

The Latest Dirt

July 2012

McLennan County Master Gardener Association

Barry starts demo plot of "hill culture"

A pile of wood, some dirt, a couple years and . . . hugelkultur!

Last month I wrote about bio-char, also known as terra preta or black earth. This summer I plan to make some bio-char, mix it with compost and experiment with it in my vegetable beds. Two other gardening concepts – hugelkultur and keyhole gardens – have captured my imagination. Hugelkultur is a German term meaning hill culture. I'm constructing a hugelkultur demo plot and will keep records on how it performs. When that is completed I will build a keyhole garden demonstration plot. Louie McDaniel and I will show these to the 2012 Intern Class during a September field trip, along with a rainwater harvesting demo.

The hugelkultur concept is simple, though there are variations. You tightly stack partly rotted wood atop your chosen site, which should be no more than five feet wide and as long as you want. The pile should initially be about two meters in height (about 6-1/2 feet), but it will subside within a year or two.



Then you cut some unwanted sod from a grassy patch and stack it upside down on top of your pile, until the wood is completely covered. Then, cover it all with topsoil and plant. If you want you can line the sides and ends with logs, cinder blocks or whatever you choose.

Don't make the sides too steep because you'll be planting on the sides as well as the top of the plot. One of the nice things about a hugelkultur bed is the ease of planting and cultivating. Much of that can be done at eye level. You also wind up with a pretty large area for growing plants. When planning your plot, take into consideration how far you can easily reach to tend your plants, and adjust the width of your bed accordingly.

As the layers in the pile slowly break down, you should wind up with an incredibly rich, fertile garden bed. When it rains, the pile absorbs the moisture and slowly releases it to the plant roots. You should seldom need to water your hugelkultur plot.

(Continued on page 2)

Next MG Meeting
Wednesday, July, 2012, noon
Carleen Bright Arboretum

What do Master Gardeners do?

Grow ... see Intern list, page 4

Educate ... see Barry's lesson on *hugelkultur*, pp. 1,2

Lead ... see Sandy, page 3

Give ... see Volunteer Hours, page 3

“the potential rewards are great”

In time you'll have about five or six feet of topsoil and it should be good for about 30 years of gardening.

There are some caveats. First, this is not Germany; our climate is more challenging for gardeners. Therefore, I reasoned that a few tweaks might help. In my case, due to space constraints, I dug a trench about 2-1/2 feet wide and the same depth. In reality, I had to

chip slowly through limestone rock – it was hard going but I finally got it done. Then, in goes the rotted wood (we have lots and lots of this here on the ranch). Next are layers of shredded brush, leaves, grass clippings and compost (I have no sod to spare). Finally, on goes a layer of topsoil.

My hugelkultur bed will be only slightly raised above ground level. I think of it as being like a dry sponge. You may find this hard to believe, but it actually does rain here now and then, so I'm figuring my hugelkultur plot will become a damp sponge.

Wood contains carbon. A hugelkultur bed sequesters carbon by locking it up in the earth and

turning it into rich soil over time. That's eco-friendly and better than piling up the wood and burning it. Now, about that carbon: as it slowly turns into compost, it will consume nitrogen. While that is less of a problem with rotted wood, it is still an issue for the first year or so. To deal with this, add some timed release, urea-based fertilizer. That should work.

Your gardening results from your hugelkultur plot should get better and better as the years pass. Can you see why I'm fascinated by hugelkultur?

More caveats: Be careful what type of wood you put in your hugelkultur bed. Avoid pine, fir, ashe juniper and black walnut.

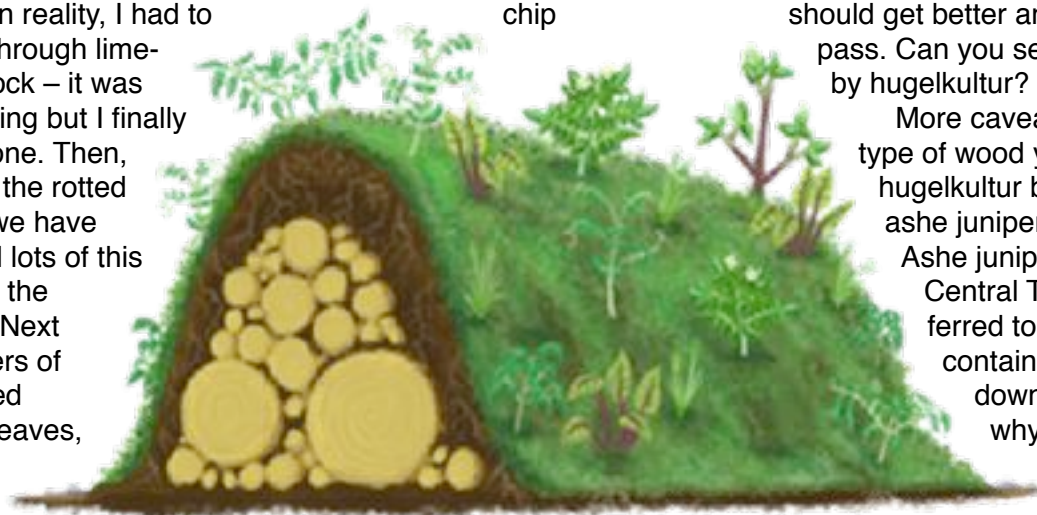
Ashe juniper is very prevalent in Central Texas and is often referred to as cedar (it isn't). It contains toxins and breaks down very slowly, which is

