

# The Latest Dirt

August 2012

McLennan County Master Gardener Association

## Cook old phone books, cardboard into keyhole garden "pie"

This month's topic is keyhole gardens, which seem ideal for Central Texas. In researching keyhole gardens, I learned that they originated in Lesotho, Africa, a high elevation country with a dry climate. Apparently a British non-profit called Send-a-Cow developed the concept and taught people how to build them. Now keyhole gardens are found in Uganda and elsewhere in Africa. To see how these are built in Africa using only local materials, type "keyhole gardens" in YouTube and you'll find several short videos.

To visualize a keyhole garden, think of a pie with one slice removed. The garden is six feet across with a section (the pie slice or keyhole) removed to allow access to the center. The walls should be about three feet high. In the center – about four feet high – goes a one foot diameter cylinder constructed of chicken wire or similar coarse wire screen. This is your compost basket. Viewed from above, the garden resembles a keyhole.

You want cardboard – lots of cardboard – and as many old phone books as you can find. As you build the outside wall using recycled bricks, pavers, cinder blocks or stone, line the sides and the bottom with cardboard. Cement the walls with cob or mortar. Toss in the phone books and layer organic matter such as straw, brush, old newspapers, spoiled



hay, rotted manure and soil – thoroughly wetting each layer as you go. Above goes a layer of topsoil. The cardboard and phone books will decompose along with the rest of it and become rich, fertile soil. You don't have to worry much about the nitrogen to carbon ratio, for that's what the wire cylinder in the center is about. You put your kitchen waste (e.g., carrot tops, greens) in the center after you first put an old phone book or two in the bottom to steady it.

The garden will be about four feet high at the center, sloping down to about three feet on the sides. The keyhole makes it easy to access the compost basket, which you continually feed with kitchen scraps. Keep the basket well watered and water the rest of the keyhole garden only when necessary.

Continued on page 2

**Next MG Meeting**  
**Wednesday, August 8, 2012**  
**at the Carleen Bright Arboretum**  
**Pavilion - 6:30 p.m.**  
**Program & Tour by**  
**Janet Schaffer**

### What do Master Gardeners do?

**Grow** ... read Barry's Keyhole Gardening, pp. 1, 2  
**Educate** ... see Sherry showing propagation, pg. 4  
**Lead** ... see Sandy's column, page 3  
**Give** ... Volunteer Needs, pg. 6, Service Pins, pg. 2,  
Volunteer Hours, pg. 3

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## The ultimate raised-bed planter for Central Texas

As the kitchen scraps decompose, they will leach into the garden and feed your plants. It works.

Take four to six one foot sections of rebar and drive them partly into the ground just outside the bed. Locate some flexible plastic electrical conduit or thin wall PVC and form loops over the bed from rebar to rebar, tying the loops at the top to steady the structure. In summer you can clip shade cloth to the loops; in winter use row crop cover or plastic to help keep the plants comfortable. You still need to mulch, of course, but you'll also grow your vegetables close together so the leaves overlap, shading the soil.

And that's a keyhole garden – perfect for sustainable gardening in Central Texas. One of these gardens will grow a lot of vegetables at a time and can be productive year-round. Just north of us, in Bosque County, the concept has caught on in a big way. At last count there were more than 60 keyhole gardens in Bosque County.

The driving force behind that is a human dynamo and landscape architect named Deb Holman, who holds a doctorate in environmental science from Portland State University. “Dr. Deb” – as friends call her – lives in a converted oat bin on the Starnater Ranch near Clifton. She uses keyhole gardens to grow most of her food. In Africa two or three keyhole gardens will feed a large family year-round.

In case it has not occurred to you, there isn't much bending over needed to tend a keyhole garden. Nor is there much soil maintenance required; just keep putting your kitchen scraps in the center basket and keep it wet. Nature takes care of the rest. The “acid test” for keyhole gardens in Central Texas was last year's exceptional drought; they thrived in Bosque County, though they did require more tending and watering to get through the drought. Providing some shade from the intense summer sun is very helpful and it extends the growing season. During winter cold snaps, you can clip a plastic sheet to the overhead loops to create a cold frame. You can also add a 100 watt light bulb inside to further protect the plants.

Deb Tolman grows Swiss chard, kale and Malabar spinach even during the sizzling summer months. Keyhole gardens definitely deserve a close look.

