

The "DIG IT" News



Lettuce pray
for good weather & plentiful harvests in 2024

PAGE 24



HIGHLAND LAKES MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION

President's Corner

Excitedly anticipating new associates, volunteer opportunities and... maybe some snow!

Greetings to my fellow gardening friends.

This time last year, I was brand stinking new to being your president. I was genuinely terrified of the responsibilities ahead of me. Now — a year later and a year left of my position — I feel much more prepared. Thank you to Carolyn Stephens for being an amazing past president and possessing some of the best patience of a person I have ever met. I had an amazing board that supported me and led our organization during a very successful year.

Welcome to the newest board members. Always remember that we work as a team, and a mighty fine one! You will be supported by the past officers and our organization.

The 2024 Certification Class will begin Feb. 7. At this moment, we have 21 people in the class. Thank you to Joan Altobelli and her co-chairs for all of the time and commitment that it takes to make this class a success. I am really excited to meet the associates and get to know the “new blood” coming on board. Please take the time to great these new members. A handshake and

a smile go a long way when someone is new and feeling nervous.

As I write this, the coming weekend is the anticipated arctic blast! I hope that none of you will have major problems. I am probably one of the only people hoping for snow. Being a lifelong resident of Texas, I love snow because I have seen it so few times. Bring it on.

As we start the slow turn toward spring, I look forward to seeing many of you out and about. Please remember that both of the gardens are always looking for volunteers! The middle school greenhouse is starting their work with the students this week. The Farmers and Crafts Market will be starting soon, as well, and can always use some help. The ability to start getting hours will quickly be here.

If you are a new associate, please come and introduce yourself to me at our next meeting!

Terri Winter

terriwinter61@gmail.com
713-854-2208

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.

Awarded First Place in the Texas Master Gardeners Search for Excellence Awards Program

TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION

TEXAS
MASTER GARDENER
TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION
Highland Lakes



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This issue's theme color is “Ashe juniper berry.”

February
HLMGA
Meeting

Tuesday, February 13, 2024 • 2 p.m.

Burnet County AgriLife Extension Office

607 N. Vanderveer, Burnet, Texas

*ATTENDANCE IN PERSON AND VIA ZOOM**

PROGRAM:

Seed Starting

Presented by Janie Vaught

**Watch your email for Zoom details.*

Approved Master Gardener Advanced Training Opportunities

JANUARY & FEBRUARY 2024

From the MG Membership Committee

JANUARY

JAN. 16 — “Winter Native Landscape Maintenance” (repeat) with Colleen Dieter, 10 a.m. (1 hr credit), at The Natural Gardener, 8648 Old Bee Caves Rd, Austin. Fee: free. No pre-registration required.

JAN. 17 — “Grow – Dementia Friendly Gardening” (repeat) with Christina Bittle, PhD student in Occupational Therapy at UT Health San Antonio, 11 a.m.–12:30 p.m. (1.5 hrs credit), at the San Antonio Botanical Garden, 555 Funston Place, San Antonio. Fee: free. Pre-registration required at sabot.org/learn/adult-classes.

JAN. 19 — “Veggie Gardening 101” (repeat) with Robb Enloe, 10 a.m. (1 hr credit), at The Natural Gardener, 8648 Old Bee Caves Rd, Austin. Fee: free. No pre-registration required.

JAN. 20 — “Landscaping with Drought-Tolerant Plants: Cactus, Agaves, and Yuccas” with Alice Liles, Horticulturalist, 1 p.m. (1 hr credit), at the Marble Falls Library. Sponsored by the Highland Lakes Native Plant Society.

JAN. 20 — “Pollinator Patches and Pocket Prairies” with Lee Marlowe, Sustainable Landscape Ecologist for the San Antonio River Authority, 10–11:30 a.m. (1.5 hrs credit), at the San Antonio Botanical Garden, 555 Funston Place, San Antonio. Fee: \$15. Pre-registration required at sabot.org/learn/adult-classes.

JAN. 24 — “Grow – Dementia Friendly Gardening” (repeat) with Christina Bittle, PhD student in Occupational Therapy at UT Health San Antonio, 11 a.m.–12:30 p.m. (1.5 hrs credit), at the San Antonio Botanical Garden, 555 Funston Place, San Antonio. Fee: free. Pre-registration required at sabot.org/learn/adult-classes.

JAN. 25 — “Winter Tree ID Workshop” with Zachery Ritchie, Conservation Technician, San Antonio Botanical Garden, 1–3 p.m. (2 hrs credit), at the San Antonio Botanical Garden, 555 Funston Place, San Antonio. Fee: \$15. Pre-registration required at sabot.org/learn/adult-classes.

JAN. 27 — “Tree Pruning” with Colleen Dieter, Horticulturalist, 10 a.m.–12 p.m. (2 hrs credit), at the LBJ Wildflower Center, 4801 La Crosse Ave, Austin. Fee: \$25 for class, \$60 with Colleen’s book. Pre-registration required at wildflower.org/learn/adults.

