



Of Leaf & Limb

Hill Country Master Gardeners Association

"Promoting education on horticulture and the environment"

October, 2005

Volume 3, Issue 10

**Meeting
Wednesday,
October 5, 2005
1:00 p.m.
at the extension office.**

Karen Welch of the Garden Shed will speak on Herbs—how to grow them and how to use them.

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President's Message:

I would like to thank all of you for your good wishes during my "down time". They meant a great deal to me. I am fortunate to have so many wonderful people for friends.

September has been a very busy month so far. The first Market Day of the fall was a great success, the plans for the TMGA meeting in 2007 are moving forward and we are laying the groundwork for our first Junior Master Gardener group. MG's also taught two gardening classes for Club Ed. The preparations for the Class of 2006 are underway. Contact Fay Drozd or Anne Brown to find out how you can help with

any of these projects.

We have only one new Master Gardener this month. Dorothy Powell has completed all her volunteer hours and is now a certified Master Gardener. Congratulations! The Class of '05 is nearing completion. There are only three or four left to finish.

Otis Fox, Tommie Airhart and Betty West make up the nominating committee. They will meet sometime this month to prepare a slate of officers for next year. Their list will be presented at the October meeting for a vote in November and installation at the Christmas party in

December.

Anne Brown, President-elect, will soon be forming committees to serve when she becomes President next year. We will need lots of help for the very busy year ahead. If you are asked to serve, please be prepared to say yes.

The Garden Planners are now available. Check them out. Christine deserves a big "hats off".

Stay cool as you go about your fall chores and come to the meeting on September 7.

Fay Drozd

Kudos:

Dorothy Powell, our latest Intern to complete her volunteer hours and become a "certified" Master Gardener.

Web Site of the Month

<http://insects.tamu.edu/extension/insctans/index.html> Access to a wide variety of printable publications for answers to insect questions.

by Fay Drozd

Hunt Discover Garden

The fourth and fifth graders of the Hunt School have been hard at work for the past few weeks. With a little help, this enthusiastic bunch weeded and "lasagna-layered" their beds and covered the walkways with fresh straw. Then, on September 6, their reward was at hand: time to plant the fall garden!

Each child made his or her own garden plan to fit the space allotted with the appropriate number of vegetable plants and seeds. The children were provided with broccoli, kale, cabbage and brussel sprouts sets and with carrot, lettuce, collard and turnip seeds. Flowering additions included dianthus, vinca minor and chrysanthemum.

It's going to be a beautiful garden, made even more lovely by the happy, earnest faces of these aspiring young people.

by Georgia Roth



Saving Summer – Part Two

by Carol Seminara

"If the definition of poetry allowed that it could be composed with the products of the field as well as with words, 'pesto' would be in every anthology." Marcellus Hazan, Italian-born American writer.

Thumbing through a cookbook the other afternoon I happened upon the above quote, which so perfectly introduces another of my favorite flavors of summer: basil.

Basil is an annual and a member of the mint family. As such, it has square, hairy stems. The genus *Ocimum* is native to Asia, Africa and Central and Southern America. It was probably first cultivated in India and then introduced through the spice routes to Africa and, of course, the Mediterranean. The Greeks called it "the herb of kings" and it was believed that basil should only be harvested by the king himself using a golden sickle. In 2003, the International Herb Society designated basil as the Herb of the Year, and still in some parts of Italy, so they say, men wear a sprig of basil in their lapels if they are looking for a mate.

In addition to its culinary uses, basil enjoys a mild reputation as a medicinal herb with several reputed properties, including the ability to draw out poison from insect bites and as a treatment for stomach cramps, vomiting and constipation. Because it has a slight sedative action, basil infusions are sometimes recommended for headaches and anxiety.

