

# WILLIAMSON COUNTY GARDENING

April 2019



TEXAS A&M  
**AGRILIFE**  
EXTENSION

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Cover:  
WCMG Veggie Demo Garden

Photo by Sonia Schuetze,  
MG 2016

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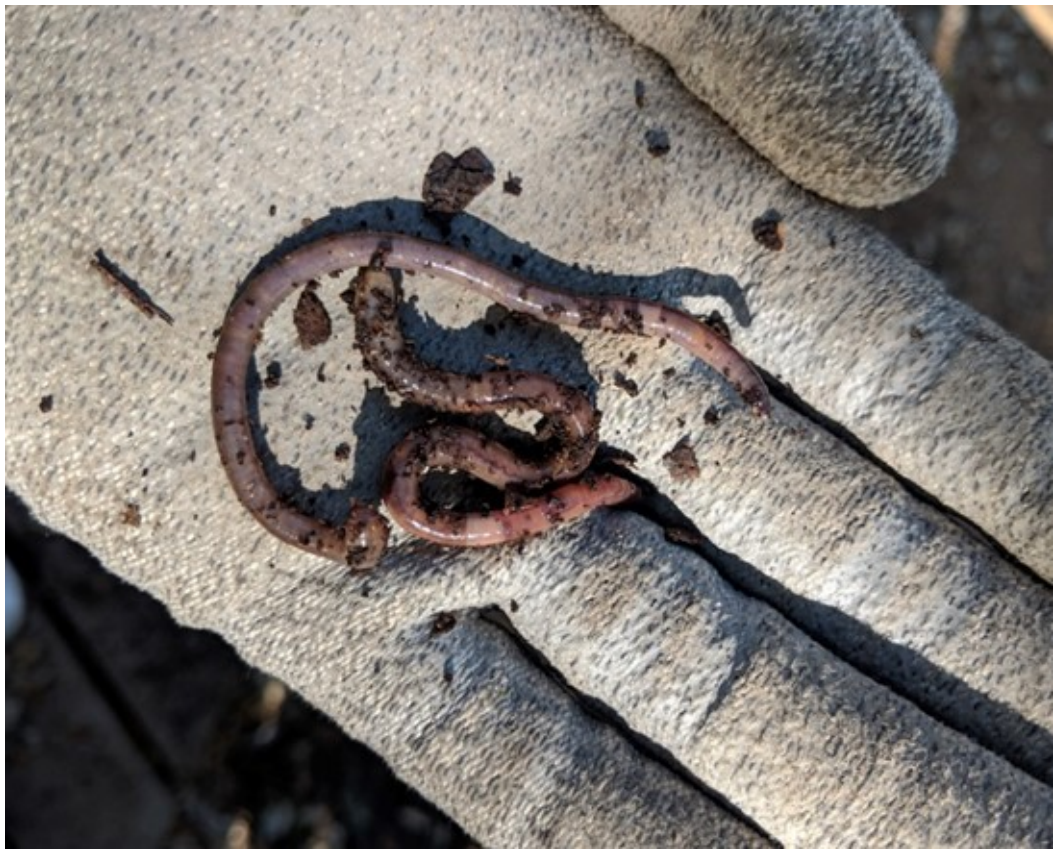
Williamson County Master Gardeners are on Facebook with information about programs and events.

# Composting Time

by Tommy King, MG 2014, WCMGA President

The stretches of warm weather, with the occasional cool snap, are getting longer by the week. Plants have been blooming and popping out of the ground now for a couple of weeks. The oak trees have begun their final leaf drop of the season. It's time to start cleaning out the flower beds and preparing for the eventual spring/summer growing season. The cleanup means lots of extra leaves and plant debris. But you're not just bagging up for the trash company to haul away, are you? Do you have a lawn service clean up your yard? You don't allow them to haul off all that plant material, do you? This is the time to start that compost bin!

