MG WOOD WORKS

TEXAS MASTER GARDENER
TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION
Wood County

November/December 2022 Inside This Issue

Barb Williams: President's Letter

Howdy y'all and welcome to the holiday season!

This is the time of year we immerse ourselves in gratitude, family, food, friends, and decorating! So full are our hearts and, unfortunately, also our calendars!

Greenhouse is closer to being enclosed.

My greenhouse is super close to being enclosed. I now have windows and hopefully before the next cold snap, I'll also have doors.

I brought my plants into the garage before the "hard freeze" in mid-October and then I moved them out again to enjoy the warm temps just a few days later. You just have to love this Texas weather!

Plants safely sheltered in the garage.

I'm so thankful for the friends gained (along with all the knowledge) from taking the Master Gardener class and I want you to know I appreciate you! Thank you for making me feel as if I'm making a difference as your president and for coming alongside and helping me out whenever I've asked! I couldn't do it without each one of you and your unique talents!

The brainstorming session at our October meeting went even better than I anticipated. A huge thanks to all who participated.

It looks as if we're all on the same page for the most part and y'all came up with some brilliant ideas for going forward!

Teamwork makes the dream work! Our next task is working on the forecasted budget for 2023.

I'm looking forward to the food, fun, and fellowship at our Christmas party and meeting in December! Until then, I hope you get the chance to enjoy your gardens and all the critters that enjoy them too.

And as always, please feel free to reach out to me whenever you'd like. I respond quickest to text message to (505) 321-2817.

Upcoming WCMGA Meetings

November	Master Gardening presentation about dues, pictures, rules, committees, and awards. Then voting on the officers for 2023 and making plans for our Christmas meeting.
December	WCMG Awards and Christmas Luncheon

TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

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Susan Jarrell
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Gloria Jeane Rosewall
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Sign ups for the 2023 Master Gardener class start in November.

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Ann Reynolds: Laura Bush Texas Native Park Tour

Part of a four-part native plant landscape design class I am taking included a garden tour of the Laura Bush Texas Native Park at the George W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum on the Southern Methodist University campus located at 2943 SMU Boulevard, Dallas, Texas. For some time, going to the SMU campus almost weekly for basketball, football, and tennis matches has been part of my nod to my love of sports. Little did I know that the library grounds were landscaped with native Texas plants which are also my passion.

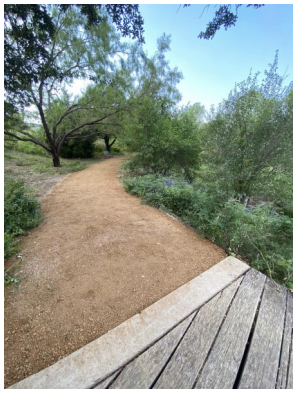
Hills and valleys create microclimates.

The park is open year-round and has self-guided tours. On November 5 and 12, at 10 am, there will be guided tours led by Texas Master Naturalists. The 15-acre park reflects plants, grasses and trees found in the Blackland Prairie, Post Oak Savannah, and the Cross Timbers Forest ecoregions. It is also the first presidential library grounds to be organically maintained.

Urban Transformation

What was once highway, urban streets, and buildings is now filled with native Blackland Prairie grasses, seasonal wildflowers, and clearings that provide native habitats for butterflies, birds, and other species.

There are tree-shaded lawns, an amphitheater, and one mile of crushed granite walking paths showcasing indigenous limestone. The new hills and valleys create microclimates with distinct balances of sun, water, and wind to enable establishment of different ecological zones.



One-mile granite walking path

Ecology and Sustainability

One goal of this park is help people understand how ecology and sustainability, particularly plants and stormwater, really works. All rainwater is managed and reused. Parking lots and planted areas flow to overland bioswales that slow and clean water. Forebays settle out sediments, a seep delays stormwater release, and all site water drains toward the Wet Prairie, where it is cleansed and slowly infiltrated into an underground irrigation tank.

Native Grasses

In the center of the trails, a native lawn provides open space. It's a blend of short-grass native grasses — buffalograss (*Buchloe dactyloides*), blue grama (*Bouteloua gracili*), Texas grama, poverty dropseed (*Sporobolus vaginiflorus*), and curly mesquite (*Hilaria belangeri*) — which require minimal mowing, watering, and fertilizing.

While not suitable for high-traffic areas or athletic fields, once it's established it can be mowed to a height of 3-4 inches for a more traditional look, according to a brochure.

Native Plants

Some of the late-blooming plants were butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*), red Turks cap (*Malvaviscus arboreus*), pitcher sage (*Salvia azurea*), blue mealy sage (*Salvia farinacea*), western ironweed (*Vernonia baldwinii*), tall goldenrod (*Solidago* altissma), fall aster, Pam's pink Turks cap, passion vine (*Passiflora incarnata*), poverty weed (*Baccharis neglecta*), prairie verbena (*Glandulari bipinnatifida*), shrubby boneset (*Ageratina havanensis*), and pokeweed (*Phytolacca americana*).

Passion vine

Native Trees

There are 900 trees on the property with more than 400 of the project's trees supplied by the tree nursery established by President Bush at the Prairie Chapel Ranch in Crawford.

The following trees were new to me: morning cloud chitalpa, Texas redbud (*Cercis canadensis var. texensis*), lacy oak (*Quercus lacyi*) and blue oak (*Quercus doublasii*).

Texas redbud

Old standbys included: Mexican plums (*Prunus mexicana*), chinkapin oak (*Quercus muehlenbergii*), Eve's necklace (*Sophora affinis*), live oak, escarpment (*Quercus fusiformis*), rusty blackhaw viburnum (*Viburnum rufidulum*), shumard (*Quercus shumardii*), and red oak (*Quercus rubra*).

Native Shrubs and Vines

Native shrubs included: American beautyberry (*Callicapra americana*), coralberry (*Symphoricarpos orbiculatus*), red yucca (*Hesperaloe parviflora*), and hummingbird bush (*Flame Acanthus*). Vines included coral Honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*), crossvine (*Bignonia capreolata*), and Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*).

