



## September 2013 Master Gardener Meeting

The September MG meeting will be held at noon at the Arboretum on September 11<sup>th</sup>. 1 hour education credit for class: Gardening Innovations by Dave Whiting, the original Dave's Garden website creator.

## Jene Hering, Third Generation Farmer and Master Gardener



Jene Hering hails from McGregor. He was born there, went to public schools there and lives there still. He met his wife "Micki" while attending UT Austin, where he graduated with

a BBA (Industrial Management). Jene and Micki have a son, who is a Waco lawyer. They have three grandchildren, upon whom they dote.

Jene is a retired third generation farmer. He did not plan to farm but changed his mind while at UT. Jene's dad had 500 acres and raised purebred Herefords. Jene rented land and acquired some of his own. Over time, he and a partner worked several thousand acres. As Jene explains it, 3,000 to 4,000 acres are needed to achieve the required economies of scale. The partnership employed one full time laborer and two part-timers who worked when needed. While farming is hard work, a large mechanized farm can be run by very few people.

Farming is hugely different compared to a few decades ago. The machinery is bigger, costs and risks are higher and there is more financial pressure. Farming has always been risky, but pressure on the farmer has never been higher. The business is more technical and specialized than ever. Farming has become more scientific. Seed companies develop improved seed varieties continually. There are different versions of a given seed for different growing regions.

Most farmers today must borrow money to put in their crop. This can easily run into seven figures for a large operation. Here locally a rough estimate of current total costs is \$350/acre for corn, maybe \$250 for wheat and perhaps \$500 for cotton. The farmer must estimate in advance what crop yield is reasonable to expect, and plan accordingly. Much can go wrong, especially for a "dry-land" farmer (no irrigation). The farmer arranges a line of credit and draws upon it to purchase seeds, fertilizer, herbicides and other things needed. When the crop is harvested, the farmer repays the bank loan and hopes to have money left over. It does not always work that way and some farmers go bankrupt. Farming is a tough business. In a good year the bank gets repaid and there is money for improvements and living expenses. In a bad year – well, let's not go there.

Buying crop insurance can help to hedge against crop failure (indeed, no prudent banker would loan money to a farmer who does not), but this increases costs. The farmer has no control over nature. A hailstorm can wipe out an entire crop, and there are so many things that can go wrong – and often do. Some farmers hedge against crop price movements in the commodity futures markets. A bumper crop is meaningless if the price is too low to break even. Timeliness is everything to the farmer. A delay of a week or two in planting can mean the difference between success and failure. There are brief "windows of opportunity" in which to get things done. Miss those windows at your peril.

The farm bills periodically enacted by Congress are misleading in that about 60% of money appropriated goes for nutrition programs (e.g., food stamps) and not for farm programs. The federal government does subsidize the crop insurance program in the public interest – but the farmer pays a major share of the insurance cost.

Jene's perspective on genetically-modified seeds is businesslike and practical: GM (glyphosate resistant) seeds result in much better crop yields, which helps keep farmers in business. Furthermore, without GM seeds, the world would have trouble feeding an ever growing population. There is simply no way that small organic farms can feed a hungry world. We need large mono-crop farms if enough food is to be produced. This is reality.

Some weed varieties are becoming glyphosate-resistant. This is a problem, but farmers are dealing with it by slightly increasing glyphosate application and adding weed-specific herbicides that do not harm the crop. Jene advises that he knows of no local farmers reporting resistant weeds so far. Seed and herbicide companies are working on the problem feverishly.

Asked about emerging farming trends, Jene predicts more technology and steadily improving equipment. He sees a future for small farmers, but only as a sideline. The costs involved are just too great. Truck farms can find local niches and thrive.

So who would want to take on all those risks, anyway? It's simple, really. Farming is in the farmer's blood, despite all the risks and constant worries. It's a way of life, and a pretty good one some of the time.



### Education Opportunities

Landscape Design School Course III, Series XXIII, September 23-24, 2013, Bryan-College station

The 2013 Texas Master Gardener Conference will be held in Cameron and Hidalgo Counties on October 17 - 19. Experience the Blooms, Birds and Butterflies of South Texas!