In the presentation I give on composting I talk about my large compost bin. That bin is started in the spring with all the leaves and cleanup material from the flower beds and yard. Then it is turned throughout the year, adding more leaves, kitchen scraps and an occasional bag of grass clippings to keep the heat up. This process means that the following spring I have a large bin of compost. The other advantage to this process is the abundance of worms that start showing up in the



completed compost. The average each year is about 2-3 per shovel full when the compost is screened. Yet another good reason to start that compost bin!

Happy gardening everybody,  
Tommy King  
President

# Congratulations to the New Master Gardeners from the 2018 Class

Steve Craig  
Cheryl Cutliff  
John Gardner  
Colette Grier  
Dale Hill  
Phyllis Kamm

Nancy Knickerbocker-Penick  
Victoria Lew  
**Kelly Linder**  
Liz Sheehan  
Deborah Spanel  
Mike Voss

Names in **BOLD** type completed their hours this past month.

## 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, April 8th will still be in the Training Room at the old location as will Hands On In The Garden on Saturday, April 27th. Once everybody is all moved in and settled an open house is anticipated.



A Little Tag Football in the Herb Garden

# IN THE DEMO GARDENS

## Setting Out Your Transplants

by Rick Halle, MG 2018

Transplanting covers a broad subject anywhere from “pricking out” tiny seedlings in a flat, to setting out annuals from six-packs or 4-inch pots, to gallon sized perennials, or multi-gallon or bare root trees. There’s even moving a 100-year-old Live Oak from the Capital through downtown Austin to Waterloo Park. Here we hope to offer some recommendations for transplants in the middle of that range, the six-pack to gallon sized plants. After the plant sale we will each have some of these to set out.

The universal first rule is to put a wet plant in a wet hole. Followed by - don’t let your transplants wilt. Plant on a cloudy day if possible or provide temporary shade and wind protection if you have to. Greenhouse grown plants may not be ready to face the sun, wind, or cold in your garden and should be “hardened-off”. This involves gradually introducing the plants to outdoor conditions over a period of days. Moderate the amount of full sun they get and bring them into a sheltered place overnight for several days.

The best technique for transplanting plants is to:

- 1) Open a hole larger and deeper than the root ball.

- 2) Add and mix in desired amendments. Some amendments that could go in the bottom of that planting hole are compost, dry molasses, cotton seed meal, earth-worm castings, 3-1-2 organic fertilizer, bone meal, corn meal, Epsom salts, and mycorrhizal fungi. Mix the amendments into the bottom of the hole just to be sure the transplant gets off to a great start. However, don’t put synthetic fertilizer into the planting hole as it would burn the young roots. Apply them as side dressing and water in well.



3) Water the hole and let it soak in.

4) Set in the transplant at the depth it grew in the pot. Tomatoes are of course one exception to the planting depth as they can be planted deeper. If the transplant is slightly root-bound you will need to tease the roots apart some. When a pot is completely root-bound cut roots along the sides of the root ball to make them branch out. Transplants in a peat pot can be problematic. You might remove it before planting, but at least be sure the top edge of the peat pot is not exposed to air. An exposed peat pot can wick water away from the young roots so they could struggle to thrive.

5) Gently firm the plant in and form a raised ring of soil around the plant to help hold



# The Tool Shed

by Jim Williams, MG 2017

## The Hori-Hori Knife

I love my tools. They make a gardener's life easier but at the same time make the garage cluttered. There are tools we use occasionally while others are close friends we work with daily. Other than my wife, my favorite and most used gardening "friend" is my Hori-Hori knife. This is an incredibly versatile tool that is always waving and pleading "use me, use me" whatever the task is.

The Hori-Hori knife is also called a Japanese gardening knife or a Farmer's Weeder. The blade, stainless steel or carbon steel, is about 7 inches long, slightly concave, with a 4 to 5 inch wooden handle. One blade edge is straight and the other serrated. That's about it, simple and sweet. I have used the same one for the past 20 years and it's still going strong. Still, I am finding more and more uses for it.

