

The Latest Dirt

March 2012

McLennan County Master Gardener Association

With garage sale treasures and bags of concrete, Melody Fitzgerald creates her garden

full of tinkles, twinkles and smiles

“You should write about Melody Fitzgerald” – said several members.

Now I understand why, for Melody is a case study in courage, determination and unshakable faith. Her ancestors were industrious Utah Mormons. Her dad was posted to Ft. Hood during WWII and that is where he met her mom. After the war they stayed in Texas and then Melody came along. They lived in Belton. Melody married a member of her LDS church and they settled in Waco.

From early childhood Melody was fascinated by nature, and her parents encouraged this interest. Her first gardening interest was cacti. Melody devoured gardening publications and is at her happiest working in her garden with leaves stuck in her hair and dirt under her fingernails.

She is a gardening addict – and an inspiration.

You see, life hasn't been easy for Melody. She has faced – and overcome – a lot of adversity. Many of us are fortunate to avoid some of the rough spots along the way, but Melody had to confront them by necessity. She knocked the stuffing out of adversity.



In 1985 she was diagnosed with lupus erythematosus, a disease of the connective tissues. Lupus can be extremely debilitating. It's a chronic condition that produces occasional flare-ups and requires careful monitoring and self-management. There is no cure. Lupus is bad enough, but Melody also has Type II (adult onset) diabetes. The upshot is that she has a constant sore throat, virtually no energy and must force herself to get up and move around. She works through the pain with grit and determination. It's like having the flu permanently; imagine living with chronic exhaustion plus achy joints and muscles.

In the face of all that, Melody has managed to accomplish some things that others might find rather remarkable. She raised four children and then entered the workforce after 25 years as a stay at home mom. She mastered computer skills and

more through self-study, and her church put her in charge of the newsletter. That necessitated learning more skills. Melody researched web site construction and maintenance and developed an excellent website, www.CentralTexasGardening.net.

She put together what became the number one gardening website in Texas.

(Continued on page 3)

Next MG Meeting

Wednesday, March 14, 2012, 12 noon

Earth-Kind Perennials

by Eva FitzGerald & Sherry Matthews

REMEMBER: Attending a meeting does NOT count for volunteer hours. Contacts are *only* made when working on a project and you are educating the public.

What do Master Gardeners do?

Grow ... see Melody, pg. 1, 3

Educate ... see Arboretum Docent program, pg. 6,
Speakers schedule, pg. 5

Lead ... see Sandy, pg. 2

Give ... see Volunteer Opportunities, pg. 6,
Volunteer Hours, pg. 2

January 2012 Volunteer Hours

Volunteer hours	267
Education hours	28
Contacts	1316
Media	107,330
Meetings	59
<i>(Hours below are included in Volunteer Hours)</i>	
Downtown Farmers' Market	18
News prep./publishing	14
Speakers Bureau	26
Master Gardner clerical	92
New Class organization	12
McGregor Demo garden	15
Phone, misc. time - Ag office	18
Cedar Ridge Elementary	23
Woodway Elementary	14
Hewitt Elementary	1
MHMR	3
B.I.G.Conference	16
Hewitt Community garden	13
Urban Coalition	1
MG new class 2012	3
World Hunger Relief	2
Various churches	1

Activity Notes:

Marlin Garden Club, 12 contacts, 2 vol. hrs.
Four Seasons Garden Club, 41 contacts, 3 vol. hrs.
Waco Women's Federation, 30 contacts, 8 vol. hrs.
Hillsboro Garden Club, 16 contacts, 5 vol. hrs.
Shareta Ellison Girl Scouts, 8 contacts, 6 vol. hrs.
Cedar Ridge Elementary, 305 contacts, 17 vol. hrs.
Woodway Elementary, 650 contacts, 14 vol. hrs.
Downtown Farmers' Market, 225 contacts, 15 vol. hrs.

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



Spring surprise: Helebores, or Lenten rose *H.orientalis*, popped up in a raised bed under an old oak in late February in northwest Waco. Plant is for Zones 5-9.

from
Sandy Back
to you



Are your weeds as healthy as mine? As things begin to green up in our yards, the unwanted plants seem to be thriving. I am grateful for the precipitation we had in February and look forward to the arrival of spring this month. Just the other day, I was in one of our local home improvement stores and... of course... the garden center just "called my name." As I walked the aisles and viewed the fresh delivery of new plants for spring, it was all I could do to keep on walking and not buy anything. I am so eager for some color in my yard. I kept reminding myself that we could very well have another freeze and winter has not left us yet. I decided to turn my thoughts of planting to my turf and getting it in good condition for the next growing season. I have declared war on my weeds. The plan of attack is mulching, pulling, spot spraying and crossing my fingers that they will move to someone else's yard. I plan to mow off the winter dead foliage in the next week or so. It is a bit too soon to fertilize, so I will just continue on with my weed war.

