



January 2014 Master Gardener Meeting

The January MG meeting will be held at noon on the 8th at the Arboretum Pavilion.

Program: How to Construct and Use a Keyhole Garden—Deb Tolman

Sandy Back Katz—MCMG Will Miss You!



Sandy Back was born in Waco. Her dad worked for the federal government and the family moved often. Sandy attended public schools in Memphis, Kansas City, Falls Church VA, Kerrville TX, Washington DC and Fairfax VA. She earned a BS from Longwood University (VA), the second oldest university in America. She was just one course short

of her master's degree when her son's birth brought a halt to her studies.

Sandy and Andy met in the second grade and had a mutual crush. They reunited in high school, dated through high school and college and married in 1974. They had a son, Ryan, and two grandchildren, Cody (8) and Justin (6). Sandy and Andy moved to Waco in 1986. After a long illness, Andy passed away in 2011, filling all who know and love Sandy with deep sadness.

Her grandparents were gardeners and Sandy remembers picking vegetables with them. Her mom and dad always kept a lovely yard, and her mom would freeze or can the harvest from their garden. Sandy worked part time at a nursery near D.C. and says, "I was bitten with the bug of wanting every plant I saw there." She followed her dad in the garden and loved to run the lawnmower. Says Sandy: "I still do my best thinking while mowing."

Sandy wanted to become a Master Gardener, but had to wait until she retired from teaching in 2003. She joined the 2004 Intern Class and "loved every minute of it".

Sandy's many friends will always associate her with the Cedar Ridge Elementary School Green Classroom Project. After retiring, Sandy met Andrea Nolan, Principal at Cedar Ridge. Ms. Nolan was seeking retired teachers to tutor low-achieving students. After interviewing Sandy, Ms. Nolan said "Can you start tomorrow?" Yes.

The school received a "green classroom" grant, but the teacher in charge transferred elsewhere. Knowing that Sandy was a Master Gardener intern, Ms. Nolan asked her to take on the project. Sandy designed the Cedar Ridge garden. The MCMG executive committee allowed Sandy to earn her volunteer hours at Cedar Ridge. Along the way she designed the Texas Superstar Bed at the Arboretum, which took lots of planning and installation work. More recently, at Jene Hering's request Sandy designed the pretty "Lone Star" garden in McGregor.

At Cedar Ridge the area was a weed patch where students parked their bikes. The first item completed was a paved area where students could hear an orientation before being assigned to specific learning stations. Fellow interns helped Sandy install the garden, an oasis of serenity and tranquility in the midst of a bustling elementary school campus. Teachers and staff often take garden breaks as a getaway. It's shady, peaceful and has its own micro-climate. Plants flourish! The MCMG "Cedar Ridge Gang" cherishes that garden. Ms. Nolan is extremely supportive and the students love their garden. It's a satisfying volunteer experience.

Asked about her gardening philosophy, Sandy says, "I think we learn by trial and error in the garden, and should plant things we love that bring us pleasure. I have learned from my mistakes and from being a Master Gardener." Sandy's special interest is home landscaping.

Sandy now has a new gardening challenge. She will be restoring a century old period home in Fayette County, with its somewhat neglected garden. Sandy is determined to use plants complementary to the era in which the house was built. Sandy met Charlie Katz, who lost his wife of many years at about the same time Sandy lost Andy. They both cared for their spouses during long final illnesses. Charlie, a resourceful and handy fellow, is also an avid gardener. They married recently.

It's a bittersweet story for us. We are thrilled for Sandy and Charlie. But Sandy will be moving to La Grange to be with Charlie. So she will transfer her TMG membership, but not right away. Sandy has agreed to stay with us for a while, and Charlie is supportive. Sandy counsels patience in gardening. Deferred gratification is better than a quick fix. Choose the right plant for the right spot and give it time and room to reach maturity. With perennials, "the first year it sleeps, the second year it creeps, and the third year it leaps". She emphasizes amending the soil first.

What a resourceful person Sandy is! To help with expenses during retirement, she taught piano and swimming lessons, ran pet-sitting and landscape design businesses and still managed to keep her sanity. She loves to read, shop, visit with friends and decorate her home. Between Sandy and Charlie, they have six beloved pets.

Fayette County is in Zone 8b (we are in Zone 8a). It's a bit warmer. The soil is better, more like sandy loam and easier to work. But they seem to get less rainfall. Bluebonnet Master Gardener Association consists of four counties (Austin, Colorado, Fayette and Washington). Their annual requirements are more stringent and their dues are \$22.