**Weeder:** I have used many weeders over the years and the Hori-Hori is far superior to all whether in dense, hard clay or rocky caliche. The thick steel blade seems to never bend or dull. Its 7-inch blade will get under deep taproots with ease or can slice through any dense mass of fibrous roots. And what's with this Spring? Where did all these weeds come from? The Hori-Hori has been my lifesaver and all my ex-weeds were no match for it. The only drawback is that you must get down and sit on the ground to use it efficiently. That wouldn't be a problem if I just didn't have to get up.



**Digging Planting Holes:** The blade is slightly concave, so it works well as a small digger when setting out transplants or bulbs. The pointy tip can stir any amendments and fertilizer in the bottom of the hole. Most of the stainless-steel blades have inch marks to judge the depth which is useful for planting bulbs.

**Prying Up Small Rocks:** Due to the strong steel this task becomes easier. I have never seen a dulled tip on one.

**Chopping and Cutting:** The blade edges work well to slice through plant material with a stiff whack but will not be sharp enough to make fine cuts. I don't want mine that sharp for safety reasons. If I need to make a fine cut, I prefer a sharp knife or pruner anyway.

**Roots:** No root can stand up to this baby. Nothing is more irritating than digging a good hole except for that last renegade root near the bottom. It is rarely still a problem after a few

stabs with the serrated edge of the blade.

A good Hori-Hori generally costs \$30 to \$40, and although you can find one cheaper, it may not be the best quality. Consider adding this handy and versatile tool to your circle of gardening “friends”.



# Dinner in the Garden

**Saturday, April 15, 2019, 5:30—8:00 PM**

Join your Master Gardener friends and neighbors for an evening potluck dinner in the Demonstration Gardens to honor our founding Master Gardener Wayne Rhoden. See VMS calendar for signup information.

Sign up your pot luck dish at <https://www.perfectpotluck.com/meals.php?t=CQBU0294>





## What is Purple and less than 4.5 inches by 6 inches?

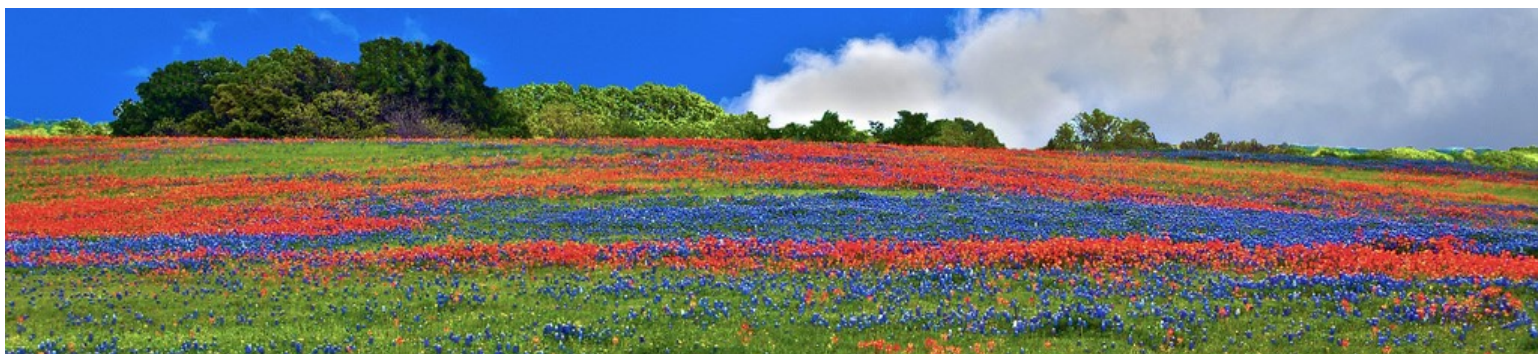
by Alice Stultz, MG 1996

Recently two dear Master Gardener friends gave me a Texas wildflower identification book that I had not seen before. It is a small color tabbed field guide. It just about fits in the pocket of my jeans. It is about half the size of other field guides to our state's wildflowers. I usually carry several of these type books when wandering during the different seasons in Texas. Sometimes it is easier to identify the flowers by the photos in the different views and no book is particularly better than the other. However, Wildflowers of Texas Field Guide by Nora and Rick Bowers and Stan Tekiela, published by Adventure Publications, Cambridge, Minnesota in 2009 is a little book with a full- page photo and a full page for the description of the flower. Perfect if you only have room for one book in your hiking backpack or fanny pack.