By Barry Vokes

*Editor's Note: Dr. Tolman has an interesting website at [www.debtolman.com](http://www.debtolman.com). She has 30 years experience in landscape design and did her doctoral studies in environmental science and research on African survival strategies. She has just published a book, “Tolman Guide to Country Living in Bosque County.” Also see [www.texascooppower.com/texas-stories](http://www.texascooppower.com/texas-stories)*

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## Recognizing 30 years of service



As of July 2012, 31 McLennan County Master Gardeners accumulated 30 years of combined service and were recognized at the July 11 meeting by Shane McClellan.

Service pins for **15 years** were given to: Mark Barnett, Grady Bonner, Ila Jean Carothers, Susan Crawford, Jean Cunningham, Rachelle Kemp, Randy Kemp, and Barbara Vance.

**Ten-year pins** went to: JoAnn Clafferty, Kris Ford, Julia Khoury, Sarah Ortiz Long, Doug Quicksall, Dawn Segrest, Jan Serface and Melba Waldrop.

Fifteen members received **five-year pins**: Bonnie Belanger, Dick Belanger, Linda Buckner, Nelda Cooper, Sarah Downs,

Melody Fitzgerald, Brenda Golubski, Lori Lutz, Louie McDaniel, Sherry Prather, Art Reinking, Sharon Richardson, Janet Schaffer, Dorothy Whitehead and M.J. Whitehead.



from  
Sandy Back  
to you



What was your favorite project that you helped with this past month? I will not list mine specifically, but I will say that I have more than one that was both rewarding and fun. My sincere hope is that you have at least one project that you are committed to helping with and that you try others out as well.

Along with the opportunity to work alongside other members on projects, we have had some excellent classes taking place for the benefit of our intern class. You are always invited and welcome to come and soak up some extra knowledge that is being presented each Wednesday. I am going to take advantage of this spot to “brag” on some of our own members. I enjoy hearing the wonderful speakers that we bring in for not only the interns, but for the open to the public sessions we have. However, the classes that I most enjoy are led by our very own talented members. Jeanette Kelly did a wonderful PowerPoint presentation on composting, Rachele Kemp brought a very interesting talk on landscape design and Sandra Kilough (our “adopted member”) taught us about perennials and herbs.

In the weeks to come, Ila Jean Carothers will teach about plant propagation and Louie McDaniel and Barry Vokes will give us a tour of their ranch to learn about rainwater, hydroponics and hugelkultur gardening. Following that, we will hear from several other members on the topics of Earthkind and native plants as well as “Firewise” plants. How very blessed we are to have such a knowledgeable group of people that are willing to share this with others.

In addition to these classes, our fearless leader, Shane McLellan writes a farm and ranch article for the paper which is quite interesting. I sincerely hope that you read the articles that Melody Fitzgerald writes each month in the *Waco Today* magazine put out by the Tribune Herald. She does an excellent job of giving the public timely tips for their landscape.

## July 2012 Volunteer Hours

Volunteer hours	513
Education hours	182
Intern Education hours	434
Contacts	1728
Media	35,259
Meetings	57
<i>(Hours below are included in Volunteer Hours)</i>	
Arboretum	29
Rose Garden	1
Herb Garden	2
SuperStar Garden	15
Trailside Garden	11
Downtown Farmers' Market	6
News prep./publishing	20
Speakers Bureau	13
Master Gardner clerical	128
Phone, misc. time - Ag office	68
Cedar Ridge Elementary	20
Beast & Blooms - zoo	4
MG new class 2012	91
Plant Sale	39
HOT Autism Network	7
McGregor Community Garden	2
Habitat for Humanity	2
Spring Valley School	44
Travel	47
BIG Conference	3
St. Paul's Church	1
Club speakers	3

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

In fact, she read my mind and wrote about just what I had selected as my topic in this month's *Latest Dirt*. So, I chose to brag about her instead. I continue to be amazed by each of you and feel extremely humbled to be your leader. Continue just what you are doing and look for new ways to expand your contribution to our great organization!

Go Out and Dig,

Sandy



*Sherry Matthews attracts shoppers of all ages to her demonstration on plant propagation.*

## Our place at the Market

Once again the Farmers Market proved to be a gathering spot for area shoppers. Although buying fresh produce, delicious bread and cheeses or herbs and honey was the main pursuit, most people were spending a wonderful Saturday morning visiting, relaxing and in the case of the Master Gardener booth, learning.