Charlie is building a keyhole garden for Sandy and will be constructing a potting bench and garden tool shed. Sandy looks forward to the new gardening challenges in Fayette County. We will miss Sandy, but she promises to visit us often.



From Jeanette Kelly
Notes from the President—

Happy New Year!

This last year certainly passed quickly, and here we are again with a brand new team of leaders. We hope to keep following the positive path set for us as we continue into the new year.

While preparing for this year I have been looking back at all of our past and present leadership, projects, accomplishments, and membership. Each one of you has a talent and has contributed to making our organization what it is today.

Do you remember when you made the decision to take the MCMG course and become a MCMG? I do. I was going to learn as much as I could and leave. Well, that was not quite what happened. Once I started volunteering, I became passionate about our organization and what it stands for. My wish for you this year is to find something in our organization that you can become passionate about, no

matter how large or small. It takes ALL of us volunteering together to make us strong.

You have elected a dedicated positive team of leaders, so let's all volunteer together and have a wonderful year!

Happy gardening,
Jeanette



Compost

We know about compost, right? Well, mostly. Actually, there is a lot to know about compost. The practice of composting is at least 2,000 years old and maybe older still. In the early Roman Empire, organic material was gathered into piles to decay until the next growing season. This works pretty well in temperate climates. No fuss, rush or muss – just pile it up and compost happens in a few months. It wasn't perfect, but it worked then and still does.

In the early 20th Century the process of composting was improved in Europe. Austrian Rudolph Steiner developed a system called *biodynamics* and Another Austrian, Annie Francé-Harrar, developed a scientific basis for a humus-compost system. She was appointed by the Mexican government to improve soil fertility and spent nine years there to set up a large humus organization to improve soil fertility, fight erosion and soil degradation.

Early composting techniques were effective but slow. Attempts were made to speed the process. With modern technology, compost can be made in just two weeks, but why rush it?

Mastering the art of composting is crucial in organic gardening. The simplest composting method is building a pile of wet organic material such as leaves and "green" kitchen scraps and then waiting for Mother Nature to convert it into compost. It's reliable and slow. At the other end of the spectrum you have the science of composting, with measured inputs of shredded carbon and nitrogen-rich materials. It's methodical, carefully monitored and the pile is turned regularly. Aerobic bacteria, maybe aided by a few worms and fungi, convert those inputs into heat, carbon dioxide and ammonium. The ammonium is further converted into nitrites and nitrates – ideal for nourishing plants.

Good compost helps condition the soil and it fertilizes the plants. It supplies humus and it's a natural pesticide. Four inputs are needed: carbon, nitrogen, oxygen and water.

Getting the ratios correct helps the process by quickly heating the pile. A hot pile will often smoke from released water vapor as it is turned. So turning the pile and keeping it damp is essential to avoid oxygen depletion. The hotter the pile, the more attention it needs. The ideal interior temperature is 135° -- 160° F. At that temperature, pathogens are destroyed.

Ask a dozen experts about the proper carbon/nitrogen ratio and you'll likely get several different answers. In the real world, "approximately" is often good enough, and that's the case here. Mix equal parts of carbon and nitrogen *by volume* and you'll get it pretty close to correct. Experiment and pretty soon you'll have a formula that works for you. Keep in mind that almost all organic materials contain both carbon and nitrogen. The ratio is about 15:1 for fresh grass clippings and 50:1 for dry leaves.

Dry leaves can produce some of the best compost. Shred the leaves finely, build your pile and walk away. That's about it. No additional nitrogen is needed. In time you'll wind up with good, rich compost. Alternatively, shred the leaves a bit less finely and apply this as mulch. It will gradually break down and feed the soil. Dry leaves are valuable. It's a pity that so many leaves get thrown away. If you have an antique *pot de chambre* or brass spittoon, think about polishing them up. Ahem, urine – yes, pee – is an excellent source of nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium. City dwellers will need to be more discreet, of course, but sneak out and pour it on your compost pile when nobody is looking. It will help increase the temperature of your pile and speed up the process. And no, it won't smell (for long). Do not put animal or human feces on your compost pile. Pee is good; poo is not. One caveat: if you are taking a bunch of pills regularly, you don't want that residue in your compost pile.

If you have access to farm animal manure and spoiled hay, straw or sawdust – just about any organic animal bedding material – you can compost it quickly and easily. If horses or cattle pee and poop on the hay, so much the better. Poultry manure mixed with sawdust or straw is also good for composting.

We should all make use of compost tea. You steep finished compost in water for a minimum of three days. An aerator will help, but frequent stirring works too. It is not a substitute for fertilizer, but foliar application benefits plants, as does a soil drench. Compost is a fascinating subject.