## from Sandy Back



### Seeds from Sandy

I know you are as ready as I for some cool fall air! I also know that we must wait at least another month, if not longer for that to happen. This is always a challenging month to keep things alive, much less looking attractive. In a perfect world, we could cut back on water due to refreshing rains, mow less often, see fewer insects and realize a decline in diseases on our plants. Sounds good, huh?!?

This growing season, I am trying to keep yards, pastures and gardens growing at three different homes. I fear that the task is bigger than me. It has also made me aware that there are so many variations of garden applications and degrees to which we practice our favorite hobby. Amongst our group of many different types of gardeners, we have members that just grow things in container pots to those that have large scale acreage as a means of living. One week, my garden implements are included in the picture here. (Trowel, hand rake and pruners) and the next week, it requires large tractors. Until recent months, my biggest outdoor issues were dead heading, pruning and watering. We are now fighting grasshoppers, crickets, stickers, extreme drought and various other elements.



At our last meeting, I used myself as an example of the perils of being a gardener and afterwards several people came up to me displaying various wounds from garden tools.



Please, please be careful when you are working outdoors. Sharp pruners, garden rakes, tree saws, shovels and most any other type of garden tool can become a danger if we are not careful. Likewise, I shared with you my lack of judgment in pruning an area around a tree recently. You can see a picture of the aftermath of my arm from sticking it right into Poison Oak. The poisonous plant was blending

in quite well with various other random briars and Hackberry saplings. I didn't bother to put on gloves or long sleeves and was just "merrily" working away at removing the unwanted plants. Likewise, the thorns on rose bushes love to just reach out and remind you they are waiting to grab you at any moment less expected. When I worked outside yesterday, I had on gloves, long sleeves and put my tools in a safe wagon. I feel certain that you are smarter than I!!!



I hope you are planning on participating in our Children's Garden Fair in October and finding lots of other ways to enjoy being a Master Gardener.

Go Out and Dig,  
Sandy

## Newest Member



Congratulations to our newest member, Tina Traynor. Tina received her certification at the August meeting.

## Keyhole Garden & Hugelkultur beds, one year on

Here at our 87 acre farm alongside Wortham Bend, we've made considerable progress over the past year. In August 2012 the MCMG intern class completed a keyhole garden here. It's doing fine now, but that was not initially the case. The amount of subsidence (settling) was far greater than anticipated, and after a full year the soil is still settling and it has been topped up several times.

That said, the keyhole garden concept is sound. The center basket does a good job of feeding the plants. The tomato plants are blooming in mid-August and we're still picking tomatoes! Louie McDaniel built three keyhole gardens and these are doing quite well. Louie used a different soil mix and got good results more quickly.

The hugelkultur beds are performing just as we hoped they would. The spring potato crop did very well; thirty pounds of certified seed potatoes yielded about 140 pounds of tubers in five varieties. Now we are adding a thick layer of finished compost to the top of each hugelkultur bed in preparation for fall vegetable planting.

You may recall that hugelkultur, Central Texas style, involves digging a trench and filling it with partially rotted wood and other organic matter, and then topping it off with compost and topsoil. It definitely works and we recommend it for those who have the needed space. A third trench was deliberately left unfilled so that visiting garden groups could see the starting point.

Recently that trench was filled, not with rotted wood but with spoiled hay mixed with cow



manure. In the barnyard, we piled it up to about five feet in height and let it cook in the heat. The hay and manure were smoking hot and soon turned into rich compost. Once the last trench was filled with this mixture, a compost thermometer registered a temperature of 160 degrees F and the thermometer was almost too hot to touch when pulled out! That bed will be planted in September or October.

We're making the transition to open-pollinated seeds in order to get the genetic diversity (and great taste) that they offer. That will allow us to save seeds from mature plants for use in the following growing season, and it means we won't be dependent on seed companies in future.

Our current project is putting up a 30' X 60' hoop style greenhouse. It arrived in several big, heavy cardboard boxes – and it seemed like there were about 10,000 bits and pieces to assemble. Thanks to Louie and some friends, it's getting close to completion.



