

The Latest Dirt

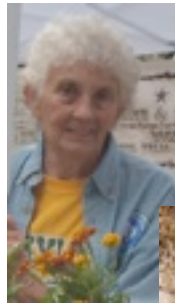
January 2012

McLennan County Master Gardener Association



Rain . . . rain . . . “But not enough,” says Shane. See page 6

December 2011



Get the most from those precious drops. See Barry’s story on Drip Irrigation with Mary Lou Trice, page 3



Add these “opps” to your Jan/Feb mobile calendar, page 5



Plan an Earth-Kind garden. See Eva’s guidelines, page 7

Three new rain gardens coming to the Arboretum. Janet gives the scoop, page 6



“Off the couch and out to the garden,” urges new pres Sandy Back, page 2



November 2011 Volunteer Hours

Volunteer hours	386
Education hours	94
Contacts	13,583
Media	39,020
Meetings	58
<i>(Hours below are included in Volunteer Hours)</i>	
Arboretum	111
<i>Trailside Garden</i>	15
<i>Superstar Garden</i>	11
<i>Garden Fair</i>	87
<i>Rose Garden</i>	4
<i>Gathering</i>	4
Phone, misc. time - Ag office	77
Cedar Ridge Elementary	48
Woodway Elementary	6
MHMR	1
MG new class 2012	1
MG clerical	52
Habitat	2
We Care Garden	9
Cedar Ridge School	64
Speakers Bureau	17*

*Note: 14 members turned in 10,550 contacts at the fair with 95 hours; 8 members turned in 1500 contacts with 64 hours at Cedar Ridge; 1 member turned in 50 contacts with 4 hours at Gathering; 2 members turned in 1200 contacts with 8 hours at the Zoo
* See Speakers Bureau report in separate article in this issue*

Please note: Hours are now due by the 25th of each month in order for Julia Khoury to compile reports for Shane McLellan.

Speaker s Bureau Report

- Nov. 10** - Jo vonRosengerg, Water Conservation to Edward Jones clients, 12.
Nov. 15 - Barry Vokes & Louie McDaniel, Rainwater Harvesting to public forum on ET Weather Conference, 100.
Nov. 17 - Jeanette Kelly, Children's Plant Activities, Garden Patch Garden Club, 12.
Nov. 22 - Ila Jean Carothers, Drought Resistant Plants, Bradley DAR Chapter, 12.
Dec. 14 - Steven Lovecky, Soils, to Crestview Elementary 3rd Grade, 90.

*from
Sandy Back
to you*



It is my sincere wish that you had a delightful Christmas season and I desire for you to have a very Happy New Year.

Each January 1, I ponder what I need to change, organize, repair or clean. That feeling can be both good and bad. It is never a bad thing to ponder on improving ourselves, but change is often not easy. As I consider taking the leadership of this wonderful organization, I am challenged with what can help us to continue to grow and affect people's lives in a positive way. Likewise, I am reminded of the old saying – "if it ain't broke, don't fix it!" Therefore, I will attempt to bring some fresh approaches, but let our success continue itself.

What made you want to become a Master Gardener when you signed up for an intern class? For me, it was a deep desire to learn more about something I truly love. I am always amazed at what I learn from others in our organization. I am going to use this space in *The Latest Dirt* to offer ideas for what we should be doing each month in our own landscapes. If you have thoughts or suggestions, please do not hesitate to share them.

One might think, yea, it's January, I can sit inside and watch my plants sleep through the winter and take a break. After the extreme heat we endured, that is a tempting thought. However, much can be accomplished in this month to put us at an advantage when spring arrives. Here are a few things we can be doing:

Plant bulbs • tend to our cool-season annual flowers • fertilize established cool-season annuals • plant blue-bonnets • cut back perennials • dream of new additions to your yard and research ideas • add organic matter to open garden areas • put new plants into your existing design • test your soil to discover deficient nutrients • mulch, mulch, mulch • pull weeds • remove plant debris which can harbor disease and insects • plant trees and transplant shrubs and trees • fertilize lightly with high-nitrogen products • plant cool-season veggies and herbs • bring in houseplants to bright location (check for insects) • provide water for birds.

Now, get off that couch and go outside. Isn't gardening wonderful? **Happy 2012!**

Sandy

Simple, economical, effective

Save water, plants with drip irrigation

Meteorologists predict that the La Niña event in the Pacific Ocean (i.e., colder than normal water temperatures) will drive our weather pattern – dry and hot – through next summer. Fortunately there are practical steps we can take in our gardens to deal with the drought – even in the midst of severe outdoor watering restrictions.