Other books of note are Wildflowers of Texas, by Geyata Ajilvsgi, published by Shearer Publishing, Fredericksburg, Texas, with latest printing 2003. It is also color coded by blooms and is excellent. Lady Bird Johnson wrote the forward to Texas Wildflowers A Field Guide by Campbell and Lynn Longhiller, edited by Lynn Sherrod, published by University of Texas Press, Austin, Texas, in 1984.

If you are traveling west of here, you might want to get a copy of Wildflowers of the Western Plains A Field Guide by Zoe Merriman Kirkpatrick, published by University of Texas Press, Austin, Texas, in 1992. I heard her review her book for a Native Plant Society of Texas meeting and she is a character. At the end of each description she includes personal comments about the plant and its characteristics. For example: the leaf sticks to your clothing so beware, or this flower is nocturnal and that is a problem if you don't want to hang around all night to watch it.

That little 4.5 by 6 Inch purple book, Wildflowers of Texas Field Guild by Nora and Rick Bowers and Stan Tekiela, is my new favorite wildflower book. It will be accompanying me on many adventures this spring and into other seasons. When I look for them, I am always amazed at how many wildflowers bloom throughout the year.



# Winola's Timely Tips for April

by Winola VanArtsdalen, MG 2007

**APRIL**, a gardener's most exciting month! Our spirits were stirred with bush honeysuckle and spring snowflake blooms beginning in January and February, redbuds, pear trees and some roses in March, and now the glory of columbines, poppies and all flowers imaginable in April! If you have taken advantage of local plant sales, including our annual Master Gardener Plant sale with fresh plants and gardening advice available, you are now in the midst of the fun of planting! Remember to use repetition for a cohesive look, repeating plants in your design. Usually you put larger plants in back, but a few tall plants located in special locations can add interest and avoid "regimented" look. Be sure to use native plants for easy care and to support wildlife, and that you have a variety of plants to bloom spring through fall to continue the excitement!

## Bringing tender plants outside:

If you have seedlings you started yourself or container plants, remember to acclimate them as you move outdoors by first putting them on a covered porch and possibly bringing them back inside the first couple of nights. Be sure that the soil is slightly moist, but not muddy when you plant. If it is dry, water it a day or two before. Leave some air space between plants, so they do not become overly crowded as they grow. To avoid future headaches, avoid plants that spread too aggressively.

Bring container plants out gradually into brighter light. If you do not change to fresh potting soil, pour water over soil to wash out salts. Do not leave saucer below plant, as salts will be re-absorbed.

If plants need repotting, (roots growing out of drainage hole or you see mostly roots with little soil), water well one or two days before moving to new container. Dry roots can break off when being moved. (This is true when transplanting plants outside, too.)

If the new container does not have drainage holes, carefully drill two or three  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch holes into the bottom. Place a coffee filter in the bottom of the new pot, covering the holes, to keep soil from washing out. Now, using potting soil mix appropriate for this plant, fill the container with a couple of inches of soil. To pull old container away from plant, turn potted plant upside down, holding one hand on the pot's bottom and the other palm on the soil with the plant stem between your fingers. If roots are tightly wound, gently loosen them. Clip any black roots which may be rotten.

Place plant in middle of new container with soil line about 1 inch below pot rim to allow for watering. Then fill in soil at sides. Water carefully.

