

**Wood County Master Gardener Association**  
**Wood County, Texas**  
**Edited by: Sylvia Johnson**



## President's Message: THIS YEAR WAS THE FIRST TIME THAT....



Sandra McFall  
 Picture by: Sylvia

So far this has been a year of many firsts. Some of them have made me so happy and excited, with a feeling of great expectations of further adventures and others being at the bottom of my list.

Surgery of any type is not anything that I put on my "to do" list. Even something that is considered to be a simple procedure. But I needed to see, so it had to be done. Cataract re-

moval, that is. I must confess that I see so much better, colors are brighter, and right now no eye glasses. Maybe later, but not now. That was the first for this year. By the time you read this I will be recovered and happy that it is over.

For Christmas my son gave me my first upright rolling 5 foot greenhouse for starting seeds in the house. In the past this task has taken up most of my kitchen countertop. Add to that a grow light over the counter and it was an eyesore that was in the way and which spilled dirt on the counter. Now I can do it right

with the greenhouse. Each night I am searching the seed catalogs for new heirlooms and open-pollinated seeds to plant. My ambition is to grow Texan or Southern seeds as well as heirlooms and open-pollinated seeds. Again, I challenge you to grow some of these seeds so that we can compare them this growing season. This first was a surprise gift from my son that I will enjoy for years.

This next first will have been completed in February while the trees are in deep dormancy. I have pruned my [\(click here for full story\)](#)

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## VP- Scheduled Speakers

**March :**Our program meeting will be presented by Tricia Stammberger, an accomplished flower arranger and flower show judge from Dallas. She will share with us her

amazing Taos Garden. Tricia and her husband created a sea of color at their second home in New Mexico. The garden has been on the New Mexico garden tour .

**April,** Sandy Tibbs



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## President's Article continued:

apple and peach trees for the first time. I followed the direction and information from the Texas A&M Ag articles found in the Ag office. Lots of good information located on these bulletin boards. I removed the branches that were crossed over, damaged or diseased. Additional mulch was added; making sure that the mulch was pulled away from the trunk of the tree. I had sprayed them back in late September/early October as was suggested by Clint in his "Wood Works" newsletter article. With this care the trees should continue to grow, be healthy, and provide delicious fruit this summer.

Now for the most challenging first I have had this year - that is being your Master Gardener President. It has been a time for me to acknowledge my weak areas and to find ways to improve on them. To plant seeds of growth in myself and others, to prune areas such as impatience, improve decision making using logic/reason, and seeking inner guidance with intuition/gut instinct. Some challenges we can meet alone, others we can only meet with the help of others. I need all of you to rally to the needs of your WCMG Association. This is your association and without you it will not continue to be a strong voice of education. You all have talents that can be used to improve and provide the elements needed to sustain this association. Please answer the call to volunteer and help grow this Educational network. There is so much we can do for the good of ourselves and others who want and need to learn about the gardening we love. Gardening education. How hard is that? Gardening - I love it - and I know that you all do too, so put your hand up and volunteer to help.

Just two more months for the interns to attend class. This provides us the opportunity to attend and earn quick, easy, and smart CEU's. Come on out to class and meet the new interns. Make them feel welcome and needed. Go up to someone and ask if they need anything; see if they have any questions; suggest projects for them to work on; ask them to go with you to your project; show them the ropes. Just talk to them and be a mentor to them.

March 21st is our Spring Conference in Quitman at the high school. Check with Gloria Jean Rosewall and see if there is anything you can do to help. Plan on attending and bring your friends. It will be a great time for garden lovers to meet and greet other garden lovers. They will need baked goods and I know a lot of your old gardening magazines and gardening books for the conference. There will be a used book sale. Gardening books/magazine donations are needed.

It is time to start getting ready to plant that garden. Depending on what vegetables or flowers you are planting this year it will be time to start your seeds indoors in the next couple of weeks. So, get all your seeds, soils, trays (clean) and lights ready to plant those babies.