Continued on page 4

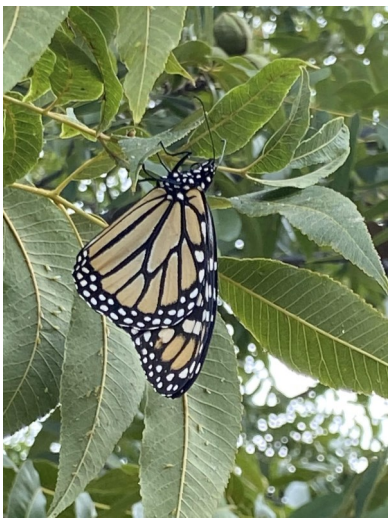
Laura Bush Texas Native Park Tour continued from page 3

Prairie Restoration

Prairie restoration is important to the Bushes. They've worked over the years to restore the native prairie at their ranch in Crawford, about two hours south of Dallas. That might seem like a big undertaking, but it is nothing new to the Bushes.

They founded Texan by Nature, an Austin-based nonprofit that aims to conserve native habitats and resources in Texas through partnerships with businesses, schools, faith-based organizations, and the scientific community. Its Monarch Wrangler program is a statewide initiative to create habitats that are essential to the butterfly.

Klyde Warren Park (above Woodall Rogers Expressway) in downtown Dallas was recently named the newest partner in the program. The park has removed invasive species and planted a garden full of milkweed plants to attract the pollinators. They are also offering educational programming on the monarch migration, including seedball making and butterfly tagging.



Monarch habitats are essential.

Worth the Drive

The drive to the George W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum is 90 minutes and if you take Highway 80 there's not a huge amount of traffic. These gardens, and the library, are worth the drive. Included below is a link to a fall guide to the gardens.

Go visit and tell me what you think.

Reference: FALL-NTP-Education-guide-2020.pdf (georgewbushlibrary.gov)

Betty Stark: Japanese Lanterns

As a New Englander, enjoying fall temperatures, I started thinking about Japanese lanterns. Japanese lanterns (*Physalis*) are also called ground cherry, golden cherry, and husk berry. They are such an interesting balloon shape with a beautiful orange color. They are great for fall arrangements and wreaths.

I discovered there are two major species of lanterns with a variety of names. Both ornamental lantern plants are toxic and should be planted separate from other plants because they spread like wildfire and will overwhelm other garden plants.

Both varieties have broad pointed leaves 2 to 3 inches long on 1- to 2-foot -tall plants. They both are planted by seed. They can be fussy when germinating so patience is the key.

Japanese lantern seed pack.

It is recommended to start seeds indoors in peat pots, 6 to 8 weeks prior to the last frost. Sow the seeds on the surface of the soil allowing direct light to reach them as this is crucial to germination. Transplant or direct sow outdoors when the weather is warm and all danger of frost has passed.

The edible fruit variety, called ground cherry or golden cherry, produces a pod that looks just like a regular ornamental lantern variety but has a round berry inside. Let the lantern dry out, turn brown like tissue paper, and fall to the ground. At that point the seed or berry is ripe and edible. All the parts of this plant are toxic, so the delicious berry is only safe to eat after it ripens and drops from the plant.

As stated, this is an extremely invasive plant. It is so invasive that you may want to grow it in a pot. However, roots of any kind of Japanese lantern plant in a container can escape from drainage holes; so you may want to do a root pruning occasionally. Keeping the roots in the pots can also be accomplished by lining the pot with fine mesh.

Japanese lanterns enjoy full sunlight to partial shade. They like temperatures that are around 70 to 75 degrees. That is a challenge here with our high temps; so I think that I'll start them earlier than suggested to see if I can get a crop before the high heat sets in. Well drained soil with a PH level of 6.2 to 7.4 is ideal. Water daily until germination has occurred but avoid overwatering or soaking. Maybe misting with a spray bottle would be best. The lanterns will grow well in Zones 3-11.

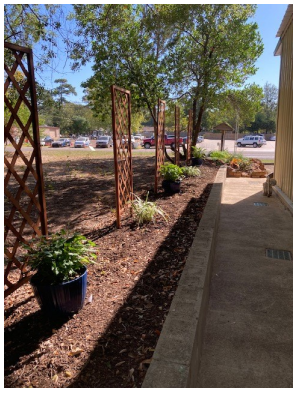
For fall and winter bouquets, pick the stems in fall just as the lanterns turn color. Remove the leaves and hang the stems upside down to dry in a shady, airy spot.

I purchased two packets of seeds so let me know if you are interested and I will be happy to share some with you.

Martha Maurits: Master Gardeners Display Skill and Generosity

The depth of shared gardening skills and knowledge, along with generosity of enthusiasm, materials, and work output for the Wood County Master Gardeners Association (WCMGA) shines. This is my conclusion after working through my first year with y'all. The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension office has become more like a second home, first with classroom learning and later outside helping there in the garden. Throughout 2022, this recent regional transplant has thankfully grown roots. It has been, and I am positive it will continue to be, a joyful and continuous learning process working with our amazing group. Let me tell you more…

Since our last newsletter, during late summer, our members made a concerted multi-day effort at the Extension Office garden preparing for the September 17 Educational Series. We cleared the north side of the building of vines and bramble. Gary Sommers with Complete Power Wash LLC cleaned the steel.



Carolyn West and Debbie Latham donated and designed trellises and plants for the back of the Extension Office.

Carolyn West and Debbie Latham creatively redesigned and donated the materials for new landscaping in that zone. They added five redwood trellises and directed the placement of gorgeous in-ground flax lilies and philodendrons potted in royal blue. This design resulted in a pleasing lapis lazuli and green effect.

In addition, volunteers installed a new hedge of thriving cast iron plants, which are perfectly suited for that wooded area. These additions added beauty adjacent to a challenging neighboring property. The designers demonstrated how to use latticework and plants to open a new garden area.

