

**March/April
2016 Issue #2**

**Edited by:
Sylvia Johnson**

MG WOOD WORKS

President: Linda Timmons

I'm always impressed at how good our master gardeners are at stepping up when we need help. I found out after I became president that our 2015 Sunshine person was having major health challenges. At our January meeting I asked for a volunteer to take that job on. Jenna Nelson volunteered. If you know of a member who needs a warm thought or encouragement please let Jenna know.

Our Wood County Master Gardener Page is getting great response since Robin Sanchez (class of 2015)

started posting to it. She is great at finding interesting links. I think my favorite to date was the Lubbock Master Gardeners weed identification link. The one on using wood ash in the garden was also very timely. Our official Facebook page and our web page are both excellent ways to share good horticultural ideas. Kudos to Robin and Keith Zimmerman (also class of 2015).

We have a new Facebook Group in addition to our page. The group is closed

and postings only can be seen by WCMGs. We've tried to find all WCMGs that are active on Facebook but I'm not sure we have. If we've missed any one just go to the WCMGA group and ask to join. So far we've used the group to ask about plant identification, request suggestions for good plant cultivars, and mention problems we've seen in our gardens (and solutions).

Melissa Deakins and I are

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VP: Melissa Deakins - OUR SPRING PROGRAMS

March 18, back by popular demand is **Dana Nance from Hootens' Lawn and Garden in Emory**. She will be sharing her vast knowledge of gardening with us. You might remember her presentation on Roses last year, it was a favorite.

April 21, our own **Reggie Askins** will present her great ideas for rustic accents. **Twigology**: the science of using nature in our indoor and outdoor décor. Reggie has been creating these artistic accents around her home and in her garden for years. Think twigs, sticks, and limbs.

Heads-up:

Begin thinking about and snapping photos of troubling spots in your own garden. In May we will show photos and discuss solutions to help you out. Imaging having all those expert opinions!!!

2016 Slate of Officers

President: Linda Timmons

VP: Melissa Deakins

Treasurer: Molly Mathis

Secretary: Jan Whitlock



**TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION**

President Article Cont.

working on a fall program that will be a virtual garden tour. We want to visit YOUR gardens. If you have an area in your yard that you will be working on we would like before and after pictures. If you have an area in your landscape that has been particularly successful, we want pictures! This isn't just about pretty or success. Sometimes we learn more from our failures, send pictures. If you try a new way for trellising your vegetables or have a very successful container garden, send pictures. My email address is lindtmmns@aol.com. Please put **"Garden Tour Program"** in the subject line. *

Happy Gardening, Linda Timmons

**This is a different program from the May "problem spot" program.*

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Texas Master Gardener Magazine by Karen Anderson

If you have friends or family who like to garden or who want to learn more about gardening in Texas, a gift subscription to Texas Gardener Magazine would make a great gift. It is easy and puts a little money in the Wood Co. Master Gardener bank account for educational programs and projects during the year.

Also, if you have a subscription up for renewal and renew it thru our WCMG we receive a percentage of the renewal fee.

For further information or an order form contact Karen Anderson.



<http://www.texasgardener.com/>

Festivals and Farmer Markets? By Sylvia

During the February WCMGA stated meeting, it was proposed that we add Farmer Markets to the budget line item for Festivals. This would not increase the line item amount. It was suggested we would reach more people and increase our Educational Outreach by setting up our "festival" booth at these venues. A more targeted audience is expected at Farmer Markets, one that is already interested in home grown/fresh products. It was pointed out that festivals are a wider and less subjective audience. With the addition of farmer markets this will contact us with both those who are already interested in gardening as well as those who just happen onto our booth at festivals.

It was emphasized that in order for this to work volunteers would be needed to run these booths. If you are interested in this concept either attend March's stated meeting or contact Linda Timmons.

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Do You Need to Apply Agricultural Limestone to your Pond?

