

The Latest Dirt

September 2011

McLennan County Master Gardener Association

**All are named,
often hand-fed,
and very loved at the Milnor farm**

Some of our fellow Master Gardeners do interesting things, so we're going to profile a few of them in *The Latest Dirt* starting this issue.

MCMG member Gerry Milnor (Class of 2008) and her husband Bill live on a 45 acre farm along a dusty lane not far from Aquilla. It is a pretty place, mostly flat, with good sandy loam. The water table in one spot is just inches below the surface, so they have a large, spring-fed pond. No pond is complete without geese; the 16 geese include Emden (white) and Toulouse (gray). They are beautiful, graceful creatures.

Gerry's pet llamas are "Tony" Llama, Dolly, Rosemary, Lloyd and Lleysa Llama. She calls each of her 19 sheep by name and hand-feeds them treats. Let's not forget the three horses.

Family doggies Walter, Mindy, Dennis, Risa, Lola, Annie and Trigger share the Milnor farmhouse, along with kitties Gadget, Waylon, "B.K" and Bitty. It's a happy, contented menagerie!



Rosemary, Lloyd and Lleysa, from left, waiting for their morning llama treats.

Mildred, Gladys, Farrah, Kate and Jaclyn are Broad-Breasted Bronze turkeys and they share the spacious "poultry palace" with 14 chickens (the chickens have their own palace "wing"). Mature female turkeys weigh 20 to 25 pounds and toms about 35 pounds. Turkey eggs are speckled and often quite colorful. They tend to be bigger than chicken eggs, averaging 2-3/4 inches in length. Anything you can do with a chicken egg, you can do with a turkey egg – and you need fewer eggs. Think mushroom and cheese omelet – yum!

Gerry's turkeys, chickens and geese mostly free range during the day, but she pens them up at night to protect against coyotes and other predators. When they are not scratching for grubs the birds eat Purina Game Bird Chow and scratch grains. Purina has chow for about any species. Want Gerbil chow? Monkey? Zebra? Rhino? Penguin? Just give them a call. *(Continued on page 3)*

In this issue:

Notes from Jan . . . page 2
Volunteer Hours Report . . . page 2
June minutes . . . page 4
A talk with the Whiteheads . . . page 7

**Next MCMG Meeting:
Sept. 14, 12 noon
Carleen Bright Arboretum
Program: Fall Vegetables**

July 2011 Volunteer Hours

Volunteer hours	359
Education hours	60
Contacts	2,426
Media	368,550
Meetings	54
<i>(Hours below are included in Volunteer Hours)</i>	
Arboretum	99
<i>Trailside Garden</i>	21
<i>Superstar Garden</i>	6
<i>Tours: 1st Baptist campers</i>	56
<i>Rose Garden</i>	2
<i>Herb Garden</i>	2
<i>Garden Fair</i>	11
<i>Clerical</i>	2
McGregor Demo Garden	2
Phone time - Ag office	33
Misc. time - Ag office	80
Hewitt Community Garden	9
Cedar Ridge Elementary	41
Woodway Elementary	2
MHMR	2
Gospel Cafe	8
St. Paul's Church	14
Plant Sale	7
Providence Planning	2
Habitat	1
Urban Coalition	3

August 10 Meeting Attendance

Members: 50

Bach Cynthia, Back Sandy, Barnes B. L., Belanger Bonnie, Belanger Dick, Bonner Grady, Buchanan John, Burchfield Linda, Carothers Ila Jean, Clafferty Jo Ann, Clark Mark, Cooper Nelda, Crawford Susan, Dauphin Irene, Demuynck Lynn, Dougherty Kim, Dupart Vic, FitzGerald Eva, Fitzgerald Melody, Ford Kris, Foulks Xan, Henson Margaret, Hering Jene, Kelly Jeanette, Khoury Julia, Matthews Sherry, Mersinger Barbara, Milam Elizabeth, Moore Linda, Ortiz Sarah, Peterson Georgia, Plasek Anne, Powers Robert, Quicksall Doug, Reinking Art, Reinking Carol, Rich Jennifer, Richardson Sharon, Romano Sharon, Von Rosenberg Jo, Seale Jim, Segrest Dawn, Setser Della, Trice Mary Lou, Turlington Kathryn, Vokes Barry, Waldrop Melba, Warriner Sonia, Widaski Susan, Wood Carol