This area provides possibilities for future development, such as adding vines for vertical interest and more in-ground texture, such as ferns, come spring. A supporting cast of volunteers placed welcome signs, rebuilt the compost area fencing, power washed sidewalks, planted chrysanthemums, labeled plants, applied mulch, and trimmed trees.

This is what Master Gardeners do. We are dedicated to improving our Extension Office garden because the site is an important local resource for the public and a recruiting hub from which we inform the community about our classes and association.

Carolyn West explaining composting techniques.

Kim Mason, Debbie Latham, and Angela Thompson at the sign in table.

During the educational series, on a sunny Saturday, Carolyn West and Bob Bauerschmidt demonstrated composting techniques, Nancy McDonald presented self-irrigating planter (SIP) gardening techniques, Jessie Mellon taught about how to be a citizen scientist and the art of phenology, and Kathy Goodman talked about our plant choices.

Several Master Gardeners, including members from the MG Classes of 2020 and 2022, volunteered to help make the event a success. Carolyn said that all went very well and the surveys she saw received excellent reviews from the attendees!

Nancy McDonald presented SIP gardening techniques.

Jessie Mellon demonstrated how to be a citizen scientist.

The teamwork and dedication found in preparing for and hosting our September education series resulted in memorable snapshots of excellence and provided a positive learning experience for everyone involved. These are characteristics that absolutely describe each of the WCMGA projects and events worked on this year. Our membership has earned a generous thank you for their efforts in accomplishing many tasks throughout 2022 and making several public gardens and libraries in our Wood County communities far more beautiful for public enjoyment. Your contributions make a positive difference. I look forward to collaborating with you on future endeavors and I am pleased to be here.

Ann Reynolds: Hawkins Project and Oil Festival

Master Gardeners Gayle Mullinax, Ann Reynolds, Meleena Byrum, Betty Stark, and Lorraine Pedretti meeting and greeting the public at the Wood County Master Gardeners table for the annual Hawkins Oil Festival.

As I pen this article, an early frost is anticipated. So, we made it through Snowmeggedon and what was a prolonged heatwave and drought. In fact, *Newsweek* magazine reported on June 22, 2022, that "Prolonged droughts and heatwaves are expected to become more common in the coming decades, with parts of the U.S. already experiencing what scientists call a megadrought." Seems as if Mother Nature is showing what she is capable of but us gardeners know of drought and try our best every year to plan for the unexpected. This year has tested the patience of even the skilled gardener.

The flowerbed at the Allen Memorial Library continues to bloom and grow as planned. Summer annuals have been taken over by the vining heliotrope (*Heliotropium*) so we will rethink adding those next year. The garden is sufficiently mulched over a soaker hose and organically fertilized in the spring. No pesticides have been used except on the fire ants. Deadheading continues for the blue-black sage (*Salvia guarantica*), roses, and black-eyed Susans (*Rudbeckia hirta*).

The gulf muhly grass (*Muhlenbergia capillaris*) is getting ready to bloom. Leaf-footed bugs (*Leptoglossus phyllopus*) were noticed on the moon flower (*Ipomoea alba*). Leaf-footed bugs are medium to large sized insects that have piercing-sucking mouthparts that allow them to feed on plant parts. These bugs are in the family Coreidae and get their name from the small leaf-like enlargements found on the hind leg. They are closely related to other sucking insects, such as stink bugs (*Pentatomidae family*).

With the small number of these insects on the plant, it was decided to use the environmentally sensitive approach to pest management of "pick and squish." This garden has been mulched and an application of organic fertilizer was applied in the spring. Also noted was an American bumble bee (*Bombus pensylvanicus*) on the oregano (*Lamiaceae family*).

The Pavilion flowerbed continues to be a challenge. The sprinkler continues to be troublesome.

Plentiful free handouts for the visitors at the Hawkins Oil Festival.

Although beautifully blooming in the spring, most all plants need deadheading or cutting back to the ground. Six flats of winter color have been planted. This bed has not been mulched and only one application of organic fertilizer was applied in the spring. Since this garden is a typical annual butterfly garden, the question is whether to mulch and/or how much to apply.

New Visiting Creatures

Carolina mantis

Two new creatures were spotted. A fledgling mockingbird (*Mimidae family*) was hiding in the rose bush. Later, a Carolina mantis (*Stagmomantis carolina*) was seen walking on the ground. This is a first for this flowerbed. We have added to our project update the creatures that we find during our workdays to prove that by adopting the integrated pest management approach, the home gardener can have beautiful flowers, bounteous vegetables, and selected fauna from Mother Nature—even during a drought.

Hawkins Oil Festival

The Oil Festival has come and gone. We handed out many packets of seeds and daffodil bulbs, sold Tip Books, gave out informational material, and answered questions. Our quiz boards were a hit with young and old alike.

Quiz boards were a hit with adults and children at the Hawkins Oil Festival.

Linda Timmons: What We Can Do for Our Native Bees

Texas has about 600 species of native bees. We know how important non-native honeybees are to pollination; however, for many plants native bees are even better pollinators than honeybees.

Like honeybees, native bee populations are in decline. Threats to the native bees include loss of habitat and lack of plant diversity.

Bumblebee on wildflower. Photo by Kathy Goodman

The Best Thing To Do for Native Bees

The good news is that there are several easy things gardeners can do to help our native pollinators. It doesn't take a lot of space and sometimes the best thing you can do for the bees is nothing. For example, about 70 percent of native bees nest in the ground. They need bare, loose soil without mulch or plants. If you can leave spots between flowers bare, without mulch, ground dwelling bees can make their nests close to the flowers they need for food.

If you need to use a weed barrier, try using newspaper instead of black plastic or landscape fabric. Bees can dig through the newspaper and it degrades over time. Some of the digger bees like to hide their holes under leaf litter so raking all the fall leaves is another thing you don't need to do that can help bees.

You Don't Need a Big Garden

You don't need a big garden to help the bees. If you and your neighbors grow flowering plants, bees will browse for nectar and pollen from garden to garden. Even just a few container plants can be a food source for your local bees.

