



The "DIG IT" News

A GREENHOUSE of her own

It's a dream come true for Suzy Buchanan

PAGE 9



HIGHLAND LAKES MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION

President's Corner

A new year... new plans... and a new President!

Happy New Year, Master Gardeners...

I hope this finds each of you in good health on this January day. As I write this, I am hearing a forecast of rain, snow and cold weather... brrr. But then, just a day ago, it was in the 60s and a beautiful Texas winter day! I am sure each of you knows the saying "If you don't like Texas weather, just wait a few minutes, it will probably change."

I am sure many of you are already looking at seed catalogs and planning your next garden. I'm not much of a winter gardener, but the winter garden can be full of wonderful vegetables such as onions, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, broccoli, lettuce and kale. And, even though it is way too early, I have already started dreaming of fresh tomatoes, squash and green beans!

Last year was a challenge for our organization. COVID-19 forced us to cancel meetings and then learn a new way to meet remotely via Zoom. Continuing in 2021, we will still be under restrictions and need to meet via Zoom for a while. Hopefully, with the availability of vaccines, we will be able to resume in-person meetings later this year. But the safety of our membership is of the utmost importance and will be our first consideration.

On the positive side... our HLMGA calendar is starting with the Lawn and Garden Show on schedule for March 27. Roxanne Dunegan and the committee are hard at work planning, contacting vendors and working on getting the word out that we are back! We have moved from the Community Center in Burnet to a new location at the Burnet Show Barn. This location is giving us a lot of room to spread out and safely have a good turnout.

Next up will be our 2021 Certification Class. Gail Eltgroth moved the start date from February to June 7 in hopes that COVID will be more under control by then and allow in-person meetings. Our 2020 class members who were not able to certify last year are invited to attend this 2021 class. Hopefully we will see and meet them all, in person, soon.

I want to thank you for entrusting me to be your President in 2021 and ask for your support. I will do my best to serve the Highland Lakes Master Gardener Association.

Carolyn Stephens

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817-874-2138

Find the latest HLMGA news online!

burnetcountyhighlandlakesmastergardener.org

 facebook.com/HighlandLakesMasterGardeners



The "Dig It" News is a publication of the Highland Lakes Master Gardener Association – written by gardeners, for gardeners! Please send all content for publication to editor Gail Braymen at gebfoto@gmail.com. Deadline is the 28th of the month for the following month's issue. The "Dig It" News is published every month except February and August.



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Tuesday, February 16, 2021 • 2 p.m.

VIA ZOOM ONLY

Watch your email or check the HLMGA website at burnetcountyhighlandlakesmastergardener.org for the meeting link.

**PROGRAM: Ask an Arborist –
A Question and Answer Session**

Presented by Clarence Biddy and other arborists from Bartlett Tree Experts

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2021

From the MG Membership Committee

Again, there are no in-person meetings or presentations scheduled that would offer Advanced Training credit during January and February from any of the local nature-oriented organizations.

Also, there are no classes scheduled at Backbone Valley Nursery, The Natural Gardener in Austin or the San Antonio Botanical Garden in San Antonio.

However, virtual classes are available both months.

JANUARY

JANUARY 19 — “**Schoolyard Habitats: Restoring Native Habitat One Schoolyard at a Time**” with Jillian Bell, 6–7:15 p.m. (1.5 hr credit), a live webinar from the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin and sponsored by New Directions in the American Landscape. Fee: free. Pre-registration required at wildflower.org/learn/adults. Find the calendar for January 2021, scroll down to this class, click on Find Out More, then click on Register at NDAL.

FEBRUARY

Four virtual classes are scheduled for February at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, 4801 La Crosse Ave., Austin. All four require pre-registration notices from you: (1) go to wildflower.org/learn/adults; (2) scroll down to the February 2021 program list; (3) find the event you want and click on “Find out more;” (4) click on “Register” and follow those instructions.

LBJ Wildflower Center Virtual Classes

FEBRUARY 2 — “**NDAL Webinar: Navigating Race and Inclusivity in Community Gardens**” with Sam Mirghavameddin, 11 a.m.–12:30 p.m., (1.5

hr credit). Fee: free. Pre-registration required (see above). Sponsored at the Wildflower Center by New Directions in the American Landscape.

FEBRUARY 6 & 13 — “**The Science of Pollination**” with Dr. Alice LeDuc, 1–3 p.m. (2 hr credit each). Fee: \$40 for both classes. Pre-registration required (see above); click “Register for the Series.”

FEBRUARY 17 — “**NDAL Webinar: Bird-friendly Home Landscapes**” with Jillian Bell, 12–1:15 p.m. (1 to 1.5 hrs Credit). Fee: \$28. Pre-registration required (see above); click “Register at NDAL.” Sponsored at the Wildflower Center by New Directions in the American Landscape.

