

The Latest Dirt

December 2011

McLennan County Master Gardener Association

A master of fields and of desert flowers

MCMG Past President Steven Lovecky is a McLennan County native. Raised on a farm off the old Dallas highway and south of the West community, farming is in Steven's blood. He currently works about 2,000 acres, half in crops and the rest is pasture for about 250 cattle. He has been farming since 1969.

As a youngster, Steven spent hours each day following his dad (Steve Lovecky) around on a tractor and learning how things work on a farm. Agriculture is a tough, demanding job. It is more a way of life than a vocation, which is why farmers hate to give up despite the formidable challenges. While there is probably nowhere in America where farming is easy, our Texas climate makes it especially tough. In this "agribusiness" era with huge corporate farms, the family farmer is a hardy soul. Whereas a few generations ago most Americans were close to the land, today a tiny percentage of the population feeds the rest of us.

Steven grows cotton, corn, wheat, milo and – um, cactus. All who know Steven know of his expertise in cactus and succulents. He is a go-to-guy for cactus questions. Most cacti are not of the "drop-it-on-the-ground-and-it-will-grow"



variety. While that seldom fails with Texas prickly pear and a few other tough, leathery varieties, many cactus plants require specialized skills and experience to propagate.

Steven grows and propagates over a thousand species and varieties. Many cactus species require special care to get them established. Propagation is by seeds, offsets and cuttings, with seeds being the most challenging (it can take years to grow a mature plant). Offsets and cuttings are faster, but rooting them and preventing rotting requires skill.

Learning how to propagate these plants inevitably means you will fail, and fail and fail – until you learn how to succeed. As Steven puts it, "One grower I know conceded to the inevitable and concluded that a person must kill a thousand plants before success as a cactus grower. I am well on my way to success."

The results, though, are worthwhile. Cactus species are among the world's hardiest and most beautiful plants, thriving in conditions many other plants cannot tolerate – like Central Texas in a dry summer, for instance. The disappointments while learning are bitter, but success

is sweet.

The MCMG Intern Class of 2008 made a field trip to the Lovecky home – Lovekey Ranch just outside the little farm community of Birome (whose gin produces possibly the best compost available in this area). Steven and wife Darlene have a cactus greenhouse adjacent to their farmhouse. The first thing

HAPPY HOLIDAYS, EVERYONE

See you at our Christmas Party

Tuesday, December 6, 2011

Waco First Baptist Church

Corner of 5th & Clay

6:30 - 8:30 p.m.

\$12 per person

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Words of praise for those who serve

The handoff from outgoing officers to incoming has always been rather simple and straightforward. Outgoing officers are thanked, incoming leaders announced, and applause all around. Some organizations have elaborate officer installation ceremonies, but we tend to be fairly un-ceremonial. This year in particular I want to acknowledge the tremendous commitment, leadership, and heart of each of these special members.

Jan Serface took on a second year as President, a job most of us were happy to pass along after one. Leading us through the biggest growth spurt in our history, she helped position us to move forward in a positive way – and always with a smile.

Sandy Back, as V.P., brought educational and entertaining programs – in time for yearbook printing!

Dick Belanger kept excellent records of all meetings and brought experience to Executive Committee decision-making.

Irene Dauphin called upon her administrative experience to keep our treasurer's records in great shape. With Irene's relocation plans, former treasurer, **JoAnn Clafferty** selflessly stepped back in to serve until the end of the year.

Barry Vokes, with significant experience in accounting and leadership with other organizations, graciously agreed to serve as incoming treasurer, in addition to all the other volunteer work he contributes to MG's, such as rainwater harvesting education and as a Cedar Ridge Elementary regular.

Brenda Golubski has served ably as volunteer coordinator, Arboretum docent chairman, JMG specialist, and all-around willing helper. She will be an efficient secretary and valued member of the Executive Committee.

Jeanette Kelly, one of our very most committed and enthusiastic volunteers, has always said she would prefer to serve quietly, behind the scenes. With a passion for Master Gardeners and a commitment to doing whatever is asked of her, she will bring her considerable skills and experience to the position of V.P./education chairman.