Use native plants where possible. These are the plants that the native bees existed with before we introduced lawns and imported plants from around the world. Native plants can also be much easier and cheaper to grow because they are adapted to the soils and climate of the area and need less care and water.

Try to grow flowering plants that bloom from early spring to late fall. Bumblebee queens start foraging in early spring so they can lay eggs and start a new nest. In the fall the next generation of bumblebee queens forages until they over winter in bunch grasses, a pile of rocks or a rodent hole.

Don't Forget About Trees

Don't forget about trees when you're thinking about gardening for the pollinators. Native red oaks give a home to hundreds of pollinator species including bees, butterflies, and moths.

Red maples are the host plant for a number of butterflies and moths. The redbud is a smaller tree that can be planted near a house or in a smaller yard. In spring, its purple flowers attract bees and butterflies. In fall, remember to leave the fallen leaves under the tree as cover for overwintering pollinators.

Carpenter Bees Need Softwood

Carpenter bees need softwood to make their homes. They are excellent pollinators of fruits such as blueberries and cherries. To help carpenter bees you can leave a few logs of pine or cedar in a quiet corner of your yard.

Use less pesticides. If you have an insect pest problem, use integrated pest management (IPM) to find the least destructive way to deal with the pest. An important part of IPM is to grow healthy plants in healthy soil. Healthy plants are less likely to be subject to pests.

A Small Garden Can Help Pollinators

Bees, like us, need food, water, cover, and a place to raise their young. Studies show that even a small garden can have an impact on pollinators. Each of us can do a little bit to help the native bees by growing a few native plants, or leaving some bare soil, leaf litter, or a bit of wood in our gardens. A less perfect garden could be a perfect home for a native bee.

Build a Native Bee Hotel

Bee hotels are a way to invite native bees into your landscape. The traditional hive box used to house honeybees does nothing to attract native bees to your garden, but solitary bees will happily take up residence in a "bee hotel," where each can have a private room of their own.

There are many designs for building a bee hotel. Look online for instructions. Melissa Deakin's husband built the hotel pictured below. It was a door prize for the October Education Session at the Mineola Nature Preserve.

A native bee house can be a fun family project and provides a good home for native bees.

Jessie Mellon: Phenology Report—Traumatic Death of a Pokeweed

American Pokeweed

Despite drought conditions this year, the American pokeweed (*Phytolacca americana*) managed to grow to about 8 feet, put on lush green leaves, bloom, and produce seed to support the wildlife.

September 25: New foliage is 1 foot tall and flowers are forming.

I thought it was invincible, but it began to wane in August and by August 24, I thought it was dead. Desiccated fruit clung to drying branches. I was sure it had succumbed to the severe drought conditions.

Miraculously, 17 days after a 6-inch rain event, new growth sprouted from the lower nodes on the drying stems and the crown of the plant. Two weeks later, the foliage was about a foot tall. I thought it would make a comeback.

September 30: A fungal fruiting body below the soil line on the tuber likely killed the plant.

Little did I know that tragedy was around the corner. Over five days, the new foliage withered, the stalks fell over, and it died. I pulled the dead stalk out of the ground and found that the tuber rotted with only shredded fibers remaining. It's a sad end to a vigorous plant. I will continue to watch this spot but I may have to find another plant to observe.

Gulf Fritillary Butterfly

Gulf fritillary (*Agraulis vanillae*) adults have been absent for most of the fall. A single adult was spotted feeding on lantana blooms on September 30. I have only counted four adults at one time feeding in midafternoon. Caterpillars have been spotted on their passion vine host but have not ravaged the plant as they did last year.

Black Gum Tree

Cooler weather approaches and 25 percent of the black gum (*Nyssa sylvatica*) leaves have begun to change color to a bright red. No leaf drop has been observed despite drought conditions.

Cedar Waxwing

No cedar waxwings (*Bombucilla cedrorum*) have been observed this season.

Yaupon Holly

The yaupon holly (*Ilex vomitoria*) bears green fruit, mature leaves, and is unscathed by dry conditions.

American Holly

The American holly (*Ilex opaca*) bears green fruit and full foliage. Some leaf drop (1 percent) has been seen as cooler weather approaches or perhaps in response to dry conditions.

Reflections on Drought Gardening

Gardening this year has been challenging. When we think of spring, we imagine spring rains and new life. This spring heralded dry conditions that persisted into fall. I follow conditions on the https://www.drought.gov website and each month's report was depressing.

Severe drought described May and June. July was "moderately dry" this year. August was "abnormally dry" until August 21 when we received a 6-inch rain event.

My dormant pollinator garden put on a show in response to the moisture. Hackberry and mulberry trees responded with new leaves, but the moisture was gone in about two weeks. Growth slowed and blooms faded in the next dry spell. Red clover, which had germinated after the August rain, turned yellow and began to wither. I found myself watering to keep things alive.

I noticed by October 4 that the hackberry tree in my front yard was bare. Its leaves lay shriveled on the ground and there was a distinct sweet smell in the area. The sticky dead leaves stuck to my dog's coat. The culprit was a surge of whiteflies which sucked the sweet hackberry juice right out of the leaves.

Whiteflies aren't flies. They are more akin to mealybugs or aphids. Eggs hatch in 6 to 10 days and proceed through three nymphal stages followed by a pupa and finally emerge as adults in about 34 days. Adult flies live 30 to 40 days. Since whiteflies have few natural predators in drought conditions, their survival is favored, and they are poised to take advantage of new growth after a rain event. The heavy rain in August triggered a whitefly explosion that defoliated the hackberry trees.

My spring garden was a bust this year despite soaker hose watering. Leaf footed bugs ruined the few tomatoes my vines produced. Flea beetles pestered the squash and green bean leaves. Green beans failed, peppers were slow to grow and did not produce fruit until September. Bunch onion growth stalled in June. Okra and southern peas (cowpeas, black-eyed peas) were the only dependable producers as they love heat and tolerate uneven moisture.