Interns 6:

Beazley Madge, Chapman Merle, High Melody, Moore Linda, Schillaci Valerie, Scott Sandra

Jan's Notes



Master Gardeners are wonderful! Thank you for all the cards, the food, the e-mails, phone calls and visits during my recovery from surgery.

During this time, I discovered a new gardener at our home. Eddie has done a great job of watering all of our potted plants and hanging baskets. In fact, he does a better job than I do conserving water between each pot. However, I think we will probably have an automatic watering system by next year.

Hopefully, you have been able to save your favorite plants during this unusually hot, dry summer. We are all ready to fall into cooler gardening and hope it comes soon. If you have any plant saving tips, please share them with us.

Congratulations Melody for your contributions to Waco Today. The first article was great and we look forward to reading them each month.

Happy gardening,

Jan

P.S. We launched a new planning committee last week for the next intern group – the Class of 2012. Kathryn Turlington will serve as chairman and Kris Ford will assist her.

Books for library to honor Judy Tye

Kris Ford reports donations for the Judy Tye Memorial Fund will be collected at the Sept. 14 meeting. The fund will be used to buy gardening books for our office library. As chair of the planning committee Kris sends thanks to Barbara Mersinger, Barry Vokes and Julia Khoury for their help planning the memorial.

for the love of animals, a sense of peace and harmony

(continued from page 1)

Ever seen tom turkeys strutting, showing off their plumage to attract females? Toms have colorful feathers that glisten in the sunlight. In the wild, females nest on the ground, laying and sitting on their eggs. This is a time when they are most vulnerable to predators. The new born chicks, called poults, line up in a row and follow their mother everywhere. Except during nesting season, wild turkeys like to roost in tree tops, safe from predators.

Turkeys communicate with each other verbally. One researcher found that wild turkeys make up to about 30 different sounds, with each sound conveying a different meaning.

This exceptional drought has put great stress on both wildlife and farm animals, and turkeys are no exception. Sadly, the intense heat this summer resulted in the loss of both of Gerry's tom turkeys.

It's not so easy to raise turkeys. There is a learning curve that must be climbed in order to become successful. Lots of things can go wrong. It is said that the best way to learn is to model someone who has done it successfully. That said, once you learn how to raise chickens, learning how to raise turkeys is not a big step. The same basic principles apply.

While it is possible to raise a few chickens in a city backyard (first check city ordinances to make sure it's okay), turkeys are much larger birds and require more space. It's not practical to raise them unless you have a few acres out in the country.

By the way, did you know that Sesame Street's "Big Bird" wears a costume made of white turkey feathers that were dyed yellow? Oh, and turkeys make pretty good "watchdogs" too. They are very observant birds, missing nothing.

There are many different turkey breeds. Some of the most common include Narragansett, White Holland, Black Spanish, Blue Slate, Bourbon Red, Beltsville Small White, Broad Breasted White, Midget White, Royal Palm, Buff, Chocolate and Bronze.

As you might expect from a MCMG member, Gerry gardens. And yes, the heat and drought have taken a toll on her garden. It is a familiar story. Yet even so, tomatoes and peppers are still looking good. The soil in her backyard garden is fertile – sandy and rich with manure.



The north wing of the "poultry palace."

When showing a visitor around her barnyard and garden, Gerry's eyes light up. She loves her pet animals and they love her back in their unique way. Gerry enjoys the eggs but would never dream of eating her chickens, turkeys or geese.

The Milnor farm conveys a sense of peace and harmony to a visitor, a sense that all is right with the world for the moment.



October is fast approaching and bringing cooler weather, hopefully!

