



December 2013 Master Gardener Meeting

The December MG meeting will be held at noon on the 10th at the Arboretum Pavilion. This will be our Christmas dinner/party.

Barry Vokes, from England to Texas



Barry Vokes was born in Darwen, England. His family immigrated to America in 1951. Barry met his future wife Eva at the University of Texas in Austin. He graduated from UT, went into the army during the Vietnam era, where he attended Field Artillery Officer Candidate School and graduated as second lieutenant in July 1968. He and Eva married four days later. He was deployed to Vietnam in July of 1969, where he served as artillery forward observer, battalion adjutant and liaison officer.

Following military service, Barry took a job as a health insurance claims examiner. He spent a dozen years in life insurance company home offices and then started a new business with a partner. He sold his interest to his partner in friendly deal in 1985 and founded his own firm, which eventually became a national operation specializing in 403(b) plans. The insurance company he worked with wanted to buy him out, so he sold the business to them in 1996 and then did expert witness work, consulting and investment advising for several years. He retired at end of 2001 but stayed busier than ever. That's still the case today.

Barry spent his retirement years doing volunteer work. He devoted 7 years to American Red Cross. For 3 years following Hurricane Katrina, he ran the financial "back office" (maintaining financial records, paying bills, etc.) for 18 county Red Cross region as a full time volunteer. He also served on the McLennan County Emergency Food and Shelter Board and saw some of the poverty we have here in McLennan County.

After his service to the Red Cross, Barry became interested in becoming a Master Gardener. He graduated from the Master Gardener class of 2008. Barry says he did not become all that interested in gardening until later in life, although he always has had a bit of the English passion for

gardens and beautiful landscapes. His sister was an active gardener, and he caught the gardening bug from her as he admired her garden and started asking her questions.

Barry likes to share his gardening knowledge with others, particularly in how to grow food in tiny backyard spaces. He has a bright, inquisitive mind and is always experimenting and learning more and more about gardening techniques and ideas. He is very helpful in sharing his learning with others and helping them learn more about what methods work best for our area.

His favorite project is Cedar Ridge Elementary School's Green Classroom. He says, "Those little kids mostly come from low income families and they deserve every chance we can give them. It's a delight to see their eyes light up when they get to come out to the school garden once each month during the school year. Volunteering there is satisfying."

Barry's philosophy on gardening is to cooperate with Mother Nature, keep things simple, and be in harmony with the seasons. He believes in starting with amending the soil. He says if you don't start with the soil, you are wasting time and



money and cultivating frustration. He says that you have to accept that some plants are much better suited to our harsh summers than others. He doesn't believe people should garden unless they enjoy it—it's not for everyone.



Barry's is always learning and experimenting with new ideas in gardening, then sharing what he has learned with the rest of us. His gardens reveal his enthusiasm and diligence, along with a lot of hard work and dedication. He raises his vegetables in the Square Foot Gardening System, but he doesn't like to use the grids recommended by Mel Bartholomew, the most famous promoter of the concept. Like your

newsletter editor, Barry finds the grids to be superfluous.

Barry also has some impressive Hugelkultur beds filled with logs and tree trimmings, then soil. He is experimenting with this concept for our part of the world. He also has a keyhole garden and a beautiful rose garden. His guest house is adorned with a wonderful cottage garden. He has also developed an extensive rainwater collection and storage system that is quite inspiring.



As for advice for others, Barry says a new gardener should start small and simple. He says to work with a small plot and gradually expand it as your knowledge grows. Just as he does himself, gardeners should read books on gardening and watch YouTube videos on garden topics that interest them. He says you must accept that sometimes you will fail as you learn the techniques required for success. Barry believes in staying mentally and physically active for as long as possible. He has made new friends as a result of his involvement with MCMG and it has been very good for him in his retirement years.

*from
Sandy Back*

Seeds from Sandy

Can it be; is it so? It should not be possible that another year is coming to a close, yet it is! I feel like the most blessed person ever to know each and every one of you. My heart swelled with pride as I watched your diligent volunteer work this calendar year. You have given of your time and talent to our community as you shared your love



for horticulture and the people that surround us. Each time I participate in a project, I leave thinking what a fabulous group you are and what good things you are doing.

On November 20, ten of us were at Cedar Ridge Elementary School to work with 120 eager Kindergarten through Fifth Grade elementary students in a Green Classroom project. This is one of many volunteer projects we offer to MCMG members. By now I hope you have found your special niche among the many approved projects we offer. It's fun and a joy to work together. Truly, it is more play than work. As we approach another new MCMG year, please select your favorite projects and experience the fun and pleasure of working with other Master Gardeners. Please "take ownership" of at least one project and stamp your own personality on it. You will make new friends and be richly rewarded.