JAN. 27 — “Gardening Workshop: Nefarious Natives: The Dark Side of Flora” with Bexar County Master Gardeners, 1–2 p.m. (2 hrs credit), at the San Antonio Botanical Garden, 555 Funston Place, San Antonio. Fee: \$15. Pre-registration required at sabot.org/learn/adult-classes.

JAN. 31 — “Grow – Dementia Friendly Gardening” (repeat) with Christina Bittle, PhD student in Occupational Therapy at UT Health San Antonio, 11 a.m.–12:30 p.m. (1.5 hrs credit), at the San Antonio Botanical Garden, 555 Funston Place, San Antonio. Fee: free. Pre-registration required at sabot.org/learn/adult-classes.

FEBRUARY

FEB. 3 — “Winter Care for Native Plants” (repeat) with Colleen Dieter, founder of Red Wheelbarrow, 10 a.m.–12 p.m. (2 hrs credit), at the LBJ Wildflower Center, 4801 La Crosse Ave, Austin. Fee: \$25. Pre-registration required at wildflower.org/learn/adults.

FEB. 4 — “Forest Bathing” (repeat) with Brooke Mellen, founder of Cultured Forest, 10 a.m. (1 hr credit), at the LBJ Wildflower Center, 4801 La Crosse Ave, Austin. Fee: free. Pre-registration required at wildflower.org/learn/adults.

FEB. 7 — “Grow – Dementia Friendly Gardening” (repeat) with Christina Bittle, PhD student in Occupational Therapy at UT Health San Antonio, 11 a.m.–12:30 p.m. (1.5 hrs credit), at the San Antonio Botanical Garden, 555 Funston Place, San Antonio. Fee: free. Pre-registration required at sabot.org/learn/adult-classes.

FEB. 8 — “Pressed Flower Valentine” with Layni Langham, Senior Exhibits Horticulture Staff, San Antonio Botanical Garden, 6–7:30 p.m., (1.5 hrs credit), at the San Antonio Botanical Garden, 555 Funston Place, San Antonio. Fee: \$27. Pre-registration required at sabot.org/learn/adult-classes.

FEB. 9 — “Making Space for Spiders” with Molly Keck, Entomologist, 10 a.m.–12 p.m. (2 hrs credit), at the San Antonio Botanical Garden, 555 Funston Place, San Antonio. Fee: \$15. Pre-registration required at sabot.org/learn/adult-classes.

FEB. 10 — “Gardening Workshop: Succulent Basics” with Anthony Sierra, Conservation Education, San Antonio Botanical Garden, 1–2:30 p.m. (1.5

HIGHLIGHT ON ONLINE CE

JAN. 22 — The National Garden Bureau will host experts from Monrovia, Darwin Perennials and Syngenta in a discussion “**Ask the Experts About Perennials for Extreme Conditions**” at 12 p.m.

If you’re in a hot and dry area, a hot and humid area, have too much shade, or have other challenging growing conditions, National Garden Bureau’s experts will help you have a more successful garden! You can pose your own questions to their panel and also learn of some of the newer varieties of perennials for special conditions.

The free, one-hour webinar is worth one hour of continuing education credit. To view the presentation, go to us02web.zoom.us/join/9tJvfuYgrzkvEtGcOtcCFsb9fUKFsefE0MQ7?#registration, fill out your name and email address and click the “Register” button. You’ll be taken to a screen that tells you that you have successfully registered for the webinar. You will also receive, in less than a minute, an email from Zoom titled “Ask the Experts About Perennials for Extreme Conditions Confirmation.” A few minutes before the webinar starts, open the email and click on the “Join Webinar” button.

According to their website at ngb.org, “National Garden Bureau is a non-profit organization that exists to educate, inspire and motivate people to increase the use of garden seeds, plants and products in homes, gardens and workplaces by being the marketing arm of the gardening industry.” Based in Illinois, the National Garden Bureau was founded in 1920 by James H. Burdett. Mr. Burdett, according to the website, “pioneered the idea of enlisting horticultural writers and broadcasters in the effort of mass education to create a population of gardeners.” During World War II, the Bureau joined the effort to encourage homeowners to grow Victory Gardens. In 1943, Mr. Burdett published the “Victory Garden Manual”, a book to help home gardeners be successful in their gardens. The NGB website has many links to videos, webinars and podcasts for the curious gardener.

For other online CE opportunities, go to burnetcountyhighlandlakesmastergardener.org/library-of-at-re-sources, enter the member password, and select a list of webinars.

hrs credit), at the San Antonio Botanical Garden, 555 Funston Place, San Antonio. Fee: \$35. Pre-registration required at sabot.org/learn/adult-classes.

FEB. 10 — “Introduction to DIY Hydroponics” with Robin Smith, owner of Yield Here Farms, learn hands-on DIY systems, 8:30 a.m.–5 p.m. (multiple hours for all-day program), at Yield Here Farms, 2662 Snow Rd, Kempner (about 50 miles through Burnet and Lampasas and east on 190). Fee: \$50 (includes

breakfast, snacks and lunch). Pre-registration required at eventbrite.com/o/yield-here-farms-74944171463.

FEB. 14 — “Gardening Workshop: Earth-Kind Roses” with Bexar County Master Gardeners, 10 a.m.–12 p.m. (2 hrs credit), at the San Antonio Botanical Garden, 555 Funston Place, San Antonio. Fee: \$15. Pre-registration required at sabot.org/learn/adult-classes.