Sandy Back can carry loads on her shoulders that would crush most of us. Sunday School teacher, piano teacher, swim instructor, green classroom chairman, this lovely lady has also been dealing with the long-term illness and subsequent loss of her dear husband, Andy. Through it all she has been thinking of Master Gardeners and how she can serve. Our incoming president will lead us through 2012 with dedication, courage, and grace.

Please join me in letting these fine people know how much you appreciate their service.

Barbara Vance

Jan's Notes



Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

There is a time for all seasons: a time to plant, a time to grow, a time to harvest, a time to be sad and a time to be glad. Now it is time for new beginnings. We have experienced all these things during the last two years because this is the truth of life.

Thank you for allowing me to be a part of this organization and to serve as president. You are a very special group of people. Your ideas and talent will lead McLennan County Master Gardeners to new levels and new projects and a positive presence in our community.

Look at some of your accomplishments during the past years.

- *A real office at the Extension Office, including new computers and "Ask the MG" help line*
- *The wonderful articles written by our members for the Waco Tribune-Herald.*
- *The Children's Garden Fair with over a thousand attending*
- *Our speakers bureau.*
- *Our school programs*
- *The wonderful big intern class*
- *Melody taking over the column in Waco Today*
- *Many other activities you have done*
- *WOW!! You are great!*

When I began the Master Gardener program in 2001 it was to meet new people, make new friends and to remember what grows in Central Texas. (I grew up in Navarro County.) I have learned so much from all of you. I appreciate the friendships I have developed and I'm looking forward to our new opportunities.

God bless each of you,

Jan

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most visitors notice is a cactus so tall that it protrudes from a hole in the roof. It is a *Pachycereus pringlei* (Cardon cactus) – and it is huge. Steven bought it as a five-year-old plant and it is now about 15 years old. Soon he cut another hole in the roof to accommodate its rapid growth. It's not winter-hardy so he must cover the top of the plant each winter.

Asked what challenges he has faced over the years as a farmer, Steven waxed eloquent: *"Too dry, too wet, too hot, too cold, too many weeds, too little money, too many hours, too little time, days too short, days too long, too much sun, too many clouds, too much wind, too much optimism."* That pretty well sums it up.

Steven and Darlene own 115 acres not far from West, where Steven grew up, and the remainder of the 2,000 acres Steven farms is leased (many farmers make a practice of leasing much of the land they work). They originally met at a Lake Whitney event and have two children, Stephanie and Ricky. Stephanie is married to Brad Brunson and they have two girls. Ricky's wife is named Dalia.

Asked how he came to join MCMG, Steven responded: "I enjoy teaching others and thought I had much to share. In reality I was the learner and now apply much of what I learned as a Master Gardener into my own operation." MCMG projects Steven has worked on include the Texas Superstar Garden, Trailside Garden, Cactus and Succulent Garden (all at the Arboretum), Speaker's Bureau, McGregor Demonstration Garden, Cedar Ridge and Woodway Elementary gardens. He helps with the MCMG plant sale each spring.

An avid backpacker, Steven loves desert wilderness hiking. He is also a fishing enthusiast. He served as MCMG VP in 2008 and as President in 2009. (BV)





Four more interns are certified. Jan Serface (center) gave certificates to (left) Melody High, Cindy Mabry, Sandra Scott and Amber Wilhite at the November meeting.

Experts advise new weather stations for water management

There is a big void in the ability to monitor and manage water use in McLennan County. And, there is no predicted end in sight to the current drought which has caused more than \$5 billion in losses in Texas this year.

This could be substantially improved if one or more private or government entities purchased high tech, low cost weather stations which would give personalized feedback to property owners on how to manage their water usage. It's all done on the internet.

This was the main objective of the public forum on water conservation November 14 sponsored by our AgriLife Extension Service. Two MCMG members, Barry Vokes and Louie McDaniel, were presenters and many others were in the audience.

The seminar was designed to create awareness of the causes and severity of the current drought, encourage personal responsibility for conserving water, show that science is available for water management and emphasize the need for available technology in our area.

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Department has developed a weather station based on ET measurements, meaning *evapotranspiration*. It measures the water needed for individual plants and crops. These stations are not funded by the state in Texas. Cost of a station was estimated at \$7000. At the moment A&M is gathering information from some 30 stations, but McLennan County does not have one. See their website at <http://texaset.tamu.edu/weatherstns.php>.