Volunteer Opportunities January 2014

Jan. 9, 16, 23, and 30	JMG@UHS (clearance Req.) 8-4:30	Tom Burr
January 11	Downtown Waco Farmer's Market 8-8:30am set up, 1pm depart	Penny Gifford Rianna Magee
January 20	MLK Day of Service	Mary Lou Trice Rianna Magee
Feb. 4 & 5	Blackland Income Growth	Tom Burr Sharon Richardson, Jim Seale

McLennan County Master Gardener Christmas Dinner and Meeting, December 10, 2013

Carleen Bright Arboretum, Pavilion

1 Hour Education Credit for Attending and Learning about the Centerpieces on the Tables

Master Gardeners met at the Arboretum's Pavilion building for the December meeting which was called to order at 7:30 pm following our special holiday meal provided by the members, great cooks one and all. Sandy Back welcomed everyone, and minutes from the last meeting were approved as read. Sandy said the 2014 Budget did have some excess funds, but that these would be appropriated in 2014 for the various education projects that master gardeners support.

New members Scott Daily, Rianna Magee and Cynthia Krzywonski were congratulated and welcomed as our newest members. Then Sandy called up all the 5 year members and awarded them their pins followed by Eva FitzGerald who received her 15 year pin.

Sharon Richardson reminded everyone of the BIG Conference on February 4th and 5th. Please call Sharon to volunteer or ask questions.

At this point in the evening we were treated to an entertaining performance of holiday music by barber shop quartet members Art Reinking, Dick Belanger, Jim Ferguson and Bob Sowder.

Following the festive singing, officers for 2014 were recognized: Jeanette Kelly as president, Janet Schafer as vice-president, David Daniel as secretary, and Andrea

Moore as treasurer. Barry Vokes was recognized as one of the two at-large members for 2014. Jene Hering was recognized as the second member elected for the at-large position.

Sandy Back then turned to our hospitality committee for the evening's party: Kris Ford, the overall chairman, Marietta Diehl, in charge of the food, Ramona Watson, in charge of the table centerpieces and Judy Schmeltekopf, in charge of securing prizes for the evening. Sandy complimented them all on the excellent job they did individually and as a team. Winning centerpieces were announced and prizes given. Members were reminded that studying these centerpieces and observing what materials were use from the various members' backyards was worth 1 hour of education credit for us all. Then drawings were held and prizes for those were handed out as well.

Incoming President Jeanette Kelly gave us some remarks about the upcoming year, but primarily bestowed praise on Sandy Back for all the many projects she had accomplished as our past president of the last 2 years. Some beautiful sounding wind chimes were given to Sandy on behalf of the outgoing officers. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully,

Elizabeth Milam, Secretary

MCMG Members Attendance 12/10/13:

Sandy Back, Bonnie Belanger, Dick Belanger, Sandy Burleson, Tom Burr, Ila Jean Carothers, Merle Chapman, Cathy Cole, Nelda Cooper, Lisa Daily, Scott Daily, David Daniel, Emily Davidson, Marietta Diehl, Archie Dilliard, Pat Dillard, Jane Dossey, Eva FitzGerald, Kris Ford, Patricia Goaley, Brenda Golubski, Joan Harmon, Judy Haller, Carolyn Hughes, Jeanette Kelly, Taddie Kelly, Missy Kinder, Denise Kinnison, Steven Lovecky, Lori Lutz, Rianna Magee, Anita March, Pat Marlin, Sherry Matthews, Louie McDaniel, Elizabeth Milam, Andrea Moore, Georgia Peterson, Ernie Petru, Anne Plasek, Robert Powers, Sherry Prather, James Prause, Art Reinking, Carol Reinking, Jennifer Rich, Sharon Richardson, Sharon Romano, Janet Schaffer, Valerie Schillaci, Judy Schmeltekopf, Ann Sefcik, Dawn Segrest, Jan Serface, Della Sester, Tina Traynor, Cathy Valentine, Barbara Vance, Barry Vokes, Jo Von Rosenberg, Sonia Warriner, Ramona Watson and Carol Wood

Guests: 27

HOURS FOR THE MCLENNAN CO.

-----MASTER GARDENERS-----
11/26/23-12/29/13

Welcome New Members

Our 3 newest members are: Scott Daily, Rianna Magee and Cynthia Kryswonski. Welcome!