FEB. 15 — “Conservation Class: Plant Propagation Basics” with Zachary Ritchie, Conservation Technician, San Antonio Botanical Garden, 1–3 p.m. (2 hrs credit), at the San Antonio Botanical Garden, 555 Funston Place, San Antonio. Fee: \$15. Pre-registration required at sabot.org/learn/adult-classes.

FEB. 17 — “Maintenance for Grasses, Shrubs and Sedges” with Staff of LBJ Wildflower Center, 1–3 p.m. (2 hrs credit), at the LBJ Wildflower Center, 4801 La Crosse, Austin. Fee: \$30. Pre-registration required at wildflower.org/learn/adults.

FEB. 20 — “Spring Gardening Basics” with Willard Horn, Master Gardener, 10–11:30 (1.5 hrs credit), at the TTU Higher Education Teaching Site, 806 Steve Hawkins Parkway, Marble Falls. Fee: \$30. Pre-registration required by contacting sarah.ramos@ttu.edu. Sponsored by the Texas Tech OLLI Program.

FEB. 21 — “Grow – Dementia Friendly Gardening” (repeat) with Christina Bittle, PhD student in Occupational Therapy at UT Health San Antonio, 11 a.m.–12:30 p.m. (1.5 hrs credit), at the San Antonio Botanical Garden, 555 Funston Place, San Antonio. Fee: free. Pre-registration required at sabot.org/learn/adult-classes.

FEB. 22 — “Introduction to Ikebana (flower arranging) with Orchids” with Chese Crister, Senior Gardener, San Antonio Botanical Garden, 5:30–7 p.m. (1.5 hrs credit), at the San Antonio Botanical Garden, 555 Funston Place, San Antonio. Fee: \$75 (includes materials to make arrangement to take home). Pre-registration required at sabot.org/learn/adult-classes.

FEB. 23 — “PLANTASTIC: Vegetable Gardening Seminar” with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, 8:30 a.m.–3:35 p.m. (at least 4 hrs credit – determine by participation), at the Gillespie County Extension Office, 38 Business Court, Fredericksburg. Fee: \$40 (includes lunch). Pre-registration requested at tx.ag/Feb24Plantastic.

FEB. 27 — “Raingardens 101” with Kate Griffin, Conservation and Adult Programs Specialist, San Antonio Botanical Garden, San Antonio, 1–2:30 p.m. (1.5 hrs credit), at the San Antonio Botanical Garden, 555 Funston Place, San Antonio. Fee: \$17. Pre-registration required at sabot.org/learn/adult-classes.

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FEB. 27 — “A Survey of Texas Cacti and Other Succulents” with Alice Liles, Cactus and Succulent Society, 10–11:30 a.m. (1.5 hrs credit), at the TTU Higher Education Teaching Site, 806 Steve Hawkins Parkway, Marble Falls. Fee: \$30. Pre-registration required by contacting sarah.amos@ttu.edu. Sponsored by the Texas Tech OLLI Program.

FEB. 28 — “Plants and Landscapes of Indigenous Texans” with Dr. Leslie Bush, Paleoethnobotanist, 10–11:30 a.m. (1.5 hrs credit), at the TTU Higher Education Teaching Site, 806 Steve Hawkins Parkway, Marble Falls. Fee: \$30. Pre-registration required by contacting sarah.amos@ttu.edu. Sponsored by the

Texas Tech OLLI Program.

FEB. 28 — “Grow – Dementia Friendly Gardening” (repeat) with Christina Bittle, PhD student in Occupational Therapy at UT Health San Antonio, 11 a.m.–12:30 p.m. (1.5 hrs credit), at the San Antonio Botanical Garden, 555 Funston Place, San Antonio. Fee: free. Pre-registration required at sabot.org/learn/adult-classes.