FEBRUARY 27 — “**The Science of Native Plant Dyes**” with Dr. Alice LeDuc, 1–3 p.m. (2 hr credit). Fee: \$25. Pre-registration required (see above).

ONGOING

Members may earn Advanced Training and Volunteer Service hours with the Book Reading Activity. Created in 2020 due to restrictions brought on by the COVID pandemic, the activity allows members to read and report on gardening-related books to keep up with their annual MG certification requirements. HLMGA President Carolyn Stephens has approved the continuation of the activity through at least June 2021. See the December 2020 issue of the Dig It, page 5, for full details and a list of approved books.

SPECIAL NOTE: Watch for additional notices during the month about webinars, Zoom classes, etc., that are approved for MG advanced training credit. (P.S. If you find a virtual class about gardening that looks interesting, please notify Ray Buchanan at drraybuch@gmail.com.)

Certification Class delayed until June

By Gail Eltgroth,
Certification Class Coordinator

The 2021 Certification Classes have been rescheduled to begin June 7. Yes, that will be on Mondays from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. This gives us time to come out from COVID restrictions, and switching to Monday will avoid bumping up against the Association meetings.

Our theme will be Gardening with Purpose, thriving not just

surviving. The application and additional information are available on the HLMGA website. Invite your new neighbor or anyone who would like to learn more about gardening in Central Texas.

There are still a few slots for volunteer service during classes; contact Gail Eltgroth at geltgroth@gmail.com.

Welcome, new Master Gardeners!



Eight new Master Gardeners were officially installed by Burnet County Extension Agent Kelly Tarla during the Dec. 8, 2020, HLMGA meeting. They are Anelicia Cheney-Campbell, Pat Ivey, Jo Keller, Tania Lichtenstein, Staci McGuire, May Miller, Lanetta Sprott, and Connie Stein.

Kelly also recognized two members of the 2020 Certification Class who have completed their training and will soon finish their required service. They are Gary Hoste and Sheralyn Nobles.



Anelicia Cheney-Campbell



Pat Ivey



Jo Keller



Tania Lichtenstein



Staci McGuire



May Miller



Lanetta Sprott



Connie Stein



Gary Hoste



Sheralyn Nobles

WASH YOUR HANDS Volunteer Service Opportunities **STAY SAFE**
JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2021
From the MG Membership Committee

HLMGA members are encouraged to follow social distancing protocols to protect themselves and others during volunteer activities.

Project sites are under the supervision of the Project Chairs. Therefore, no one should show up at a project site expecting to do Volunteer Service unless specific permission has been obtained from the Project Chair. Availability of VS activity as well as schedules, etc., at each project site are up to the Project Chair exclusively.

• HARTH Foundation (Greg Cockrill – jgcockrill@yahoo.com)

• Horseshoe Bay Church Garden (Vicki Adcock – txrunner55@att.net)

• The King’s Garden (Keith Atwood – keithatwood@hotmail.com)

• Oaks Nursing Home Courtyard Garden (Christy Stephens – cnt78611@yahoo.com)

• AgriLife Extension Office Building (Amy Parke – steveamyparke@yahoo.com)

• The Garden (Suzy Rowley – suzyrowley@gmail.com).



In Memoriam Rose Lackey

We believe Rose became a Master Gardener in 2000 and earned her Emeritus status in 2012. She remained an actively involved member until 2018 when her health became an issue.

While an active member, Rose was involved as an instructor for the new class for several years, Show Chairman for the Lawn and Garden show, and even President for two years. As President, she worked with the prison to develop gardens for fresh vegetables for the prisoners.

It seems that gardening was one of Rose's true loves. She held propagation classes at her greenhouse for associates for many years and shared the grounds of her home for Master Gardener picnics and plant exchanges. Rose enjoyed teaching the students of the Burnet Middle School so much that she took part in propagation at the greenhouse up until 2018.

Rose was instrumental in bringing back the Burnet County



Area Fair after it was dormant for 10 years. She was actively involved in the Fair until 2018, serving as President for two years.

Rose had a reputation as a doer! If you needed something, just challenge Rose and, whatever it was, she would get it done. She designed several flower and vegetable beds for the Bertram Library for their children's program, including drought-tolerant butterfly gardens.

The first time I saw Rose, she had said something funny and had her head back, just laughing away. Such a great laugh... such a great lady. Everyone in our community will miss her.

The board asked that any kind of end-of-year gift be used for a donation in Rose's honor, so the HLMGA will be making a \$100 donation to the Burnet County Area Fair for the Rose Lackey Scholarship Fund.