Spring bulbs are up and blooming. I am so ready for this beautiful display of nature. My Saucer Magnolia has buds and blooms. Next will be the red buds. There are little sprouts coming up all in my flowers beds. The trees have small leaves. Spring has sprung. Enjoy it. Get out and take a walk, look around you at all that natures has to offer. Smell the sweet fragrance in the air. The birds are eat at the feeders and splash in the new start for us to enjoy. Bring some flowers to our meetings for all to enjoy.

Sincerely,

Sandra McFall





## Wood County 2015 Spring Conference

### Time to Plant Smarter

When: Saturday, March 28, 2015, 8:30  
to 12:45pm

Where: Quitman High School Auditorium, 1101 E Goode St. (aka Hwy 154).

Guest Speaker: Steven Chamblee, from Weatherford's

'Chandor Gardens' — Subject: "Texas Tough Plants"

There will be: Door prizes      Raffle items      Vendors

The best advertising uses the personal touch. It is great that the word is getting out about our conference (I received an email inquire from a person in Van Zant county). However, we still need you to help us spread the word. Please tell your friend and families, tell you neighbors, tell the people next to you at the check out stand! Help us advertise!

Also, we need more vendors that sell gardening subject merchandise for the conference. If you know of a possible vendor or need more information about vendors please contact Melissa Deakins.

Gloria Jeane Rosewall

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# Time to Plant Smarter

## Schedule of Events



8:30 – 9:15	Registration
8:45 – 9:15	Mini Seminars
9:15 – 9:30	Opening Remarks
9:30 – 10:30	Opening Speaker
10:30 – 10:35	Door Prizes
10:35 – 11:30	Mini Seminars
	Vendor/Education Booths
11:30 – 12:30	Closing Speaker
12:30 – 12:45	Program close and door prizes

### Mini Seminar Topics

Vegetable Gardening, Native Plants, Herbs, Worms

### Education Booths Topics

Native Plants, Rainwater Harvesting, WCMG Awareness, Herb Gardening, Help Desk

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## Daylight Savings Time begins March 8—Spring Forward!

### Monthly Meeting Schedule cont.

**MARCH:** (The garden has been on the New Mexico garden tour) and is visited by hundreds of people each year. Tricia believes that growing flowers that you love is the easiest thing to do. Her thousands of dahlias light up the desert landscape on a plateau just outside of town.



**APRIL:** (Sandy Tibbs) of Mineola's Lost Creek bird store will give us tips on creating friendly environments for our feathered friends. Sandy is a Master Naturalist and avid Birder. She has a wonderful selection of nature products and is always willing to give advice beyond what seeds to feed to attract desirable wildlife to our area. I'm thinking birds, butterflies, bats, houses, feeders, fountains, gages, fun yard art. and more.

Please join us and participate and learn from these unique and varied ideals and individuals.

Melissa Deakins

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### Tea Thyme: Sandra McFall

**Lavender Herb Tea** (Makes 4 cups)

- 1 teaspoon dried [lavender flowers](#)
- 1 teaspoon dried chamomile flowers
- 1 teaspoon green tea leaves
- ½ teaspoon dried yarrow flowers
- 4 cups near boiling water

Place the herbs in a warmed teapot. Pour in the water, cover, and steep for 3 minutes. Strain and serve, sweetened with a little honey if desired.



Clip art

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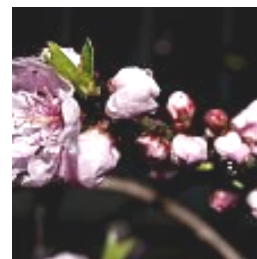
As we approach **Tax Filing Time**, many of us think about end-of-the-year giving. Have you considered giving to Wood County Master Gardeners? We are a 501-C-3 non-profit organization that will joyfully receive your gift and provide a receipt for you tax records.

Contact Katy Carter, WCMG Treasurer



## Consider Thinning Peach Trees This Year

These warm days that we have been experiencing in February are getting many people thinking about springtime. We need to start making a plan for our fruit production this year. Peaches are about to start blooming. Trees in most “cared” for orchards should have a bountiful supply of fruit buds this year. If the tree appears to be strong, and the potential for a good crop is promising, it is now time to plan for thinning the crop.



freedigitalphotos.net

Before you say, “Wait a minute”, just what are you talking about. Thinning is perhaps one of the least understood and most feared aspects of fruit production. The idea of thinning conjures up thoughts of wasting fruit or some other disaster coming along and not having a full crop. Thinning is not an exact science, and many factors will affect the amount of thinning actually achieved. The benefits of an aggressive thinning program far outweigh the negative aspects.