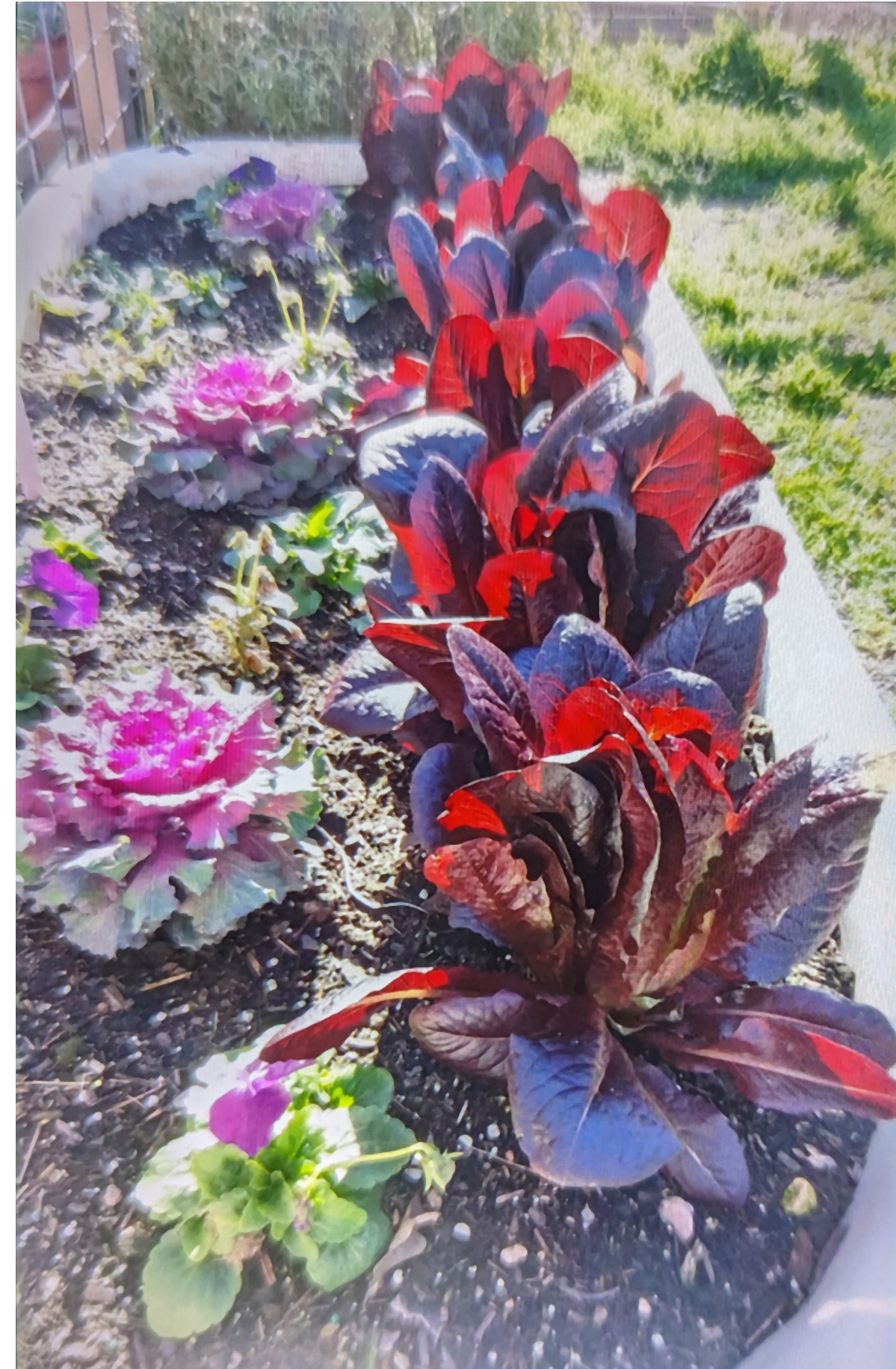
FEB. 29 — “Plant Propagation” with Layni Langham, Senior Exhibits Horticulture Staff, San Antonio Botanical Garden, 5:30–7 p.m. (1.5 hrs credit), at the San Antonio Botanical Garden, 555 Funston Place, San Antonio. Fee: \$17. Pre-registration required at sabot.org/learn/adult-classes.




**24TH ANNUAL HILL COUNTRY
LAWN & GARDEN SHOW**
SATURDAY, MARCH 30, 2024
10AM - 4PM
**AGRILIFE AUDITORIUM
607 N. VANDEVEER, BURNET**
SPONSORED BY HIGHLAND LAKES MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION

WIDE VARIETY OF VENDORS! PLANT SALE, ACTIVITIES FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY! SILENT AUCTION, HANDMADE QUILT DONATION CHANCES, GARDENING HOW-TO DEMONSTRATIONS, & MORE!

**ROXANNE DUNEGAN • SHOW CHAIR
ROXDUNEGAN@GMAIL.COM**



Recover, Reposition, Repot

I had the opportunity to save a cast iron bathtub from the scrap yard (cheap). My intent, all along, was to create an eye-appealing display just inside my garden gate.

I had recently given a talk on fall color for the winter garden. That being my focus, I set about to put my words into practice. What you see here is my effort, and hopefully success, for the winter season. The contents include red lettuce — deliciously edible — and ornamental kale — not very edible — and flowering pansies.

~ Willard Horn



What's growing, blooming and producing in YOUR garden? Show it off in What's Growing On! Send pictures of your plants and projects, plus a little information, to Gail Braymen at gebfoto@gmail.com.



2023 Garden Party



Highland Lakes Master Gardeners know how to celebrate! To cap off a busy year, we gathered Dec. 5 at the AgriLife Building in Burnet for the annual Awards Banquet and Christmas Party. As we enjoyed a delicious potluck meal, The Elderberries band — featuring our own multit talented Kerry Nyquist singing and playing guitar — entertained us with toe-tapping tunes. President Terri Winter shared the following HLMGA statistics for 2023:

- We had 107 members.
- As of Oct. 31, 2023, 64 of our members recertified for 2023.
- From January through November, our members volunteered 8,543 hours, a dollar value of nearly \$272,000 using the national average of \$31.80 per hour of volunteer time. 🎸



2023 Certification Class



Recertified Members

Recertified members stood up to be reconized. We had 64 members recertify as of Oct. 31, 2023.