We will have 1,800 square feet of greenhouse space, where we will start plants, set up hydroponics and aquaponics rigs, grow plants and store various materials. Next door to the hoop house is a large vegetable garden, which will be planted for the fall and winter growing season. We will soon rototill the soil and add amendments, and then plant. We are gradually getting closer to our goal of being self-sufficient in food production.



In June Louie took the Thai Jars class hosted by Dr. Deb Tolman, and she served the group pizza cooked in her cob oven. Louie mentioned

this to his wife Hilary, who promptly decided that she wants one. So Louie got to work building it. It's a bit more complex than you might think, but someone with basic masonry skills can build one. Fired with wood, a cob oven gets very hot and it's excellent for baking bread, pizzas and many other cooking chores. Louie can explain how to build one if you are interested. The next time we host a field trip, you will have the opportunity to see these completed projects.



### Volunteer Opportunities September 2013

September 12	Trailside Gardens workday, 8:30am	Melody High
September 14	Arboretum tidying, supervise Baylor Crew, 9am to noon	Janet Schaffer

September 25	Extension Office Shade Garden tidy up, 8:30am	Cathy Cole
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## McLennan County Master Gardener Monthly Meeting, August 14, 2013

President Sandy Back called the meeting to order at 12 noon at the Whitehall Center in the Carleen Bright Arboretum in Woodway, Texas on August 14, 2013. After her welcome to the membership she presented the minutes of the July meeting which appeared in The Latest Dirt in August. She requested any corrections. None were made. The minutes stand approved as printed. Ms. Back announced that in Elizabeth Milam's absence today, Brenda Golubski would take the minutes.

Following the acceptance of the July minutes, the treasurer's report, this was emailed to each member or made available in print to those members who do not use email, was presented. The balance is \$19,000 with most resources coming from the plant sale and cookbook sale. Ms. Back announced the executive board will consider future expenditures at the September board meeting and report back to the membership.

Six projects for August and September 2013 were listed on the back of the agenda.

Janet Schaffer and Judy Schmeltekopf reviewed the Children's Garden Fair to be held on Oct. 13 at the Arboretum. Sept. 14 will be a workday to get ready from 9-12 at the Arboretum. Special requests needed by stations should be made to Janet. Tables and chairs will be set up prior by another volunteer group.

Tom Burr, project coordinator for the UHS project, stated he has 21 people ready to begin the project in 15 days. It will be an Environmental Sciences class for 180 students. The group will meet at 8 a.m. on Aug. 19 at the greenhouse for final cleaning and prepping.

Sandy Back reviewed the educational opportunities available to master gardeners. The Master Gardener State

Conference is in McAllen on Oct. 17-19. Specialist Trainings are listed online.

Tina Traynor was recognized as the newest member of the McLennan County Master Gardener Organization after completing her transfer requirements. She received her certificate and name badge from President Back.

President Back also brought up concerns for Elizabeth Milam, Art Reinking and JoAnn Clafferty while wishing each the best.

Barry Vokes, parliamentarian, reviewed the procedure which had been followed to allow a by-law change. He stated that a quorum of 25% of the membership was present and the vote could be made. He then called for the vote, which carried. The by-law change will be made.

Della Setser, cookbook chairperson, report another \$400 in cookbook sales have been made. She indicated there are about 3.5 boxes of books left to be sold. Also, on Dec. 3, the cookbook will be entered in a contest with a substantial prize.

Barbara Vance reported the 4-H group at the extension office relayed their thank yous for the assistance given by the master gardeners at the study day at the office.

Garden Innovations will be discussed at the September meeting.

Members were reminded of the public session following the regular meeting. Mark Barnett will present on Lawn Care and Diseases. The session will run from 1-4 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 12:44 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Brenda Golubski

## University High Greenhouse Project

The greenhouse project is moving along at University High School. Containers and supplies for the project have been moved into the greenhouse by our wonderful volunteers.

Louie McDaniel and Melody Fitzgerald developed a power point presentation about the greenhouse, which will be used in the second week teaching session.

The first day at University HS was a huge success. Twelve Master Gardeners worked together to accomplish something great. All the rest who worked so hard and so diligently so many days leading up to the first day made it possible.