## **Spring cleanup:**

Complete spring cleanup, trimming freeze damaged parts down to new growth, removing large leaves and other debris, adding compost and then mulch. Top dressing on turf and beds help prevent evaporation and increase moisture retention to help get through Texas' long hot summer!

## **Care of plants:**

Remember that perennials must be divided when crowded, or they will gradually lose strength to bloom. Transplant spring and fall bloomers in spring and spring bloomers in fall. Seaweed is excellent for getting plants started and strengthens them to protect against extreme weather changes. Look for strays to move into beds. Seeds may have escaped from flower beds, or a bird flying overhead may have left you a seed all nicely enclosed in natural fertilizer!

Plants need more attention the first season to keep from getting dry.

Established plants are more drought tolerant. This is why fall planting is strongly recommended in Central Texas, but most gardeners simply cannot resist the call of spring fever to plant!

Try repellants for deer/armadillos/other critters.

Problems: If aphids are a problem, a hard water spray is best first treatment, followed by insecticidal soap, if necessary. For less problems, plant a large variety of flowers, especially herbs.

Seaweed, 001, is good for new plantings and to strengthen any plant for extreme weather survival.

## **Turf:**

Dig weeds now! They are easy to see and will only get longer and stronger as season progresses!

After last freeze, aerate when moist and spread top dressing (one-half to one inch organics, fine compost). If you spread top dressing, skip spring fertilization, as that would be too much nitrogen.

Fertilize Bermuda and St. Augustine in late March to early April after second mowing and Buffalo and Zoysia in late April to early May.

# JUNIOR MASTER GARDENING WITH OUR YOUNGEST GARDENERS

by Arlene Boyer, MG 2000

## Emerson Academy

Emerson Academy is an all abilities early learning school on the east side of Round Rock and home to our newest preschool and toddler level JMG program which began in Spring 2018.

JMG Lead Patsy Bredahl, MG 2007, and Christie Gardner, MG 2012, simplify and adapt lessons from the JMG curricula with an emphasis on gardening and nutrition. Patsy, a retired nurse, and Christie, a career educator, meet with the children and their staff twice a month on Thursday mornings. They have a short inside lesson and weather permitting, they take the children and Emerson staff out to the fenced garden, which has two raised beds and one long ground level bed. They work with two classes of 15-17 children per class with two teachers participating. The first session class has children of ages 3-4 and the second class has ages 5-6.

The children love planting, caring for their garden and harvesting. "They are a joy to work with," says Patsy Bredahl.



"They are a joy to work with"

Patsy Bredahl, MG 2007

## Round Rock Head Start

Round Rock Head Start is next door to the Round Rock Area Serving Center gardens, a Wilco MG project. Head Start's JMG program began in Fall 2015. The children's two gardens with raised beds are located adjacent to the playgrounds, seen and enjoyed by children, staff, parents, and visitors. JMG Leads scientist Ralph Brewer, MG 2016, and Christie Gardner, MG 2012, provide age appropriate gardening experiences and fun activities, including children's books with storyteller Ms. Christie. This site serves toddlers with quick, mini-sessions and two Pre-Kindergarten classes with programming correlated to Round Rock ISD curriculum; Head Start staff members participate along with their children. A special feature of this JMG site is the watering and routine maintenance provided by Ralph Brewer, who also volunteers at the Round Rock Serving Center gardens. Children and staff look forward to seeing their own special gardener and friend, Mr. Ralph.

For more details on Emerson Academy and Round Rock Head Start, please see the VMS for postings of sessions and contact information. MG volunteers are always welcome! Thank you.