With a healthy, mature peach tree, a full crop of fruit may be obtained when less than ten percent of the flower buds set fruit. Leaving excess fruit on the tree may result in small fruit, tree damage from the heavy crop load and a reduction in the crop potential for the following year. The earlier a fruit crop is thinned, the more pronounced the effect will be on the remaining fruits. The early stage of fruit growth involves cell division. With high rates of cell division, the potential for large fruit increases. Stresses resulting from too much fruit will lower the rate of cell division. Even though thinning a heavy crop will have a positive effect whenever the thinning is done, the increase in fruit size as a result of thinning diminishes with time. Delaying the thinning operation will also lessen fruit bud formation for next year’s crop with some varieties.

Peaches should be thinned when they are the size of your thumbnail. Thin the peaches until they are 5 to 6 inches apart. A peach tree will make X number of pounds a fruit a year. You can either have a bunch of small knotty peaches or fewer, big, sweet, juicy ones - the choice is yours.

Happy Gardening!

Clint Perkins



<http://photobucket.com/images/peach>

For more information From Texas A&M: <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/fruit-nut/files/2010/10/peaches.pdf>

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Wood County TX AgriLife Extension Service

618 South Main Street

Quitman, TX 75783-0968

Phone: 903-763-2924



Wood County Extension Agent,

Clint Perkins

Email: [clperkins@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:clperkins@ag.tamu.edu)

\*Extension programs serve people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, disability or national origin.

# Mineola Nature Preserve

## Wildscape Gardens



The Wildscape Gardens are going to have a beautiful show of Bluebonnets this spring. Large clumps are already 6" tall and full. In the Grass Bed, by the rock, the ground is covered with Bluebonnet plants. We are expecting a great wave of blue in the spring. Also, in the same bed, we are waiting to see if the "Princess Caroline" grass makes it through the winter to be a focal point again this summer.



The Master Gardener Association has received information from the Native Plant Society of Texas concerning the decline of the Monarch Butterfly. The Society is awarding grants to nature centers, schools, educational groups to Bring Back the Monarchs to Texas (BBMT) program. The Wildscape Gardens' butterfly garden has a great location to expand and we will be submitting a grant request. If we receive this grant we will need volunteers to help plan and plant the flower beds using Milk-weed Plants for the Monarchs. We will know the results by April 1.

We are also working on presenting our 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual "Spring Fling" Educational Seminar in late April or early May. Volunteers are needed to assist with this program. Detailed information will be distributed when plans are finalized with the Mineola Nature Preserve Board.

The Nature Preserve had a close call in February at the Mineola City Council meeting. A proposal was presented to establish a shooting range at the old waste water treatment location which is right next to the Preserve. They were also discussing moving the fireworks show to the Preserve but luckily they voted down both items. As one councilman stated they have to decide if they want a "Nature Preserve" or a theme park. Hopefully it will stay a "Nature Preserve".

We are looking forward to warmer weather and all the spring blooms. Come enjoy the peace, quiet and beauty of the Preserve and the Wildscape Gardens.

Karen Anderson

Photos by Karen



Possomhaw Holly Berries lite up the  
Wildscape in winter

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## The Lite Side: What Do Chickens *Really* Want?

We've all seen the magazines by the checkout counter, shrieking titles like, "*What Do Women Really Want?*" Well, since I want to raise chickens, I want to know what chickens *really* want. I suggest anyone seriously wanting to raise chickens consult [www.backyardchickens.com](http://www.backyardchickens.com) for copious amounts of information, often more than you want or can use on subjects too numerous to mention.