Our ponds here in Northeast Texas are a lot like our pastures. We need to apply agricultural limestone in order to raise the pH and alkalinity. Our soils here are naturally acidic because of how they were derived. Same goes for our ponds. In order to raise the pH and alkalinity, we need to apply agricultural limestone to our ponds just as we do in the pastures. Anytime is ok to apply the agricultural limestone, however, the winter months are the best time to adjust the water pH and increase the total alkalinity of the water. It takes time for the agricultural limestone to work. The balance change rate can range from a couple of days to more than a month depending on the type and amount limestone used, weather conditions, and on the degree of acidity of the original water.

Water pH and alkalinity must be in correct order for a pond fertility program to work properly. Nutrients are added to the pond water to encourage a phytoplankton bloom. These are microscopic plants that feed microscopic animals called zooplankton. The forage fish like bluegill and minnows feed on the zooplankton. Game fish, like largemouth bass feed on the forage fish. This results in better fishing due to a properly managed pond water quality. Nutrients are pH dependent especially phosphorus. Proper pH balance can improve phosphorus availability and enhance the health of the pond.

Applying agricultural limestone can make a difference in the health of the fish even though the land owner does not have a fertility program. Since our soils are natural acidic, therefore our ponds are acidic, a *fish kill* can occur if the total alkalinity gets too low.

Total alkalinity of the pond water needs to be 20.3 ppm or greater. If the total alkalinity gets below 20.3 ppm in the pond water, pH fluctuations occur. These fluctuations cause the fish to stress. If the pH gets below 5, "acid death point" occurs for many fish species.

(cont. on next page)

County Extension Agent-Ag/NR: Clint Perkins

Wood County TX
AgriLife Extension Service
618 South Main Street
Quitman, TX 75783-0968
Phone: 903-763-2924

Interested in becoming a Master Gardener and contributing to your county? If so, call the Wood County AgriLife Extension office for more information and to join.

TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION

AgriLife Agent Cont. (Ponds)

If you are digging a new pond and if the soils are naturally acidic in the area, I would recommend applying agricultural limestone before the pond fills with water.

The best way to determine if your pond water's PH is too low is to have a water test done. It is cheap and inexpensive. I test for pH and total alkalinity here at the office. It will cost \$1 since I have to buy the reagents to conduct the test. Use a clean drinking water bottle or a jar with a lid on it to collect your sample.



<http://fisheries.tamu.edu/pond->

If you have any questions regarding pond water testing and applying agricultural limestone, please contact the Wood County Extension Office. Please see all contact addresses and numbers on the previous page.

Happy Gardening, Clint Perkins

TMGA 2016 Master Gardener Master Classes

- ♦ The State Master Gardener Irrigation Specialist Training with Dr. Dotty Woodson is scheduled for March 21 – March 23
- ♦ The State Master Gardener Composter Training is scheduled for June 22 – June 24
- ♦ The Junior Master Gardener –Youth Educators Training is scheduled for July 27 – July 29
- ♦ The State Master Gardener Texas Superstar Training is scheduled September 20 – September 22
- ♦ The State Master Gardener Vegetable Specialist Training is scheduled for November 9 – November 11

These classes will be held in Bexar County. For more information contact: Jayla Fry

979-845-3308

East Texas Garden Lecture Series

The following classes will be held in Smith County

<http://smith.agrilife.org/event/2016-east-texas-garden-lecture-series/>

AgriLife Office

903-590-2980

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QUITMAN ARBORETUM AND BOTANICAL GARDEN

Will those hundreds of tulips bloom again? That is the question we are asking as we watch last year's hard work return. Those of us who broke many a fingernail getting those little gems into the ground, in the fall of 2014, will just have to wait and see what Mother Nature has in store for us. I guess I should have started a lottery of some sort to earn a bit more money for necessary expenses in the gardens.

