

The Latest Dirt

April 2012

McLennan County Master Gardener Association

She grows food for charity - not for the kitchen

Mention the term “plant propagation” and chances are you’ll associate that term with Ila Jean Carothers, for she has taught many of us the basics of plant cloning. It’s an art requiring practice to perfect.

Ila Jean is a West Texas girl, born in San Angelo and raised in Eldorado, where she completed high school. From there she worked her way through Abilene Christian College, majoring in English and graduating with a teaching certificate that she never used.



Onions (background), chard and tomatoes (wearing their protective wraps) – all destined for the Caritas food bank.



An expert at propagation, Ila Jean and Scarlett show off the greenhouse filled with mothers and babies who wouldn't dream of not growing.

In Abilene she met future husband Jon Carothers, a student across town at Hardin Simmons University, and they graduated the same day. Ila Jean and Jon celebrated their 50th anniversary last year.

Ila Jean thinks she probably picked up her interest in gardening from her maternal grandmother. That interest blossomed when she joined a garden club in the 1970's and later became an accredited master flower show judge.

The couple moved to Waco in 1964 and in 1977 built a new house on a small lot. Room for gardening was limited so they began searching. Eventually they bought land and built their house on Old Crawford Road in 1985, where Ila Jean has the space she needs for her extensive gardens.

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Next MG Meeting
Wednesday, April 11, 2012, 11:00 a.m.
Melba Waldrop & John Alexander
on Habitat for Humanity
Steven Chamblee on
“Garden Harmony 101”
noon - 1:30 p.m.
Chief horticulturist at
Chandor Gardens, Weatherford

What do Master Gardeners do?

Grow ... see Ila Jean, pages 1, 3

Educate ... see Woodway Pickle Garden, page 5

Lead ... see Sandy, page 2

Give ... see Volunteer Opportunities, page 7,
Volunteer Hours, page 2

Learn ... see Crepe Myrtle fungus, page 4

February 2012 Volunteer Hours

Volunteer hours	484
Education hours	130
Contacts	9489
Media	97,700
Meetings	64
<i>(Hours below are included in Volunteer Hours)</i>	
Arboretum	16
<i>Trailside Garden</i>	13
<i>Rose Garden</i>	1
<i>Herb Garden</i>	2
Downtown Farmers' Market	17
News prep./publishing	22
Speakers Bureau	28
Master Gardener clerical	79
New Class organization	12
McGregor Demo garden	15
Phone, misc. time - Ag office	54
Cedar Ridge Elementary	99
Woodway Elementary	2
Hewitt Elementary	2
MHMR	5
B.I.G. Conference	129
Hewitt Community garden	2
Urban Coalition	2
MG new class 2012	14
Various churches	2

Activity Notes: Additional sites included Region 12 Leaf Project, Tension Jr. High, Brookhaven School and Hills of Childress Creek Association.

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



*from
Sandy Back
to you*

What could possibly be more profoundly beautiful than springtime in Texas after the blessing of rains we have had? Driving down the road today it was all I could do to keep

my eyes on the traffic as I passed a field of bluebonnets, Indian paintbrush and soft yellow flowers. After the intense heat we had last summer, I had my doubts about many of the trees and shrubs getting new growth this spring. What a joy to see new leaves forming and the buds growing on roses! It just reminds me that there are some things we humans have no control over and grateful that someone much bigger than any of us is in perfect control.

This is such a busy time of the year for gardeners. I continue to fight the war on weeds and think I see them waving a very tiny white flag in surrender! I am not quite so "blonde" as to ever think I will totally rid the world of weeds, however, here are a few things that each of us can do to manage them a bit better. Providing our desirable plants with the best possible soil will give them a much better chance to get stronger and give less space for weeds to grow.

It is important to be careful about the soil that we bring into our gardens. Our worst enemy, nut sedge, comes right along with poor quality topsoil. This may sound hard to believe, but I actually like to mow. I get my best thinking done behind a mower. The more often turf is mowed, the thicker the grass will grow. Thicker grass means fewer weeds. I have a neighbor who is on his hands and knees every evening pulling weeds for several hours. I do believe he must have a strong back and knees, but I must say I don't see any uninvited plants in his yard!

Putting down several layers of newspaper is a strategy we have learned well in our previous classes. It is one of the very best ways to keep weeds out of the shrub bed. An entire article could be written on the value of mulch. The benefits of three inches of mulch not only keep control of weeds, but as we all know, help to conserve moisture and add nutrients to the soil as it breaks down. Last, but not least, herbicides are very helpful in ridding unwanted "guests" in our yards.