My term of office is drawing to a close and I wish you a wonderful, blessed holiday season. Find time to putter in your own garden, enjoy family and friends in your own home and do some serious, thoughtful relaxing. Perhaps we should learn from the plants we lovingly tend. They go to sleep for the winter and rest for the coming spring. But their roots continue growing throughout the winter, as they prepare for the spring growing season. Should we not be doing that too? It is worth contemplating.

I wish you and yours a special Christmas season, and I close my last column as your president with this poem:

Somehow, not only for Christmas,
But all the long year through,
The joy that you give to others,
Is the joy that comes back to you.
And the more you spend in blessing,
The poor and lonely and sad,
The more of your heart's possessing,
Returns to you glad. - John Greenleaf
Whittier

Go Out and Dig,
Sandy



All About Mulch



Mulching may be the single most important thing you can do for your garden in Central Texas. It's worth learning the art of mulching. There are two fundamental types of mulch – organic and inorganic. Organic mulch comes from living organisms such as bark, straw, leaves, grass clippings, etc. These break down over time and help feed your soil.

Inorganic mulch includes ground up rubber tires, gravel, black plastic and landscape fabric. Inorganic mulches do not decompose. Both types have their place.

Mulch keeps the soil warmer in winter and cooler in summer. It helps keep the soil moist and keeps weeds down. Mulch also helps keep the soil from crusting, prevents soil splashing when it rains and helps prevent soil compaction.

There are pros and cons. Bugs love damp, dark, cool places, and that's what a thick mulch layer provides. Your mulch layer needs to be thick enough to protect the soil and keep your plants comfortable, but don't overdo it. Wood and bark mulches can suffocate plant roots if applied too thickly. Two to three inches is sufficient.

Before you add mulch, add whatever soil amendments are needed and work them into the soil. Then, cover the soil with several layers of old newspapers. Next, place the mulch, two to three inches in depth. Do not apply mulch directly to the plant stems. Leave a space around the base of each plant. And do not mulch right up to your house foundation. You don't want to make it easy for termites.



Where might you want to use inorganic mulch? Pea gravel or smooth stones are suitable for mulching a cactus garden. The summer reflected heat does not much bother cacti. An inch layer of small rocks or pea gravel will help control weeds in foundation plantings. But it will also reflect heat in summer, making your plants uncomfortable.

Black plastic buried under a layer of other mulch will keep the weeds down and the soil moist. Do not use it in poorly

drained areas and do not expose it to sunlight. It's not really a good choice. Clear plastic should only be used temporarily to solarize the soil (kill weed seeds). Mulch from ground rubber tires does not decompose. It will help control weeds but does not feed the soil.

Buying mulch in bulk is cheaper than bagged mulch, but make sure you purchase a quality product. Avoid sour mulch, stored where air cannot circulate through it. Mulch needs to "breathe" or else microbes can form methanol (wood alcohol), acid, ammonia gas and hydrogen sulfide gas. The mulch should be light and fluffy. If you have a home mulch pile, turn it regularly to keep it aerated.

Before you purchase mulch, you'll need to know how much you need. Figure up the surface area to be mulched, and then decide how thickly you want to apply it. A cubic yard of mulch is 27 cubic feet. That will cover 162 square feet with a two inch layer of mulch, or 108 square feet with a three inch layer. To determine how many cubic yards you need, multiply the square footage by the desired depth in inches and divide by 324.

Grass clippings are better left in place on your lawn than used as mulch. They break down quickly and add nitrogen back to the soil. If you do use grass clippings as mulch, a solid mat can form. This should be avoided. Hay is not suitable because it usually contains weed seeds. But properly composted hay and manure make an excellent soil amendment. Straw can be used as mulch, but it's not pretty. It will, however, feed the soil and it breaks down quickly.

Leaf mold makes an excellent soil amendment but it's not a good mulch. It can crust over and shed water, keeping it from the soil beneath. Shredded leaves make great mulch for a vegetable garden. When it decomposes, work it into the soil and add more mulch. Pine bark and pine needle mulch look good and help control weeds. Since pine trees don't grow around here, you will probably have to order it in bags. Shredded hardwood mulch also looks good and suppresses weeds. It decomposes slowly. Wood chips range from good to bad, depending on the quality of the wood. Avoid dyed wood mulch. It does not look natural and chances are it is treated wood from old pallets. Use only seasoned wood chips, not fresh ones. Avoid chips from treated wood. Happy mulching!