Speaking of necessary expenses, I would like to address our first annual *Valentine's Day Dinner* which took place at the historic Stinson House. Some may wonder, what are gardeners doing selling tickets, cooking, serving, bussing tables and hosting a delightful evening full of candles and fun? The answer to that question is a simple one . . . **EXPENSES**. With 23 acres to maintain, formal gardens that need weeding, fertilizing, planting and transplanting one must keep one's eye on the bottom line and I am proud to say Pam Riley does that thankless job like a pro.

Those of you who have ever volunteered at the Arboretum will be pleased to know that our dream of providing some ongoing education for the community became a reality Wednesday, February 17th. A no reservation, [no cost](#), no experience required class was held for the public covering the basics of pruning roses and preparing them for the advent of spring. We plan on these classes becoming a monthly event held on the second Wednesday of each month. Topics will be selected and taught by Lin Grado, resident plant guru.

Please mark your calendars for the Arboretum Spring Plant Sale. We hope to see you on Saturday, April 9th. Remember the early bird does not only catch the worm – she also gets the best plant picks.



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Photo from Spring 2015 edition of
"MG Wood Works"

WILDSCAPE EDUCATIONAL GARDENS

The gardens at the Mineola Nature Preserve are looking dead and dry but that is because they are resting so they can pop out with a bang in time for our annual exhibition *"Spring Fling"*.

We have revamped one garden bed and almost finished with another. We can start putting in plants when warm weather gets here. The bigger bed that is going to become the Monarch Waystation Garden is still in the planning stage and hopefully we will have it finished by the middle of April.

We will be dividing and transplanting grasses when it gets warmer. This should help fill in the bare spots on the hill and hopefully keep the weeds down. The Sensory beds at the Pavilion will be cleaned up within a few weeks and then Kathi Ladewig and Twala Watters will be choosing herbs and plants for these beds.

We really appreciate the trainees who have come to the Preserve to help get our beds in shape and get a head-start on the weeds. They did a beautiful job in the Triangle bed, trimming the trees, digging out weeds and tree sprouts, and laying mulch all thru that bed. You can now actually see our Big Rock in the middle and are able to look across the bed. Thank you, Trainees and Ursula, for all the hard work you put in on this bed.

"Spring Fling" is getting closer and things are starting to come together. We have our two containers (a little red wagon and a wheel-barrel) for the lecture and demo on container gardening. These will be given away after the lectures for door prizes. The Sensory beds should be ready for Twala's talk about herbs and Ellen will give her demo for "Lasagna Gardening". We will be distributing flyers in the next few days to the Master Gardener's and trainees. These flyers are for posting in public areas to help us spread the news about our venue. We need you to start canvassing local businesses, churches and neighbors to attend our **free** seminar. Of course, as always, we invite all WCMG Associates to come volunteer time to help in this great Public Educational Project. We need help before, during, and afterwards. Please contact one of the committee associates or me, Karen Anderson, for opportunities to help. The seminars will be on **April 23, 2016 at the Mineola Nature Preserve Pavilion from 10:00-12:00 AM**. Tours of the Wildscape garden to follow.

We still have a pair of ducks on the pond next to the gardens and they sing for us every time we come to work. If you are ever in the mood for a restful and relaxing picnic come to the pond. There are picnic tables, grills and a fishing deck for the kids to do some fishing (catch and release only). So get out and enjoy the sunshine, our gardens and fresh air along with all the sounds of nature at its finest.



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Texas Master Gardeners Director's meeting by: Linda and Peggy

The first Texas Master Gardeners Director's meeting of 2016 is over. Can you believe it is March already? Linda and I wandered south towards College Station visiting away with each other. The trip seemed short, so I guess we are getting used to the route and for once we didn't miss a turn.