The **Children's Garden Fair** will be October 16, and as usual, we need supplies and volunteers.

Our current "needs/requests" list:

Plant starts - to be potted: airplane/spider plant, hens and chicks, etc. Ila Jean Carothers has lost all of hers and we we need these or the activity will have to be canceled. This has been a favor-

ite event each year, so let's see what we can come up with to help Ila Jean and her "crew" out. ijcarothers@juno.com

Knee High Stockings - for the Stocking Baby activity
Nelda Cooper at coopernelda53@yahoo.com

Old Button-Down Shirts - for the Rock Painting activity
Sandy Burleson at sburleson@grandecom.net

Seeds - for Origami Pockets. Collect your own or donate any extras that you did not plant this year
Emily Davidson at moundsandburs@yahoo.com

Volunteers - I didn't get the list passed around at the last meeting so here it is again

Decorating Committee - Responsible for putting cloths on the tables, balloons, arranging the pumpkin patch (Pumpkins and hay will already be there)

Setting up/taking down areas - need to be at CBA early to help move and set up tables, chairs, and tents.

As the time nears I am sure we will have more requests for materials and help.

Thank you all for your continued support and participation! Jeanette Kelly - jkelly46@aol.com and Judy Schmeltekopf - judy_schmeltekopf@baylor.edu

FUN IS GUARANTEED!

Minutes: August 10, 2011

Vice –President Sandy Back called the meeting to order at 12:05 p.m. President Jan Surface’s recent surgery prevented her from conducting the meeting. Reports are Jan is doing well. Irene Dauphin moved and it was seconded that the minutes be approved as were written in the July newsletter. The Treasurer’s report was approved as well.

Sandy sent an email out regarding leadership opportunities for the coming year. For those of you who have not received a copy, they are located at the back of the room on the table. If you have brought yours, you can turn it in.

Sandy has an immediate need for help regarding the next intern class for 2012. Those members who are interested in helping put the program together, please sign up. It is quite extensive with organizing the program from locating the speakers to travel and costs. It should be educational to see how it’s done. We think you would enjoy it.

Those Master Gardeners who need to fill out background checks, please do so. You will receive a card stating you can work with children.

Old Business:

Judy Tye memorial: It is suggested that we donate gardening books for our library. Please bring the books to the September meeting for collection to our new Master Gardeners’ library in the office.

Ila Jean’s office and related items:
The BIG program this next February is having a cooking school. They are looking for volunteers to decorate. The conference is February 7 and 8, 2012

Carol Reinking is looking to fill slots for telephoning this September and October.

The state Master Gardener convention will be in San Antonio May 3-5, 2012.

We received a flyer of a seminar in Wichita Falls for water conservation dated Saturday October 1.

We are looking for our Master Gardener sign. If anyone knows where the sign is let us know. Ila Jean, Jeanette Kelly, and Linda Burchfield attended the state conference in College Station.

We will be having an open house for our new office and need a committee for planning.

Jeanette Kelly updated us on the Garden Fair dated October 16. We have flyers that are ready. We have 2 lists available, one for people that have signed up already. Please check the list for your name. The second list is for those that would like to sign up. It will take approximately 3 hours to set up, decorate, and take down the booths.

The September program will be about planting and growing fall vegetables. The program will be given by Jene Hering, Ila Jean, and Carol Wood.

Since we have such a large group Sandy suggested that everyone get acquainted with one another. She has given us three minutes to meet two people that you don’t know.