~ By Lida Woodul

Put your Zoom face on!

Four tips to improve your virtual presence



By Lanetta Sprott

It's a new world we live in due to COVID. Thank goodness we discovered Zoom and can now stay in touch, have meetings and conduct business for our organization! Of course, the virtual meeting concept is not as good as face-to-face, but it is what it is.

When all this began, the concept of Zoom was new to me. Maybe it was new to you, as well. Even though we've been meeting via Zoom for several months now, I went on a mission to read about what tips the experts had to share that answer my question: How can we make virtual meetings a better experience for all participants? I read through many websites and found some common themes.

1. The number one tip was to have the camera at face or shoulder height. If it means setting the device on a stack of books, a box or something else, do it! When looking "down" at the camera the participant is looking up your nose! Not attractive!

2. The second suggestion most mentioned was to look straight into the camera when speaking, rather than at someone (or yourself!) within a Zoom window. This has been the hardest thing for me to remember! When someone is speaking, whether in person or via Zoom, we appreciate it when they make direct eye contact.

3. Another common thread discussed was being mindful of our background. What is behind us — such as a bright light coming in through a window, or clutter or an open door to a bathroom — can be distracting to others.

4. And last, but not least, smile! We know everyone is glancing around to see new and familiar faces. It makes the heart happy to see a smile on the face of like-minded people!

See you at the next meeting!

JANUARY

Tuesday, January 12

Permaculture – Working with Nature, Not Against It
Presented by Mia Anguiano, Owner of Full Circle Urban Permaculture Landscape Company

FEBRUARY

Tuesday, February 16

Ask an Arborist – A Question and Answer Program
Presented by Clarence Bidy and other arborists from Bartlett Tree Experts

MARCH

Tuesday, March 9

Creating a Hummingbird Hotspot
Presented by Kathleen Scott, Comal Master Gardener and lifestyle writer

SAVE THE DATES!

**Highland Lakes Master Gardener Programs
January through June, 2021**

Provided by Susan Young

All programs will be presented via Zoom due to COVID-19 until further notice. Zoom links will be emailed to all members a few days before each meeting and posted on our website. For further information or suggestions, please contact Susan Young at susanyoung819@gmail.com. Fall programs will be announced by late spring.

APRIL

Tuesday, April 13

Worms in the Garden
Presented by Brian Fraus, owner of Texas Big Worm

MAY

Tuesday, May 11

How to Become a Drip!
Presented by Suzy Buchanan, HLMGA Master Gardener

JUNE

Tuesday, June 8

All About Oak Wilt
Presented by Kelly Tarla, Burnet County AgriLife Extension



22nd Annual Hill Country



Lawn & Garden Show

Saturday, March 27, 2021
9 AM – 3 PM



NEW LOCATION:
Burnet Rodeo Barn
1301 Houston Clinton Dr.
Burnet, TX

Free Admission

Sponsored by Highland Lakes Master Gardener Association
Contact: Roxanne Dunegan, Show Chair, roxdunegan@gmail.com
Website: www.burnetcountyhighlandlakemastergardener.org

- Vendors selling
 - Succulents, Native Plants, Yard Art
 - Vegetable and Potted Plants
 - Gardening Supplies, Much more...
- Activities
 - Children's booth, Silent auction
 - Handmade quilt donation chances
 - Gardening How-To Presentations

Call for Content!