Volunteer Opportunities December 2013

Dec., 5, 12, 19	JMG@UHS (clearance Req.) 8-4:30	Tom Burr
December 13	Woodway Elementary Garden Day 8am-3	Marietta Diehl, Lisa Daily
December 14	Downtown Waco Farmer's Market 8-8:30am set up, 1pm depart	Penny Gifford
December 17	JMG@UHS training meeting (no clearance req.) 10am to noon at Extension office	Tom Burr

November 2013 Speaker's Report

November 5th	Margaret Hensen presented her program on Composting and Worm Composting to the Steel Magnolia Garden Club. Ten were in attendance.
November 14th	Jan Serface gave a tour of her garden to the Crawford Garden Club. She talked about ways we can use less water in our gardens. Nine members attended.
November 17th	Margaret Hensen spoke to the Good Times Garden Club about beekeeping, composting, and keyhole gardening. Twenty people attended.
November 20th	Steven Lovecky will speak to the Mexia Garden Club about Cactus and Succulents
November 21st	Jo Von Rosenberg will give her program "Gardening for the Mind & Spirit" to the Hubbard Garden Club.
November 21st	Jene Hering will talk to the McGregor Garden Club about the McGregor Gardens.

McLennan County Master Gardener Monthly Meeting, November 13, 2013

"Anecdotes of Historical Gardens" by Pat Goaley, (1 hr education credit)

Carleen Bright Arboretum, Whitehall Center

Minutes of the Meeting:

President Sandy Back called the meeting to order at 12:05 and asked everyone to look at the ballots that they had received on their way in to the meeting. The vote to be taken was for the 2 at-large members who will join the executive

committee for the calendar year of 2014 and have voice and voting privileges. Ballots were filled out and turned in for counting with results to be announced at the end of the meeting.

Members also voted unanimously to accept the slate of officers for 2014. They include Jeanette Kelly for President, Janet Schaffer for Vice President, David Daniel for Secretary and Andrea Moore for Treasurer. Congratulations were offered to the newly elected officers.

Next Judy Schemeltekopf and Marietta Diehl spoke about the MCMG Christmas Party to be held at the Pavilion building of the Arboretum on Tuesday, December 10 at 6:30 pm.

Reservations: Kris Ford - Everyone needs to make a reservation via telephone or email; please remember to include your spouse if they are coming. Later if your plans change let Kris know.

Centerpieces: Ramona Watson - Each centerpiece should have a garden theme with plant material from your yard. These will be judged and each must have a card listing all the plants used. Ramona has photos available from previous entries. Ask Ramona if you have questions.

Food: Judy Schmeltekopf and Marietta Diehl - Please let either Judy or Marietta know what food you plan to bring. Each dish should be labeled and have the recipe written on a card with the dish or if it is out of our cookbook put the title and the page number.

Minutes: Members were asked if they had any corrections to the minutes as read in The Latest Dirt, with no corrections the minutes were approved. Treasurer's Report: Sherry Matthews said she had copies at the back for any who wanted to see them. She also asked that members who hadn't paid their dues to please do so, and if anyone had receipts they planned to turn in to get them to her very soon.

People needing volunteer hours will find a few more opportunities available on the back of the November meeting agenda; Tom Burr in particular needs volunteers on Dec 5, 12 and 19th at University High, but there are other excellent choices as well.

Sandy Back urged members to please get their hours recorded online. Call Brenda Golubski if you require help.

The results of the at-large vote were very close, but the nominees elected were Jene Hering and Barry Vokes. Both men were thanked for agreeing to serve in the coming year.

Certificates were not available at the time, but Scott Dailey and Rianna Magee have both completed their required

hours and are now members in the McLennan County Master Gardeners Association.

Ila Jean Carothers reminded us that for the Texas Master Gardeners Association we are allowed 2 delegates and 2 alternates that attend the TMGA's quarterly meetings, and she asked who among the members would be interested. The delegates are Jeanette Kelly and Ila Jean, and the alternates are James Prause and Archie Dillard.

It was announced that three of our members have now completed their hours of Specialist Training. Jeanette Kelly earned her hours and is now a Composting Specialist; Barry Vokes and Sherry Matthews have both become Specialists in Plant Propagation. All three were congratulated for their dedication and the many hours they spent pursuing these specialties.

Della Setser brought cookbooks to sale, and Marietta Diehl brought a display of seeds, free to anyone who has need of them.

