

# The Latest Dirt

October 2011

McLennan County Master Gardener Association

## Growing healthy food

### Consider the “Locavore” Movement

During the Great Depression and the war years, millions of Americans cultivated gardens and grew much of their own produce. As we know, gardening skills improve rapidly with practice so in those days there were many skilled gardeners. Sadly, today most people do their vegetable gardening with a shopping cart in the produce aisle of their local supermarket. Instead of buying farm fresh produce from a neighboring farmer, they mostly buy it indirectly from a factory farm in California.

Most people do not comprehend how vulnerable we are to America’s “just in time” food delivery system. Much of the food on grocery shelves is trucked in over long distances and that requires oil. If anything goes wrong with the delivery system, store shelves will be bare in about three days. America is addicted to oil. Just about every aspect of our daily lives involves oil – and much of it is imported from countries not particularly friendly to America. We are vulnerable to another oil shock like in the 1970’s, only worse, so it is prudent to prepare.

You are a Texas Master Gardener with valuable skills. You can grow some of your own food. As you already know, this is not difficult once you have climbed the learning curve, even here in our challenging Texas climate. Some plants do well in spring, while others thrive in the fall and winter garden.

There are advantages to growing your own food – knowing what went into the soil, for instance. You limit chemicals to those considered acceptable for use in organic gardening and you apply them sparingly. You nurture your vegetables and when you pick them you enjoy that delicious, fresh flavor.



*Jonathan and Bethel Erickson-Bruce show off their “monster” melon plant which grows from their backyard compost pile in Waco. Bethel is executive director of H.O.T. UGC and is working with the city of Waco to develop a downtown farmer’s market. She and Jonathan do workshops on gardening and food harvesting. A recent topic: chickens.*

You don’t mind those little imperfections that are absent in store-bought produce drenched in chemical fertilizer and pesticides.

In addition to growing some of your own food, you can teach others how to do so. The H.O.T. Urban Gardening Coalition partners with community organizations to promote locally grown food.

[www.hotugc.org](http://www.hotugc.org)

*(continued on page 2)*

**Next MCMG Meeting:**  
**October 12, 12 noon**  
**Carleen Bright Arboretum**  
**Program:**  
*Water Recycling*  
**by Dottie Woodson, Texas A&M**  
**Open to Public, 3 CU’s**

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# Growing and buying locally

*(Continued from page 1)*

The H.O.T. UGC maintains a list of vegetable and fruit growers that qualify as “local” producers (within a 100 mile radius of Waco). They also have lists of local meat and honey producers, egg, milk and cheese distributors and wineries. In addition HOT UGC helps to start school and community gardens throughout the area. For more information about HOT UGC, contact Bethel Erickson-Bruce at [UGCBethel@gmail.com](mailto:UGCBethel@gmail.com). Check their website; it’s filled with information and links.

The next best thing to growing your own is buying from a local farmer. By developing relationships with local farmers, you can ensure a reliable supply of locally produced farm fresh food. The “locavore” (buying locally produced food) movement is steadily gaining momentum nationwide.

When you grow your own food or buy locally produced food, you adapt to the seasons as people did before the era of long distance trucking. You eat what is fresh and available. Locally produced food is not cheap compared to supermarket prices because local producers are mostly small operations. Big factory farms have major economies of scale. They pour fertilizer and pesticides on the crops and strive to grow unblemished produce that fetches the best price. Local producers tend to position themselves as artisans, producing high quality products sold at a premium over supermarket prices.

Another approach is Community Supported Agriculture (CSA). World Hunger Relief Farm in Elm Mott runs such a program. You pay an enrollment fee and a monthly payment during the seven month growing season (April - June and September - December). This entitles you to a large bag of greens each week. Farm interns grow the produce and they write an informative weekly newsletter with information and recipes for preparing that week’s harvest. There is a waiting list.

Remember last year’s garlic growing project? Terry Vanderpool (a.k.a. Vanderpool’s Gourmet Gardens) is our local “garlic guy.” Terry is as enterprising a fellow as you are likely to meet. He sells his garlic varieties in the established Austin Farmers Market, and he – along with HOT UGC – is spearheading establishment of the Waco Farmer’s



*Wire hoop chicken house with screen door entry in Bethel and Jonathon’s backyard. Note laying boxes in back corner. They have a rooster named Mr. John who keeps everyone happy.*

Market. The expected start date is Saturday, Oct. 22, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and every Saturday thereafter. The farm stand will be located behind the old fire tower on University Parks Dr.