Sherry Matthews provided a great demonstration for plant propagation. She had all the necessary ingredients and sent home some "new" plants with thrilled children! Sherry estimated that she had about 40 contacts and others directed questions to Jeanette, Brenda, Candace, Mark and I. The questions were varied; from needing a planting schedule for vegetables to a question about scale on crepe myrtle trees. What was fun was the enthusiasm of those that watched Sherry's propagation and decided they could do it! Many were just as excited to be starting their first garden and being able to get some pointers from experienced gardeners. Thanks to all that helped to answer questions and encourage that excitement and enthusiasm!

*By Penny Gifford*

## Intern Training Session Schedule

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

**8/1 - Entomology & Plant Pathology**, Chris Sansone

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

**8/15 - Plant Propagation**, Ila Jean Carothers

**8/22 - Lawn Care**, Dr. Jim McAfee, *open to public*

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

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

**912 - 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.

## July 11, 2012, Meeting Attendance Members: 43

Back, Sandy; Barnes, B.L.; Barnett, Mark; Belanger, Bonnie; Belanger, Dick; Bonner, Grady; Burchfield, Linda; Carothers, Ila Jean; Clafferty, JoAnn; Cooper, Nelda; Dauphin, Irene; Dougherty, Kim; Ford, Kris; Foulks, Xan; Golubski, Brenda; Hahn, Judy; Henson, Sherry; Herndon, Jane; High, Melody; Kelly, Jeanette; Khoury, Julia; Kinder, Missy; Mabry, Cindy; McDaniel, Louie; Mersinger, Barbara; Milam, Elizabeth; Milnor, Gerry; Moore, Candace; Peterson, Georgia; Powers, Robert; Quicksall, Doug; Reinking, Art; Rich, Jennifer; Schaffer, Janet; Segrest, Dawn; Serface, Jan; Trice, Mary Lou; Vance, Barbara; Waldrop, Melba; Warriner, Sonia; Whitehead, Dorothy; Whitehead, M.J.; Wood, Carol.

## Minutes: July 11, 2012

President Sandy Back called the meeting to order at 12 p.m. and welcomed all members and interns to the meeting. She announced the June 2012 meeting minutes were published in The Latest Dirt and stated they would stand approved as corrected hearing no corrections. No corrections were put forward and the minutes stand approved.

Barry Vokes distributed the budget and benevolence fund report by email.

Shane McLellan, McLennan County AgriLife Extension Service Agent was introduced by President Back to present service pins to members for 5 years, 10 years and 15 years of service. Mrs. Back also congratulated him on passing his orals as part of his doctoral degree program.

Agent McLellan then presented 5 year service pins (class of 2006) to Dick Belanger, Bonnie Belanger, Linda Buckner, Nelda Cooper, Sarah Downs, Melody Fitzgerald, Brenda Golubski, Lori Lutz, Louie McDaniel, Sherry Praether, Janet Schaffer, Art Reinking, Sharon Richardson, Dorothy Whitehead and M.J. Whitehead.

10 year service pins (Class of 2001) were presented to JoAnn Clafferty, Kris Ford, Julia Khoury, Sara Ortiz Long, Doug Quicksall, Dawn Segrest, Jan Serface, and Melba Waldrip.

15 year service pins (Class of 1996) recipients were Mark Barnett, Grady Bonner, Ila Jean Carothers, Susan Crawford, Jean Cunningham, Rachele Kemp, Randy Kemp, and Barbara Vance.

A recommendation was made to donate an additional \$1,000 to TSTC for scholarship by Ila Jean Carothers. She noted the funds are available as a result of a very successful plant sale in May. Comments and objections were solicited by the president. None were presented. Robert Powers then made the motion to make the \$1,000 donation and the motion was seconded by Art Reinking. Through a show of hands, none were opposed to the motion. The motion passed. The latest scholarship awardees were Leslie Barnhill and Shawn Fifer.

Ila Jean Carothers brought the sign-up page for members to man the "Ask a Master Gardener" telephone line. It was circulated through the membership for volunteers to select a date to work.