Inasmuch as we are Master Gardeners, I thought I'd begin with a listing of plants that chickens *allegedly* will let alone. The caveat here is that chickens do need something to forage on all the time so, although they may merely romp through the following list of chicken resistant plants; the chicks should always have constant access to water and their feeder. It was also advised that the compiler of the list additionally gives his birds lots of treats a couple of times daily. (Perhaps they become so torpid, the "resistant" plants become safe as a result of him stuffing them full of food?)

### ~ The Resistant List ~

Heliotrope, agapanthus, salvias, four o'clock, iris, nandina, camellias, pittosporum, clivia (mildly toxic but not deadly), purple heuchera, lavender, penstamen, lambs ears, leather leaf ferns, calla lilies, asparagus fern, Japanese anemone, amaryllis Belladonna ("Naked Ladies"), lantana, wallflower, yarrow, mother in law's tongue, osteospermum, rosemary, Mexican sage, sedum, Jade (also mildly toxic but not deadly), tansy, hosta, Virginia creeper, autumn clematis, zinnias, creeping phlox, horseradish, mint family (salvias and sages), chive, roses, daisies, honeysuckle.

Photos by: Petra Jones



The above listing should not be taken literally as safe and vegetable gardens and other fragile plants should be fenced off from their regular runs and birds only allowed to roam there occasionally and only under supervision. But, when the garden is done, it is good to allow the chickens to help clean it all up—makes everyone happy.

If you do give the birds access to your veggie garden, it is suggested to lay chicken wire around the base of the root zones of plants when they are first put in the ground. Lay it on the ground with any sharp parts trimmed off or poked into the ground. Landscape staples can then be pounded through the chicken wire into the ground and then covered with mulch. This way the chicks avoid scratching over it, but are able to walk on it. This prevention will keep the birds from digging the plants out before the shoots are strong enough to resist the birds.

A note of caution: chickens may dig up bulbs, eat all low hanging grape leaves or raspberries. Additional targets for destruction would be fuchsia if within reach and alstromeria flowers and any other soft flowers you can imagine. For instance, can you just see in your mind's eye what chickens would do to pansies or nasturtiums? I suspect they are not very discriminating in their marauding.

### ~ What to feed? ~

**Protein** is vital. I understand producing an egg is tantamount to our delivering a child so one needs to keep nourishing chickens to keep them in good enough condition to keep producing. Caged chicks could have soybeans every day or, if free range, they may pick up all the protein they need in the form of bugs and



worms. There is a whole group of people who also raise meal worms for their birds. We tried it one winter when someone moving gave us a stash of worms. We wanted to attract more bluebirds. Well, it was a huge chore for my honey and then they turned into beetles and the bluebirds wouldn't have them at all. I suspect chickens, though, would still be pleased even with the beetles. This is something to think about. Someone also suggested mounting a poison free trap for yellow jackets and then feeding the dead ones to the chickens because they are so high in protein.

**Grains:** First and foremost, grains must not get wet and mold as this can kill chickens. Good is any small, hard seeds like oats, wheat, corn. They also like cooked rice, pasta or oatmeal as well as breakfast grits. They need a good scratch and one made from whole grains is preferable to a solid cracked corn scratch.

**Greens** will be available in the yard if you allow the chickens to browse and eat grass, et al. They can eat scraps as long as they are not moldy. Chicks love a cabbage to peck on and feeding pumpkin pieces will turn yolks a lovely bright orange.

**Grit** is, in reality, small rocks and pebbles that the bird will swallow to help them digest food as they have no teeth. (Remember 'scarce as hen's teeth'?) Free range birds have easy access and will pick and choose, but confined birds need grit supplied to them monthly. Note size and don't give a chick something much larger than sand.

**Calcium** supplement is the most popular and easiest source for the calcium birds need to keep their egg shells from becoming too soft. Another easy source is oyster shells but they cannot be used in place of grit, referenced above. There is a controversy regarding feeding egg shells back to the hens. I know of one couple who actually microwave the used eggshells before feeding. Others say the chickens may develop a taste for eggs this way. This may be determined by the level of neurosis in your flock, i.e. *Silence of the Lambs*.