Sharon Richardson and her co-chair, Jim Seale, will be in charge of the Master Gardener participation in the 2014 B.I.G. Conference. This will be the 56th annual year for this conference which will be on February 4th and 5th, at the Extraco Building in the H.O.T. Fairgrounds. It is attended by ranchers, producers and others in agricultural businesses. Master Gardener volunteers who sign-up will help register attendees and take the money. There are two sessions 8 – 11 and 1 – 4, or all day. Our volunteers working there get a free lunch. Let Sharon or Jim know if this interests you.

Before adjourning Steven Lovecky thanked all the Master Gardeners who helped with the Cactus Society event at the Arboretum.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:55 pm and followed by a program on "Anecdotes of Historical Gardens" by Pat Goaley. All who attend the program may claim 1 hour of education credit.

Respectfully submitted,
Elizabeth Milam, Secretary

MCLENNAN COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS

November 13, 2013 MEETING AND PROGRAM

Members in attendance:.....
Sandy back, Bonnie Belanger, Dick Belanger, Grady Bonner, Tom Burr, Ralph Calhoun, Ila Jean Carothers,

Mark Clark, Catherine Cole, Susan Crawford, David Daniel, Marietta Diehl, Archie Dillard, Pat Dillard, Jane Dossey, Eva FitzGerald, Melody Fitzgerald, Kris Ford, Cindy Geletzke, Patricia Goaley, Joan Harmon, Judy Haller, Margaret Henson, Jene Herring, Peggy Holcomb, Carolyn Hughes, Jeanette Kelly, Missy Kinder, Denise Kinnison, Linda Deal Kruse, Steven Lovecky, Lori Lutz, Cindy Mabry, Patricia Marlin, Sherry Matthews, Louie McDaniel, Barbara Mersinger, Elizabeth Milam, Gerry Milnor, Andrea Moore, Linda Moore, Georgia Peterson, Ernie Petru, Anne Plasek, Robert Powers, James Prause, Carol Reinking, Jennifer Rich, Sharon Richardson, Sharon Romano, Janet Schaffer, Judy Schmeltekopf, Sandra Scott, Ann Sefcik, Dawn Segrest, Della Setser, Betty Tawwater, Tina Traynor, Mary Lou Trice, Barry Vokes, Jo von Rosenberg, Sonia Warriner, Ramona Watson, Dorothy Whitehead, MJ Whitehead, Amber Wilhite

(No interns were present.)

Changes in Membership

Joann Clafferty, resigned
Edrena Smith, resigned
Scott Daily, newly certified
Rianna Magee, newly certified

**HOURS FOR THE MCLENNAN CO.
MASTER GARDENERS
10/26/13-11/20/13**

VOLUNTEER HOURS	408
EDUCATION HOURS	1
(The hours listed below are included in the above totals.)	
ARBORETUM	2
• Docent Program	2
ASK A MASTER GARDENER PHONE LINE	14
CONTINUING EDUCATION	1
CEDAR RIDGE ELEMENTARY GREEN CLASSROOM	61
EXTENSION SHADE GARDEN	3
JMG@UHS	192
MCMG ADMINISTRATION/CLERICAL	46
NEWSPAPER ARTICLES/NOTICES/LATEST DIRT	2
OTHER VOLUNTEER HOURS	34
SPEAKER'S BUREAU	5
WACO FARMERS' MARKET	17
WOODWAY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL GREEN CLASSROOM	18
FLOWER POT RECYCLING	10
HABITAT FOR HUMANITY	3
MCGREGOR DEMONSTRATION GARDEN	1

MCMG Christmas Party

University High Project

Things are cooking over at the UHS Project. After the students planted purple potatoes, Linda Deal Kruse contributed a purple potato salad in honor of the greenhouse project. Shown here in the greenhouse, Linda got into the spirit with her Trojan taters t-shirt, too.



Purple Potato Salad

2 lbs. small purple potatoes
1/4 purple onion, diced
2 celery stalks, chopped
1/4 c fresh dill, chopped
(less if dried)
1/4 c fresh parsley, chopped
(less if dried)
1 c mayonnaise
1/4 c Dijon mustard
1 t celery seed
1/2 t cayenne pepper
1 T white vinegar
Juice of 1 lemon
salt and pepper to taste



Scrub and quarter potatoes. Boil in salted water till tender, not mushy (about 10 minutes)

Drain, rinse in cold water. Drain well.
Toss with onion, celery, dill and parsley.
Stir together mayonnaise, mustard, celery seed, cayenne, vinegar and lemon.

Pour over potatoes and toss (gently) to coat. Don't mash.
Season with salt and pepper.

*The purple potatoes taste just like white potatoes.