## The Stars of the Plant Sale



# Williamson County Soil Characteristics

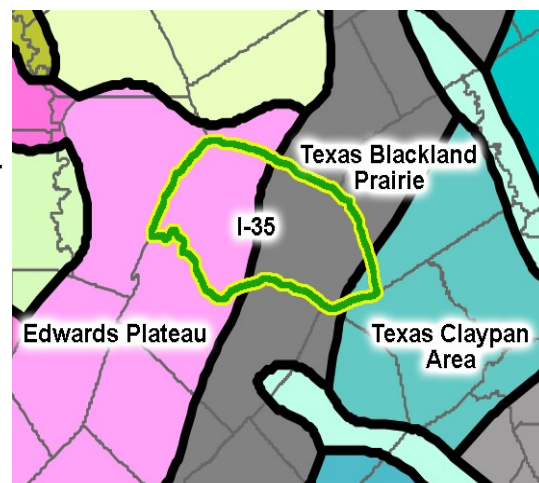
by Garry Bowman, MG 2014

Depending on where you live in Williamson County, you could have 1 of 3 different soil types. Williamson County is highlighted in green on the attached USDA soil map excerpt.

The **Edwards Plateau** (pink area on map) lies roughly west of Interstate 35. The terrain is rocky and hilly and prone to flash floods from storm water runoff. The soil tends to be thin, stony and was formed in limestone or limestone marl. Beneath the soil is a layer of caliche often with limestone bedrock below that. In areas of thin soil, many gardeners use raised beds.

The **Texas Backland Prairie** (grey area on map) is roughly east of Interstate 35. The soil is deep and fertile, black heavy clay soils that formed in marine marls, ancient clayey alluvium, soft limestone and chalk. The land is relatively flat and good for farming and pastures. Drainage can be an issue with clay soils. Utilizing French drains, adding expanded shale to the soil and or using raised beds may help with this.

The **Texas Claypan** (turquoise area on map) is in the far southeastern corner of the county. Over most of the area, soils have well developed, clayey, subsoil horizons with sandy and loamy surface textures.



All three Williamson County soil types are alkaline with an average pH range of 7.5 – 8 which can impact a micronutrient uptake. Soil pH is a measurement of how acid or alkaline the soil is. A neutral soil pH measures 6.6 to 7.3.

For the homeowner, issues with alkaline soil can affect trees, garden and landscape plants. As soil pH increases from neutral to alkaline, phosphorus, iron, copper, zinc, boron and manganese become less available for plant use. This can result in a plant showing symptoms of nutrient deficiency even though the nutrient is present in the soil.

The only way to know for sure what nutrients your soil needs or has enough of is to have a soil test done. Contact the Williamson County Extension office Horticultural Agent or Master Gardener Help Desk for information on doing a soil test. Don't rely on what your neighbors may tell you as some areas and subdivisions have had soil and or sod brought in from other areas during construction.

[https://legacy.lib.utexas.edu/maps/texas/texas-general\\_soil\\_map-2008.pdf](https://legacy.lib.utexas.edu/maps/texas/texas-general_soil_map-2008.pdf)  
<http://soiltesting.tamu.edu/files/urbansoil.pdf>

## Have Fun in the Garden with Color – Painted Cinderblocks

by Linda Collins, MG 2017

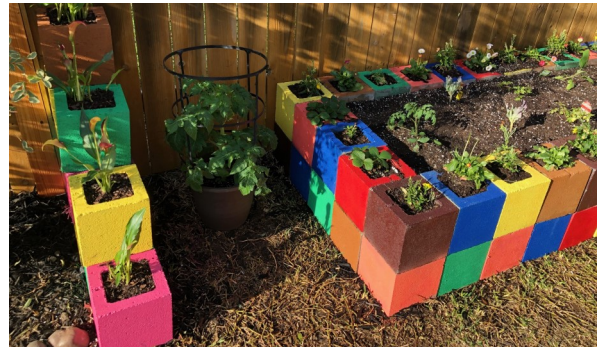
Cinderblocks are great to use for raised beds in the garden. Some of the advantages of using them are that they are not expensive, are easy to move around, allow good drainage, and hold heat to help keep the soil warm. But they are not very attractive. Their dull grey color is not appealing.