The most important thing we can do as Master Gardeners is teach others. In particular, children since they will learn to carry on the skills we teach them. A group of us had the privilege of working at a school this past week harvesting the vegetables they had planted in the fall. The look on their faces was priceless as they pulled turnips and carrots out of the ground. It is a reminder that children assume fruits and vegetables simply come from the grocery store. With the rising price of gas causing produce prices to soar as well, it is more important than ever that we need to train the next generation of gardeners. It is both planting a seed physically and mentally.

Thank you for being a group of people that care about horticulture, education, sense of community, pride and encouragement of one another. I look forward to gardening with you soon. Exciting days are coming for our group!

Sandy

(from page 1)

Working in the garden is her favorite thing to do



Melody realized early on that gardening in Texas is – well – different. What works elsewhere won't necessarily work here. A general book on gardening will contain lots of otherwise good advice that is wrong for Texas gardeners, like adding lime to your soil, for example. Uh, no. Her website has lots of useful "do" and "don't" tips for Texas gardeners.

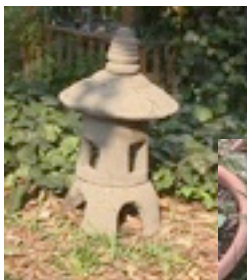
Not only did Melody enter the workforce after a 25 year career as a stay at home mom, but she started her own company, found a little niche in the field of marketing, and built a successful business. Her employees include her husband, one of her daughters and her son. They are marketing consultants who work with small Native American tribal-owned companies to foster job creation for tribe members. Husband John, a Vietnam vet, is the salesman for the family firm.

Melody and John found their current home in Woodway 18 years ago. From the moment Melody saw the

place, she started making plans for it. The previous owners kept the place neat and clean, but preferred a natural setting for their kids to play in the woods. Says Melody, "I admire the Japanese philosophy; the placement of such small details as rocks should be done in a way that leads the gardener through the garden space, discovering interesting and peaceful vistas as they go. I like to include places that are good for meditation and prayer."

The front yard is about half lawn and half garden. The back yard is on a slope and Melody created tiered garden beds. The rear of the back yard is naturally wooded and she fenced it off with a hedge of shrubs and a blue door. There is a large vegetable garden, a gazebo, several flower beds and a wildflower area. The herb bed incorporates a fairy garden, complete with tiny houses and buildings. She has a strict "no gnomes" policy, however.

Asked for garden advice, Melody offers this: "Start small and expand to the limits of your time, money and energy. Make the garden a place for your family's enjoyment, fitting form to function, as Frank Lloyd Wright would say." She was a member of the 2006 MCMG intern class. A devout Mormon, Melody embraces the LDS philosophy of provident living and being prepared for the unexpected. Gardening is in harmony with this philosophy. (BV)



A "Fairy Garden" (above) of found treasures nestles among herbs.

A yaupon hedge (top) surrounds a sundial placed among rocks, real and homemade, in the front garden. The circle of bricks are engraved with scripture verses.

Melody made the concrete Japanese lantern (left) and directions are on her website.

Clusters of sparkling orbs (left) were once glass globes from light fixtures.

Minutes: February 8, 2012

President Sandy Back called the meeting to order at the Carleen Bright Arboretum, Whitehall Center, in Woodway, TX at 12:05 p.m.

Eva FitzGerald was recognized and thanked by President Back and the membership for the beautiful 2012 Handbook. The book was the culmination of many hours of research and preparation and is a job well done.

President Back welcomed all attendees to the meeting. She announced the January 2012 minutes were published in *The Latest Dirt* and stated they would be stand approved as printed. No additions or corrections were made to the minutes.

The B.I.G. Conference report was given. Doug Quicksall thanked everyone who volunteered at the conference. A show of hands indicated many members attended the education sessions. No action was taken.