Dr. Bill Welch presented the program on *Heirloom Gardening*. You should be well informed by the end of the afternoon. The program started at 1:00 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 12:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Dick Belanger, secretary

McLENNAN COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS
WILL HAVE AN
OPEN HOUSE
AT THE NEW MG OFFICE
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2011
420 N. SIXTH STREET
2:00 TO 4:00 P.M.
THE PUBLIC IS INVITED

McLennan County Master Gardeners Association Officers 2011

President - Jan Serface • Vice President - Sandy Back • Secretary - Dick Belanger

Treasurer - JoAnn Clafferty

AgriLife Sponsor - Shane McLellan, County Agent

Newsletter - Sonia Warriner jwarriner@hotmail.com

Our web site: www.mclennanmastergardeners.org



Send volunteer hours to Julia Khoury, 8512 Bosque Blvd., Waco 76712 or tkhoury@hotmail.com

Educational programs of Texas AgriLife Extension Service serve people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, disability or national origin. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating

A brief Horticulture Lesson - the Southern Live Oak

Southern Live Oak trees (*Quercus Virginiana*) are popular landscaping trees. They have problems, e.g. oak wilt. And they are over planted in small yards.

Many botanists say there are two Texas sub-species - Coastal and Escarpment. Along the coast, Coastal live oaks grow about 60 feet tall while the Escarpment trees grow only to 40 or 50 feet. The national champion live oak near Lewisburg, LA, is 55 ft. tall with a 132 ft. wide canopy. The canopy diameter is 2.6 times the tree's height.

Most Texas live oaks are a natural cross between the two sub-species. If unhindered, these will grow about 50 ft. tall with a canopy diameter of 125 to 135 ft. Live oak genes will not let them grow taller. Scientists say that no tree can grow taller than roughly 400 to 425 ft.

Why, you ask? Trees have to overcome gravity, getting water and soluble nutrients up to the leaves. Also, friction in the system - all the way to the crown. As trees get taller and taller, leaf expansion slows down, reducing photosynthesis. Finally, growth stops.

Live oaks are trimmed for two reasons: 1) to let more sunlight into the turf below, 2) to make live oaks grow taller. Trimming is not for a tree's benefit.



This live oak is on Knottingham in Woodway.

Live oaks have a natural characteristic to grow lower limbs that dip down and then grow back up. Look at some undisturbed mature live oaks. Live oaks have lower limbs cut off to eliminate this feature. This eliminates too many leaves that do the photosynthesis work. The tree is weakened. And a beautiful feature of mature live oaks is eliminated.

Live oaks should be used sparingly in landscapes with limited space. *Submitted by Robert Powers*



Lovely, unique and flowing with memories

Last month Barbara Vance submitted this photo of their fountain. Her husband Bill made it with an above-ground concrete basin.

He built a frame for the form of the basin, filled it with cement and then dyed the concrete. The stones for the fountain and the basin were collected from their favorite spot on the Llano River. Water is added to the basin as it evaporates.

“Birds and insects love it and a large frog lives nearby,” said Barbara. The fountain is adjacent to their outdoor kitchen so they spend many hours enjoying it.

from the
cardinal's corner

by Janet Schaffer

The Carleen Bright Arboretum is going to have a SCARECROW CONTEST during the Children's Garden Fair this year. Anyone is eligible to participate. We are looking for businesses, civic groups, church groups, or individuals interested in becoming a part of this fun community event.

If you are a teacher and would like to enter with your students, we would love to have you. If you are a mom and would like to enter with your children, we would love to have you. I really hope the Master Gardeners will create a scarecrow to call their own - watering can in hand.

Scarecrow Contest Guidelines

- Reserve your space now - Scarecrows may be delivered anytime from October 8 -15.
- Scarecrows will be displayed through November 1, 2011 and need to be picked up no later than November 5, 2011. Any scarecrows left after November 5 will become property of the City of Woodway.
- Scarecrows will be displayed along the Nature Trail by reserving a space.
- Judging will take place during the Children's Garden Fair October 16. There will be a pre-selected group of judges and winners will be announced before 5:00 pm

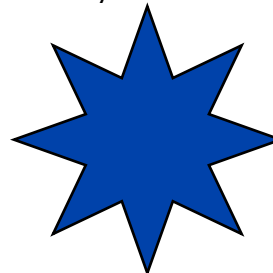


at the Fair. Winners will be awarded a blue ribbon for each of the following categories: Best in Show, Most Creative, Most Lifelike.