It’s not easy to set up a farmers market. There is a lot of red tape, but the Waco City Council is supportive and it looks promising. Keep your fingers crossed and watch for details in the local newspaper.

– by Barry Vokes

*“I’m starting to believe that the simple act of going to the farmer’s market is one of the best ways of reminding yourself what matters in life. A perfect snap back to reality surrounded by the simple things in life: fruits, vegetables, organics, herbs, and smiling faces lolling around with their significant others.”*

– quote from shopper at the Austin Farmer’s Market.

To see photos of a farmer’s market organized by the Highland Lakes MG Association in Burnet, go to [www.hillcountrylgshow.com](http://www.hillcountrylgshow.com) and click on Farmer’s Market.

## August 2011 Volunteer Hours

Volunteer hours	395
Education hours	147
Contacts	875
Media	3,490
Meetings	56
<i>(Hours below are included in Volunteer Hours)</i>	
Arboretum	10
<i>Trailside Garden</i>	2
<i>Superstar Garden</i>	2
<i>Garden Fair</i>	6
McGregor Demo Garden	15
Phone time - Ag office	59
Misc. time - Ag office	38
Cedar Ridge Elementary	23
Woodway Elementary	3
MHMR	3
Plant Sale	8
Habitat	2
MG new class 2012	28
MG clerical	48
Spring Valley School	5
BIG Conference	36

January through August records show MCMG members volunteered 3,047 hours. Based on the *Independent Sector's* estimate of \$21.36 per hour, the value of service to McLennan County is \$65,084. (Source: Ila Jean Carothers)

## September 14 Meeting Attendance Members: 52

Barnett Mark, Belanger Bonnie, Belanger Dick, Buchanan John, Burchfield Linda, Carothers Ila Jean, Clark Mark, Cooper Nelda, Cunningham Jean, Dauphin Irene, Davidson Emily, Dawson Anita, DeMuyneck Lynn, Dougherty Kim, Downs Sarah, DuPart Vic, FitzGerald Eva, Fitzgerald Melody, Folse Norma, Ford Kris, Geletzke Cindy, Golubski Brenda, Hering Gene, Johnson Marilyn, Kelly Jeanette, Kindler Missy, Lindsey Donna, Lovecky Steven, Lutz Lori, Matthews Sherry, McDaniel Louie, Mersinger Barbara, Milam Elizabeth, Moore Andrea, Moore Linda, Plasek Anne, Quicksall Doug, Reinking Art, Rich Jennifer, Richardson Sharon, Romano Sharon, Schaffer Janet, Serface Jan, Setser Della, Turlington Kathryn, Vance Barbara, Vokes Barry, Wariner Sonia, Whitehead Dorothy, Whitehead M.J., Widaski Susan, Wood Carol

## Interns: 3

Mabry Cindy, Scott Sandra, Wilhite Amber

## Jan's Notes



Oops, I failed to mention at the September meeting who our nominating committee members are – Steven Lovecky, Sharon Richardson and Barbara Vance. They are working on a slate of officers for 2012. If you are asked to serve, the appropriate response is “Yes, I would love to!” Members will vote on the 2012 officers in November.

With year-end rapidly approaching, a few reminders might be helpful. First, AgriLife Extension Agent Shane McLellan needs our help and support, as he and his staff are thinly spread these days. Without Shane's support and encouragement, there would be no McLennan County Master Gardener program.

Second, here's a short checklist: 1. Do I have a handy calendar or planner? 2. What have I done this year that counts as volunteer hours? 3. What have I attended that counts as CE? 4. Have I attended at least three MCMG meetings in 2011? 5. Have I reported all my hours?

Please do your part to make things easier for Julia Khoury by promptly reporting your hours at the end of each month. Julia must decipher seemingly impenetrable handwriting at times, record everyone's reportable activities and get her report to Shane. In turn, Shane must report to the County Commissioners Court, to his boss, to College Station and to the state legislature on a strict monthly deadline. This information is used to help determine budgets and the future of Master Gardening programs in Texas counties. The more hours we contribute and report, the better we look – everyone wins. Please cooperate, for we count on you. Every now and then you might want to thank Julia in person for her major contribution to MCMG. Thank you, Julia!

FAQs about reporting your volunteer and CE hours

- I worked at the Extension Office answering the phone, but I had to do some research. Is this CE time? **No, it's volunteer time.**
- I gave a presentation to 'XYZ' on behalf of MCMG and I did research and wrote a script. Is this CE time? **No, it's volunteer time.**
- Two MCMG members attended my presentation to 'XYZ'. Is that CE time for them? **Yes.**
- I attended a recent MCMG meeting and we had a guest speaker. How do I count this time?

