

The Latest Dirt

January 2013

McLennan County Master Gardener Association

Our Newsletter 2013

Happy New Year! Melody Fitzgerald and Linda Kruse are looking forward to working with everyone to create a great newsletter this year.

We are looking forward to all of you who have contributed in the past continuing to support us this coming year. We also want to encourage input from those of you who have never contributed. Our newsletter not only helps keep us all informed on what we are doing in Master Gardeners, but it is an opportunity for us to get to know one another better.

Below are some contributions that we would like to see in the coming year:

- Timely recipes (such as squash recipes when that vegetable peaks in the garden)
- Articles to give us more knowledge on specific gardening topics
- Garden or Master Gardener trivia or history
- Success stories from your gardening experiences
- Arts and crafts in the garden
- PowerPoint suggestions or pointers
- Tools you have found useful
- Articles on our members to help get to know them better (We very much want to continue this and suggestions are welcome.)
- Freezing or canning your harvest
- Tips on how you have successfully controlled pests such as spider mites in your garden
- Pruning tips and techniques
- Your favorite plants

Master Gardener Meeting January 2013

Our meeting for January will be very interesting. Our local expert, Steven Lovecky, will be giving us a program about Cacti and Succulents. Come and learn about these fascinating plants! Noon at the Arboretum, January 9th.

Looking forward to our February meeting, Margaret Henson will be having a program about Bees and Bee Hives. With all the danger to our bee population this will be a timely and important subject for our information.



Hard at work at the Extension Office Landscape Project

from
Sandy Back

Seeds from Sandy

Happy New Year and I hope that 2013 is a wonderful one for you and your garden!! Is it spring, winter or fall? The weather is changing each and every day and can't seem to decide what the season is. One thing is for sure, we are severely lacking in moisture!! I usually look forward to winter to relax from mowing, watering, weeding and deadheading plants. However, even if a few things have slowed down in their growth, we must surely keep watering as long as this drought continues. There are several things we can be doing to insure a more productive landscape this coming spring. Now is the perfect time to amend your soil and add nutrients to benefit either existing plants or new ones you intend to install in the near future. Winter is also a great time to move plants to a more desirable location in your landscape or completely redo your design. As you rake up those falling leaves, remember that they make a great addition to your compost pile or can be shredded to use for mulch in out of the way places in your yard.

As we turn the calendar page to a new month and year, one thing is certain.....we are all getting older! This is not necessarily a bad thing, but my back reminds me of it even if I am not looking into the mirror for a reminder. No, this is not an article for AARP, but some thoughts how we can make gardening a bit easier on ourselves. Surely, you have felt an ache or pain after a long day of gardening. It may be time to rethink that garden area and how we can all continue what we dearly love no matter our current age. This may involve changing out some of those plants that require constant deadheading or the use of growing containers closer to our house for added color. High maintenance plants that need staking, pruning, feeding often or trimming can take a toll on your



level of enthusiasm. By using ornamental grasses or slow growing shrubs, you have a once or twice a year pruning and then enjoyment during the rest of the growing season. Have you ever thought about working with friends when it is time for big garden projects? Likewise, there are many garden supplies that can make the job easier and less taxing on the back. The use of a large tarp can be helpful in pulling leaves, sticks and weeds you need to move to another area. Another handy object is the handled kneeler which helps with getting down and back up. I don't know about you, but I have no trouble getting down....but....getting back up is another story. We don't always have to have a big garden area for personal satisfaction. The use of various types of containers can provide an area for color or veggies. You can be creative with the types of containers you use, or practical. I recently saw a picture where someone had stacked the large 5 gallon buckets two high. They drilled holes in the bottom of each and gardened in the one on the top which made it about waist level high. Most important is to stretch before and after hard work outside to keep you flexible. Finally, pace yourself to maintain energy and stamina and don't ever stop staying active. It is not about getting older, but getting wiser!!

Now, Go out and Dig!

Sandy



**Volunteers work on the Extension
Office Landscape Project**

Organic vs Non-Organic

By Barry Vokes

Let's wade into the organic vs. non-organic controversy and learn what we can from it. Many people have chosen sides and are passionate in their beliefs – especially those on the organic side. The controversy centers on the relative merits of chemical vs. organic nutrients and pesticides.

We should understand that most experienced soil specialists and planters use organic and/or inorganic plant food depending on what the soil and/or plants happen to need. Plants don't care whether what you feed them is organic or not. It's the people feeding and eating the plants who care.