I delayed putting in a fall garden this year due to the lack of soil moisture. I bought a few transplants and have them in gallon pots. Moisture is easier to control, and pots can also be moved to shady areas when the temperatures spike into the 90s.

On October 16, we were blessed with a 1.8-inch rain. Hope springs eternal!

Kathy Goodman: Meleena Byram Shares Design Expertise

At the September WCMGA meeting, Meleena Byram shared her knowledge of floral design by demonstrating how to use natural elements from outdoors within floral designs.

She shared slides with beautiful designs that used dried plant materials and fresh flowers.

Reasons to Use Dried Plant Materials

A lot of plant material can be gathered on your own property especially if you grow plants with future use in mind. It's a great way to recycle because you can use materials more than one time. Using interesting, dried plant material brings nature into your home décor while saving you money. In addition, the plant material doesn't pollute the environment when you dispose of it. For flexibility of design, you can paint the plant material any color. Another idea she suggested is to create a dried table design, and then add fresh flowers for different occasions.

Branches can be used in other ways, such as for stakes in your garden. Or, use a sturdy branch as a trellis.

Tips for Collecting, Storing, Preserving, and Using Dried Plant Materials

When collecting branches or stems, always cut stems long. You can trim shorter, but you can't lengthen. Collect cattails right before they puff out. Spray them with hairspray or clear sealer to prevent puffing out after they are cut. Timing is key. If you spray and they still puff, don't dismay. Try again next year.

Hydrangeas are delicate and can be difficult to store. They can be sprayed like for cattails to toughen the petals for storage. If you don't cut the blooms after they dry on the bush, you can hang them upside down, or place in a screen or anything with small squares to hold the stems upright and separated. This method works well for storage if you have the space.

You can store large, long stems and branches in a tall sturdy box, such as a moving wardrobe box in a dry area.

When creating floral arrangements, use dry floral foam to anchor sturdy stems. Use wet floral foam for delicate stems.

Spray paint, Rub-n-Buff metallic wax finish, acrylic craft paints, and more can be used to color dried plant material.

Tell your friends that you collect dry plant material, and they'll bring you random cool things all the time!

Meleena advises that if you receive or buy a tropical bouquet, save the more interesting stems (bird of paradise, protea, banksia) or any interesting leaves in any bouquet.

Master Gardeners viewing two of Meleena's interesting dried flower arrangements that were on display at the meeting.

Melissa Deakins: The Path to Becoming a National Garden Club, Inc. Judge

Many may not realize that Meleena Byram is a judge for the National Garden Club (NGC) competitions.

To qualify as a judge, she completed Flower Show School. That school is a comprehensive program that teaches all one needs to know about judging, entering, competing, and chairing an NGC flower show.

There are four courses each with a specific curriculum that includes horticulture, design, and flower show procedure. Subjects are taught by qualified instructors and outlines are provided. Examples of horticulture and design are displayed and critiqued. They learn point scoring to evaluate how entries are judged and see what it takes to get the blue ribbon. They learn about awards, types of shows, and what is needed to produce a show.

This program usually takes three to four years to complete the course work. In addition to completion of the school, candidates must demonstrate how to put on a flower show, enter a number of flower shows and win several blue ribbons or top performing awards for their designs and horticulture entries. They participate in judging shows under the watchful eye of qualified judges and eventually are recommended to become a judge.

You must complete all these requirements in a certain time frame or start over. There is no guarantee that after all that time, work, and effort that one will become a NGC Flower Show Judge.

Continuing education, exhibition, judging, and periodic testing are required to maintain NGC judge accreditation and to achieve advanced judging levels.

Lin Grado: Native Plants for East Texas

As I write this article, we're in the middle of Texas Native Plant Week (October 16 - 22). At the Wood County Arboretum and Botanical Gardens, we have an entire area on the north side of the George Bridge dedicated to Texas native plants. This area was triggered by a grant from the Native Plant Society of Texas to establish a native-plant-based Monarch Demonstration Garden, full of larval host and nectar plants. We decided to expand that concept and landscape that entire area with native plants, to positively impact the wildlife in the 23-acre Arboretum.

Rough goldenrod (Solidago rugosa) at the Wood County Arboretum and Botanical Gardens.

What's a Native Plant?

A native plant is one that has evolved in a geographic area over millennia – in North America we consider the time before settlement by Europeans. These plants occur as the result of natural processes rather than human intervention, so they've developed in Texas soils and climate. Native plants can handle our high (and low) temperatures, the temperature swings that we have, and the amount of precipitation as well as its timing.

Consider that Wood County, Texas, receives an annual average rainfall of 43.7 inches, above the national average of 38.7 inches – but we have very little rain in summer. Add to that the Texas wind, and our native plants truly are Texas tough.

Why Plant Natives?

There are many reasons to plant natives. First, it's one way to preserve our Texas botanical heritage. So many native plants are at risk due to habitat destruction that it is our obligation to promote their continued growth. One plant that comes to mind is the rare and endangered Neches River rose-mallow (*Hibiscus dasycalyx*), which is found in just a few counties in East Texas.

Many native plants serve as host plants to caterpillars, the larval form of butterflies and moths, which are important pollinators. With fewer native host plants on which to lay eggs, there are fewer caterpillars. Without caterpillars, birds lose a major food source for their young. More than 95 percent of birds feed caterpillars to their young – and it takes 6,000-9,000 caterpillars to raise one brood! Native plants also provide important food and shelter for other backyard wildlife and provide biodiversity.

From a totally selfish point of view, planting natives can reduce your garden costs. If plants are native to our area, we don't have to provide fertilizer. And since we want native insects (the basis of our ecosystem) to feed on the plants, we don't need to apply pesticides. And once established, native plants (selected correctly for your garden) typically require less water.

Common Myths About Native Plants

Some folks think that native plants don't need to be watered at all, and that's the greatest myth about native plants. Some, such as prairie natives, have large fibrous root systems and don't need supplemental watering. However, not all native plants grow this way – many plants grow from rhizomes or have short tap roots extending 12 inches deep or less.

