soup (see May/June 2016 newsletter for that recipe) and yogurt soup. While I haven't tasted this one yet, I'm sure it's exceptional.

In next month's newsletter, we'll feature recipes for beets. If you have a recipe to share, please email Radhika Baliga (see VMS) by March 10.

Portuguese Kale Soup by Carole Buckner

Ingredients

- 2 tbsp olive oil, plus extra for serving
- 1 cup diced onion
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 celery stalks, diced
- 2 carrots, peeled and diced
- 1 cup diced red or gold potatoes
- 14.5 oz can diced tomatoes
- 4 cups water, vegetable broth, or chicken broth
- 15 oz can cannellini beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 bunch of kale, chopped (stems and ribs removed) salt and black pepper to taste
- 1 tsp fresh oregano or ¼ tsp dried oregano
- 2 tbsp fresh basil, chopped or 1 tsp dried basil
- 2 tbsp fresh parsley, chopped or 1 tsp dried parsley
- 1 tbsp balsamic vinegar



Directions

Heat the olive oil in a large soup pot over medium heat. Add the onion, garlic, and celery, and cook for about 5 minutes. Add the carrots and potatoes and any dried herbs (oregano, basil, parsley) and cook for a few more minutes. Add the tomatoes, the beans, and the water or broth. Bring the soup to a boil, then cover and reduce to a simmer and cook for 20 min. Season the soup with salt and pepper, and then stir in the vinegar, the kale and any fresh herbs. Turn off the heat. Cover the pot and let the soup sit for 5 minutes before serving. Ladle the warm soup into serving bowls and drizzle with olive oil if desired.

WCMGA EVENTS

March 4

WCMGA Board Meeting
AgriLife Training Room, 100 Wilco Way, AG201
1 to 3 pm

All members are welcome to attend.

March 11

WCMGA Monthly Membership Meeting
AgriLife Training Room, 3151 SE Inner Loop
6:30 to 8 pm
"Integrated Pest Management for Vegetable Pests"
with Wizzie Brown, Extension Program Specialist

March 14

Drought Tolerant Demo Garden
Spring Cleanup Workday
9 to 11 am
Details & Sign-up in VMS

March 14

Green Thumbs Up Gardening Series: Cedar Park
Cedar Park Public Library
6:45 to 8:15 pm
"Plant Selection"

March 19

Green Thumbs Up Gardening Series: Round Rock Round Rock Public Library 6:30 to 7:30 pm "Plant Selection"

March 28

Master Gardener Social Event
11 am to 12 pm
For the Birds—Georgetown
Details & Sign-up in VMS

March 30

Hands On In The Garden
AgriLife Training Room, 3151 SE Inner Loop
9 to 11 am
"Grafting and Propagation"