Back in the old days – as in way back – primitive man figured out how to cultivate crops. As the soil became depleted, the site was abandoned and a fresh area planted. Over time, people learned that rotted manure made plants grow better. That was pretty much where things stood until Justus von Liebig (1803 – 1873) came along and brought a scientific approach to the study of plant nutrition. Liebig's work led to the discovery of phosphate and superphosphate. In turn, this led to investigation of nitrogen, potassium and trace minerals as aids to plant cultivation. It happened at a good time, for naturally fertile land was starting to become scarce as the population grew. Nineteenth century thinking considered soil as a kind of bank in which you made deposits (fertilizer) and withdrawals (via plant roots). There was as yet little or no thought given to the role played by the soil itself, such as soil organisms and that essential ingredient – humus. "If some is good, more is better" was the feeling at the time. Having noticed that adding refined chemical elements (e.g., nitrogen, phosphorus) to the soil dramatically improved crop yields, farmers piled on the chemicals. It worked for a time, but when the

point of diminishing returns was reached, farmers discovered that plants actually did better with natural manure or less highly refined chemical fertilizers.



Today, we know that plant nutrition is complex. It is not just about having fluffy soil and adding nitrogen, phosphorous, potassium and trace minerals. We also know that chemical fertilizers can be too highly refined, and often less refined versions result in healthier, more vigorous plants. When added to the soil in small quantities, certain chemical elements strengthen the plants. But when over-used, weaker plants are the result.

The organic label has become something of a cult. Growers, distributors and grocers noticed that many people will pay much more for the organic label – and they were quick to take advantage of the opportunity. As a result, an industry developed around growing and distributing organically grown products to the public. Big corporations press for rule changes to their advantage – and very often get them because of their political influence and money. Smaller growers are increasingly squeezed out because they cannot afford the expense of initial and ongoing organic certification.

Small growers banded together and came up with a less costly alternative. It is the "Certified Naturally Grown" label. Growers adopt the same standards and practices used by certified organic growers, but they avoid the expense of the certification process. The key is trust, for the buyer must be willing to trust that the grower is following organic practices. It is all about supporting the small local farmer, whose livelihood depends on customer trust. Certified Naturally Grown produce can often be found at the Waco Downtown Farmers Market.

Organic growers are strictly limited in their selection of pesticides. There is a National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances that must be adhered to by the grower. Most pesticides are prohibited but some

are allowed; synthetics are generally prohibited while non-synthetics are generally allowed. Genetic engineering is prohibited and no "sludge" may be applied to the soil. If these things matter to you, then the extra expense of purchasing Organic or Certified Naturally Grown produce may be worthwhile.

Without genetically engineered seeds, agricultural production would fall off a cliff, resulting in widespread pockets of starvation around the globe. World-wide food stocks are perilously low and many of the world's food growing regions – including much of the continental USA – are experiencing severe drought. Organic (and Certified Naturally Grown) produce is great for those who can afford it. Lots of people cannot, and they need access to affordable food. There are seven billion humans to be fed. Barring another "green revolution" we may well be approaching catastrophe on a scale previously unimagined. Let us hope that agricultural science will deliver us from that grim outcome.



Our volunteers on the Extension Office Landscape Project pose for a photo

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

January and February 2013

<u>Date</u>	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Contact</u>
1/11	Tx. Superstar Bed perennial trimming 8:00 a.m.	Jennifer Rich
1/ 12	Woodway Elementary Clean Up 9:00 a.m.	Kim Dougherty
1/ 12	Downtown Waco Farmers' Market 8-8:30 set up, 1:00 depart	Penny Gifford
1/17	Tidy Arboretum Garden	Melody High
1/ 18	Cedar Ridge Day in the Garden 7:45 a.m. to 3:15 p.m.	Sandy Back
1/19	Trim roses	Melody High
2/ 8	Tx. Superstar Bed weeding, rose trimming 8:00 a.m.	Jennifer Rich
2/ 22	Cedar Ridge Day in the Garden 7:45 a.m. to 3:15 p.m.	Sandy Back



Working together is fun!