The Elderberries



*Hours Milestone
500+*



*Hours Milestone
1,000+*



*Hours Milestone
250+*



Raffle Quilt



*Hours Milestone
2,000+*



Lavona Fry received a standing ovation for being a member for 20 years and volunteering more than 5,000 hours.



Longevity
20 Years



Burnet County Extension Agent Kelly Tarla installed the 2024 officers.



Longevity
5 Years



2024 Officers

Cold spell

Winter weather is here, but where are the winter birds?



Ruby-crowned Kinglet

What is going on this winter? Thank you for asking. We are still waiting for the flocks of our favorite birds.

The holly bushes are full of berries. The bird baths are clean and full, but the cedar wax wings and robins are not here. Could the reason be that it is still too warm and the birds haven't migrated? Is there a change in migratory pattern or maybe the Cooper's Hawks (pictured at right) that have nested a few doors down are scaring them away? Does anyone have an idea why?

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16

Story by Hank Romínski

Photos by Colleen "Sissy" Romínski



Cooper's Hawk

Fun Fact: As I am sitting here, stringing letters into words, words into sentences, and sentences into paragraphs, I hear Sissy walk in the back door. She speaks loud enough for me to hear. “The mockingbird is yelling at me because there is no suet on the feeder.” She continues, “I have never heard him squawk at me so loudly. I’m out of suet, so I need to make up a batch for him.”

Today it is the mockingbird, other days it may be a Verdin, a cardinal or a woodpecker that vocally dresses her down because the trough is empty. Spoiling our feathered friends is a labor of love for Miss Sissy; it’s

one of the things that I love about her.

Our time these days is dedicated to preparing the property and plants for the freezing temperatures. Potted plants are segregated. Those that we want to keep are put in the hoop house, greenhouse, dog house, garage and the sunporch. Sissy wants to have a large inventory for the spring sales. She primarily sells through the Nextdoor app and the Lawn and Garden Show.

Cactus, artichokes and fig trees will be covered or wrapped to survive those cold spells. Frost cloth will be put over the vegetables in the outdoor beds.



Gulf Fritillary butterfly on Hawaiian Dance gourd



Orange-crowned Warbler



Verdin eating grape jelly



Female Cardinal



Male Cardinal



Tiger Swallowtail on dwarf Lantana

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

I have been pleased using a Chinese diesel heater in the hoop house this winter. It was purchased as a hedge for an extended power failure. Needing 12 volts to operate, the heater is connected to a car battery that is charged with a solar panel. For the last couple years, we needed two 1500-watt electric heaters for the hoop house, and they weren't as effective as the diesel heater. I believe that the cost of fuel vs. electricity will be about equal, and there are a few advantages for the diesel heater. If you want to know more about it, give me a call, or you can view about 30 YouTube videos on it.



Diesel heater in the hoop house

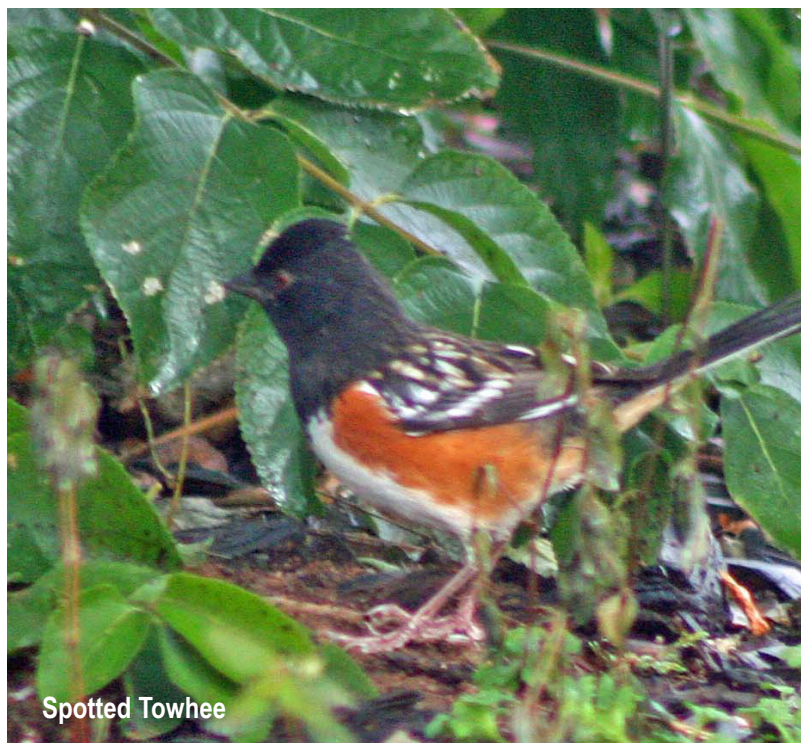


Some of our loofah crop

'Tis also the time to be jolly and harvest the loofahs and gourds. The gourds are stored in a cool, dry area for the winter, but the loofahs need to be processed within a few weeks or they will develop mold spots. Processing includes removing the outer husk, rinsing them in water, draining the water, washing in soapy water, drying, removing the seeds and classifying them from “#1” — suitable for body-washing — to “#3” — good for cleaning cars, etc.