Barbara Vance and Jennifer Rich reviewed volunteer opportunities which were printed on the back of the agenda. Mulching will begin in the superstar bed. Jennifer noted that the projects listed on page 9 of the handbook are those supported by McLennan County Master Gardeners as an organization and most of the volunteer hours are spent in support of these. Education is the main focus of all Master Gardener volunteer work.

President Back noted the Benevolence Fund collection is voluntary and will be used as needs arise to express our sympathy or other heartfelt emotions to members of the organization. The latest expression is the purchase of a gardening book for the MCMG library in remembrance of Jo vonRosenberg's mother-in-law, Edna vonRosenberg.

The TSTC scholarship Fund was reviewed by Ila Jean Carothers. A textbooks account is established to purchase books required in the horticulture classes. This year the executive committee allocated \$500 to add to the fund balance. Teri Earhart of TSTC, balance and scholarship coordinator, reported to Ila Jean that 6 recipients have received the scholarships in the last 2 years. Ila Jean announced she had brought some Larkspur seedlings to sale to members and the funds would go into the plant sale revenue.

Carol Reinking, office staff volunteer coordinator, announced the sign-up sheet for March was being circulated throughout the assembly.

Barbara Mersinger and Penny Gifford presented the report for the upcoming plant sale and Farmers Market. Barbara stated it is time to plant seeds, divide plants or dig up plants from the garden in order to be ready for the sale on May 19. She noted that Louie McDaniel has recycled pots which can be used, if needed, for the plantings. Penny Gifford reported that on Feb. 11 Elizabeth Milam and Carol Wood will present 2 20 minute seminars on rose pruning and preparation for gardens for the market shoppers. Mary Lou Trice will present on March 10. The May 5 market conflicts with the Texas Master Gar-

dener conference. Penny noted we might consider monthly presentations about seasonally relevant issues.

Page 11 of the 2012 MCMG Handbook, Guidelines for Reporting Volunteer Hours and Recording Contacts was read by the membership under the guidance of the president.

Guideline #1 was read by Sherry Matthews. No action was taken.

Guideline #2 was read by Madge Beazley. No action was taken.

Guideline #3 was read by Sonia Warriner. No action was taken.

Guideline #4 was read by B.L. Barnes. No action was taken.

Guideline #5 was read by Dorothy Whitehead. Much discussion was heard about the allowance of travel time to an educational seminar. A motion was made by Della Setser and seconded by Linda Burchfield that the time in the seminar will count as education hours and travel time to and from the seminar will count as volunteer hours. When asked by President Back for a show of hands in favor of the motion, a majority of those present voted as in favor. The motion passed. The Guidelines will reflect the change.

Guideline #6 was read by James Prause. No action was taken.

Guideline #7 was read by Jo vonRosenberg. No action was taken.

Guideline #8 was read by Kris Ford. Julia Khoury commented that Arboretum hours are recorded into specific areas and hours should be reported by the actual activity performed such as the work done in specific areas: an example is mulching in the superstar bed. Children also need to be counted. No action was taken.

Guideline #9 was read by Sandy Back. No action was taken.

Guideline #10 was read by Jim Seale. No action was taken.

The study session then moved on to Recording Contacts, page 11.

#1 was read by Norma Folsie. Membership discussion clarified that the contacts must be public contacts. Fellow master gardeners do not count as contacts.

#2 was read by Pat Goaley. No clarification followed.

#3 was read by Barbara Vance. Once again, contacts must not be fellow participants who are MCMG members.

#4 was read by Steve Lovecky. A clarification was made that writing for *The Latest Dirt* does not count as contacts since as in #1 "contacts must be public contacts. Fellow master gardeners do not count as contacts," and in #3, "contacts must not be fellow participants who are MCMG members."

#5 was read by B.L. Barnes. An illustration of recording contacts in these areas was given by Ila Jean Carothers who gave the example that if Doug Welch was the speaker, the introduction by the MGer would be counted as volunteer time, the time listening to the presentation would be education time.

Continued on pg. 5

February 8 minutes (from pg. 4)

Barbara Vance offered some background information on why counting hours is so important to our organization. She stated that knowing our hours and our contacts has profound effects on the future of the program. In the last 2 years extension budgets have been cut and the more we do in our organization and our documentation helps the extension office to maintain services. It was noted by a member that possibly large numbers of hours could have an inverse effect; i.e., if we have too much it might be interpreted that we don't need the maintenance or improvement of our office. Another member recognized that could be read that way, however, the numbers we turn in goes to the legislature and that justifies what we're doing. The legislature sees public contact as an important function and it is influential in their decision making.