why farmers & ranchers use it for fence posts. Fresh sawdust is not good, but

aged sawdust is probably okay. Woods containing natural toxins are *allelopathic*. They can take decades to break down.

I will share my results with anyone interested. If you would like to see a hugelkultur plot and a key-hole garden, join us for the 2012 Intern field trip on September 5. There is work involved in building a hugelkultur bed. But the potential rewards are great.

– Barry Vokes



This happy group was among the bus full of interns and members who enjoyed strolling through the lush Chandor Gardens on June 27. See pages 4 & 6 for more photos.

Speaker s Bureau Report

May 30 - Barbara Vance spoke to the West Kiwanis Club about the Arboretum gardens and facilities.

from
Sandy Back
to you



We were quite blessed during June with average temperatures in the lower 90's and several unexpected rains. All of us, I feel sure, went outside and did a happy dance with each raindrop after the summer of 2011. I looked at the extended forecast for July and August (which is, of course, an educated guess) and it appears to look promising. After putting in a brand new yard just prior to the heat wave of last summer and keeping the City of Waco's water department fully funded through my water bill, I am thrilled with the prospect of periodic moisture coming our way.

Each time I work with a group of our Master Gardeners on a project I am always amazed at the quality and quickness of work that is accomplished. I recently had the pleasure of working with 10 of our members as we faced a huge challenge of weeds, pruning and various other jobs calling our attention. After a very short while, we could pat ourselves on the back and look at a job well done. More important than the work was the fellowship we had while we labored. You just get to know people so much better while you sweat and get dirt under your fingernails!!

Why isn't it that much fun at home in your own yard? In addition to the conversation and laughter, I always take away a tip or new bit of knowledge from these occasions. One of our members recently mentioned to me that we often know the plants that are good for our area, but then aren't always sure how to care for them long term. We both agreed that it would be a wonderful idea to compile commonly used plants along with tips for pruning, fertilizing and other such issues that would benefit that plant. Food for thought!

We are so much more than just people sitting in a chair at meetings. I really want to encourage you to meet each other, learn their names and find out more about them. Our group has some amazing people with a wide variety of talents and interests. One thing that makes MG so unique is that we have a wonderful collection of interests, talents, and backgrounds.

April 2012 Volunteer Hours

Volunteer hours	535
Education hours	109
Contacts	7060
Media	98,500
Meetings	51
<i>(Hours below are included in Volunteer Hours)</i>	
Arboretum	39
Cactus Garden	6
Rose Garden	13
Herb Garden	11
SuperStar Garden	1
Gardeners Gathering	8
Downtown Farmers' Market	9
News prep./publishing	19
Speakers Bureau	13
Master Gardner clerical	92
Phone, misc. time - Ag office	42
Woodway Elementary	5
MHMR	14
Beast & Blooms - zoo	5
MG new class 2012	18
Plant Sale	232
Walmart Gardening	18
HOT Autism Network	6
McGregor Community Garden	5
Habitat for Humanity	13
Travel	23

45 members turned in volunteer hours
31 members turned in education hours
26 members worked at the Plant Sale

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

It reminds me of a beautiful bouquet of flowers. One single flower is lovely, but when you put stems of many colors and varieties all together, it becomes an object of beauty. Of course, those flowers have to be carefully selected and nourished to continue their display of beauty. Before I get too wordy here and carried away, my point is that each one of us has been carefully selected and nurtured and together we are an interesting group to enjoy.

Don't ever stop planting, growing and watering! I challenge you to meet as many people as you can at the next meeting on July 11. Find a project that you can help with and see what great laughter and joy you get from being around our members.

Go Out and Dig.

Sandy

2012 PLANT SALE:

“A whopping success”

Barb Mersinger and Penny Gifford organized and supervised the 2012 Plant Sale. Barb shares her impressions with us:

“The 2012 Plant Sale was a whopping success (as usual). We had many varieties of plants – and shoppers. We had everything from bulbs and seeds, to hanging baskets, cactus plants and herbs, sun-loving and shade-loving plants. There was something for just about everyone.