Sissy is trying to take a good photograph of the Spotted Towhee, the first we have seen in our backyard. It's always exciting to see a new bird. Towhees are ground feeders, foraging under the shrubs, and are very skittish — not the best circumstances for shooting an award-winning photo. But as you can see in the photo below, the bird's markings are magnificent.

We hope that you enjoy the photos. Isn't that Lincoln Sparrow just the cutest thing? 🐦



Spotted Towhee



Lincoln Sparrow

CREATURE FEATURE

By Wizzie Brown, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist

Tiger Moth Caterpillars

Tiger moth caterpillars have been a common sight lately in the Central Texas area. These insects are native to the United States and are sometimes called “woollybear caterpillars.”

“Woollybear caterpillar” is a more general term that refers to various species of caterpillars that are densely covered in hairs, called setae, and tend to wander.

While these caterpillars can be highly variable for individual species, the common ones seen lately are woollybear (Isabella tiger moth), saltmarsh caterpillar (saltmarsh moth) and garden tiger moth caterpillar, also known as the great tiger moth caterpillar. Woollybear caterpillars are usually black on each end with brown



Saltmarsh caterpillar



Garden/great tiger moth caterpillar

in the middle. Saltmarsh caterpillars are variable and can be a creamy yellow to brown to black in color. Garden/great tiger moth caterpillars tend to be black on the top part of the body and brown on the bottom.

All three of these caterpillars feed on a wide variety of herbaceous and woody plants, but they are only sometimes considered to be pests when they feed on field crops.

Tiger moths have a complete life cycle with four life stages: egg, larva, pupa and adult. Eggs are laid in clusters on the leaves of host plants. Larvae go through several instars before they pupate in soil. Larvae tend to actively disperse and may be seen in groups moving over turf, roads, sidewalks, or other locations. Adults usually emerge in the spring to mate and begin the cycle again. Moths can be active year-round in South Texas, but for most parts of Texas, larvae overwinter in the last larval instar in protected locations. 🐦

TEXAS A&M
AGRI
LIFE
EXTENSION

For more information or help with identification, contact Wizzie Brown, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist, at 512-854-9600. Check out Wizzie's blog at urban-ipm.blogspot.com.

UPDATE The Garden

For 2023, The Garden just missed giving 4,000 pounds of produce to The Helping Center. Considering the long, HOT summer, we are pleased with that total. As I am sure everyone is, we are praying for more gentle temps this year.

This is a first request for folks to plant seeds for transplants for The Garden. Things to start indoors include, but are not limited to, various peppers, eggplant and, of course, tomatoes.

As in years past, there will be a planting party in late March/early April to get transplants in the ground. More on that later this year.

Other big events planned for 2024 are the mulching event where we rent a big mulcher and run 2023 remnants through the grinder. There will also be a big clean-up day in late March to tidy up the beautification area for spring. Again, more details closer to the date.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 23



Story and photos by
David Waldo

BELOW: Some of our faithful garden volunteers pose with the artful vegetable display arranged by our multitalented Marybeth Edeen.

OPPOSITE PAGE: One of our many heads of broccoli. We need to do more cool season veggies in 2024.



RIGHT AND FAR RIGHT: Broccoli.
Photos by Marybeth Edeen

BELOW: This raised bed holds a combination of Brussels sprouts and broccoli. We had minimal bug damage due to vigilant use of DE.



LEFT: Doug, Kerry and David get soil and compost to amend beds.
Photo by Marybeth Edeen

BELOW: We made more than 135 pounds of fall tomatoes that we picked before the first freeze. Early Girl tomatoes really produced!



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As it is January, our current production has slowed, but not completely shut down. We have had good success with carrots, Brussels sprouts and several other cool season crops. Based on this season’s harvest, we plan to plant more cooler season crops in 2024.

How time flies when you are having fun! This will be our fifth year in The Garden at Trinity Episcopal. This will be

the end of our initial five-year lease, which will be extended on a yearly basis based on that initial contract. Trinity continues to be a strong supporter of our project, and I see no problems continuing to grow organic produce for the food bank.

As always, we are in The Garden Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays beginning at 8 a.m. There is always something to do, so come join the fun. Here’s to a bountiful 2024! 🍅

Call for Content!

The Dig It News is written for gardeners, by gardeners... and that means we need to hear from YOU! You may 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.
- **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?



LEFT: Volunteers work on frost clean-up.

BELOW: New plantings.



THE KING'S GARDEN

UPDATE

Happy New Year, y'all!! Isn't it amusing how so much emphasis is placed on simply going from one day to the next?

New Year's resolutions abound: gonna lose those pounds, learn another language, get organized, read more and stop that bad habit. Those are all great resolutions, but one that would really put you over the top this year is to volunteer at The King's Garden.

Gardening-wise, 2023 was a challenge, as the Texas heat and dry weather really put our plants through their paces. However, the plants and volunteers persevered, and we managed to harvest 6,111 pounds of produce that went to the Sharing the Harvest Food Pantry.