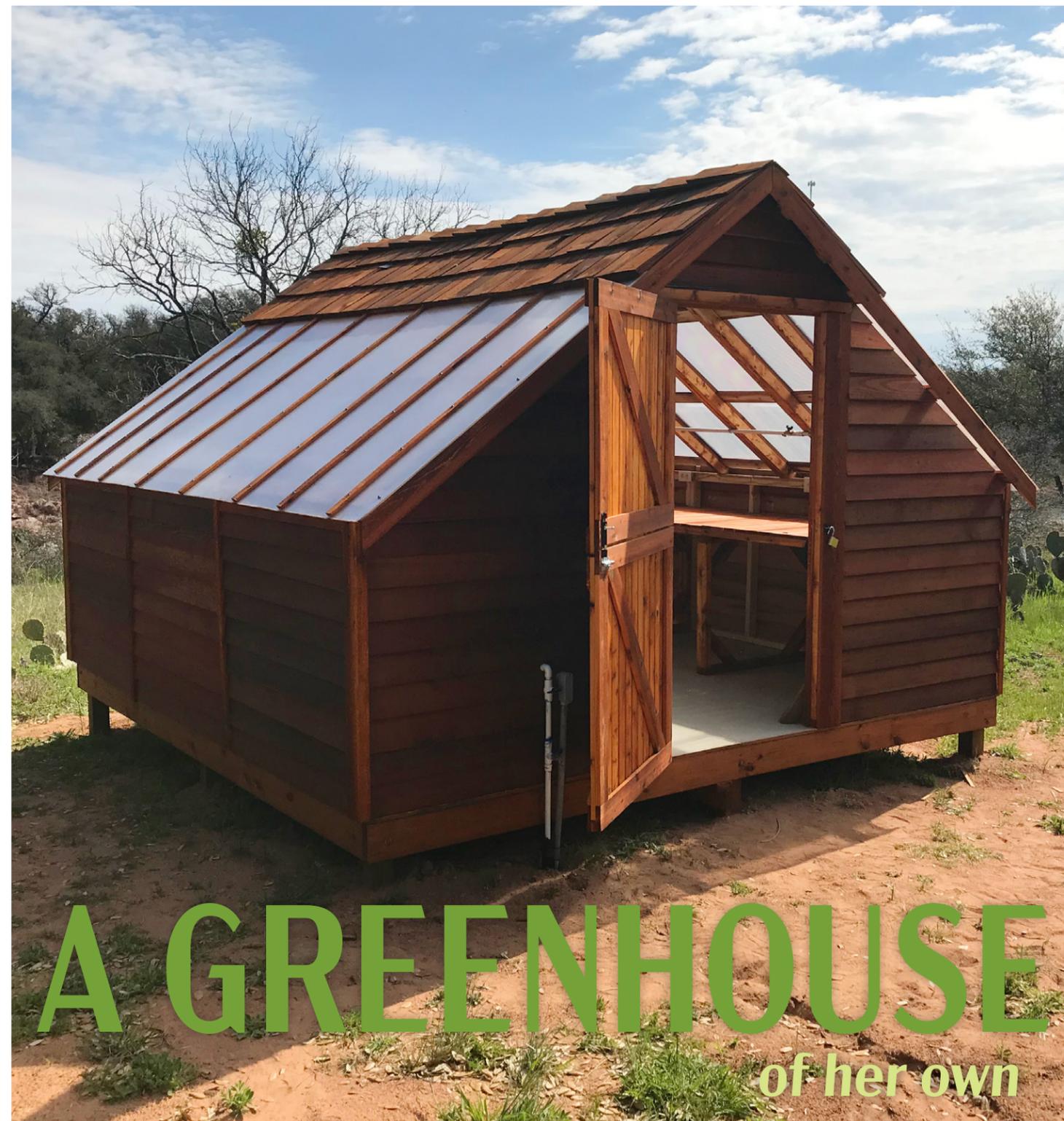
The Dig It News is written for gardeners, by gardeners... and that means we need to hear from YOU! You can send material at any time to Gail Braymen at gebfoto@gmail.com, but the deadline for the next issue (March) is Feb. 26. You can send content as the text of an email or in a document – whatever works best for you. Cell phone pictures are fine, and photos are welcomed with all types of submissions.

Here's a list of submission categories, but please don't feel limited – if a topic interests you, chances are it will interest other HLMGA members!

- Articles - Stories about people, projects, plants, places or anything else you think would interest readers. Those of you with specialized training or knowledge are especially invited to share your expertise with the rest of us! Photos are a plus. (BONUS: time spent writing articles counts as volunteer time!)
- Photos / What's Growing On - Share pictures of plants,

projects, people, you name it. Please include a brief description of what is in the photo and identify any people.

- Gardener's X-change - Please include your email address and/or phone number so folks know how to contact you.
- Q&A with the HLMGA - Send gardening questions you have, or answer questions published in a previous issue.
- Diggin' the Dirt - Share your gardening knowledge and experience by answering the question of the month. Please email your answer to Suzy Buchanan at docinia@yahoo.com.
- Garden Hacks - Share your best tips and tricks.
- Recommended Reading - Send the titles of your favorite gardening books.
- Links & Apps - Share your favorite online gardening links and applications.
- Recipes - Because who doesn't like to enjoy the fruits – and veggies – of their labor?



A GREENHOUSE

of her own

Story and photos
by Suzy Buchanan

Ever since I became interested in gardening, I've wanted a greenhouse. I had visions of growing tomatoes and flowers all winter, starting seeds to transplant to the garden in the spring, as well as a place for my potted Plumeria to spend the winter. In the summer, I envisioned starting seeds for fall. The problem was, at that time, I was living in a garden home

with a very small yard where there wasn't room for even the smallest greenhouse.

Several years later, when my husband and I moved to Burnet County and built a home on an acre and a half lot, I was determined to have my greenhouse. After much research, I chose the 12-by-12-foot Cedar Shed built in Canada. It arrived on three large pallets with the sections

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pre-assembled. The website indicated that two people are needed to assemble the greenhouse, but three people would have been better because some of the sections are very heavy. There are two work benches included. We installed one inside and one outside to leave plenty of room for the Plumeria inside. We also ran water and electricity to the greenhouse, and added gutters to fill rain barrels. My dream had finally come true!