Cynthia Kryswonski



Scott Daily



Rianna Magee

*Welcome to
MCMG*

VOLUNTEER HOURS	281.25
EDUCATION HOURS	23
MILES DRIVEN	1425
(The hours listed below are included in the above totals.)	
JMG@UHS	151
MCMG ADMINISTRATION/CLERICAL	56
PUBLISHING	66
WACO FARMERS' MARKET	10
FLOWER POT RECYCLING	2

2013 Annual Report

MILES DRIVEN	27,588
CONTINUING EDUCATION HOURS	1,159.50
VOLUNTEER HOURS	7,709.20
2013 ANNUAL VOLUNTEER HOURS BY PROJECTS	
Ask a MG phone line	402
BIG Conference	217

Children's Garden Fair	327
Carleen Bright Arboretum Docent Program	38
SuperStar Bed	121
Trailside Garden	86
Cedar Ridge Green Classroom	500
Beasts 'n Blooms 4/20/13	83
Shade Garden	76
Flower Pot Recycling	94
Gardener's Gathering	34
JMG@ UHS	1279
McGregor Demonstration Garden	133
MCMG Admin/Clerical	982
MCMG Cookbook	313
MLK Day of Service 1/21/13	17
MCMG Plant Sale 5/18/13	390
Publishing	186
Other Volunteer hours	903
Speaker's Bureau	198
Waco Farmer's Market	350
Woodway Elem. Green Classroom	234

Free Gardening Books:

Melody Fitzgerald is bringing some wonderful gardening books she has collected through the years to the MCMG January meeting. These books will be free for the taking for any Master Gardener who wants



them. If any are left after the meeting, the rest can go to our library selection at the county extension office or the Waco Public Library, whoever would want them. Melody's husband got an enormous big screen TV for Christmas and no longer has room for all her books, so some have had to go. Please help her out and take one or two or more of these gardening books off her hands.

Hints for Master Gardeners from Master Gardeners

You can make garden markers for your plants using the kind of craft clay that you bake to harden. We have used these markers for years and they stand up to all kinds of weather. We like to use the large cartons of clay colored Sculpey. You will need to buy a set of letters of the alphabet that can be imprinted into the clay. Both our major craft stores have these available where their clay is sold. Ours are in a pill container sorted alphabetically to make finding the right letters easier.

Roll the clay out with a dowel or rolling pin, shaping into an oval. Make a hole at the top, then press the letters onto the clay to emboss them into the clay. Bake according to directions. They can be hung from the plant with a decorative wire (seen below in blue) that fits through the hole.

UHS Greenhouse Project Update

The UHS Greenhouse had a plant sale on December 20th. The students harvested vegetables to be sold, including greens and several varieties of peppers growing in flats. The income from the sale will help with the funds needed to buy seeds and supplies for next season.

Greens grown by the students in the JMG program were also donated to the Myer Center for Mission Waco and they were thrilled. They serve lunch 2 days a week. They get very few fresh vegetables and these greens were gratefully accepted.



MLK Day of Service 2014

A Project of the Heart of Texas Urban Gardening Coalition

To promote Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s vision of building broad and diverse community coalitions, the [Heart of Texas Urban Gardening Coalition](#) (UGC) is coordinating gardening and clean up projects throughout the city of Waco as part of the MLK Day of Service on January 20, 2014 from 12:00pm-3:00pm.

As Doctor King said, "everyone can be great, because everyone can serve."

How to sign up:

Browse our service sites and choose the site that fits you best! We have options for January 18 and 19, if you are unable to serve on the 20th.

[Campus Kitchens](#) — Baylor Campus, FCS Kitchen, **Saturday, January 18 2-4pm**

[Campus Kitchens](#) — Baylor Campus, FCS Kitchen, **Sunday, January 19, 2-4pm**

[Campus Kitchens](#) — Baylor Campus, FCS Kitchen, Monday, January 20, **9am-1pm**

[World Hunger Relief Farm](#)

[St. Lukes Community Garden](#)

[Provident Heights Elementary School Garden](#)

[Baylor University Community Garden](#)

[Waco Wetlands](#)

[Lakeview Baptist Church Community Garden](#)

[Brazos River Cleanup, Keep Waco Beautiful](#)

For more information about future service events, please contact: Elizabeth Ross – Heart of Texas Urban Gardening Coalition by email: vista@worldhungerrelief.org



Carolyn Hughes 2nd Place Centerpiece winner



Sonia Warriner 3rd Place Centerpiece winner



Sonia Warriner 4th Place Centerpiece winner

Winners of the Christmas Party Centerpiece Contest



Rianna Magee's 1st Place Centerpiece winner

Master Gardeners About Town



Five year pin recipients



Linda Deal Kruse with student at UHS Greenhouse



Eva FitzGerald receiving her 15 year pin



Cathy Cole at our last cleanup of the shade garden



Louie McDaniel with students at greenhouse

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