“A big thank you goes to all the workers who helped out. Everyone was friendly, eager to help and full of valuable information for our shoppers. An especially big thanks goes to those who collected the money and those who stayed afterward to help clean up. Penny Gifford and I appreciated all that everyone did to help. Jene Hering was particularly helpful.

Treasurer Barry Vokes adds the following comments: “So far, 2012 Plant Sale revenue totals \$3,798.75 and expenses are \$275 (for the tent rental and the annual State of Texas floral license). Net revenue is \$3,523.75. Revenue was comfortably over budget and expenses were just under budget. The annual plant sale is our big revenue generator and I’m so pleased that it was a success.”



New interns and members tour Chandor Gardens in Weatherford with Steve Chamblee guiding this group past the bronze lions fountain. More photos on page 6.

Intern Training Session Schedule

Training for the 2012 Intern Class will begin June 6. Classes will be at the Arboretum from 1 to 5 p.m. unless noted. The schedule will include 68 hours of training. Two sessions will be open to the public; three will be field trips.

7/3 - Perennials: Container Gardens & Herbs, Sandra Killough, **Tuesday** session

7/11 - Waco Wetlands Tour, to be announced, composting

7/18 - Basic Landscape Design, Rachelle Kemp, TSTC field trip

7/25 - Vegetables, Patty Leander,

8/1 - Entomology & Plant Pathology, Chris Sansone

8/8 - Fruits & Nuts, Dr. Larry Stein

8/15 - Lawn Care, Dr. Jim McAfee, open to public

8/22 - Plant Propagation, Ila Jean Carothers

8/29 - Drought, Oak Wilt; Tree Problems, Dr. David Appel, open to public

9/5 Rainwater, Hydroponics, Hugelkultur, Louie McDaniel & Barry Vokes, field trip

9/12 - Earthkind, Native & Fire-wise Plants, MCMG specialists in each field

9/19 - Choosing Your Volunteer Projects, MCMG members

Note: A \$10 fee will be charged to non-members for the public sessions.

MCMG accepts 30 new interns for 2012

Thirty new interns began their training on June 6 under the direction of chairmen Linda Burchfield, Emily Davidson and Kathryn Turlington. Barry Vokes was in charge of putting their informative guidebook together. Several months of planning were involved in setting up the program and included Sherry Matthews, Robert Powers, Lynn DeMuynck, Art Reinking, Sharon Richardson, Sandy Back, Jeanette Kelly, Ila Jean Carothers, Brenda Golubski, and Kris Ford.

New interns are: Billy Burchfield, Tom Burr, Ralph Calhoun, Catherine Cole, Robert Creech, Lisa and Scott Daily, Marietta Diehl, Archie and Patricia Dillard, Jane Dossey, Judy Haller, Joan Harmon, Peggy Holcomb, Carolyn Hughes, Taddie Kelly, Denise Kennison, Linda Kruse, Cynthia Krywonski, Rianna Magee, Monika Marks, Patricia Marlin, Claudia McLatcher, Ann Sefcik, Rita Self, Betty Tawwater, Catherine Valentine, Ramona Watson, Vicki Watson and Matthew Whelan.

Minutes: June 13, 2012

President Sandy Back called the meeting to order at 12:10 p.m. President Back welcomed all attendees to the meeting. President Back announced the May 2012 meeting minutes were published in *The Latest Dirt* and stated they would stand approved as corrected.

Barry Vokes distributed the budget by email. The benevolence fund basket was available for donations.

Upcoming projects listed on the back of the agenda were noted by Barbara Vance and Jennifer Rich. Some seats will be available for the field trip to Chandor Gardens in Weatherford on June 27. The general membership can purchase the seat for \$35 as long as seats are available. Treasurer Vokes announced he would accept checks at the meeting or payment at the bus on the day of the trip.

According to the treasurer's email report the net gain for the very successful plant sale was \$3508.75.

The 2012 intern class has had one successful start up meeting. The second meeting is after the general meeting concludes today.

President Back showed the Lucite education award given to MCMG by Keep Waco Beautiful last month. It will be displayed in the office. Kim Dougherty received recognition for her gardening instruction at Woodway Elementary, Ila Jean Carothers was awarded a plaque by County Extension Agent Shane McLellan as Extension Service Volunteer of the Year Award and Eva FitzGerald was honored by Comal County for her work in establishing excellent herb garden practices.

Members were reminded to pick up their background check clearances.

Barry Vokes has two extra copies of the intern Master Gardener handbook available for sale.