As usual, this first meeting of 2016 was a business meeting without a program. Matters discussed were:

- TMGA President, Mary Means, reminded everyone that the August Director's meeting would be on Saturday August 13, 2016, which will be the 2nd Saturday instead of the usual 1st Saturday of the month.
- The 2016 Budget was presented and accepted. TMGA's income is totally from dues paid by associations of \$2.00 per member. It was reported that most TMGA Associations have paid their dues thus meeting the deadline of March 01, 2016. This makes them eligible for 2016 awards. (In an executive meeting on Friday, it was decided that Associations should pay their dues based upon the number of members they have on December 31 of previous year. This simplifies matters as some members are late payers or new ones join during the year. This does not change when your dues are due to WCMG.)
- Annual Conferences:
 - § *2016 Collin County, Myers Park
 - § *2017 Cruise (Awards Brunch meeting is being planned in Galveston the morning of Cruise docking).
 - § *2018 College Station – The Gardens
- The Awards Committee reported 126 award entries had been submitted by the deadline.
- The Outreach Committee said they were busy trying to get new officer rosters, dues and charters submitted by the associations. (WCMGA officers and charter had been submitted and only lacked paying dues).
- The Special Tax Advisory, Wayne Rhoden, encouraged all associations to file their Form 990's by February 28th to avoid problems. The IRS will be accepting these forms directly from the Associations as of March 01. Previously all Form 990s were sent to an independent contracted collection company and they then forwarded all the Forms to the IRS. TMGA does not expect this change to go smoothly. Form 990 is due by May 15th. Thus the request for early submission.
- TMGA is still encouraging MG Associations to donate to "The Gardens" at Texas A&M AgriLife ("Greenway" has been dropped from the official name and the area will now be known as "The Gardens"). At the December meeting, all MG Associations that had donated to The Gardens received a certificate and a Belinda's dream rose bush. Wood County did not have their donation paid by that date.

We had a breakout session with Committee Chairs for questions/answers. This meeting also allowed delegates to volunteer to serve on different TMGA committees.

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Training Class 2016 Project Updates by: Linda Bradley

The Wood County Master Gardeners Class of 2016 has chosen its class project. The project will involve re-planting the area fronting the Wood County TX AgriLife Extension Service Office at 618 South Main Street, Quitman, TX. This building is better known as Clint's Office! The area fronts Texas Highway 37 in Quitman.

To date, the area to be planted has been cleared. Stumps and old growth have been removed to prepare the ground for new planting.

The 2016 Class is still planning what will be installed. The new vegetation will be chosen to be attractive while requiring a low amount of maintenance. One feature to be investigated is installing a rainwater drip irrigation system.

The exact types and number of plants have yet to be decided. The Class is considering a raised bed herb garden.

The Class will attempt to finalize plans during February. The Project Leader is Andrea Sullivan.

We will keep WCMG Associates updated as we progress through our 2016 Training Classes and work days.

The following pictures are "BEFORE" pictures with new photos to follow as progress is made.



All Associates are encouraged to attend Training Classes each Tuesday. Remember, these are a great way to get CEU credits, meet new people and share your knowledge of gardening. Oh yes, and it is a great way to be in on the fun and excitement of our Association. See you there....

Can you grow Bay Leaf Shrub in Texas? By: Sylvia Johnson

Can we grow this great *Perennial HERB* in our gardens?

“Cooking Bay”: Dr. William C. Welch, Texas A&M Landscape Horticulturist, has a great article on an herb often called Greek Laurel, Sweet Bay, Mediterranean Bay or Cooking Bay. He states it can be grown in Texas with very little care. This is the variety that is sold in most U.S. markets.

To control the plants size grow it in a container. If planted in the ground the Bay may grow into a 40' tree. This plant also takes well to sculpting. Bay is a long lived perineal plant. There are known plants here in Texas dating back to 1843. “The bay is not fussy about soil type but requires good drainage. It is quite drought tolerant, but does best with some afternoon shade during the hot summer months. Bay can however, be sensitive to cold and may freeze back thru zone 9.” The hardy plant usually just starts growing back again from the root the next year.