However, painting cinderblocks can add unexpected fun and a surprise to a garden. I had a great time putting in a small vegetable garden in my backyard with painted cinderblocks.

The steps I took to paint them include:

1. Clean the cinderblocks thoroughly.
2. Apply two coats of a concrete bonding primer to each cinderblock and let each coat dry completely.
3. Spray paint each cinderblock two times.

Once they were painted, I created my raised bed, added a good vegetable potting soil and planted my garden. I am happy with the way this project turned out. My 20-month-old granddaughter loves it too!



# Cameras in the Demo Gardens!

Photography by Sonia Schuetze, MG 2016





# From Garden to Table

## SPICED BEET SALAD

by Radhika Baliga, MG 2015

### Ingredients

- 2 medium beets, cooked, peeled, and cut into 1/2" dice (for a total of 2 cups diced beets)
- 2 Medjool dates, pitted and chopped
- 1 Tbsp chopped parsley
- 1 Tbsp chopped cilantro
- 1 Tbsp chopped spearmint
- 1 Tbsp finely minced shallot or red onion
- 2 Tbsp orange juice
- 1 Tbsp red wine vinegar
- 1 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- ¼ tsp honey
- salt and pepper to taste
- ¼ tsp ground cinnamon
- ¼ tsp ground cumin
- ¼ tsp ground coriander
- 1 Tbsp chopped pistachios



### Directions

In a medium mixing bowl, whisk together the herbs, shallot (or red onion), orange juice, vinegar, olive oil, honey, salt, pepper, and ground spices. Add the beets and dates and toss together. Pour the salad into a serving bowl and top with the chopped pistachios. Serve chilled or at room temperature.

# Triple Ginger Cookies

These are the cookies Teresa Robinson recently brought to an event and everyone asked for the recipe so she provided it to us to pass around. Bake and enjoy.

## TRIPLE GINGER COOKIES

- 2 cups flour
- 2 tsp baking soda
- 1 1/2 tsp ground ginger
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp cloves
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 1/2 sticks butter
- 1 tsp black pepper
- 1 1/4 cup of molasses
- 1 egg
- 2 tsp grated fresh ginger root
- 1/4 cup chopped crystalized ginger

Make balls and roll each ball in turbinado sugar and bake 350 degrees for 15 minutes

## The Continuing Transformation of the Herb Garden



# WCMGA EVENTS

## April 1

WCMGA Board Meeting

AgriLife Training Room, 100 Wilco Way, AG201

1 to 3 pm

All members are welcome to attend.

## April 6

11th Annual WCMGA Plant Sale

9 am to 4 pm

Georgetown Community Center

<https://txmg.org/williamson/special-events/>

## April 8

WCMGA Monthly Membership Meeting

AgriLife Training Room, 3151 SE Inner Loop

6:30 to 8 pm

“Great Garden & Lawn Naturally” with Mike Serant of MicroLife Biological Fertilizers

## April 11

Green Thumbs Up Gardening Series: Cedar Park

Cedar Park Public Library

7:00 to 8:00 pm

“Turf Management” with Kaye Davidson

## April 13

Dinner in the Garden with Wayne Rhoden

Demo Gardens

5:30 to 8 pm

Signup on VMS and follow link for you potluck dish

## April 15

Spring Field Trip

San Antonio Botanical Gardens

8 am to 5 pm

See VMS calendar for signup and information

\$40 fee for transportation and admission

## April 23

Green Thumbs Up Gardening Series: Round Rock

Round Rock Public Library

6:30 to 7:30 pm

“Care of Turf Grass” with Kaye Davidson

## April 25-27

2019 Texas Master Gardener State Conference

Victoria Community Center, Victoria, Texas

<http://2019tmgaconference.com/>

## April 27

Hands On In The Garden

AgriLife Training Room, 3151 SE Inner Loop

9 to 11 am

“Bugs and Pests in the Garden” with Stephanie Facey



So Long,  
We'll Be Back Next Month When We  
Figure This Thing Out.