In reality, a small greenhouse in the Texas Highland Lakes isn't what I had envisioned. In the summer, it is too hot to grow any plants inside. I have seen the thermometer well over 130 degrees even with the door and window open, 90 percent shade cloth over the plastic roof panels, and after adding an automatic exhaust fan. In winter, there isn't enough daylight to

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Ingrid Hoffmeister tends to the thousand feet of onions.

Photo by Hank Rominski

THE KING'S GARDEN

UPDATE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

grow warm-season vegetables and flowers. I have recently added some additional lights on timers that I hope will help. My Plumeria, however, are very happy in the greenhouse during the winter with only a small heater for when temperatures dip below freezing.

The Cedar Shed looks nice in the backyard. But if I had it to do over, I think that a potting shed with a small window air conditioner and several fluorescent lights over the work bench would be more practical. 🌱

Garden Hacks

Been gardening more than a day? Then chances are you have lots of tips and tricks to grow healthier plants, fight pests and generally make gardening easier and more productive. Send your Garden Hacks to Gail Braymen at gebfoto@gmail.com.

Rose Lackey's Tonic/Fertilizer

Combine one-half the recommended amounts of HastaGro (plant food), seaweed and fish emulsion and the recommended amount of Superthrive (plant vitamin solution).

This is great for plants that are not thriving — it really gives them a boost. I also use it periodically as a fertilizer and it will never burn your plants.

As Rose wrote it, shared by Andy Doerfler



Freshly dug beds are ready for compost and irrigation.

Photo by Hank Rominski

Well, 2021 has finally arrived and with it new opportunities and challenges at The King's Garden. Last year — our first year on this new parcel — we were extremely fortunate that volunteers came when they were needed. On big harvest days, more people showed up. Smaller days — fewer volunteers. Always enough to get the job done. So with the Lord's help, we totaled up 8,078 pounds of produce for the Share the Harvest center. Not bad for the first year.

This year, will you be one of the volunteers? Help us meet the goal to grow 12,000 pounds.

We are beginning to change the bed configuration of our garden to have

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14



BY HANK ROMINSKI



Terri Enloe prepares new beds for planting.

Photo by Hank Rominski

With more than 11,000 square feet of vegetable garden and about 1,500 square feet of pollinator space to be tended, it is easy to maintain your “social distance” while making your future memories. Contact Keith Atwood (713-203-8846) or Hank Rominski (860-575-8098) for information if you want to visit or volunteer at The King’s Garden. We are in winter hours and will be at The King’s Garden every Monday, Wednesday and Friday starting about 9 a.m. Usually someone is there until about 11-11:30.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

30-inch beds and 18-inch aisles. The change will give us more arable land and will make maintaining the beds easier on our volunteers to plant, weed and harvest.

Along with the change in bed locations, we also have to change the location of the irrigation. Each new bed will have one outlet feeding it, along with new piping above ground — pipes that haven’t



Hank Rominski waters onions and takes in irrigation timers before a night of freezing temperatures.

Photo by Colleen “Sissy” Rominski

been weakened from those harmful ultraviolet rays from the sun. As long as they are not stepped on, they should be in service for many years.

Right now we have a few plants that are producing or will be picked soon. We continue to pick about 15 pounds of spinach and lettuce leaves every other week. Some turnips and greens just might find their way over to the food pantry in mid-January, as well.

We have had close to 1,000 row feet of onions in the ground for about a month now. The onions and the 150 feet of garlic are just growing bigger each week. It is so awesome to see.

The flowers in the Pollinator Garden have fallen, as well as most of the leaves. However, the weeds love this time of the year, and it is only due to the constant vigilance of Cris Northup that weeds have not overtaken the area.

I would like to extend an invitation to you to stop by and see if you would like to be part of The King’s Garden. With the new season, there are many opportunities to help set up the new beds, spread compost and put seeds or plants in the ground. You can also learn

about the irrigation and how the pieces connect, or help keep the grounds neat and clean. If you’re interested in native plants and birds, Cris will gladly share her wealth of knowledge. Many of her

suggestions have found their way into my backyard.

New hands and new ideas are always welcome. You might uncover a hole that we hadn’t even realized existed.

Q&A with the HLMGA

Have a question about gardening? Ask the experts: your fellow HLMGA members! Please send your questions and answers to Gail Braymen at gebfoto@gmail.com.