*(Continued on page 6)*



Linda Moore, (right) earns her MG certification and is welcomed by Jan Serface, president, at the September meeting.

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**•NOTICE for Reporting September Hours**  
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- Julia Khoury's computer is under repair. She requests that members mail reports to her at:
  - 8512 Bosque Blvd., Waco, 76712. Or, if your report is short, call her (772-1679) and she will record them as you read them.
  - **Note:** there are three meetings left in 2011 if you have not met your requirement. October's program is open to the public and three CE's will be awarded.
- .....

Much of the focus of this issue has evolved into FOOD. To add to this, here are some good sites for more information.

[barbara@digandletdig.com](mailto:barbara@digandletdig.com) - Pumpkins and toads. Plus, check the video link to the Texas Forest Service on proper techniques for tree watering. All you need is a long screwdriver! Get on Barbara Elmore's bi-monthly email newsletter list.

[www.globalbuckets.org](http://www.globalbuckets.org) - Another low tech approach to gardening anywhere with two 5 gal. buckets and a black garbage bag. A well-done video with easy instructions.

[www.wacotrib.com/wacotoday](http://www.wacotrib.com/wacotoday) - Melody Fitzgerald's column on winter vegetable gardens. Shovel ready tips for all.

[www.hotugc.org/garden-manual](http://www.hotugc.org/garden-manual) - Bethel Erickson and the UCG site offer many resources including a manual for Waco. Sign up for her weekly email on garden tips.

**Jan's Notes** (Continued from page 3)

You may count that as CE time. Note that we usually allow you to count one hour even though the real meeting time runs 30 - 40 minutes. We currently allow you to count travel time for volunteer activities (including regular meetings) but not for CE. This is subject to change.

- Please give some examples of activities that count as volunteer time. **Baking cookies, decorating (and taking down decorations), room set-up, office work, education and other school programs, helping with 4-H or Scouts, working at the Arboretum Trailside Garden, Superstar Beds, etc., speaking to various groups, writing articles, helping with the Children's Garden Fair, development of PowerPoint presentations.** There are lots of other possibilities. If in doubt, ask a member of the executive committee.

When you became a Master Gardener, you assumed some responsibilities. Please plan now to finish the year strongly. If you are behind in volunteer hours or CE credit, let us know. If we know that you're trying to get it done we will help you if possible.

Dues for 2012 are due in November. It's okay to pay now, but please be sure your payment gets recorded - no fair just tossing money at the treasurer! Note to 2010 Interns: Time is running short for you to complete your hours. Need help? Please ask now.

We have such a terrific group of talented people. Every member brings something unique to the group. Please remember that we must finish what we started and this means supporting current projects before we start new ones.

Question: **Why do we have fewer volunteers for the Children's Garden Fair this year when we have a lot more members?**

Happy gardening!

*Jan*

*Office Staff Schedule open dates*

*October, November 2011*

- Thursday, October 6 - 1
- Tuesday, October 25 - 1
- Thursday, Nov. 3 - 1
- Tuesday, Nov. 8 - 1
- Thursday, Nov. 10 - 1
- Thursday, Nov. 17 - 1
- Tuesday, Nov. 22 - 2
- Tuesday, Nov. 29 - 1

Contact: Carol Reinking - [sscarol.24@gmail.com](mailto:sscarol.24@gmail.com)

## Minutes: September 14, 2011

The Master Gardeners met at the Carleen Bright Arboretum with Jan Serface presiding. Jan called the meeting to order at 12:05 p.m. The minutes were approved as printed in the newsletter. Jo Ann Clafferty had serious recent surgery so Jan read the treasurer's report. It was accepted by the membership.

Sandy Back is not here because her husband is in ICU and has been given 10 pints of blood. Anyone wishing to give blood will be greatly appreciated.

Time is growing short. Many of you haven't turned in your hours for volunteering and education. We need to have them updated. Time is catching up with us. Please help us with this.

The MCMG would like to welcome our newest Master Gardener, Linda Moore. Welcome aboard.

We have a request from the BIG Conference. Funds are tightening up, and we derive a huge portion of our fund raising from this source. They are asking that we sponsor a horticultural speaker for the February Conference. We will ask Dr. Doug Welch. The cost of the speaker will be \$500. A motion was made by Irene Dauphin, then seconded by Barry Vokes. The motion carried.