Your garden is typically not the native soil in which your plants would have grown– it may have been previously planted or tilled; it may be compacted; or it may contain little organic matter. I know when I bought my property, the sand in the back yard was white like a beach. The former owner raked and burned every leaf that dropped, so that the organic matter had long since been used by the trees. Over time you can rectify these deficiencies (compost, compost, compost; mulch, mulch, mulch), but in the meantime your plants need supplemental water.

Also, if you're planting nursery-grown natives, they are grown in a soilless mixture. When transplanted into garden soil, it takes time for their roots to adjust and grow past the confines of the pot – during which time they'll need more frequent watering (at least for the first year or two).

A garden of native plants is not a no-maintenance garden. Native plantings need weeding, pruning, and thinning, in addition to watering. We had a small circle of reseeding annuals in a bed at the Arboretum, but the annual weeds seemed to out-pace most of the annual desirable natives. In this same border we have perennials such as frostweed (*Verbesina virginica*), goldenrod (*Solidago spp.*) and late boneset (*Eupatorium serotinum*) that drop many seeds – and every one of the seeds seems to grow. The bad news: you must weed them out. The good news: you can share with friends. Others, such as American germander (*Teucrium canadense*) spread by rhizomes and must be yanked out once they spread too far. If you consider the mature size and spread of the plant from the start, it may help minimize the maintenance.

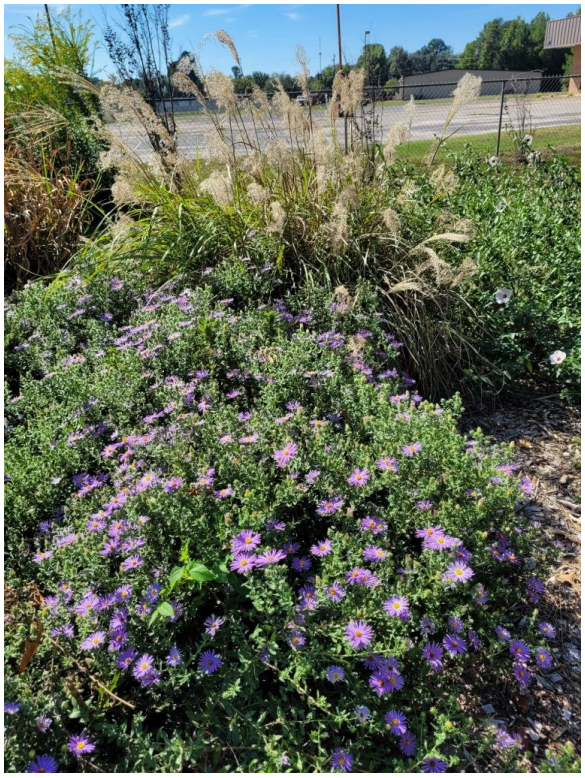
Continued on page 11

Native Plants for East Texas continued from page 10

Native plants also look better in a garden setting with regular grooming. A wildscape is fine, with native plants left to duke it out, but in a typical backyard garden, you might want something a little more manicured. You can prune native plants just as you would any others – cut back dead stems and branches, and prune for shape. Many late-flowering plants will have many more blooms if you cut them back several times up through July, and grasses typically respond well to being pruned in late winter.

How to Start Using Native Plants in Your Garden

One way to integrate native plants in your garden is to replace dead and dying plants with natives. Remember to plant with similar light and water needs. I'm sure it goes without saying, but this applies to native plants as well as others: pick the right plant for the right spot.



Fall aster at the Wood County Arboretum and Botanical Gardens.

One of my favorite native plants that can be grown like a large shrub in sun or shade is Turk's cap (*Malvaviscus arborescens var. drummondii*), with red, pink, or even white blooms.

To find out what plant might be a good substitute, visit the website of Trinity Forks chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas (https://npsot.org/wp/trinityforks/plant-lists/), where there are links labeled, "Plant This Not That."

Another way to integrate natives into your garden is to add a themed native garden, such as a pollinator bed, bird and butterfly garden, pastel colors garden, a moon garden, or a shade garden.

Be sure to plan for year-round beauty, and plant in groups or drifts, not straight lines. Use the resources at the Native Plant Society of Texas website to help select the right plants for that garden.

Impediments to Using Native Plants

Since growing native plants is so great, why isn't everyone doing it? First, it's hard to find native plants in a garden center. Remember the definition from the beginning of this article? "These plants occur as the result of natural processes rather than human intervention." That means if you find a plant at a nursery as a named selection (such as Henry Duelberg salvia, a cultivar of the native mealy blue sage), it's no longer a true native.

Now I'm not a purist, and I'll settle for these "nativars" (native + cultivar), but they're still hard to find locally.

I carry all I can find at the spring and fall plant sales at the Arboretum, but it's usually limited to eight or ten types of perennials, a few ferns, some grasses in the fall, and a handful of shrubs and trees. I'm able to offer native trees in our bare-root tree sale in February, but those are year-old seedlings, and many folks aren't patient enough to allow them to grow in their landscape.

I order plants from online sources, such as Mail Order Natives out of Florida, or Prairie Moon Nursery in Minnesota, but those plants are not as adapted to Texas as locally grown plants. For perennials, you might be best served by growing from seeds.

Another impediment to growing natives (perennials and grasses especially) is that it can take several years for the garden to mature as the plants establish because much of the first years' growth is underground as the root system develops.

Remind yourself of the gardener's mantra:

> *The first year they sleep, the second year they creep, and the third year they leap.*

Then, your native garden will reward you long-term.