Louie McDaniel said he had pots in his truck for members to take to help in their harvesting for the plant sale.

President Sandy Back announced that Steven Chamblee will present from 12-3 on April 11. The regular meeting will start at 11 a.m. Madge Beazley asked if snacks would be needed. She was told yes.

Sherry Matthews began the preliminary search for mentors for members of the 2012 class. She is looking for people who are willing to be involved with their intern and maintain contact on a weekly basis. The mentor will help provide a quality program and assist the intern with the completion of their requirements for certification. Julia Khoury asked members to keep track and report their volunteer hours as a mentor.

Amber Wilhite discussed the Facebook page. Members can log into Facebook, go to the top search box and input mclennan county master gardeners. Under more results, click on the little blue circle to get the master gardener page. In the top right corner on the thumbs up button-click-will get notified>events-click join. That will register that you are coming to do that volunteer activity. Barbara Vance noted that will count as a contact. Janet Schaffer asked if it was ok to put this info in the Arboretum newsletter and was told ok.

Julia Khoury asked if this meeting will count as 1 education hour. President Back affirmed it will count as 1 hour of education. The next meeting will feature Earthkind perennials presented by Sherry Matthews and Eva FitzGerald. The meeting adjourned at 1:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Brenda Golubski, Secretary

Member changes

Guest/member:

Candace Moore
3124 Maple Ave.
Waco, TX 76707 720-233-3081 cedarstudio@mac.com

Active member:

James Prause
207 HCR 2418
Hillsboro, TX 76645 254-707-0433 sfcprause@hotmail.com

New email:

Linda Burchfield burch73field@gmail.com

New address:

Zach Elwell
PO Box 187
Valley Mills, TX 76689 254-313-8805 zacharyel2@yahoo.com

Speaker s Bureau Report

February 9 - Jeanette Kelly spoke on *Water Conservation* to the Garden Forum Garden Club; 17 contacts.

February 13 - Eva FitzGerald & Sherry Matthews presented *Earth-Kind Perennials* to the Hillsboro Garden Club; 15 contacts.

February 15 - Barry Vokes presented *Gardening in Small Spaces* to the Mexia Garden Club; 17 contacts.

February 16 - Eva FitzGerald & Sherry Matthews presented *Earth-Kind Perennials* to the Morning Glory Garden Club in Lorena; 16 contacts.

February 16 - Steven Lovecky spoke to the Hubbard Garden Club about *Cactus & Succulents*; 12 contacts.

March 6 - Barry Vokes will do *Gardening in Small Spaces* for the Steel Magnolia Garden Club in Lorena.

March 21 - Jo vonRosenberg will speak to the Mary Milam Garden Club in Waco.

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@hot.rr.com
Our web site: www.mclennanmastergardeners.org

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

Docent? What is a docent?

According to the Encarta Dictionary it is a tourist guide that works in museums or cathedrals. Well, the arboretum is not a museum and it is certainly not a cathedral, but we are looking for tourist guides. Our docents will enhance the experiences of Carleen Bright Arboretum visitors by providing educational tours to adults, families and school groups.

Brenda Golubski was instrumental in developing the docent program for the Carleen Bright Arboretum. She researched the history, walked the gardens, studied the plants and trained people on how to be docents. Brenda did a wonderful job in setting up the program; now I am going to attempt to step in where she left off.

One of the visions of the arboretum is to teach diverse audiences about home gardening, plants, and the environment through programming, events and facilities.

I would like to have three different types of docent programs. The first, a guide for adults: this guide would be able to answer basic questions about plants and gardens, and would be available give tours to garden clubs. Ideally, the tours would begin outside, walking the gardens, then move inside for a lunch or refreshments. Then we could follow with a Power Point presentation on one of several topics such as propagation, roses, herbs, fire-wise gardening, rainwater harvesting, native and adaptive plants, etc.

The second type of program would have the same type of format, but be open to the public. We would advertise in Woodway Today and have educational tours and workshops. The docent for these programs would need to be



Docent Barbara Vance, center, guides visitors along the Trailside garden path at "Evening in the Garden" last May.

able to talk about the plants and present an educational topic.

The third program would be for children, mainly field trips. These would also start by having a tour in the gardens and possibly the nature trail, then moving inside (or to the gazebo) with the children for refreshments or lunch. We would have a project such as making bluebonnet cards, grow babies, planting a bean, etc. The trip would end with a story such as The Legend of the Bluebonnet or The Legend of the Indian Paintbrush.