For more info: <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/southerngarden/laurel.html>

According to the website below you can forage Bay in the Texas wild. You can find three types of laurel in Texas; common are sweet bay (*Laurus nobilis*), redbay (*Persea borbonia*) and laurel cherry * (*Prunus caroliniana*). http://www.foragingtexas.com/2008/08/bay-laurel_20.html



Greek Laurel, *Laurus nobilis*



*Warning Laurel cherry is poisonous. These leaves have sharp spiny edges and “smell like bitter almonds or artificial cherry scent.”



Native Bay can be found in Texas and is great for our wild life.

Flower Color: Whitish or greenish.

Flower Characteristics: Inconspicuous.

Flowering Season: Spring.

Fruit: Dark blue to nearly black shiny drupe, 1/2" long. Late summer to fall

Wildlife and Ecology: Provides significant food and cover for wildlife. Larval host plant for palamedes swallowtail (*Papilio palamedes*) and spicebush swallowtail (*Papilio troilus*) butterflies.

<http://www.regionalconservation.org/beta/nfyn/plantdetail.asp?tx=Persborbborb>



George D Gann

But what does it smell or taste like, anyway?

“... my best approximation is eucalyptus/menthol/lemon/balsam/mint/rosemary. Er ... yeah. Precisely. Try a leaf in the water next time you boil potatoes to isolate the wonderful flavor of bay.

<http://davesgarden.com/guides/articles/view/2468/>

And the answer is...YES. We can grow this perennial herb and it will flourish in our area. It may take a little beating in the winter but should be back in the spring. Happy Day!

Work Days and Schedules

Wildscape—Tuesdays starting around 8:00. Bring your basic gardening tools. We do have larger tools like shovels, rakes, etc. We will work every Tues. unless there is a chance of severe weather or high percentage of rain. Project Leader: Karen Anderson

QA&BG—Wednesdays at 0900. Bring your own gardening tools. Please come and help us maintain our public garden. Project Leader: Jan Whitlock

Due to winter weather, times may change, please call the project leaders for info. All are welcome to come out and help. sj

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If you are a full Wood County Master Gardeners Association Member and have time to work but can't make the above schedule, call the project leader and tell them you want to work. They will let you know what needs to be accomplished. Just because you cannot meet the schedule does not mean that you are not needed! Even an hour of your time would help keep our projects updated. If you are working on your own without the "group" be sure to wear your WCMGA nametag to identify yourself to the public and other Associates. You may also want to wear your official T-shirt. sj



2016 WCMG Officers



Photo by Keith Zimmerman

Melissa Deakins, Linda Timmons, Jan Whitlock, Molly Mathias

Online with WCMG

–**Website** at <http://txmg.org/woodcounty> for up-to-the-minute news and scheduled events, back issues of the newsletter and seasonal videos. Any new content for the web-site can be sent to Keith Zimmerman.

–**Facebook**, search for **Wood County Master Gardeners, Inc.** You should find 3 pages to choose from,

- Page 1 is a blank site that has been removed
- Page 2 is Wood County Master Gardeners / Kentucky
- [Page 3 Wood County Master Gardeners, Quitman](#)
 - Then "like" us!

–**CEU—ON LINE:** <http://txmg.org> -look to side of page, click on Training, click on Training Opportunities, click Earth-Kind Training for Master Gardeners, almost to bottom of page you will find Directions. There are 12 subjects, click on arrow in front of subject for video then click on survey or test. You are not graded on the test.

–**Sunshine:** If you know of a member who needs a warm thought or sympathy contact **Jenna Nelson:** Jnelson@peoplescom.net

–**Volunteer Hours:** <http://texas.volunteersystem.org> Just click on the link and you will see where to enter your password. Before logging in, right click on the page and save to favorites or bookmark or Create Shortcut to you desktop. Thanks for entering your hours. If you need help contact Peggy Rogers.

Editor-you can find all E-mail address and/or contact information on the Membership Roster sent to you by E-mail or on the Member Roster on the Volunteer Hours Website site above.

Unless otherwise annotated, all photos in this publication were taken by the author of the article in which they appear. SJ Editor

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