Resources for Native Plants

Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center:

- https://www.wildflower.org/plants/ (To research plants)

Plano Prairie Garden:

- planobluestem.blogspot.com (Entire landscape in natives)
- On Instagram https://www.instagram.com/planoprairiegarden/

Pam Penick:

- https://www.penick.net/digging/?page_id=17911 (Deer-resistant gardens)
- On Instagram https://www.instagram.com/pamdigging)

Native Plant Society of Texas:

- Chapter serving the Denton area: https://npsot.org/wp/trinityforks/plant-lists/ (For lists of plants)

Native Plants or seeds for sale:

- Native American Seed http://www.seedsource.com
- Wildseed Farms http://www.wildseedfarms.com
- Prairie Moon Nursery http:/www.prairiemoon.com

Kathy Goodman: Mineola Nature Preserve Education Session

The Education Session at the Mineola Nature Preserve was informative and interesting. Linda Timmons talked about how we can help native bees even if we have a small yard. Lin Grado provided extensive information about native East Texas plants that are more geared to survive our weather extremes.

Visitors from the community asked questions pertaining to their gardens. Several Tip Books were purchased, especially after Marty Da Silva explained all the good bits of information in the book.

The October weather was good other than a bit of wind across the hilltop. Several people attended the hosted walkabout and were very interested in the native plants. Linda Timmons and Lin Grado guided the tour and several Master Gardeners were strategically placed at the various flower beds to answer questions.

The attendees were excited to win door prizes which included a bee house, a bluebird house, several native plants, and a very special pumpkin.

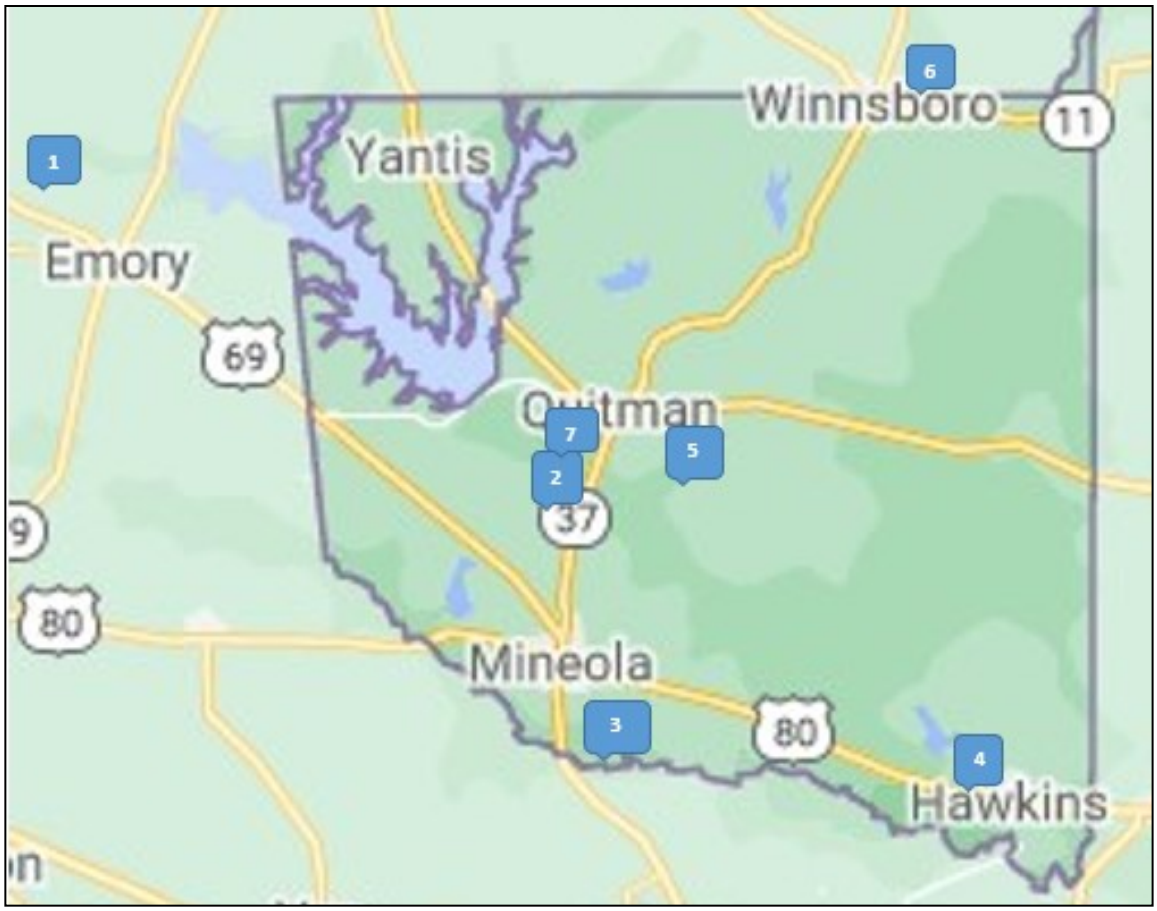
These Master Gardener events have been so much fun to attend and to volunteer at. I encourage our Master Gardeners to participate at future WCMGA events when they get the opportunity.

For more information, see the following topics in this newsletter: *What We Can Do for Our Native Bees* on page 7 and *Native Plants for East Texas* on page 10.

Barb Williams: WCMGA Projects Map

This map shows the location of each of the WCMGA projects.

See the list below for the names, project chairs, and work days relating to the numbers.



Current Projects

1. Emory Park (Emory)
   Project Chair: Lannette Beaver
   Work day: Varies
2. Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Office (EOG)
   Project Chair: Carolyn West
   Work day: Thursday @ 9 am
3. Mineola Nature Preserve (MNP)
   Project Chair: Martha Maurits
   Work day: Tuesday @ 9 am
4. Hawkins City Park and Library (HCP)
   Project Chair: Ann Reynolds
   Work day: Friday @ 9 am

Soft Launch Projects (1-Year Trial)

5. Quitman Public Library (QPL)
   Project Chair: Jan Whitlock
   Work day: Monday @ 9 am
6. Winnsboro Library (WINNS)
   Project Chair: Bob Bauerschmidt
   Work day: Monday @ 10 am
7. Wood County Arboretum & Botanical Gardens (WCABG)
   Project Chair: Lin Grado
   Work day: Wednesday @ 9 am

Please sign up on the Texas Master Gardener Volunteer Management System (VMS) for each of the projects you would like an email from so you can receive up-to-date information about a particular project.