To summarize, there were 98 total seniors in 6 classes, ranging from 7 to 31 per class (a little class “balancing” will be done). All went well, except that the greenhouse curtains still have a mind of their own. But that did not stop any of you, or the students.—Tom Burr

### **MCMG Attendance August 14, 2013** **65 Master Gardeners; 2 Interns**

Sandy Back; Mark Barnett; Bonnie Belanger; Dick Belanger; Grady Bonner; Linda Burchfield; Billy Burchfield; Tom Burr; Ila Jean Carothers; Merle Chapman; Mark Clark; Susan Crawford; Robert Creech; Jean Cunningham; Lisa Daily; Scott Daily; David Daniel; Emily Davidson; Lynn DeMuynck; Marietta Diehl; Archie Dillard; Pat Dillard; Jane Dossey; Eva FitzGerald; Melody Fitzgerald; Kris Ford; Xan Foulks; Brenda Golubski; Judy Haller; Margaret Henson; Jene Hering; Carolyn Hughes; Missy Kinder; Denise Kinnison; Linda Deal Kruse; Donna Lindsey; Monica Marks; Sherry Matthews; Louie McDaniel; Claudia McLatcher; Barbara Mersinger; Andrea Moore; Georgia Peterson; Anne Plasek; Robert Powers; Sherry Prather; James Prause; Jennifer Rich; Sharon Richardson; Janet Schaffer; Valerie Schilaci; Judy Schmeltekopf; Sandra Scott; James Seale; Ann Sefcik; Jan Serface; Della Setser; Edrena Smith; Betty Tawwater; Tina Traynor; Mary Lou Trice; Cathy Valentine; Barbara Vance; Barry Vokes; Sonia Warriner; Ramona Watson; Amber Wilhite and Carol Wood

**Mark Barnett: Lawn Care and Diseases**

**Public Program**

Master Gardener Attendees -36; 1 intern, 3 Guests:

Sandy Back; Bonnie Belanger; Dick Belanger; Grady Bonner; Linda Burchfield; Billy Burchfield; Ila Jean Carothers; Merle Chapman; Mark Clark; Susan Crawford; Jean Cunningham; Scott Daily; Emily Davidson; Archie Dillard; Pat Dillard; Jane Dossey; Eva FitzGerald; Melody Fitzgerald; Brenda Golubski; Carolyn Hughes; Linda Deal Kruse; Monica Marks; Sherry Matthews; Claudia McLatcher; Barbara Mersinger; Anne Plasek; Jennifer Rich; Janet Schaffer; Valerie Schilaci; Sandra Scott; James Seale; Edrena Smith; Cathy Valentine; Barbara Vance; Barry Vokes; Sonia Warriner; and Ramona Watson.

<b>HOURS FOR THE MCLENNAN CO. MASTER GARDENERS August 2013</b>	
<b>Members reporting: 33</b>	
VOLUNTEER HOURS	262.5
EDUCATION HOURS	41.5
(The hours listed below are included in the above totals.)	
ARBORETUM	3
• Superstar Bed	3
SCHOOLS:	7
• Cedar Ridge Elementary	5
• Woodway Elementary	2
MCMG:	106.5
• MCMG Clerical	40.5
• Ask A Master Gardener Telephone Line	29.5
• News Publishing	32.5
• Shade Gardening	4
DOWNTOWN FARMER'S MARKET	26
CHILDREN'S GARDEN FAIR	2
OTHER VOLUNTEER PROJECTS	118
• 4-H Day @ Extension Office	19.75
• 2014 Intern Class Planning	11
• MHMR Garden	61.75
• Various Other Activities	24.5

*(August 21-25 reported hours will be included with the September total.)*

## **Tips for Master Gardeners from Master Gardeners**

This month we have some tips on getting ready for fall gardening from Mark Barnett.

Fall flower prep

Now is the time to get things ready for fall. Clean up the roses, nip out the old flower heads, do light trimming to shape them up and fertilize to encourage new growth.

Do light trimming on most perennials that have flowered all summer and now may have accumulated old flower stems. Fertilize them to make them look better for fall and be ready for winter.