Jeanette Kelly is in charge of the Children's Fair in October. For all of you who need hours, a signup sheet is being passed around. She has a project for you, and there is plenty of work for everyone such as preparation to cleanup to everything in between. There are many activities available. She has flyers that can be handed out. There are many locations throughout the area where flyers can be delivered. The Brazos Knights and Warren Barron/Eric Gilchrest will sing. Holly Tucker, a new singer, will sing from 3-4 p.m. Zack Kelly, a guitarist, will stroll around. There will be a Scare Crow contest and a Scavenger Hunt on the nature trail. We'll have a Pumpkin Patch. The Arboretum will supply the pumpkins and Sharon Romano will lead the committee.

Ila Jean Carothers updated us on the Open House that is being held next Thursday Sept. 21. The time is 2- 4:00 p.m. Anne Plasek is in charge of the refreshments so the cookies and punch have been arranged. Eva FitzGerald is working on a centerpiece for the refreshment table. Invitations have been sent to county officials. Barry Vokes has written an article for the newspaper. Ila Jean has need of 6 to 8 hosts and hostesses. We will need to wear name tags. Barbara Vance is making a

video of our last 15 years. Sharon is making a scrapbook. We have seeds to give away and a rain barrel demonstration. There are videos of the City Cable Channel and superstar pamphlets that can be used as giveaway items. There are poster boards of the demonstration garden and habitat project. We should park in the lot adjacent to the office parking lot. Anyone interested in becoming a Master Gardener should be invited. Ila Jean is also assisting Carol Reinking to staff the office for October and November. Numerous other projects will be featured at the Open House.

Kathryn Turlington discussed the upcoming 2012 intern class. Linda Burchfield has contacted all the speakers and has them confirmed for the class. There have been 30 people who have volunteered to help with the class. Kris Ford is co-chairing the program with Kathryn as is Linda Burchfield. Others involved are Barry Vokes, Sandra Scott, Sherri Matthews, Lynn DeMuynck, Brenda Golubski, Linda, and Sharon Richardson. We've set the limit at 30 and if we go over that number, we'll use a lottery system to select the interns. The orientation will be April 18, 2012, and classes will begin June 6 and run until September 18. We'll use our own members as much as possible. We have a lot of expertise in our group. The next meeting will be prior to our Master Gardener meeting in October.

Brenda Golubski has an updated list of the continuing and upcoming projects at the back of the room. We have ongoing projects at Gospel Café, Habitat for Humanity, and various schools should you like to participate.

We had a couple of announcements by our members. Kris Ford has brought a basket for the Judy Tye memorial book fund. You can place your books in the basket. Sherry Matthews indicated that we are running out of space for our pot recycling and is looking for additional space. Art Reinking notified us that Keep Woodway Beautiful Committee has had some resignations and is asking that residents of Woodway who would like to be on the committee contact the city.

Next month Dottie Woodson from Texas A & M will talk about Water Recycling.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:45 for the vegetable training class. One education hour will be given for attending the session.

Respectfully submitted,  
Dick Belanger, Secretary

### 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](mailto:jwarriner@hotmail.com)

Our web site: [www.mclennanmastergardeners.org](http://www.mclennanmastergardeners.org)



Send volunteer hours to Julia Khoury, 8512 Bosque Blvd., Waco 76712 or [tkhoury@hotmail.com](mailto: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

# Tropical gingers become an “addiction”

**Ginger** - the tropical plant type - was the purpose of a recent trip to East Texas. We met friends who wanted to attend the “first ever Ginger Fest at Tejas Tropicals” near Coldspring.

A few miles south of Route 150, a sandy curving driveway off a county road led past rows of tall fat palms into a hidden jungle paradise.

There tall pines surrounded a large clearing of gardens, two sprawling log homes, several out-buildings, a huge greenhouse, a pasture and zoo-sized cages of monkeys. The monkeys scolded and tropical birds called out from the forest. Two wallabees, a kangaroo and black necked swans roamed the pasture (though the wallabees and kangaroo were hiding that day).

Our host and nursery owner David Glover gave informal talks as we walked along the rows of gingers growing under the dappled roofs of pine trees. At noon a formal lecture with slides took place in a large storage building complete with kitchen.

The “fest” included lunch prepared by his wife Cheri for our group of about 20. Among the guests was a couple who are with the Mercer Arboretum in Houston.