Plants need sunlight, air, nutrient-rich soil (hydroponic gardens excepted) and water. In drought-stricken areas, drip irrigation is the optimum method of delivering water to the plant roots. Drip irrigation has been around since ancient times, when clay pots filled with water were buried in the ground so moisture would gradually seep into the soil. Surprisingly, modern drip irrigation originated in Afghanistan (1866), when someone figured out how to use clay pipes simultaneously for drip irrigation and drainage. The idea is to place the right amount of water directly in the plant root zone, avoiding wasteful evaporation.

In the 1920s German farmers began using perforated pipe. Plastic piping got its start in Australia, but it was in Israel that highly efficient drip irrigation was perfected with the development of plastic emitters. Israeli farmers figured a way around the problem of blocked holes in tiny emitters by using somewhat larger and longer tubing and using velocity to slow the flow of water. As drip irrigation was gradually perfected, farmers in that parched land made the desert bloom.

In 1964 an American named Richard Chapin developed the first drip tape. The latest innovations include precise computer-controlled delivery of water to the root zone of each individual plant. This is hugely important in arid regions, for it makes possible reliable crop cultivation and eliminates a major risk of dry-land farming. Some drip systems use micro spray heads instead of emitters for crops with larger root zones. Drip irrigation is far more efficient than impact sprinklers (invented in the 1930s). As fresh water becomes more scarce, drip irrigation becomes increasingly important.

MCMG member Mary Lou Trice is an expert in small scale drip irrigation, for she has been working with drip systems since 1972. In California, where Mary Lou lived at the time, with a few exceptions only farmers were using drip irrigation. After a friend showed her how to do it,



Mary Lou made regular trips to the local farm supply store to check on new ways of setting up drip systems. Over time she learned a lot and set her own drip system up on a timer to come on while she was at work. Since then, every garden Mary Lou has grown has used drip irrigation. When she moved back to Texas, she was surprised that nobody here was using it.

Mary Lou is a Waco native whose family moved to Fredericksburg when she was in the 5th grade. She

graduated from high school there and went on to become a lab technician. Moving to California at age 19, she eventually became a computer programmer. In her spare time Mary Lou attended a local community college and then San Diego State College, graduating with a triple major in math, biology and anthropology. She continued to work in the computer field and participated in development of Global Positioning Systems technology. Later she was a (civilian) Systems Architect for the U.S. Navy. After retirement she moved back to Texas.

Mary Lou has helped install drip systems in several local community gardens. These include the Hewitt Community Garden and a recently installed garden at Rapoport Academy. While visiting the World Hunger Relief Farm in Elm Mott, she learned about the Heart of Texas Urban Gardening Coalition, and she joined. That led to several drip irrigation projects at various community gardens in the area.

Her own garden is watered using rainwater she collects from her roof with gutters and downspouts. A couple of large plastic barrels collect the rainwater and Mary Lou uses a sump pump to transfer the water to a series of barrels set up at the back of her garden. From there a gravity flow drip system using individual emitters provides each plant with the needed amount of water. Very little water is lost through evaporation, which means that a little rainwater can go a long way, even during the hot summer months. During a drought, the key is to collect the rainwater and then use it efficiently. Mary Lou's system is simple, economical and effective.

Mary Lou is delighted to answer questions and to help others install drip irrigation in their gardens. BV (*See photo on page 6; photos by Mary Lou Trice*)

Minutes: December 6, 2011

The Master Gardeners met at the Waco First Baptist Church to conduct the last meeting of the year, along with its banquet. Jan Serface will preside over her last meeting as president. Jan called the meeting to order at 6:40 p.m. and opened the meeting with greetings and a special greeting from Shane McLellan our extension agent, who wasn't able to attend.

Jan read a letter that was sent by Shane regarding the events that have transpired at the extension office since October 2010 and are forecast to happen in the next year. There may be another position that will be lost in the coming year. Shane gave Jan copies for all of us and these will be sent to all our members that aren't at this meeting. Shane values the Master Gardener program for its volunteer efforts as well as its educational contributions to McLennan County.

Steve Lovecky gave the invocation before the Master Gardeners gathered around the banquet table.

We recognized four new Master Gardeners and one that hadn't received her certificate at the October meeting. A hearty welcome goes to Patricia Whitley, Merle Chapman, Marty Lee, Patricia Goaley, and Valerie Schillaci. Marty and Patricia weren't able to attend.

Jan recognized her past officers this year for their work with our group. Jan gave gifts to Sandy Back, Dick Belanger, Irene Dauphin, and to Jo Ann Clafferty (the latter replaced Irene in July). Jo Ann wasn't able to attend for health reasons.

Jan recognized some support staff that worked behind the scenes for their work. They are Brenda Golubski, Sonia Warriner, Julia Khoury, Nelda Cooper, and Jeanette Kelly.