Turn the mulch in the beds and gardens with a cultivator claw to loosen it and allow fertilizers and water to penetrate easier. Old mulch can form a tight mat that can prevent water from getting in, and it can run off and leave a bed dry underneath. If you have automated irrigation the tight mulch will stay moist longer on top and actually allow weeds to grow instead of preventing weed growth.

Fertilize most plants and gardens, after the summer heat and stress. A light feeding will help rejuvenate most plants and especially those in pots and other containers.

Turn or till the soil in vegetable gardens or planting areas, add in some compost or other organic materials in preparation for fall planting. Sometimes fresh compost needs to do a little more composting in the ground before you plant anything in; this way it will be ready to plant later when the weather is better. For any flower pots that did not do well this summer or currently do not have anything growing in them, turn out the potting mix that is in them and put in fresh. You can also mix in some fresh potting mix and use the old soil in the flower beds or garden. If you have specific spots that you plant with seasonal flowers every year and you do not have anything there now, dig them up and work in some compost or fresh potting mix to help the flowers grow better later.

Have potted plants that you bring in for the winter? Now is the time to get any repotting, dividing, or change out cracked or damaged pots. That way the plants will be settled in and not have as much stress when you move them later.

If you have shrubs that only flower in the spring and they need grooming, now is the time to get it done. Then they can get new growth back on before winter and you can still have next season's flowers. Do not trim them again until after they finish flowering next spring. Some plants such as Texas Mountain Laurel have already set their buds for next year and it is too late to cut without removing next year's flowers. So if you are not sure, ask a master gardener.

I am seeing bulbs for sale now, but be careful as the best time to plant bulbs here is mid-September on into October and November. Be sure to keep any purchased bulbs cool and do not store them in locations that get very hot, or do not purchase any that are displayed in areas exposed to heat. The heat can stunt the flower in the bulb and you may get foliage and no flowers in the spring. When planting bulbs dig the holes a bit deeper and bigger and work in some compost and bone meal for better flowers next year.

Have too much to do? Seem overwhelming? Make a list, prioritize it and set yourself a manageable pace, do not try to do it all in one week end. Do a little and mark it off the list, which will give you a sense of accomplishment and it will get done without killing yourself in the process.

## Speakers Report

If you are a Master Gardener and would like to speak to area Garden Clubs and civic organizations, please contact Nelda Cooper at 822-1629 or email [coopernelda53@yahoo.com](mailto:coopernelda53@yahoo.com).

There are many already prepared programs on our lap top computer that can be checked out from the Agri Extension office. Also, any of our present speakers would be happy to mentor you as you prepare to speak.

Reminder: Speakers, please send your speaking engagements to me by the 20th of the month so that I can make my report.

Thanks so much for all you do.

Nelda Cooper



In an old child's wagon, seen above.



In an old sheep feed bucket, seen left.

Tom Burr speaks on container gardening with veggies, below:



## 4-H Container Gardening at the Extension Office

There was a class for the 4-H at the Extension Office this last month. Linda Deal Kruse put some containers together to illustrate what could be done:

# Children's Garden Fair

Sunday, October 13th

2:00 - 5:00 PM

Carleen Bright Arboretum

9001 Bosque Blvd.



Sponsored by McLennan County Master Gardeners  
and Carleen Bright Arboretum



Scarecrow Contest



Popping corn-on-the-cob

**Join your children for a few fun-filled hours.**

Making seed cards

Painting rocks

Paper Sombreros

Potting a plant to take home

Scavenger hunt

Worm composting

The Hale Highland Dancers



**Lots more and it's free!**

All children must be  
accompanied by an adult!



# Master Gardeners About Town

Farmers Market Booth in August featured "gardening in small spaces" and Fall gardening. Many interested visitors came by for information and "to Ask a Master Gardener".



Container gardening workshop for 4-H at AgriLife Office.



Steve Chaney, Ft. Worth extension agent and horticulture specialist, spoke to volunteers for Univ. High greenhouse project.



Habitat for Humanities Project. MCMGs provided a gift of a hose, hoe and sprinkler to the family at the dedication.

## 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](http://www.mclennanmastergardeners.org)

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