The data supporting the need for these weather stations was based on the huge population growth in Texas the past 50 years, the cyclical weather patterns from the Pacific causing the extreme drought conditions and the fact that homeowners are the biggest users - and wasters

Those monthly hours reports: So important for you, So important for MCMG!

As year-end rapidly approaches, a reminder is in order. To remain in good standing as a member, you must earn at least six hours of continuing education credits and volunteer a minimum of 12 hours on authorized projects during the calendar year.

Please report your time to Julia Khoury promptly at the end of each month. If you have delayed doing so this year, please catch up before the end of December so Julia can compile the data. There is a special reporting form for this purpose.

We all owe Julia a huge debt of thanks for the record-keeping work she does. It takes a lot of time and effort to compile the data.

October 2011 Volunteer Hours

Volunteer hours	440
Education hours	69
Contacts	24,255
Media	3,320
Meetings	53
<i>(Hours below are included in Volunteer Hours)</i>	
Arboretum	237
<i>Trailside Garden</i>	13
<i>Superstar Garden</i>	2
<i>Garden Fair</i>	219
<i>Herb Garden</i>	4
Phone, misc. time - Ag office	45
Cedar Ridge Elementary	48
Woodway Elementary	6
MHMR	19
MG new class 2012	6
MG clerical	31
Habitat	11
Plant Sale	9
Hewitt Community Garden	13

Note: 26 members turned in 22,264 contacts with 219 hours; 6 members turned in 897 contacts with 48 hours at Cedar Ridge; 2 members turned in 340 contacts at Woodway Elementary with 6 hours.

- of our water supply.

Barry and Louie supported the goals of the four-hour seminar with photos and handouts of their potable and irrigation rainwater collection systems.

Minutes: November 9, 2011

The McLennan County Master Gardeners met at the Carleen Bright Arboretum to conduct the monthly meeting with Jan Serface presiding. The meeting was called to order at 12:03 p.m. Barbara Vance was graciously taking notes in Dick Belanger's delayed attendance. There was one correction in the minutes that were printed in the newsletter. Madge Beazley's last name was misspelled. President Jan gave the treasurer's report in the absence of Jo Ann Clafferty. The report is located at the bottom of the November agenda. It is noted that Barry Vokes is collecting our dues for the coming year.

The nominating committee chairperson Barbara Vance presented the slate of officers for the year 2012. Jan asked if there were any nominations from the floor. Robert Powers requested that the slate be approved by acclamation. The motion carried. Your new officers for the coming year are Sandy Back, President; Jeanette Kelly, Vice President; Brenda Golubski, Secretary; Barry Vokes, Treasurer.

MCMG has added four new members to our growing group of Master Gardeners. They are Melody High, Cindy Mabry, Sandra Scott, and Amber Wilhite. Congratulations to all and welcome aboard.

Julia Khoury updated us on the hours accumulated for the month of November. She reminded us to turn in our hours. She noted that the Children's Fair had 219 hours accounted for.

Brenda Golubski presented us with volunteer hours for the coming weeks. We have Cedar Ridge green classroom project slated November 30 from 8:30 to 3:00 p.m.. Children's day in the garden will have a work project on December 7 from 8:00 a.m. till noon.

Our December meeting will be our annual dinner Tuesday, December 6. It will be at First Baptist Church in Waco. The dinner will be catered by Big Daddy's and will cost \$12.00 per person. Reservations will be required and can be mailed to Barry Vokes. The location is printed in the agenda.

Office coordinator Ila Jean Carothers reports there are five slots available for office work by the end of the year. A sign-up sheet is being passed around for you to sign up.

Announcements:

There will be a water resource meeting at the South Waco Community Center scheduled for November 15 from 10 a.m. until noon. It's titled "Future Efficient Water Use in Waco." Shane McLellan is encouraging us to attend the meeting. Louie McDaniel and Barry Vokes are presenting the topic Rain Water Harvesting along with three other speakers.

Lori Lutz's husband is having surgery in Dallas today.

There will be a Greenhouse Management Specialist training in Huntsville slated for late November.