Jan recognized her motivators that helped her through the year, which are Ila Jean Carothers and Jo von Rosenberg.

When Jan moved to Waco and joined the Master Gardener program, the interns had to find their own projects. Her project was planning and constructing the courtyard that you passed by when you came into the church building. Jan feels that this is an appropriate place to end her presidency.

Jan turned the meeting over to Sandy Back, our incoming President, to introduce her officers for the coming year. Our officers are Jeanette Kelly –Vice President, Brenda Golubski – Secretary, and Barry Vokes - Treasurer. Brenda wasn't able to attend.

Sandy gave Jan a gift for her tireless service these last two years. The Master Gardeners gave Jan a hearty thanks.

Job well done. Our last executive meeting will be December 7 at 10:00 a.m.

Sandy and Dick Belanger led us in singing Christmas carols.

Sandy addressed the group calling on our support this coming year. She gave examples of people who have influenced her as she's gathering momentum. Sandy gave credit to all the past Presidents who have given insight one way or another.

The Brazos Knights Quartet closed the meeting by singing Barbershop music for the group.

The Meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Dick Belanger
Secretary

December 6, 2011 Meeting Attendance

Members: 47

Back, Sandy; Barnes, B.L.; Beazley, Madge; Belanger, Bonnie; Belanger, Dick; Burchfield, Linda; Carothers, Ila Jean; Chapman, Merle; Crawford, Susan; Cunningham, Jean; Dauphin, Irene; Davidson, Emily; Dawson, Anita; Dougherty, Kim; Downs, Sarah; FitzGerald, Eva; Geletzke, Cindy; Henson, Sherry; High, Melody; Irvine, Terry; Kelly, Jeanette; Kemp, Rachele; Kemp, Randy; Khoury, Julia; Kinder, Missy; Lovecky, Steven; Matthews, Sherry; McDaniel, Louie; Milam, Elizabeth; Moore, Andrea; Moore, Gary; Plasek, Anne; Powers, Robert; Prather, Sherry; Reinking, Art; Reinking, Carol; Rich, Jennifer; Richardson, Sharon; Schaffer, Janet; Schillaci, Valerie; Schmeltkopf, Judy; Serface, Jan; Setser, Della; Smith, Edrena; Vokes, Barry; vonRosenberg, Jo; Whitley, Patricia

Interns: 1

Newton, Kai

McLennan County Master Gardeners Association Officers 2012

President - Sandy Back • Vice President - Jeanette Kelly • Secretary - Brenda Golubski
Treasurer - Barry Vokes



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

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Three more new members receive certification. Jan Serface, left, welcomed Valerie Schillaci, Merle Chapman and Patricia Whitley as official members at the December Christmas meeting.

Entertainment at the December Christmas party was provided by the Brazos Knights Quartet featuring our MGMC carolers, Art Reinking, left, and Dick Belanger, right.



Plug Into These Volunteer "Opps"

- **Jan. 14 - Waco Farmer's Market**, Gardening in Small Spaces & Paper Towel Gardening with Children, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.
- **Jan. 16 - MLK Day of Service** through HOT UGC, Barry Vokes, Mary Lou Trice
- **Jan. 17 - Woodway Elementary MLK Day Celebration**, planting with 2nd grade classes, Kim Dougherty, time to be determined
- **Jan. 20 - McGregor Demonstration Garden** clean-up, 10 a.m.
- **Jan. 25 - Leaf Raking Party, Cedar Ridge School**, Sandy Back, 9 a.m.
- **Jan. 27 - Day in the Garden, Cedar Ridge**, 8:15 a.m. - 3 p.m.
- **Feb. 7, 8 - B.I.G. Conference**, Steven Lovecky, Carol Wood, Jene Hering

from the
cardinal's corner

What an exciting year 2012 will be for the Carleen Bright Arboretum. We have many things to look forward to including eco-friendly landscaping.



We are installing three rain gardens near our new Pavilion. A rain garden is a garden that takes advantage of rainfall and storm water runoff with its concave basin design. Rain gardens are not only attractive and efficient, but also help the environment by filtering contaminants from runoff and putting clean runoff water to good use, instead of “going down the drain.”

While the typical rain garden is usually dug 4 to 8 **inches** deep, ours at the Arboretum will be between 3 and 6 **feet** deep. Plants for rain gardens must be carefully selected to withstand moisture extremes and high levels of nutrients that will accumulate from runoff, such as nitrogen and phosphorous. Because of the depth of the rain gardens at the Arboretum, we will have to rely on sump pumps to remove excess water, which is also known as an “under-drain” system.

In our rain gardens we will have: American Smoketree, Dwarf Yaupon, Jerusalem Thorn, Jun-cus Mix (wetland grasses), Mexican Sycamore, Possumhaw, Desert Willow (on the top side) and Switchgrass.