In closing, the most important thing we can do as gardeners is to get out and enjoy. Digging, pulling, planting, watering, spraying and pruning is the best and cheapest form of fun I can think of. What other activity brings so much joy and reward?

Sandy



She divides, propagates for our annual plant sale

(From page 1)

It's just under 13 acres of "no soil; lots of rock" as she puts it. So what do you do with that? You build raised garden beds, of course.

Right now lettuce, spinach, Swiss chard, tomatoes (protected by garden cloth), and lots of onions are growing. Additional tomato seeds are germinating in 4 inch pots, ready for transplanting after the freeze danger ends around Easter Sunday. Ila Jean grows plants from seeds when she can, for she loves the challenge. It's probably fair to say that plants wouldn't dare to cross Ila Jean. More than 95 percent of the produce in her garden is donated to the Caritas food bank.

Jon and Ila Jean retired in 1996. She worked 20 years for Central Texas Iron Works, 1-1/2 years for Waco Construction and then seven years for D&E Builder's Supply. While at Waco Construction she had the privilege of writing the million dollar check for the gold dome on Baylor's Ferrell Center.

Ila Jean was a member of the 1996 training class that was the beginning of McLennan County Master Gardeners. She is certified in plant propagation and in vegetables, having attended the specialist training in both. In addition, Ila Jean is active in the Texas Master Gardener Association (TMGA) and has attended eight state annual conferences. A few years ago, at the Kerrville state conference, she was awarded a plaque as Master Gardener of the Year, 2nd Place in Small Groups. She is a member of the TMGA Outreach Committee and a regular delegate to the TMGA board meetings. She is well known at the state level by Texas Master Gardeners.



Bouganvillea splashes color all over the greenhouse while a Malabar spinach lives in a pot and shows off its blossoms – fit for a bouquet or lunch.

A visitor to the home of Jon and Ila Jean is struck by the natural feel of the place. The gardens are in harmony with the landscape. As you might expect, there are a couple of greenhouses, a potting and tool shed, compost bin – and evidence that much love and care has been put into the gardens. It's a pretty place that leaves a visitor with a relaxed feeling.

Jon and Ila Jean have a problem though, and it's feral hogs. This is a serious issue for many country folk in McLennan County. Feral hogs reproduce rapidly, root up pastures and cause much damage wherever they go. They are a scourge, and it's difficult to get rid of them once they move in – and they are here in McLennan County to stay.

Fortunately, Ila Jean's vegetable garden is fenced. Although the fence is not very high, it is sturdy and so far the hogs have not managed to break in and wreak havoc on the plants. Next door neighbor Carol Wood is also dealing with feral hogs. A hunter friend killed the sow and Carol's husband shot another, but other hogs remain. The destruction is evident and widespread.

Asked about her vision for MCMG, Ila Jean waxes eloquent: "We are so grateful finally to have an office in which to store things and work. Callers with questions have been supportive and seem appreciative that we offer the service." She feels we should offer lectures and workshops to the public on a regular basis. We also need a readily accessible, high-traffic demonstration area for ornamentals, vegetables and plant trials. A larger plant sale area where there is room for educational programs during the sale would be wonderful. (BV)



Mildew fungus loves new growth on crepe myrtles

Crepe Myrtles are enjoyed for their deep green foliage and bright colored showy flower sprays from early summer and into fall. They have good fall color (orange, red and yellow) if powdery mildew is kept under control. They are deciduous and their attractive slick bark is a real asset during winter.

In the spring and fall months, some leaves appear to turn a grayish white. This is powdery mildew, which is a fungus. The fungus grows in thin layers on the surface of the leaves, shoots, buds and flowers.

The powdery mildew fungus can survive the winter on leaves or plant debris, and will produce spores in the spring that re-infect the crepe myrtles. Powdery mildew grows best on young, actively growing plant tissue. Older leaves are less likely to be infected, but can become infected under certain conditions. This disease has a powder-like appearance on the infected surface. Infected shoots may dry and shrivel up and affected buds will drop off. Badly infected leaves may grow abnormally (curl and twist). Severe infestation may also cause premature defoliation.

Powdery mildew spores are spread by the wind. With favorable conditions, infestation may occur in as few as 3 to 5 days after the spores land on crepe myrtles. Warm days and cool nights are favorable for the growth and spread of powdery mildew. It may become less of a threat when leaf temperature is above 90°F.