All scarecrows should be no shorter than 4ft. and no taller than 8ft.

*Scarecrows should be made of durable materials and held together in such a way as to withstand potential wind, rain, and other outdoor elements.

- **The Carleen Bright Arboretum and the City of Woodway are not responsible for any damage to the scarecrows or theft of scarecrows and/or signage.**
- The scarecrows must be child friendly - no blood or gore, please.
- You are allowed to make and place a sign in front of your scarecrow saying who created it. No profanity or vulgar language is allowed.
- The first 20 entries will be accepted; make your reservation today! 254-399-9204.



Speakers Bureau Report:

Nelda Cooper, chairman, reports one member gave one talk in August.

Sandy Back did a program on Landscape Design for 15 members of the Steel Magnolia Garden Club in Lorena

Office Staff Schedule

September 2011

Sept. 1: Terry Irvine, Amber Wilhite
Sept. 6: Merle Chapman, Valerie Schillaci
Sept. 8: Pat Goaley, Amber Wilhite
Sept. 13: Brenda Golubski,
Sept. 15: Jennifer, Rich Amber Wilhite
Sept. 20: Lynn DeMuynck, Pat Goaley
Sept. 22: Pat Goaley, Amber Wilhite
Sept. 27: Pat Goaley
Sept. 29: Pat Goaley, Amber Wilhite

Contact: Carol Reinking - sscarol.24@gmail.com

This couple loves to work with children

It hasn't been the best year for MJ and Dorothy Whitehead, the fourth couple to be featured in our series on Master Gardener twosomes.

The last time they volunteered as Master Gardeners was with Beast and Blooms at the zoo in April. The next day - Easter Sunday - they were both injured in an accident near Gatesville. The pickup truck collision sent MJ to the ICU at Hillcrest and both have been slowly recovering over the past months. As Dorothy said, "It takes a lot longer when you are our age."

These 79-year-olds are not used to being inactive. They found their one-acre property north of Bellmead in 1998 while out biking. It had a row of 18 loblolly pines and room for a garden. Though it's struggling this year, they still have some eggplants, black-eyed peas and okra. Can you tell they are native Texans?

In 1961 they bought a farm east of Axtel in Limestone County. At the moment they are feeding their 31 cattle hay left from last year and adding supplements. But the future of the cattle is uncertain.

MJ (that's his given name) retired in 1997 after 37 years with the Pure Milk Company (now Oak Farms) and Dorothy retired from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

To celebrate they took off with a pickup and a pop-up camper heading for Alaska and drove 12,000 miles exploring the northwest for six weeks. This included bumping along 300 miles of gravel to reach Prudhoe Bay.

They became master gardeners with the class of 2006, but already knew some of the Cactus Club gang: Steven Lovecky, Ernie Petru, Julia Khoury.

They are looking forward to a field trip this fall to Sonora with fellow cactus growers. It will include hunting for prize varieties on a huge acreage as well as cowboy barbecues and sleeping in a bunkhouse.

MJ and Dorothy have been attracting children to their popcorn demonstration at the annual Children's Fair to watch real popcorn poppers.

"Their eyes get so big," said Dorothy. They are so eager to learn and we like the interaction between parents and kids."

The Whiteheads have three children, seven grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.



MJ and Dorothy Whitehead, class of 2006

They celebrated their 58th anniversary last January. This summer they took it easy recuperating from the accident and had fun taking the younger grandchildren to local attractions and exhibits at the Mayborn Museum.

If you haven't met this charming couple, make a point to do so. But, you might have to make an appointment. Their schedule is getting busy again.

SCHOOL WORK SCHEDULE

Cedar Ridge

Sept. 30, 8:30 a.m.- 3:15 p.m.	
Oct. 28	Feb. 24
Nov. 30	Mar. 30
Jan. 27	May 18

Woodway Elementary

Sept. 23	
Oct. 21	times to be announced
Nov. 18	
Planting salad and native American gardens with 3rd and 4th grade students	