Be sure to drive by and check out our progress over the next few months.



American Smoke Tree



Mexican Sycamore



Switchgrass

More rain, runoff needed to reverse damage from 2011 drought

“It will take time before we can say the drought is history” wrote Shane McLellan, McLennan County Extension Agent, in the Dec. 25 Waco Tribune-Herald. “Our deep soil moisture, which has been severely depleted during 2011, is being recharged.”

But, he said most of Central Texas is well below the official reported rainfall total. By year end 4.99 inches for December were reported in the paper and recorded on many backyard gauges. However, he said the consistent precipitation has been beneficial for the soil resulting in many fall cool season plants germinating and emerging.

He said a large runoff event is still needed to fill stock pond water and the drought remains “until we can grow and harvest local hay and field crops at normal levels of production.”

Rows of blue barrels collect water which is pumped into raised beds through PVC pipes and into drip lines. Mary Lou Trice's system in Hewitt. (Story on page 3.)



Conserve water with Earth-Kind landscape plan

Earth-Kind landscaping focuses on the conservation and protection of our natural resources by using environmentally friendly practices to create attractive, easy-to-care-for landscapes, vegetable gardens and trees. It conserves water, improves soils, reduces the use of fertilizers and pesticides and reduces yard wastes in our landfills. Earth-Kind landscapes need not be cactus and rock gardens; they can be cool, green landscapes with beautiful plants.

by Eva FitzGerald
She and her husband
Jim have developed
their own unique and
attractive water-
efficient landscape in
China Spring.

Major Earth-Kind principles include:

Planning and design: Develop a good plan and design for your landscape that fits your lifestyle. It should include efficient use of water and ease of maintenance.

Practical turf areas: Use drought tolerant grasses and minimize lawn area or have no lawn at all. Turf grass requires the highest amount of water usage and requires the most maintenance. Turf could be replaced by ground covers, more flower and shrub planting areas, mulched areas, a vegetable garden or even patios and decks.

Appropriate plant selection: Look for plants that are drought, heat and pest tolerant. Texas has a large selection of beautiful native and adaptive plants that have lower water demands, are pest tolerant and require less fertilizer. Plants should be “zoned” depending on their water usage requirements. Concentrate plants together that have like water needs.

Soil improvement: Get a soil test before adding amendments to determine the proper fertilization and nutrients to be applied to the soil. In order to increase plant health, conserve water and reduce fertilizer use; add compost to your soil when planting shrubs, flowers and vegetable gardens. A good rule to follow would be to till six inches of organic matter into landscape beds and planting areas, then add a four to six inch layer of mulch after planting is complete. **No** soil preparation is recommended for planting trees, but mulch should be added.

Efficient irrigation and rainwater catchment: Water is usually wasted by applying too much, too often. Look for signs of stress to your turf before watering, such as foot printing and dull appearance. “Indicator” plants can be planted in flower beds that will begin to wilt when water is needed, such as hi-

biscus, American beauty berry and obedient plant. You have a good moisture meter everywhere you go – your index finger! Capture rainwater; use a barrel or any container to collect high-quality water. Even if you only catch enough for potted plants, your plants will do much better using rainwater for irrigation. Runoff can sometimes be diverted toward plants. Consider designing a rain garden, a depression in the land-

scape to collect storm water runoff. Rain gardens hold water for only a few hours after most storms. Consider building a bog area. Capturing rainwater also reduces pollution of streams and lakes and provides plants with good water that nature gives to you.

Efficient use of mulches: Mulches have a high impact on conserving water by reducing moisture evaporation from the soil, reducing weeds and keeping soil temperatures moderate. Using mulch imitates nature’s way of maintaining the floor of a forest. As mulches decompose, nutrients are added to the soil and less or no fertilizers are necessary. Less fertilizer reduces the chance of contamination of soil and water supplies. Millions of dollars are spent each year to collect and dispose of yard waste which represents as much as 20 percent of trash in the landfill. However, these numbers are decreasing because of the increase in composting.

Appropriate maintenance: Following these principles will result in less difficult and time consuming maintenance.

Earth-Kind is a federally registered trademark of the AgriLife Extension Service, The Texas A&M University System. Conserving water and maintaining an adequate supply of high-quality water is a critical issue for the future prosperity of Texas. Our growing population has increased the demand for our state’s limited supply of potable water.

Online resources:

<http://earthkind.tamu.edu>

<http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu>

<http://UrbanLandscapeGuide.tamu.edu>

(Note: Eva and Sherry Matthews recently attended an Earth-Kind landscape class in Cleburne and this is one of her reports for class credit)