We hope you can join us for fun, fellowship, and friendship at our annual MCMG Christmas Party!



When: Dec. 10, at 6:30 p.m.

Where: Carleen Bright Arboretum Pavilion

In the spirit of "giving", the MCMGs will donate books to Storybook Christmas this year.

(If you feel so inclined to donate a book, there will be a "drop box" at the party, and Marietta will deliver the books to Storybook Christmas)

Contact Ramona: ramonawatson@yahoo.com or Judy: [Judy Schmeltekopf@baylor.edu](mailto:Judy_Schmeltekopf@baylor.edu) for volunteering a "natural" centerpiece.

Contact Marietta diehlmd@yahoo.com to let her know what favorite dish you are bringing. We could use more side dishes (have 11). We have meat (have 13) & bread (have 5). It has been suggested, and it might be fun to make a recipe from our cookbook, if you like!

RSVP to Kris Ford pford@hot.rr.com by Dec. 6th for reservation. (Please let her know if you need to cancel, also.)

Ramona Watson is in charge of table centerpieces and is still needing volunteers. She has requested that you contact her at ramonawatson@yahoo.com if interested in making a centerpiece.



MCMG OFFICE REPORT:

The "Ask a Master Gardener" telephone line and MCMG office will be closed until February.



Thanks to each of the 60 persons who worked in the office the past year. That is barely over half of our membership. Some volunteered multiple times. Please make it a personal goal for each member to volunteer for one Tuesday or Thursday afternoon in the office beginning in February, 2014. This service to the AgriLife program is valuable and should be supported by all members.

We also have an excellent selection of books and horticultural material in our office library which can be checked out year round.

Ila Jean Carothers

Hints for Master Gardeners from Master Gardeners

John and I attended a seminar in early Oct. at the Rose Emporium. Glenn Schroeter – Production Manager at the Rose Emporium presented a class, “Here We Grow Again”. He showed us the way he does his cutting for the Emporium and the success he has. He uses the cloning gel “ROOTECH (Original Cloning Gel)” to root all of the roses there with great success. He pours a small amount into a separate lid, plate or something that you can dip the root into thus not spreading any kind of disease or fungus into the jar. We purchased a 2 oz jar from the Rose Emporium and it cost \$26.00 which he said would last us years. He also stated that if you use the hormone rooting powder that you are to make a cut into the root tip and just quickly drag it through the powdered rooting hormone. I have always stuck the tip into the powder and packed on as much as I possibly could. Glenn said packing it onto the cutting leads to disease, fungus and rotting of the cuttings.

Dawn Segrest

Happy Holidays and a Great New Year!

On behalf of the staff of the *Latest Dirt*, I would like to thank everyone who helped put our newsletter together. We could not do it without your input, photos, articles, and ideas. It is our hope that this will continue to be your newsletter, personalized with the articles you want to see. We are looking forward to 2014.

Master Gardeners are tasked with educating the public on how to garden here in Central Texas, with respect for the land, the people, and the miracle of nature itself. We have put together some New Year’s Resolutions that you may want to incorporate in 2014.

1. Be mindful of the impact of our gardening on the environment and the plants and animals that live here. Make wise, informed decisions about the use of pesticides, fertilizers, and possible invasive species in our recommendations to others.
2. Be sure that we have researched what we teach others who consider us experts. They trust us to know what we are talking about.
3. Make it a goal to continually expand our expertise in gardening. Take advantage of the wonderful educational opportunities that we have as Master Gardeners.
4. Don’t forget to report our volunteer hours. People are counting on us.
5. Volunteer cheerfully and often.

When I joined Master Gardeners in 2006, it was during one of the most difficult times in my life. I thought I would become a member of an organization that would increase my gardening know-how. What I did not expect was to belong to an organization that lifted me up, made me feel appreciated, and allowed me to get to know some of the best people in the area. Our organization has enriched my life in many ways, and I am sure that you feel the same way. Let’s make 2014 our best year ever!

Melody Fitzgerald
Editor

Master Gardeners About Town

Sandy Back Katz has turned over the leadership of Cedar Ridge Elem. to the very loving and capable hands of Nelda Cooper and Ann Sefcik. The Cedar Ridge volunteers celebrate with lunch in between classes on Day in the Garden. (right)
Sandy receives a fairy garden from the Cedar Ridge gang. (far right)



Margaret Henson shares her expertise with the Steel Magnolias. →



Sherry Henson and Rianna Magee help build a compost pile at the Biointensive gardening class at World Hunger Relief, Inc. near Waco. (below)



Ila Jean Carothers speaking on container gardening at University High School. (left)

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

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