The best management method is prevention. Use resistant varieties, plant them in full sun, avoid excess fertilizer and remove affected leaves in the fall. Encourage good air circulation through good pruning (removing crossing limbs and limbs that grow toward the middle of the plant). Crepe myrtles with good to excellent resistance to powdery mildew include Tonto, Muskogee, Acoma, Souix, Tuskegee and others.

There are numerous fungicides that are available to control powdery mildew. Natural fungicides such as Neem oil and Potassium bicarbonate have been shown to be effective when used correctly. Fungicides are not needed at the hottest time of the year, because the powdery mildew fungus is inactive and the fungicides may cause damage to plants.

By Eva Fitzgerald



Ode To The Squash Bug

by Dr. Tess Grasswitz

'Neath the smiling summer moon,
The pumpkins sweetly bloom.
But as the farmer lies there sleeping,
Those squash bugs, they come creeping,
And gather in the gloom.

In tandem they do climb,
Up every leaf and every vine.
Sweet juices they do seek,
With piercing needle-beak.

And though their wounds are slight,
Those plants, they know their plight ...
For what triggers their hysteria
Is the squash bug's pet bacteria,
Which turns leaves once green and mighty
Into something quite unsightly.

But as their host plants droop and die,
The squash bugs softly sigh,
... And their hungry offspring cry.
For they, too, have their needs,
And many a saddened squash bug pleads:
'Brothers! Kill not the plant that feeds.'



Poem from the New Mexico Organic Gardening Conference. Submitted by Barbara Vance.

Woodway Elementary School had a Garden Day March 23 and it was amazing to see Kim Dougherty and the children at work and play.

The younger children planted a "pickle garden" - cucumbers and dill - and other gardens with zucchini and basil.

The older children looked for potato blossoms in the garden they planted in January.

The teachers will make breakfast burritos after the children harvest their crops.

They also had a lesson about fiber in the diet, spacing plants properly, plant parts - stems, tubers, leaves, nodes and roots.

This garden also has a fig tree, a productive grape vine and a 3 ft. parsley plant right now.

Do you know how much fiber you need in your daily diet? Ask the WWE students and they will tell you. Really!

- Jeanette Kelly



Planting a "pickle garden" at Woodway Elementary School in March.

Plug Into These Volunteer "Opps"

Volunteer Opportunities
April - May



Date	Activity	Contact
April 19	Cedar Ridge work day 9:00 a.m.	Sandy Back
April 20	Cedar Ridge "Day in the Garden" 8:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.	Sandy Back
April 20	Woodway Elem. K & 1st gardening 8:30 a.m. - 2:15 p.m.	Kim Dougherty
April. 21	Earth Day/Beast & Blooms at Zoo 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.	Jeanette Kelly
April 29	Gardeners' Gathering at Arboretum 1:00 - 4:00 p.m.	Sharon Romano
May 5	Waco Farmer's Market 8-8:30 a.m. set up; 1:00 p.m. depart	Penny Gifford
May 12	Bugfest at Waco Wetlands 9:00 a.m. - noon	Jeanette Kelly
May 19	McMG Plant Sale Plant delivery 7:30 a.m.	B. Mersinger/P. Gifford
May 25	Woodway Elem. k-1st Harvest Time TBA	Kim Dougherty

Minutes: March 14, 2012

President Sandy Back called the meeting to order at the Carleen Bright Arboretum, Whitehall Center, in Woodway, TX at 12:02 p.m. President Back welcomed all attendees to the meeting. She announced the February 2012 minutes were published in *The Latest Dirt* and stated they would be stand approved as printed. The Budget and Benevolence Fund report was given as a handout previous to the meeting.

Kathryn Turlington gave a report on the status of the 2012 intern class. The committee will meet again at 10 a.m. prior to the regular meeting on April 11. The class will be restricted to 30 interns. Sherry Matthews, organizer of the mentor program, reviewed the objectives of mentors. Robert Powers has developed an information sheet for mentors with guidelines and a sign up for mentors which will be distributed at the April meeting. Training for mentors will take place in May.

Volunteer Opportunities for March and April was printed on the back side of the agenda. President Sandy Back asked members to change the April 4 date to April 3 at Cedar Ridge. Barbara Vance who informed the membership that they logged 484 volunteer hours, 29.5 education hours and 9,489 contacts for the month of February. Carol Wood media contacts reached a possible 97,987 people with her column.

Ila Jean Carothers announced MCMG received a thank you from the Texas State Technical College Scholarship Fund for the \$500 donation. Ila Jean indicated Carol Wood would like help writing articles for the gardening section of the local paper. Also, ask.mastergardeners@gmail.com needs someone to monitor it on a regular basis and respond. Linda Buckner volunteered to do so.