Q Has anyone had luck propagating a lemon tree? I know it is not the best time of year, but it is REALLY important to my daughter to save part of this tree. She took cuttings and we rooted them in a light soil mix, keeping them moist but not soggy. They are currently in my plant room in the barn (stays about 65 degrees). I did not think they would like to be in a hot dry house right now.



Sometimes when life gives you lemons, you want MORE lemons!

Photo courtesy Texas A&M University



Late afternoon sunlight silhouettes a row of broccoli plants.

Photo by Hank Rominski



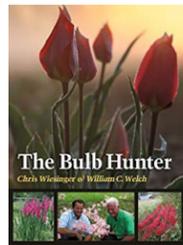
Frost covers protect rows of plants from freezing.

Photo by Hank Rominski

Recommended Reading



Know of a great book that you would recommend to your gardening friends? Send the title to Gail Braymen at gebfoto@gmail.com. Written reviews are welcomed, but not required.



The Bulb Hunter

By Chris Wiesinger and William Welch

Filled with beautiful flower photos, this book is divided into three sections. The first section is written by Chris Wiesinger, “The Bulb Hunter,” and is his account of how he became interested in bulbs and “grew” his business, the Southern Bulb Company. Throughout this section, Wiesinger ties bulb descriptions and their variations in with his story and their effects on his business. This section gives very useful descriptions of the various bulb species which do well in the southern climate. An interesting note is that Wiesinger gathered many of his bulbs, and continues to do so, from old, abandoned houses and cemeteries, demonstrating their hardiness and adaptability because the bulbs had no one to tend them, yet they grew and flourished. These bulb descriptions include examples of lilies, rain lilies, daylilies, crinums, narcissus, iris, tulips, hyacinths and others.

The second and third sections are written by William Welch, a professor and Texas AgriLife Extension Service landscape horticulturist. Welch is a mentor of Wiesinger, and in the sections written by him gives descriptions of companion plantings which compliment various bulbs, such as esperanza growing with crinums and spider lilies. The third section of the book describes the plant-by-plant development of various landscapes around houses owned by Welch. Again, discussion of the companion plants is included.

Gardeners, myself included, will be most interested in the descriptions and photos which show the differentiations between bulb species and the inclusions of the bulb varieties which are most suited to our immediate Austin area. Included, too, are explanations of terms such as forcing, geophytes, rhizomes, stoloniferous, etc., and discussion of “mainstream” bulbs which are considered as annuals in our area because of the lack of chilling hours needed. These include some varieties of daffodils, hyacinths and tulips.

Recommended by Judy Caramanica



Butterfly Gardening for Texas

By Geyata Ajilvsgi

Suppose you opened your holiday presents to find a copy of “Butterfly Gardening for Texas.” You might not realize what a wonder you were unwrapping. Between two covers Geyata Ajilvsgi has compiled an extremely comprehensive reference with hundreds of luscious photos — a true gem for any gardener at any knowledge level.

Suppose you are a member of a garden association with three projects boasting pollinator beds, and you want to do more at your own home, but lack space or time or energy for building. Chapter 4, “An Instant Butterfly Garden,” will inspire you with myriad ideas and practical advice for grouping pots or hanging baskets to lure butterflies.

Suppose you can identify some of the butterflies who visit, but want to know more. Chapter 7 includes almost 70 photographs profiling a wide array of species you might encounter.

Suppose you have space for a few more perennials or annuals, or you want to put in some more trees. There is an entire chapter with plant profiles and charts for larval plants and yet another for nectar plants that are attractors for butterflies as well as other pollinators.

Suppose you don’t want to buy this book. The Burnet County library system has a copy that is available for check-out as I write.

Do you love looking at garden designs or want an in-depth peek at the elements of a butterfly garden? Do you want to know how to take higher-quality butterfly photos or, even better, how to garden so you will have easier access to butterflies for picture-taking? Geyata Ajilvsgi took all of the 260+ gorgeous photos for this book. She knows. She knows a lot. And she has done an incredible job sharing her knowledge so we can know more too.

Recommended by Carolyn Crouchet



The Complete Language of Flowers: A Definitive and Illustrated History

By S. Theresa Dietz

Say it with flowers!

Floriography, the language of flowers, has been around for centuries. According to author S. Theresa Dietz, people have long been using blooms and leaves to send cryptic messages to others, while also enjoying the scent they may share. The book reads as an encyclopedia of different flowers and plants, listed alphabetically by their Latin names, followed by their common names, symbolic meanings with different color associations, possible powers, then folklore and facts. Small illustrations help to identify the varieties. From the first listing, No. 001 Abies, known as fir, all the way to the final entry, No. 1001, Zinnia, we learn about the many interpretations of scent, color and form that inform symbolic meanings from the ancient Greek and Roman times to the present. An extensive guide for the florist, this could serve as a wonderful resource for the gardener, as well as for creating symbolically rich arrangements and landscapes. A lovely book!