Upcoming projects were noted as printed on the back of the agenda. Jeanette Kelly announced the Children's Garden Fair will be held on Sunday, October 14. Members were asked to develop projects which can be done and/or assist with other stations at the fair.

President Back reminded members the intern class will be touring the Waco Wetlands today at 1:30 and Master Gardener Jeanette Kelly will give a presentation on composting.

Our next meeting will be August 8 at 6:30 p.m. at the Carlene Bright Arboretum. Members will meet in the new facility known as the Pavilion where Master Gardener and Arboretum manager Janet Schaffer will give a tour and talk about the docent program.

President Back noted we will have two upcoming classes for the interns which are also open to the public. Public attendees will be required to pay a \$10 admission fee for each of the programs. August 22 will be Lawn Care by Dr. Jim McAfee and August 29 will be presented by Dr. David Appel on Drought, Oak Wilt & Other Tree Problems. Dr. McAfee was changed from Aug. 15 to Aug. 22. Ila Jean Carothers, originally scheduled for the 22<sup>nd</sup> will present propagation on Aug. 15. Notices with the changed dates will be publicized.

Ila Jean Carothers indicated potting soil (many types) and growing planters are still available. Contact her for details. President Back adjourned the meeting at 12:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Brenda Golubski, recording secretary

### 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](mailto:jwarriner@hotmail.com)  
Our web site: [www.mclennanmastergardeners.org](http://www.mclennanmastergardeners.org)

Send volunteer hours to Julia Khoury, 8512 Bosque Blvd., Waco 76712 or [tkhoury@hotmail.com](mailto: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



*Interns and members tour the Waco Wetlands July 11 as part of their training course on composting. VP Jeanette Kelly did a PowerPoint presentation on this popular topic about creating beneficial soil additives from garden debris and kitchen wastes.*

**Notes from Barry Vokes:** The class built a “hot” compost pile which reached an internal temperature of 155°. After it dropped to 130°, several people went out and turned the pile. It dropped to 120° - the desired temperature. After another turning this week, it may maintain a proper temperature if kept moist. Decomposition has started. As layers of greens (nitrogen) and browns (carbon) are added along with moisture, the compost will mature into a sweet, earthy smelling soil amendment.

## Plug Into These Volunteer “Opps”



### Volunteer Opportunities August & September 2012

Date	Activity	Contact
August 16	McGregor Garden rose pruning 8 a.m.	Jene Hering
August 17	Cedar Ridge Elementary work day 8:30 a.m.	Sandy Back
Sept. 8	Downtown Waco Farmers’ Market 8 a.m. - 1 p.m.	Penny Gifford
Sept. 14	Cedar Ridge Elementary work day 8 a.m.	Sandy Back
Sept. 28	Cedar Ridge Day in the Garden 8 a.m. - 3 p.m.	Sandy Back

**MCMG Office openings - August 7, 14, 23**

check with Carol Reinking - [sscarol.24@gmail.com](mailto:sscarol.24@gmail.com)

from the  
*cardinal's corner*

## We've Moved!

This month is going to be a quick note to let you know we have moved our office to the Pavilion and remind you that our evening meeting this month will be at the Pavilion at 6:30 p.m. on August 8.

I will be giving a presentation about the Arboretum Docent Program and then everyone is welcome to take a quick tour of the building. Although some of the new plantings are stressed (especially the trees), I feel confident the final project is something for Woodway and the Master Gardeners to be proud of. I hope to see you all here.



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



*Last year's Scarecrow Contest Creators of Miss  
Rose Bush: Gale Torbett and Andrea Moore*

- Entry forms available at Arboretum
- Miss Rose available to renew, re-do

For more information, contact  
Sonia Warriner, [jwarriner@hot.rr.com](mailto:jwarriner@hot.rr.com)



*Taylor First,  
new Events Coordinator*

**Save the Date:**  
**5th Annual Arboretum & Master Gardener  
Children's Garden Fair**  
**Sunday, October 14, 2012**  
**2 to 5 p.m.**

**WANTED:**  
**Scarecrow Designers, Builders**  
**for 2nd Annual Scarecrow Contest**  
**Must be**  
**HIGHLY COMPETITIVE, SERIOUSLY MOTIVATED,**  
**CHALLENGED TO WIN**  
**THE GOLD FOR MASTER GARDENERS.**  
Skills with PVC pipe very helpful.