To Sign Up for a Project

1. Sign in to Texas Master Gardener VMS at https://vms.texasmg.org/sec_Login/
2. Select **GENERAL INFORMATION** > **PROJECTS**.
3. Click an **ID** for a project. For example:

   The **PROJECTS** tab opens.

4. Scroll to the bottom. Add **Notes** to indicate that you want to offer a particular skill, and then click **Volunteer for this Project**. You will receive an email verifying your sign up.

Ann McKelroy: Food Pantries for Vegetable Donations

Thank you for helping feed the hungry! Please track the number of pounds that you donate for the year.

All the pantries that we contacted are pleased to accept donations of fresh vegetables. There may be other programs that are not widely published. So, if you discover a program that is not on this list, please let me know so that I can update the list. damckelroy@gmail.com.

Note from Kathy Goodman: Please also copy me on updates to this list of donation sites. For convenience, I plan to post this list as a regular part of the newsletter. My email is kmgoodman0807@gmail.com

Tracking Vegetable Donations

Please include the following information when you donate vegetables to a program:

Your name

Texas Master Gardener-Wood County

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension System

Also, please create a vegetable donation record by tracking how many pounds of fruits and vegetables you are producing per square foot or acre of your garden and track every time you harvest or donate. For Wood County Extension Agent Emily (Husmann) Castillo's reports for the year, she needs the total pounds of produce grown by Wood County Master Gardeners as well as the total pounds of produce donated.

So, each time you donate, please record:

- Estimated pounds harvested during that donation period
- Estimated pounds donated

Then, at the end of the season, please total each amount and give that information to Wood County Extension Agent Emily (Husmann) Castillo.

emily.husmann@ag.tamu.edu

Extension Office: 903.763.2924, FAX: 903.763.2092

WCMGA Meetings

Third Thursday of Each Month

8:30 - 9 am Visiting and Sign-in
9 am Meeting

First Assembly of God Church
909 E Goode St., Quitman, Texas

Area Food Pantries

The following food pantries accept donations of fresh vegetables.

Alba

Alba-Golden Food Pantry
245 E. Holley Street, Alba (903) 765-2471
Friday 9 AM - 11 AM
Service Area: Alba-Golden School District

Lake Fork Baptist Church Feed My Sheep (Pantry)
9483 W FM 515, Alba (903) 473-9523
Second Tuesday 1 PM - 3 PM
Service Area: All counties

Hawkins

Hawkins Helping Hands (Pantry)
320 W. Front St., Hawkins (903) 769-4357
Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday 9 AM - 12 PM
Service Area: Hawkins ISD

Mineola

Bread of Life Ministries (Pantry)
1001 E. McDonald, Mineola (903) 405-0064
First and third Tuesday 8:30 AM - 4 PM
Service Area: Wood County

Kindness Kottage (Pantry)
316 E. Broad St, Mineola (903) 569-9197
Monday - Friday 9 AM - 3 PM
Service Area: Mineola ISD

Rose Hill Food Pantry
1420 CR 2460, Mineola (903) 312-3256
Second and fourth Wednesday 10 AM - 12 PM
Service Area: Wood County

Quitman

First United Methodist Church (Senior Box)
406 E Lane St, Quitman (903) 597-3663
Second Friday Participating Clients: 9 AM - 10 AM
Waiting Clients: 10 AM - 11 AM
Service Area: All counties
Note: Enter on N. Goldman St.

Mercy Mall (Pantry)
104 Bermuda, Quitman (903) 497-0684
Every Saturday 10 AM - 12 PM
Service Area: All

Winnsboro

Winnsboro CRC (Pantry)
115 W. Broadway, Winnsboro (903) 342-3287
Tuesday & Thursday 10 AM - 2 PM

As you read the WCMGA newsletter, you can learn about:

- Educational seminars and classes
- Garden projects
- Advanced training speakers at educational forums
- Classroom instruction for county ISDs
- Educational articles written by Master Gardeners
- Community outreach events

Please send newsletter articles, suggestions, and interesting information to newsletter editor Kathy Goodman at kmgoodman0807@gmail.com.

Note: For writing articles, you can count up to 3 hours as Project: NL volunteer hours in VMS. Put the number of hours for research under Project: Research in VMS. Please understand that all articles will be edited to fit the newsletter style or for spacing needs.

WCMGA Information and Educational Opportunities

MG Wood Works Newsletter Photos

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

Texas Master Gardener, Wood County Website

http://txmg.org/woodcounty This website contains up-to-the-minute news and scheduled events, back issues of the newsletter, and seasonal videos. Send new content for the website to **Keith Zimmerman**: keithzim@yahoo.com

WCMGA Private Facebook Group

This private Facebook group is for the Wood County Master Gardeners Association members. To join, contact Linda Timmons at 903.569.3443 or lindtmmns@aol.com.

https://www.facebook.com/groups/1534107646899295/

Volunteer Management System

VMS is most user-friendly when using a computer, iPad, or tablet. The system has some nice features, such as copying a previous entry and changing the date and hours. Please add your photo, volunteer hours, mileage, and CEUs.

Associate Roster: You can find email addresses and contact information for other Master Gardeners in VMS. Please update your profile and add your photo in the Roster. Check your listing to be sure your contact information is up-to-date.

If you have problems entering your hours or updating your information, please contact Linda Timmons at 903.569.3443 or lindtmmns@aol.com.

https://vms.texasmg.org/

Advanced Training

Visit the **Texas Master Gardener Advanced Training** website for information about advanced training topics and opportunities.

https://mastergardener.tamu.edu/master-gardener-specialist/

Sunshine

Know of a member who needs a get well, warm thought, or sympathy card? Contact Elaine Porter at 361.319.7300 or porterpettus@gmail.com.

Become a Master Gardener

To learn about how to become a Master Gardener contact the Wood County Extension Office at 903.763.2924.