The book led me to research further: Carrying small bundles of flowers, called “nosegays,” was thought to ward off germs, and certainly the smells of 15th century Europe.

Shakespeare used the meanings of flowers to enhance his storylines, as in Hamlet, when poor Ophelia laments, “There’s rosemary, that’s for remembrance; pray, love, remember: and there is pansies, that’s for thoughts.”

The Middle English word for nose still means nose, and the word “gay” meant ornament. Nosegays were held close to the nose, or worn as a brooch or a hair ornament, or tied around the waist. To ward off disease, both men and women wore or carried certain flowers and herbs, primarily scented herbs such as rosemary, thyme and rue. A small, tapered metal vase that holds the flowers is still sometimes called a tussie-mussie, as are the fragrant flowers in the vase.

It was the Victorians who became particularly enthralled with the secret language of flowers. In 1716, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, wife to the ambassador to Turkey, discovered the fascinating use of flowers to communicate in code in the Ottoman and Persian courts, and then wrote about it in letters sent home to England. These “posts,” similar to a modern-day blog, created quite the stir; it became all the rage to carry tussie-mussies, bouquets with a message in code!

The modern version of the bridal bouquet was first popularized by Queen Victoria, who carried a tussie-mussie filled with moss and orange blossoms at her wedding to Prince Albert in 1840. Her bouquet also included myrtle, known as the herb of love. Following the ceremony, Victoria planted a myrtle shrub in her garden at Osborne House on the Isle of Wight. Ever since then, all British royal brides have included a sprig plucked from the same myrtle shrub. Even Megan Markle, in her wedding to Prince Harry, carried a tussie-mussie. Her modest bouquet included flowers picked by Prince Harry from their garden at Kensington Palace: white Forget-Me-Nots, (his mother Princess Diana’s favourite), scented sweet peas, lily of the valley (representing sweetness and purity, and also part of Kate Middleton’s bridal bouquet), astilbe, jasmine, astrantia and, following tradition, sprigs of myrtle.

While bouquets were assembled with certain flowers for a specific intent, sometimes their meaning was misinterpreted, depending on the recipient’s version of the flower dictionary!

Some of the common flowers found in nosegays included bluebells, peonies, tulips and wallflowers. Bluebells in a nosegay meant that the sender found the recipient kind, while a return of peonies indicated a feeling of bashfulness. A tulip turning up in a bouquet indicated passion, while a wallflower — no surprise — indicated faithfulness.

Naturally, the color of the flower also held significance. This significance comes through in that most-gifted of all flowers, the rose:

- Red rose — love and respect
- White rose — innocence and secrecy
- Yellow rose — friendship
- Pink rose — grace and joy

Additionally, a single red rose symbolized what it does today — the endurance of romantic love. However, while all modern roses have their thorns removed, a thornless rose in Victorian times indicated love at first sight.

There are so many wonderful ways to say it with flowers!

Check out also Flower & Fable’s list of sentiments, and the flowers associated with each, at flowerandfable.co.uk/pages/choose-by-sentiment.

Recommended by Samantha Melvin

Journal your garden and landscape



Photos courtesy Texas A&M University

The winter months of January and February are always a great time to reassess what we did last year and project what we are going to do this year. That brings up a point about keeping a journal of your gardening activities. It doesn't have to be complicated or sophisticated; try a spiral notebook from the grocery store, or keep notes on your Google calendar. We need to journal what we did, when we did it, what the results were, and what changes are necessary (and maybe what questions to ask Martelle or Bill). Other than gentle reminders of what we planted where and when, it is helpful to document rain amounts and watering schedules.

January & February Duties

- In the flower department, plant Sweet Alyssum, ornamental cabbage and kale, Johnny jump-ups, Pansy (faceless are my favorites), Snapdragons, Violas and Stock.
- Plant vegetable plants: Artichoke crowns, asparagus crowns, broccoli, cabbage, lettuce and spinach. We can still plant strawberries and herbs such as chervil, chives, cilantro, oregano, parsley, rosemary, sage and thyme. Start selecting onion sets and get them into the ground. There are many varieties these days, so take your time in your final selection.
- If you are blessed enough to have a greenhouse or cold flats, start tomato seeds indoors.
- Time to be spraying our fruit trees with dormant oil. Orange oil is good for this and is safe for the environment.
- Check out (and repair if necessary) your irrigation system. Also, design your system for this spring.
- On those cold days, working inside is best. It's a wonderful opportunity to clean and oil gardening tools.
- Mulch, mulch and more mulch is the byword for winter. Mulch promotes moisture retention and protection from the cold.
- Fertilize your established Pansies with dried blood meal or cottonseed meal at the rate of 3-4 pounds per 100 square feet of flowerbed.
- With the heavy dew and light rains, keep an eye on your bird feeders. You want to make sure that you don't allow the bird seed to mold. Moldy seed can make birds sick. Be kind to your backyard buddies.
- Continue to prune dead wood out of oaks and other shade trees. Removing the dead wood, especially those at "head height" will provide kindling and allow sunlight to reach inside the umbrella of the tree.
- Trees, shrubs, plants, etc. need watering during the winter. Check the soil around your trees. If you've had less than 4 inches of rain in the last 30 days, trees love "deep watering." A slow drip (very slow dribble) for a 24-hour period is best for trees.