There was no other business on the agenda, so the meeting adjourned at 12:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Dick Belanger, Secretary

November 9, 2011 Meeting Attendance

Members: 58

Bach, Cynthia; Barnes, B.L.; Beazley, Madge; Buchanan, John; Carothers, Ila Jean; Chapman, Merle; Clark, Mark; Crawford, Susan; Cunningham, Jean; Dauphin, Irene; Davidson, Emily; Dawson, Anita; Dougherty, Kim; DuPart, Vic; FitzGerald, Eva; Fitzgerald, Melody; Folse, Norma; Ford, Kris; Geletzke, Cindy; Goaley, Pat; Golubski, Brenda; Henson, Margaret; Hering, Gene; High, Melody; Irvine, Terry; Johnson, Marilyn; Kelly, Jeanette; Kinder, Missy; Lindsey, Donna; Mabry, Cindy; McDaniel, Louie; Mersinger, Barbara; Milam, Elizabeth; Milnor, Gerry; Moore, Andrea; Moore, Linda; Peterson, Georgia; Plasek, Anne; Rich, Jennifer; Richardson, Sharon; Schaffer, Janet; Schmeltekopf, Judy Scott, Sandra; Seale, Jim; Setser, Della; Smith, Edrena; Torbett, Gale; Trice, Mary Lou; Turlington, Kathryn; Vance, Barbara; Vokes, Barry; vonRosenberg, Jo; Waldrop, Melba; Warriner, Sonia; Whitehead, Dorothy; Whitehead, M.J.; Wilhite, Amber; Wood, Carol

Intern: Newton, Kai

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

from the
cardinal's corner

We are dressed and ready for the holidays! Snaps, dianthus and pansies are planted. White lights are twinkling, the wreaths are hung, Christmas tree is up and our banners are proudly bringing the greetings of the season.

I would like to take a moment and introduce you to the small but mighty staff we have at the Carleen Bright Arboretum.

I'll start with **Dolores Canavati**. Dolores' official title is "Attendant" but she is so much more than attentive! Dolores came to us from Texas Senior Corps as a volunteer; and volunteer she does! Dolores has probably pulled more weeds and trimmed more plants as a volunteer than anyone else at the arboretum. She has volunteered three mornings a week for several years. About four years ago she began helping us out by working events and the rest is history. Dolores is now a permanent part time employee and a treasure to work with.

Bobby Sparks is our hardworking groundskeeper. He is the workhouse of our operation. Bobby does everything from planting and weeding to carrying in the groceries and putting up the Christmas Tree. (He's kind of like the Dad at the arboretum). Bobby has worked for the City of Woodway for nine years; he came to us from Prestonwood Baptist Church in Dallas.



L-R: Bobby, Dolores, Janet and Karen

Our newest staff member is **Karen Brandon**. Karen is our Event Coordinator. We hired her away from the post office much to their dismay. Karen has been an asset to the Arboretum already. She is meticulous and her hardworking "I can do it" attitude is invaluable in our small operation. We look forward to many years with Karen being with us.

I am **Janet Schaffer** and I have worked for the City of Woodway for eight years. I have met most of you and hope to get to know each and every one of you. The Master Gardeners are AWESOME! I am looking forward to another wonderful year and can't wait to meet our new interns coming in. From all of our staff –

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!



Bethel Ericson-Bruce, UGC director, and Mary Lou Trice on opening market day.

Smiles were abundant as big people, little people and dogs . . . lots of dogs . . . shared the success and fun on opening day at the new Waco Downtown Farmers Market Saturday morning, November 19.

Terry Vanderpool, president of the market board, estimated 2,000 people strolled among the vendor tents under the live oak canopy along the Brazos during the four-hour market day. Many vendors were sold out by 11 a.m. as shoppers bought eggs and free-range chickens, sampled salty pecans and local honey, and lunched on burritos and beef tacos made while you watched. Pots of fall flowers and bags of ripe pears beckoned shoppers to their stalls.

No one had bigger smiles than Mary Lou Trice and Barry Vokes who serve as liaison members from MCMG to the Heart of Texas Urban Gardening Coalition (HOTUGC), a major player in getting the market established. UGC is one of our approved work sites.

So, next Saturday morning grab your market basket and head down to the river. It's *THE* place to be!