June 13, 2012, Meeting Attendance

Members: 57

Back, Sandy; Bays, James; Belanger, Bonnie; Belanger, Dick; Buchanan, John; Burchfield, Linda; Burleson, Sandy; Carothers, Ila Jean; Chapman, Merle; Clark, Mark; Dauphin, Irene; DeMuynck, Lynn; Elwell, Zack; FitzGerald, Eva; Fitzgerald, Melody; Folse, Norma; Foulks, Xan; Geletzke, Cindy; Goaley, Patricia; Golubski, Brenda; Henson, Margaret; Henson, Sherry; Hering, Jene; Herndon, Jan; High, Melody; Irvine, Terence; Lindsey, Donna; Mabry, Cindy; Matthews, Sherry; McDaniel, Louie; Milam, Elizabeth; Moore, Andrea; Moore, Linda; Peterson, Georgia; Plasek, Anne; Powers, Robert; Prather, Sherry; Prause, James; Rich, Jennifer; Romano, Sharon; Schaffer, Janet; Schmeltekopf, Judy; Scott, Sandra; Seale, James; Setser, Della; Smith, Edrena; Torbett, Gail; Trice, Mary Lou; Vance, Barbara; Vokes, Barry; vonRosenberg, Jo; Waldrop, Melba; Warriner, Sonia; Whitehead, Dorothy; Whitehead, MJ; Wood, Carol.

Sandy Back announced members completed 535 volunteer hours in May according to Julia Khoury, records keeper.

Members were invited to attend the intern class at 1 p.m. given by Dr. Mark McFarland on soils.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:32. Janet Shaffer offered members a tour of the new meeting facility recently completed at the Arboretum.

Respectfully submitted,
Brenda Golubski, recording secretary

Shoppers at the July 7 Waco Farmers' Market will see propagation demonstrations by Sherry Matthews and Barry Vokes. These two MG members recently took the specialty training and are prepared to include gardening education along with the variety of food and plant offerings.

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

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



A living “work of art”



Enclosed by boxwood hedges, stone walls and magnificent oaks, the four-acre Chandor gardens are enhanced by cooling sounds of water from fountains and a man-made 30 ft. waterfall. The gardens were built 70 years ago by English portrait artist Douglas Chandor and his wife Ina Kuteman, a native of Weatherford. They are now owned by the city.

Plug Into These Volunteer “Opps”



Volunteer Opportunities July

Date	Activity	Contact
July 6	Woodway Elementary Garden cleanup 7 a.m. (or as soon as you can)	Kim Dougherty
July 7	Downtown Waco Farmers’ Market 8:30 a.m. set up - until 1 p.m.	Penny Gifford
July 20	McGregor Demo Garden Pruning, Weeding 8 a.m.	Jene Hering

MCMG Office openings - check with Carol Reinking - sscarol.24@gmail.com



from the
cardinal's corner

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

Woodway won a prestigious award for the third time this past year with a gift of \$130,000 to be used for beautification of a TXDOT right-of-way.

The Governor's Community Achievement Award is given to a community for excellence in the following areas: Community Leadership and Coordination, Public Awareness, Education, Beautification and Community Improvement, Litter Prevention and Cleanup, Solid Waste Management, and Litter Law and Enforcement.

The following is an excerpt of the grant application written by Kaisa Reddin, who is the staff liaison for Woodway Beautiful.

“To the outside world, Woodway is a picturesque bedroom community, filled with beautiful homes and manicured lawns, which is precisely the image the residents would like to portray. To those who live and work here, though, Woodway is a haven - a beautiful alcove, tucked into the pocket of Waco, teeming with life and opportunity. Woodway is made a better place, not because opportunities exist, but because these opportunities are seized. Parks and Streets crews spend every day working to keep the city clean and colorful. Volunteers give time and skills to assist in these efforts, and to educate fellow citizens. City government is hands-on in maintaining the aesthetics through ordinances, development reviews, and City Council and Planning and Zoning meetings which are open forums for the citizens to attend, gather information, and voice support or concern over anything going on in the City. From the laughter of children playing in one of Woodway's three beautiful parks, down the well-maintained streets to the Arboretum, where a beautiful bride in a white gown poses among the blooms and butterflies, everywhere you turn in Woodway, peace and beauty

abound. Woodway is made a better place to live, work, and play every single day, because every single day, there is a steady, cooperative, community-wide effort which drives our expectations, and our desire to exceed those expectations, higher than ever before.”

I would like to thank each and every one of you who volunteer at the Arboretum for helping to make Woodway what it is today.



Photo by Courtney Advertising

The Arboretum was the scene for 66 weddings in 2011. So far, 18 are scheduled when the new Pavilion opens in September. Three weddings took place the last weekend of June.