Have questions or comments?

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Luedecke Lessons

By Bill and Martelle Luedecke

Keep your souls and soles in your garden! Remember the True Master Gardener: Jesus said, "I am the vine; my Father is the Gardener." John 15:1

Composting 101

Start a composting pile with all those leaves in your yard. Here is how you can do it. Your composting can be done in either a fixed bin made of wood or stone, piled up in a part of the yard or garden, or in one of those elevated metal bins that rotate either by motor or manually. Regardless of the method you choose, there are a few fundamentals to keep in mind.

There must be three ingredients in the process of creating this most wonderful plant food ever. First, there must be air.

Composting microbes are aerobic, which means they need air to do their work efficiently. Second, there needs to be water. Ideally, the pile of material should be as moist as the proverbial wrung-out sponge. Third, there needs to be food for the microbes. The food is made up of two major sources: what we call "browns" (carbons) and "greens" (nitrogens). Browns are materials such as dry and dead plant material (straw, leaves, wood chips, etc.) Greens are all manures, fresh or dried, and all green plant life, such as grass, coffee grounds, hair trimmings, uncooked fruit and vegetable waste, and eggshells (rinsed and crushed).

The manures are rated as to their nitrogen

levels. Poultry manure (turkey and chicken) is the highest; next is sheep, goat, steer and horse manures, which are all about the same and work equally as well. If you have friends who own turkeys or chickens, ask if you can clean out their poultry houses for the manure. The same applies with friends who own any livestock. Ask to clean out the barns. They'll probably try not to laugh as they say yes.

Now we need to place all these ingredients together. The piles need to be turned every so often in order to keep the



air in the pile (depending on the size of the pile and the weather, monthly or more often). The fancy elevated bins, which will make compost in a matter of days, suggest that they be turned daily with five complete rotations each time.

While you are waiting for your first batch of compost to be ready, begin making your list of places to apply this new product that you have created.

A few suggestions for applications: for any trees that are "in need of a shot in the arm" (apply compost 1 inch thick around the tree out to the drip line), in your flower beds, garden areas in need of help, or in preparation for your spring planting in the garden.



A Ladder-backed Woodpecker eats peanut butter suet from a log “dispenser” in front of a colorful Shumard Oak tree.

Snowbirds

Last February, Sissy and Cris Northup were talking about a good suet to attract woodpeckers. (They really need a life, don't they?) Later, Cris forwarded a recipe for homemade peanut butter suet. Sissy made up a batch and found an old log to use as a suet holder. I drilled some 1-inch holes in it to better hold the mixture, dug a hole, planted a pole and hung it in our back yard. We barely left with the tools when a Ladder-backed Woodpecker landed to check it out. It was an immediate success. Woodpeckers and other birds have been frequenting the log every day.

An added bonus is that many other birds also like to eat the suet when it is placed in peanut butter jar lids on our patio table. During the massive snowfall of Jan. 10, 2021 (Hank's birthday), we noticed a few “snowbirds” came to the table. Sissy just happened to have her camera at the ready. We hope you enjoy the photos.

If you want to enjoy watching various birds come to your table, give the peanut butter suet recipe a try. We found that the least expensive, biggest jar of crunchy peanut butter at the HEB works well.

After Sissy makes her batches, she puts the mixture in a baggie and keeps it refrigerated.

Peanut Butter Suet

- 1 cup crunchy peanut butter
- 1 cup of lard
- 2 cups of quick oats
- 2 cups of corn meal
- 1 cup of flour

Melt lard and peanut butter in microwave or over low heat. Fold in remaining ingredients and pour into square freezer containers about 1/2 inch thick to fit your suet baskets. Keep in the freezer until ready to use. This makes about six suet containers. Your birds will love it.

Story by Hank Rominski | Photos by Colleen “Sissy” Rominski



Orange-crowned Warbler



Female Cardinal



Ruby-crowned Kinglet



Yellow-rumped Warbler



Carolina Wren



Bewick's Wren