These are my goals for 2012. I need lots of outgoing, interested guides who enjoy working with people to be docents. You have the education, now let's share it!

This is a great way to get your volunteer hours. Please contact Janet or Karen at the Arboretum, 254-399-9204.

*by Janet Schaffer
Director of Arboretum,
Tourism & Recreational Services*

Library Notes:

Several books in our library at the MG office have been memorial donations. These include: *"The Vegetable Book: A Texas Guide to Gardening"* by Sam Cotner; *"Howard Garrett's Texas Trees"* and *"Heirloom Gardening in the South"* by William Welsh and Greg Grant (in memory of Judy Tye).

"How to Grow Native Plants of Texas and the Southwest" by Jill Nokes (in memory of Jo vonRosenberg's mother).

Three books have been donated by Julia Khoury in memory of her brother-in-law Cecil Davidson (titles to be announced).

Lynn DeMuyneck, library chairman, will record the donation in each book with a memory label. People making donations should notify Lynn with the name of the donor and the name of the memorial recipient.

Plug Into These Volunteer "Opps"

Date	Activity	Contact
Mar. 10	Waco Farmers; Market 8-8:30 a.m. set up; 1 p.m. depart	Penny Gifford
Mar. 16	Superstar Bed , trimming, clean-up 9 a.m.	Missy Kinder
Mar. 23	Woodway Elem. Spring Planting Time TBA	Kim Dougherty
Mar. 27	Trailside Gardens work day 9 a.m.	Emily Davidson
Mar. 28	Cedar Ridge workday 9 a.m.	Sandy Back
Mar. 30	Cedar Ridge "Day in the Garden" 8:15 a.m. - 3 p.m.	Sandy Back
Apr. 20	Woodway Elem. K & 1st gardening Time TBA	Kim Dougherty
Apr. 21	Earth Day/Beasts & Blooms at Zoo	Jeanette Kelly
Apr. 29	Gardeners' Gathering at Arboretum	Sharon Romano

March Office Schedule 1 - 4 p.m.

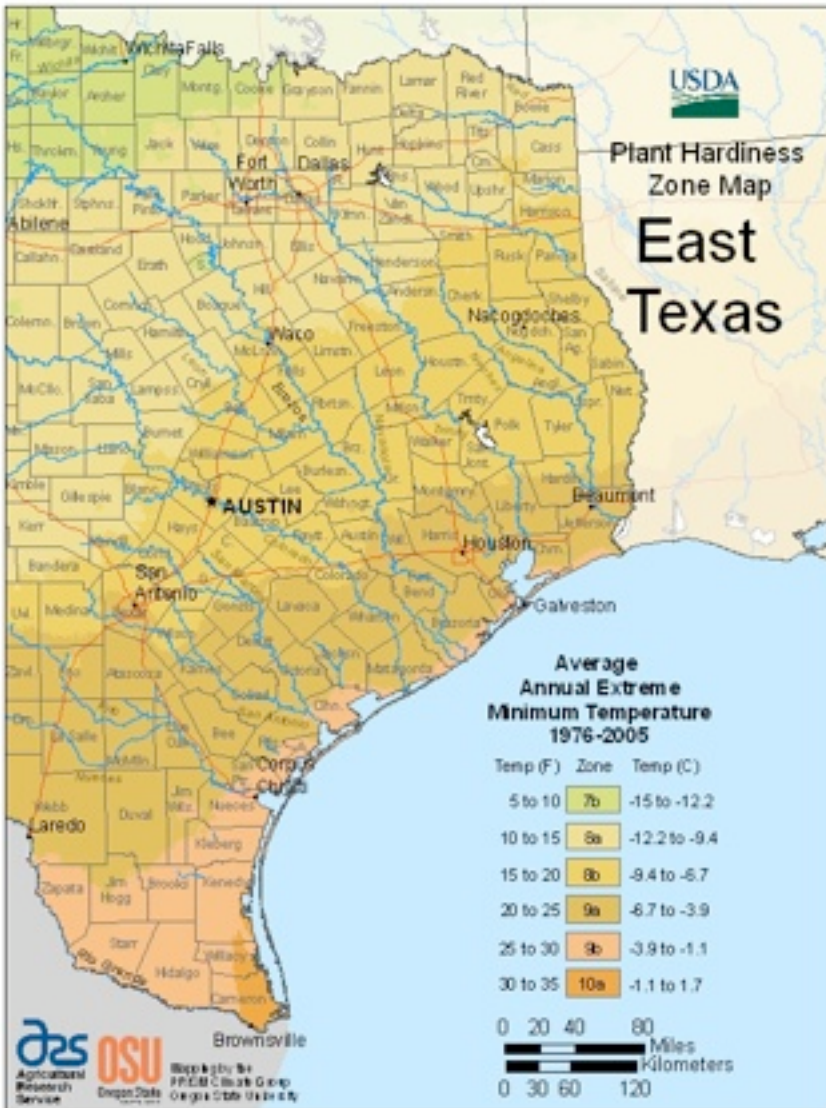
- Mar. 1: Linda Moore, Steven Goldman
- Mar. 6: Kathy Turlington, Kris Ford
- Mar. 8: Judy Schmeltekopf, Sharon Richardson
- Mar. 13: Amber Wilhite; Emily Davidson
- Mar. 15: Missy Kinder, Irene Dauphin
- Mar. 20: Robert Powers, Sharon Romano
- Mar. 22: Louie McDaniel, Sherry Matthews
- Mar. 27: Pat Goaley
- Mar. 29: Jo vonRosenberg, Jan Serface