Not only did our volunteers work in the gardens, but we also instructed and interacted with other Master Gardener members and members of the community. Hosting the 2023 associate class was the most fun and rewarding for us. After the class, more than five individuals decided that they wanted to be volunteers. Their extra hands were very much needed to keep our little project going.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 27



STORY BY HANK ROMINSKI

PHOTOS BY COLLEEN "SISSY" ROMINSKI



MIDDLE LEFT AND LEFT: The King's Garden as it appeared in 2019 and how it appears today.
BELOW: Mary Beth waters onions.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 25

I wonder if we will be fortunate enough to harvest a few volunteers from the 2024 class? Will we increase our produce harvest by at least a few hundred pounds? Will we have a sunny day for the April 8 eclipse? We shall see.

The weight tally has been turned back to zero as we start a new count this year. Will we be able to surpass 2023's poundage, or will Mother Nature toss another wrench into our well-oiled machine? By the way, is "Mother Nature" still considered politically correct to say in public? Does anyone remember that 1977 Chiffon margarine commercial that said, "It's not nice to fool mother nature"?

Not quite so old as the margarine commercial, I have included a picture of The King's Garden in 2019 when we first started clearing it out. You can see that it wasn't ready to plant vegetables. There is also a similar shot from a few days ago. We have come a long way.

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TOP: A Convergent Lady Beetle.
ABOVE: Caleb works in a garden bed.
RIGHT: May and Keith plant lettuce.



Volunteers work on frost clean-up.

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This should be a good year for The King's Garden. We are starting this year better prepared than last year. Keith is back at the helm scheduling the planting, and we have more and bigger plants in the ground than this time last year. More regular volunteers are sharing the work. Marylynne Norman, our new project manager, is looking at this project with different eyes and brings new ideas.

One of the ideas is to update our Facebook page, so Marylynne and Sissy have added a few more articles and photographs that capture our basic aura. If you are on Facebook, check us out. Just type "The Kings Garden" (no apostrophe) in the search menu

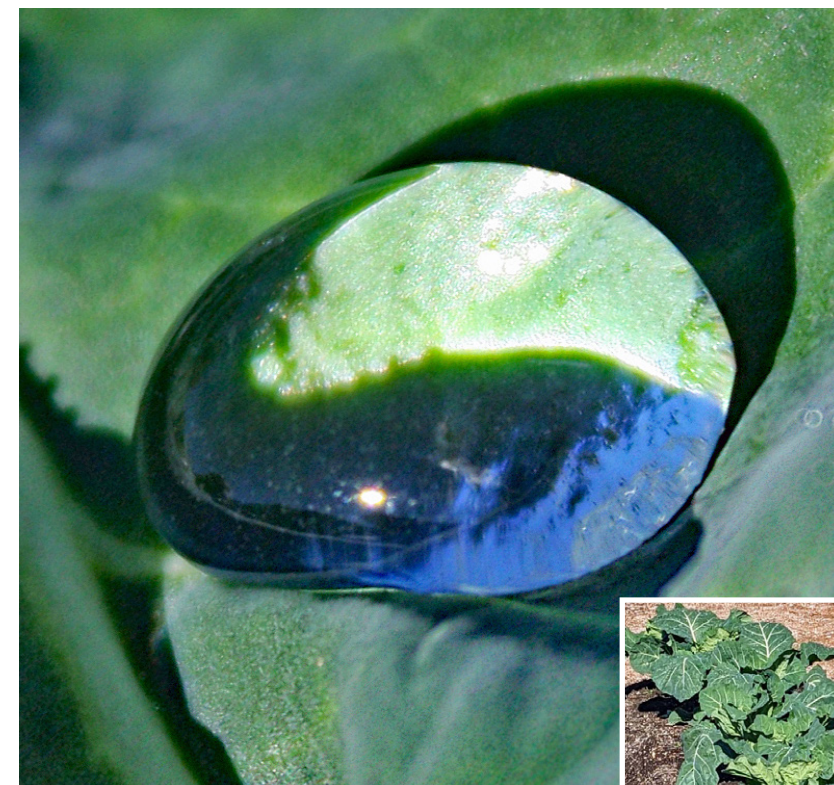


Black Swallowtail

and voila!, it should magically appear. We have 19 followers so far; how about we see if we can hit 25 friends/followers by next issue.

Another shout-out for Jeannie Trucking: once again, she has waived the delivery fee for a load of mulch. We have used Jeannie a few times to have soil and granite gravel delivered to the house, and the price and product were top-notch.

We hope that you like the photographs this month. Sissy captured a couple good bug pictures, the usual volunteers-at-work shots and found a very interesting raindrop on a cabbage leaf. If you look at the bright spot in the drop, you can see a reflection of the sun, the curvature of the earth, and the morning sky. 🌧️



TOP: Jeanie's Trucking delivers a load of mulch.

ABOVE: "The World in a Raindrop."

RIGHT: Sissy Rominski takes the picture of "The World in a Raindrop."

Photo by Hank Rominski



The King's Garden is operating on the winter hour schedule. The core hours for the volunteers are 9 to 11 a.m. Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Depending on their schedules and sleep patterns, volunteers might arrive earlier or later (me). Contact Marylynne Norman (512-202-7244) or Hank Rominski (860-575-8098) for more information if you want to visit, volunteer, or start on your "increase my volunteer hours" New Year's resolution. Put "3333 Route 1431 Kingsland TX" in your GPS and it should direct you to the right place.