A retired oil company CEO, Glover bought his 20-acre property in 2007. He cleared about half the land, built the houses and other buildings and thought he would become a mail order nursery for palm trees. Then, he “got addicted” to gingers and traveled to Asia to collect plants. Their website [www.tejastropicals.com](http://www.tejastropicals.com) tells the whole story and has wonderful photos.

Of course, I now have gingers and hope I still will in the spring. Here is what I learned for growing in our Zone 8:

Plant in raised, well-drained beds or pots.

When plants go dormant after a frost, store in garage and keep dry. Don’t water.

He recommends an easy plant, the curcumas, many of which bloom from June until first frost.

Some curcumas are spring bloomers, but he likes all-summer bloomers.

Every ginger blooms on a new stem; more shoots, more blooms. Each bloom lasts several weeks.

When leaves yellow after a fall frost, let them dry to feed the rhizome. Cut off when they fall over and lie down. The frost should “burn” the leaves.



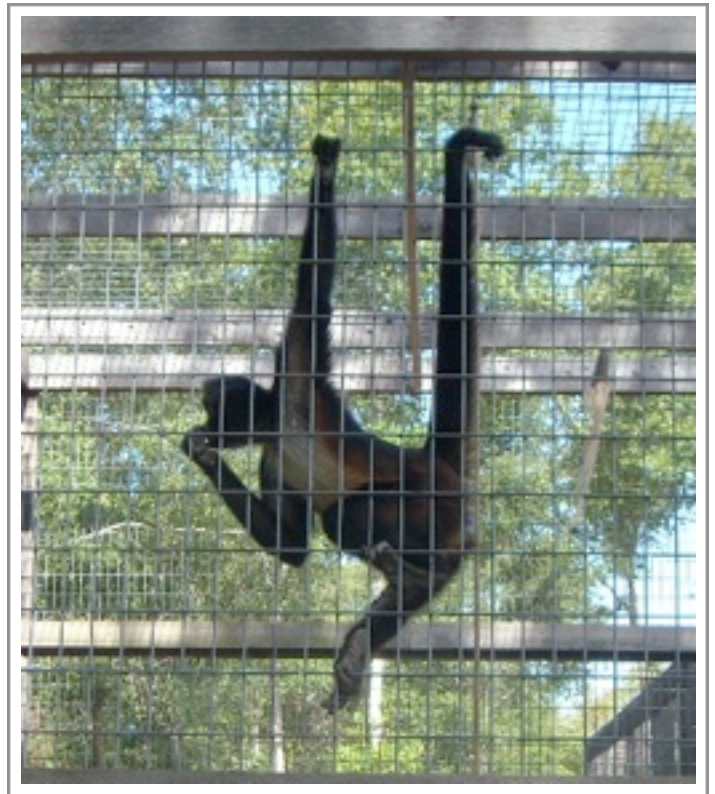
They grow in clumps and should be divided every three or four years.

Glover adds coarse sand to the planting medium and prefers older compost made from twigs and leaves.

He fertilizes with slow-release granules, preferably a 3-3-2 ratio or 13-13-13. Gingers are heavy feeders. – SW

*Left: “Emerald Pagoda,” a curcuma harmandii, for Zone 8A, grows 24 - 30 inches, moderate water.*

*(Note: the address is Cleveland, TX, but it is close to Coldspring and there are nice little Sunday House cabins there for an over-night or weekend stay. The drive is a little over three hours).*



*Above: One of two Spider monkeys Glover brought to Tejas Tropicals from central South America. The best photo is on their website, a white-faced, male capuchin observing humans.*

from the  
*cardinal's corner*



**Some  
like  
it  
HOT!**



*Photos  
by  
Janet  
Schaffer*

**Summer Survivors at the Arboretum**



**Visitors to our Open House.** Displays depicting our activities, a slide presentation and a low-tech rainwater barrel were set up by MG volunteers for the Oct. 21 event. Nine prospects for the next intern class signed the interest form. And, cookies . . . lots of yummy cookies!

**Speakers Bureau Report:**

Nelda Cooper, chairman, reports one member gave one talk in September. Ila Jean Carothers did a program on Raised Beds for the Williams Creek Baptist Church; 22 people present.

*The October schedule:*

- 10/4** - Steven Lovecky or Ernie Petru will talk to the Steel Magnolia Garden Club in Lorena on Cactus & Succulents
- 10/10** - Sarah Ortiz will be at the HOT Fair for a talk on Container Gardening
- 10/11** - Ila Jean will talk about Heat Tolerant Plants to the American Business Women's Association
- 10/13** - Melody Fitzgerald will do a program on bulbs for the Garden Forum Garden Club.