**Water** is crucial to keep the flock properly hydrated at all times. Thinking is not a chicken's long suit so it is advisable to keep water nearby at all times. They don't care for dirty water, regardless of the amount of dirt they, personally, have contributed to it. Give up. This is not a trainable trait. Just refresh it often.

#### ~ Short Cut ~

To make this all a lot easier, one can put out any chicken feed which is a complete diet for them. Flock Raiser is one that is high in protein although perhaps a bit more expensive.

#### ~ Off Limits ~

Chickens should not eat raw green potato peels as they contain a toxic substance called Solanine; anything very salty as this can cause salt poisoning in small bodies like chickens; citrus (don't yet know why); dried or undercooked beans contain a toxic poison called hemagglutinin; candy, chocolate or sugar which is not good for their systems, particularly chocolate. Forget meat and onions too.

#### ~ Tidbits ~

We easily raised lots of sunflowers for the seeds but I understand these are considered merely a treat and not a complete food and should be limited.

Additionally, do not count on your chickens *ever* knowing what is good for them as it has been documented that they have eaten blocks of Styrofoam.

Some have estimated that after purchase of birds, feed, enclosures, et al, the cost of the first egg to be between \$500 and \$700.

On a *very* personal and final note, do not wear flip flops and a shiny gold toe ring into a chicken run!



The Yantis JMG began this semester by planting a tree on campus. This group has already gone through the program several years ago and were eager to continue with JMG. They planned where to plant the tree and how to properly plant it. In their greenhouse they are getting ready to plant plugs for spring sales.



Quitman JMG will begin their semester project by planting a tree on campus also.

If you are interested in volunteering for the JRMG Program, please contact Linda Avant. She has programs throughout Wood County.

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# TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION

## Tri-County Landowners Conference

**From your AgriLife Agent,**

I wanted to tell everybody about a new educational program we are doing for Wood, Rains, and Van Zandt Counties. It's called the Tri-County Landowners Conference. It will be held on Friday, May 8, 2015. It will be held in Emory since that is a central location for all three counties. Topics are listed below. This program is in line with the conference we held last year as a pilot program. I would like for the Wood County Master Gardeners to have educational booths at this program. Deena has agreed to her presentation on square foot gardening!!!

Tri-County Landowners Conference

Dr. Blake Bennett (Texas A&M AgriLife Economist)

Square foot gardening (Deena )

Earth-Kind Principles and vegetable varieties (Dr. Steve George)

Planning the home fruit orchard (Keith Hansen CEA Horticulture, Smith Co)

Clint Perkins

[ctperkins@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:ctperkins@ag.tamu.edu)



Don't forget our fund raiser magazine subscriptions. This would make a great **Mother's Day** gift for the Mom who gardens or who just loves reading about it. She would love the recipes and gardening trivia. What a great way to show Mom you care.

Remember renewing your subscription through WCMG also supports our Association.

Get your subscription from WCMG,  
Contact Katy Carter.

Picture from TG website

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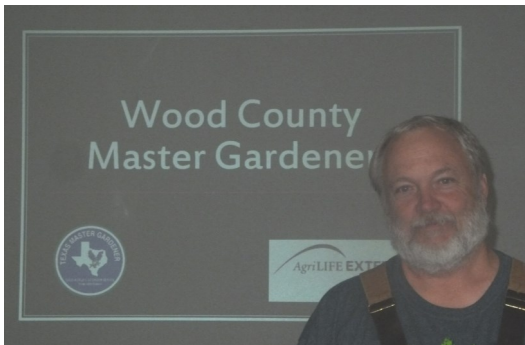


## Training Class 2015: Some featured speakers

Internees learned about soil composition from Peggy Rogers.

Ellen Atkins gave a slide presentation on Home Vegetable Gardening.

Lowell Tanksley gave his yearly slide show on vegetable farming for Farmer's Markets.



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## 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 [jrwillisjr@yahoo.com](mailto:jrwillisjr@yahoo.com).

—**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 from Kentucky
- Page 2 is Wood County Master Gardeners
- 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 someone who needs a warm thought or sympathy contact **Joyce Holloway**

—**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 at: [peggyrogersc21@gmail.com](mailto:peggyrogersc21@gmail.com)