Contact Carol Reinking: sscarol.24@gmail.com
399-0927

February 8, 2012 Meeting Attendance

Members: 63

Back, Sandy; Barnes, B.L.; Beazley, Madge; Belanger, Bonnie
Belanger, Dick; Bonner, Grady; Buchanan, John; Buckner,
Linda; Burchfield, Linda; Carothers, Ila Jean; Cunningham,
Jean; Dauphin, Irene; Davidson, Emily; Dawson, Anita; De-
Muynck, Lynn; DuPart, Victor; Elwell, Zach; Evans, Richard;
FitzGerald, Eva; Folse, Norma; Ford, Kris; Foulks, Xan; Ge-
letzke, Cindy; Gifford, Penny; Goaley, Pat; Goubski, Brenda;
Henson, Margaret; High, Melody; Irvine, Terry; Kelly, Jeanette;
Khoury, Julia; Kinder, Missy; Lindsey, Donna; Lovecky, Ste-
ven; Matthews, Sherry; McDaniel, Louie; Mersinger, Barbara;
Milam, Elizabeth; Milnor, Gerry; Moore Andrea; Peterson,
Georgia; Powers, Robert; Prause, James; Quicksall, Doug; Re-
inking, Art; Reinking, Carol; Rich, Jennifer; Richardson,
Sharon; Romano, Sharon; Schaffer, Janet; Schmeltekopf, Judy;
Seale, James; Serface, Jan; Setser, Della; Trice, Mary Lou; Tur-
lington, Kathryn; Vance, Barbara; Vokes, Barry; vonRosenberg,
Jo; Warriner, Sonia; Whitehead, Dorothy; Whitehead, M.J.;
Wilhite, Amber; **Guest:** Moore, Candace



The 2010 Plant Hardiness Zone Map, by the USDA Agricultural Research Service, is available online, but not in print.

The web address: <http://www.planthardiness.ars.usda.gov> will ask you to select your state or zip. McLennan County falls into two zones, 8a in the northern and western part, and 8b in most of the county. This zone gives average winter temperatures of 15 to 20 degrees.

This is based on the average annual minimum winter temperature, divided into 10 degrees Fahrenheit zones.

The Plant Hardiness Zone Map is the standard by which gardeners and growers can determine which plants are most likely to thrive.

Too much? Too little? Go online to find out if it's time to water.

We received an email about this new tool and the information was in the 2/23/12 edition of the *Waco Tribune Herald*, but we think it's timely to repeat the news about the new "evapotranspiration tower" recently installed at Cottonwood Creek Golf Course. It measures rainfall, humidity, solar radiation and wind. Using a tool developed by Texas AgriLife Extension Service, you can calculate whether to water and how much for your lawn with your type of grass.

The site is <http://texaset.tamu.edu> and it will indicate if you are over watering in a given week depending on your system. Area officials believe most homeowners use more than is needed. The measurement device should save water and money.

As good stewards of this precious resource, it will be interesting to see how we are doing. And, no more cat food cans scattered about. Well, maybe if you don't know how much your sprinklers shoot out.