Barry Vokes presented a clarification of the hour's motion on page 11 of the handbook. For example, if someone drives to San Antonio for training, the actual hours in class should be reported as education hours. The travel time to and from the training can be reported as volunteer hours which equal the time spent in class or equals the actual drive time if it exceeds the class time.

Barry is making available to members a form to present for purchases which will exclude state sales tax amounts from the final tally.

President Back outlined the April 11 meeting noting it will begin at 11 a.m. instead of noon. Melba Waldrop and John Alexander, the director of Habitat for Humanity, will speak about the goals of the organization. At noon Steven Chamblee will present 1 ½ hour talk on Garden Harmony 101. This meeting is not open to the public.

Lynn DeMuyneck announced books were recently added on behalf or in memory of Andrea Moore, Judy Tye, Cecil Davidson, Edna von Rosenberg and Ken Mueller. Lynn has set April 12 as a workday at the library.

Announcements: Sonia Warriner announced a 4 session herb class at MCC for \$59, Mar. 22-Apr. 12.

James Bays and Melody Fitzgerald thanked the membership for the cards and emails.

Julia Khoury won the drawing for the Shamrock plant. The meeting adjourned at 12:39 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Brenda Golubski, Secretary

March 14, 2012, Meeting Attendance Members: 62

Sandy Back, BL. Barnes, James Bays, Bonnie Belanger, Dick Belanger, John Buchanan, Linda Buckner, Linda Burchfield, Ila Jean carfother, Merle Chapman, JoAnn Clafferty, Nelda Cooper, Susan Crawford, Irene Dauphin, Lynn Demuyneck, Eva Fitzgerald, Melody Fitzgerald, Norma Folse, Kris Ford, Xan Foulks, Pat Goaley, Steven Goldman, Brenda Golubski, Judy Hah, Margaret Henson, Sherry Henson, Jene Hering, Jane Herndon, Rachele Kemp, Randy Kemp, Julia Khoury, Missy Kinder, Donna Lindsey, Steven Lovecky, Cindy Mabry, Sherry Matthews, Louie McDaniel, Barbara Mersinger, Elizabeth Milam, Andrea Moore, Candace Moore, Linda Moore, Ernie Petru, Robert Powers, Sherry Prather, James Prause, Art Reinking, Carol Reinking, Jennifer Rich, Janet Schaffer, Sandra Scott, James, Jr., Jan Serface, Della Setzer, Mary Lou Trice, Kathryn Turlington, Barbara Vance, Barry Vokes, Melba Waldrop, Sonia Warriner, Dorothy Whitehead, M.J. Whitehead.

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

The Carleen Bright Arboretum is very excited to be working with Rachel Kemp (MG Class of '96) and her wonderful students at TSTC. Rachel's landscape design class is designing the bed right next to the handicap ramp in front of Whitehall where we removed the dead wax myrtles.

Each student designed a bed and then gave presentations to me out at TSTC. I then brought the presentation boards back to the Carleen Bright Arboretum where I received input from Karen & Bobby.

Each student brought their own perspective to the project. One student looked at the front of the bed as if he was coming off the trail and he was standing on the grass. Another student was talking about the comfortable feel of the arboretum, what the background looked like and what the fragrances were when she was standing in the bed. Yet another

student talked about dark areas in the bed itself and what could be done to bring color to that area.

The design we chose was designed by a retired teacher, Taddie Kelly, who is interested in creating enthusiasm in children about gardening. She chose plants for butterflies, both nectar and host plants. One of the plants she chose is Imperial Blue Plumbago, the host plant for Cassius Blue Butterflies. Taddie also included a whimsical bunny bird bath for a shallow water source.

The students will be planting the bed within the next week. Be sure to take a peek. We would like to give a special thanks to Rachel and her students.

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

TSTC landscape designers submit ideas for a new garden next to Whitehall Center



Speaker s Bureau Report

March 6 - Barry Vokes talked about *Gardening in Small Spaces* for the Steel Magnolia Garden Club in Lorena. 18 present.

March 8 - Ila Jean Carothers spoke to the Lake Whitney Garden Club on *Some Like It HOT (drought tolerant plants)*. 16 present.

March 8 - Barbara Vance talked to the Waco Study Club on *Landscape Lessons for Waco's Wacky Weather*. 40 present.

April 18 - Jo vonRosenberg will do a presentation for the Mary Milam Garden Club in Waco.