MCMG Attendance 12-11-12

Sandy Back, Bonnie Belanger, Dick Belanger, Linda Burchfield, IlaJean Carothers, Merle Chapman, JoAnn Clafferty, Nelda Cooper, Susan Crawford, David Daniel, Emily Davidson, Kim Dougherty, Richard Evans, Eva FitzGerald, Brenda Golubski, Judy Hahn, Sherry Henson, Jeanette Kelly, Missy Kinder, Peggy Holcomb, Steven Lovecky, Anita March, Sherry Matthews, Barbara Mersinger, Elizabeth Milam, Gerry Milnor, Kai Newton, Anne Plasek, Sherry Prather, Art Reinking, Carol Reinking, Jennifer Rich, Sharon Richardson, Jan Serface, Janet Schaffer, Valerie Schillaci, Judy Schmeltekopf, James Seale, Barbara Vance, Barry Vokes, Jo vonRosenberg, Sonia Warriner, Dorothy Whitehead, M.J. Whitehead.

43 members

Billy Burchfield, Tom Burr, Catherine Cole, Robert Creech, Lisa Daily, Scott Daily, Marietta Diehl, Archie Dillard, Patricia Dillard, Jane Dossey, Joan Harmon, Denise Kinnison, Linda Deal Kruse, Rianna Magee, Monika Marks, Claudia McLatcher, Ann Sefcik, Rita Self, Cathy Valentine, Ramona Watson, and Vicki Watson.

21 interns

Michael Clafferty, Roy Cooper, Jamy Crawford, Drew Hahn, Tom Kelly, Troy Kinder, Holcomb, Darlene Lovecky, Emil Plasek, Ben March, guest of Jennifer Rich, Troy Schaffer, Becky Seale, Eddie Serface, Bill Vance, Glenn vonRosenberg, Fran Daniel, James Bays, Vic DuPart, Ann Kligre, Barbara Burr, Robin Cole Melinda Creech, Don Harmon, David Kinnison, J. Spoy, David L. McLatcher, Gary Self, and Bill Watson

29 guests

93 in attendance

Our Members Show Talent with Unique Centerpieces

Our fall table decorations were outstanding this year. Below are some beautiful photos taken of some of the centerpieces created by our talented members:



1st Place:

Jeanette Kelly

Jeanette won first place with her imaginative use of boots in this Texas style arrangement.



2nd Place:

Barbara Vance won second place for this arrangement that features a pumpkin and fall berries and leaves.



3rd Place:

Judy Schmeltekopf won third place with this beautiful centerpiece.

Honorees at the Christmas Party

Sandy and Vic DuPart

Vic DuPart, who has resigned, received a certificate in praise of his work since he joined in 1998.



James Bays

James Bays has resigned for health reasons. At the meeting he thanked everyone for their friendship and also mentioned "the good times they had at parties at his place." Sandy especially thanked him for all the zillion plants he brought to the Plant Sale over the years. He was in 2004 class.



Jeanette Kelly and Barry Vokes were thanked for their service as officers in 2012 and received a gift.



Archie and Pat Dillard, both interns, won a drawing for door prizes. Archie won the garden hat, but Pat put it on for the photo.



HOURS FOR THE MC LENNAN CO. MASTER GARDENERS December 2012

VOLUNTEER HOURS	952 1/4
EDUCATION HOURS	173
CONTACTS	9,144
CONTACTS MEDIA	65,058
MEETING ATTENDANCE	64
(The hours listed below are included in the above totals.)	
ARBORETUM	84 1/2
SUPER STAR GARDEN	3 1/2
TRAIL	3 1/2
CACTUS	4
GATHERING	5
TOUR	2
CHILDREN'S FAIR	66 1/2
MASTER GARDENER CLERICAL	274 3/4
AG-OFFICE PHONE	37
AG-OFFICE LANDSCAPE	69 1/2
WOODWAY ELEMENTARY	9 1/2
NEWS PUBLISHING	40 1/2
INTERN CLASS OF 2012	17

TRAVEL	64 1/2
PLANT SALE	18
CEDAR RIDGE ELEMENTARY	110 1/2
URBAN GARDEN COALITION	2
J. H. HINES ELEMENTARY	56
HOTAN	2
DOWNTOWN FARMER'S MARKET	5
UNIVERSITY HIGH SCHOOL	6
CLUB SPEAKERS	31
HABITAT	40 1/2
BIG CONFERENCE	3
MCGREGOR GARDEN	81

Our Newest Members

Congratulations to our newest Master Gardeners. Two of our hard-working interns completed their training and hours and received their certificates at the December meeting. They are Tom Burr and Ramona Watson. We all look forward to working with them this year.

McLennan County Master Gardeners Association Officers 2013

President - Sandy Back • Vice President - Jeanette Kelly • Secretary – Elizabeth Milam

Treasurer – Sherry Matthews

AgriLife Sponsor - Shane McLellan, County Agent

Our web site: www.mclennanmastergardeners.org

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