Squeeze the day

I bake Ina Garten's Lemon Yogurt Cake two or three times a year, because it is my Italian neice's favorite dessert, and I want her to visit often with her babies. You can find the recipe at foodnetwork.com/recipes/ina-garten/lemon-yogurt-cake-recipe-1947092.

To ramp up the harvest celebration, I added 1 1/2 cups of flour-dusted frozen blueberries to the batter and baked it in a round cake pan until it was 205 degrees in the middle. Since the cake was attending our New Year's gathering with neighbors, I served it on my mom's wedding-present plate, but skipped the glaze. The recipe's simple syrup made with fresh Meyer lemons is sufficiently sweet and staggeringly delicious.

In a previous Dig It article, I wrote about my beleaguered young Meyer lemon tree and its remarkable survival after hosting a horde of swallowtail caterpillars. We are indeed treating the tree more kindly this winter. Hubby John got the tree onto a pallet and moved it via tractor to a wagon I can wheel in and out of the barn as needed. Furthermore, I did buy the grow light I promised the tree, so it can get eight hours of good light even on frosty days.

Meyer lemons can easily be grown to maturity in pots as their root systems are shallow. Here in Central Texas that ups the survival rate, for they are cold sensitive. Mary Kay Pope from Backbone Nursery offers the following growing guide for citrus in the Highland Lakes area: backbonevalleynursery.com/growing-citrus-in-central-texas/#.

Lemon blossoms in spring are magical, tree care is minimal, and harvesting your own Meyer lemons is a mighty reward for every bit of patience and gardening effort. 🍋

When life gives you Meyer lemons — and only two for the entire year's crop — it is time to celebrate with extra-special food.



LEFT: John moves the Meyer lemon tree to the barn. The pot is not too heavy to lift, but the tractor really helped our old backs.

ABOVE: Simple cake, major yum.

RIGHT: Get out the good stuff for a harvest celebration.

Story and photos by Carolyn Crouchet



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



Keep a Garden Journal

January is always a great time to assess 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

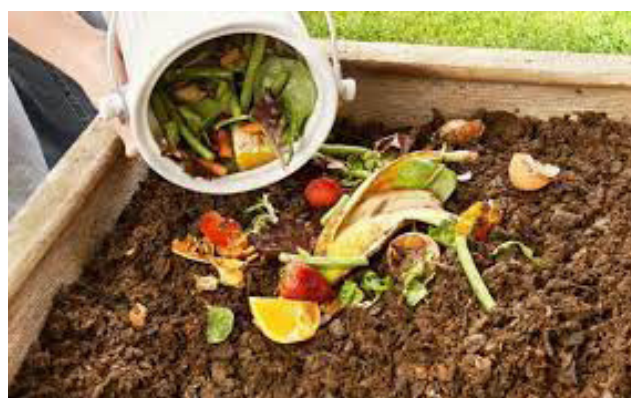
gardening activities. It doesn't have to be complicated or sophisticated; it can be a spiral notebook from the grocery store or notes on your Google calendar. We need to journal what we did, when we did it, what the results were, and what changes are necessary (or questions to send Martelle or Bill to ask). Other than gentle reminders of what we planted where and when, it is helpful to document rain amounts, high/low temperatures and watering schedules.

Composting 101

Start a composting pile with all those leaves in your yard. Your composting can be done in a fixed bin made of wood or stone, or 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 option you choose, keep a few fundamentals in mind.

The process of creating this most wonderful plant food ever requires three ingredients. First, there must be air. Composting microbes are aerobic, which means they need air to do their work efficiently. Second, there must be water. Ideally, the pile of material should be as moist as the proverbial wrung-out sponge. Third, there must 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 egg-



shells (rinsed and crushed).

The manures are rated as to their nitrogen levels. Poultry manure (turkey and chicken) is the highest; next are 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 put all these ingredients together. The piles need to be turned every so often to keep the air in the pile (depending on the size of the pile, monthly or more often depending on the weather). 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.

Photos courtesy Texas A&M University



What's growing, blooming and producing in YOUR garden? Show it off in What's Growing On! Send pictures of your plants and projects, plus a little information, to Gail Braymen at gebphoto@gmail.com.



On a chilly Sunday morning, I was captivated by these frosty leaves in our church parking lot.

~ Gail Braymen



Growing plants and student gardeners fill the greenhouse.

Burnet Middle School GREENHOUSE

Master Gardeners will be going back to work at the BMS greenhouse soon. The students have been taking care of the growing plants, and we can hardly wait to see the progress.

We will have workdays through February assisting students with seeding vegetables, bumping seedlings up as they grow, making cuttings for more plant production and helping

prepare plants for the first greenhouse sale in March. Dates for all will depend on plant growth and the school calendar.

If you have empty 4-inch plastic pots to donate, I can collect them at our meetings for the students to sterilize and reuse.

The plants are growing, and the excitement is, too! 🌱



Story and photos by Carolyn Crouchet



Look at all that color!