Basil is a warm season crop that wants full sun and thrives in temperatures in the 80s and 90s. It needs rich, well-drained soil and adequate water, but don't over water it. Some experts advise basil does best when protected from wind and scorching midday sun. There's some controversy, too, about whether or not you should fertilize basil: some experts recommend fertilizing basil sparingly to allow the fragrant oils to fully develop, while others suggest regular applications of fertilizer for vigorous growth. In any event, basil is generally very easy to cultivate, but can be susceptible to

attack by common garden pests such as aphids, Japanese beetles and spider mites. Pinch off terminal shoots to encourage branching and new growth and to slow bolting (flower production). As for companion planting, basil is a natural when planted near tomatoes and peppers.

Basil is effortlessly grown from seeds, but small pots are readily available at most nurseries. If you opt for seeds, you can sow them directly into the ground after the danger of any frost has passed. As we approach winter, basil can be transplanted or sown into pots and grown on sunny windowsills. Germination occurs in about 5 to 7 days.

There are about 150 cultivars of basil that can be used for both cooking and ornamental applications. Below is a sample of some common varieties:

- Cinnamon basil (*Ocimum basilicum* 'Cinnamon') has cinnamon-colored stems and purple flowers. Often used as an ornamental, the leaves are edible and have a distinct cinnamon-like flavor and scent and make an excellent addition to potpourri. The plants can grow up to 3-feet in height and width.
- Dark Opal basil (*O. basilicum* 'Dark Opal') is highly ornamental with its deep purple foliage and pink flowers. It grows up to 2 feet in height and a foot in width and is used as a theatrical garnish or for flavoring oils and vinegars.
- Genovese, or Genova (*O. basilicum* 'Genovese') is a standard, flat-leafed Italian variety with a sweet, spicy taste that is commonly used for making pesto. The plant is a biennial and can grow as tall as 5 feet tall, and 2 feet wide, but is better if kept smaller. Leaves are 3-4 inches long and 2-3 wide, and can yield up to 7 or 8 cuttings per season.
- Lemon basil (*O. basilicum* 'americanum') has small, light green leaves and a lemon fragrance. It is very mild flavored and only slightly lemony. Commonly used in Indonesian cooking.
- Spicy Globe basil (*O. basilicum* 'Minimum') this compact variety with tiny leaves makes a good container plant or ornamental border; it grows about 6

inches high and about 12 inches across.

This was my first year as a Hill Country gardener and of my few successes (and thankfully, there were a few), I count basil as my best crop. I planted two 4-inch pots of the Genovese cultivar purchased from a local nursery at the end of a raised, lasagna-style bed of tomatoes. Sadly, the tomatoes failed back in mid-July, but the basil is still going strong. Those two plants stand about 30 inches tall and 3 feet wide, overflowing the end of their bed. From their tender, fragrant leaves, I've made innumerable platters of bruschetta, dozens of caprese salads and sandwiches, several margarita pizzas, gallons of tomato sauce and four batches of pesto.

It's the pesto that makes me happiest because basil leaves are fragile -- they're easily bruised and they don't retain their fresh flavor when frozen or their bright color when dried. It's only in the making of pesto that you can truly save this bite of summer.

I make pesto without cheese (so it keeps better) and, something I learned from Martha Stewart, I briefly blanch the basil leaves in salted water, shock them in ice water and then dry them thoroughly before processing them with toasted pine nuts, best-quality EVOO and garlic.

I freeze the pesto in two forms: ice cube trays and small, freezer containers. For smaller amounts, I put 2 tablespoons pesto per cube in an ice cube tray, cover the tray with plastic wrap and put it the freezer overnight. The next morning, I pop out the frozen pesto cubes and place them in resealable, plastic bags. For larger quantities, I use 1/2-cup freezer-proof jars. I love opening the freezer and seeing all those small, green jars lined up like little soldiers. Pesto, frozen in this manner, will keep at least 6 months.

[
 Who bends
 a
 knee
 where
 violets
 grow
 A hundred
 secret
 things
 shall
 know.

Rachel
 Field
 From "A
 Charm for
 Spring
 Flowers,"
 Poems,
 1957
]

Fall Planting

Summer's over, or so at least the calendar tells us despite the days of soaring temperatures. Still it's time to bid farewell to our showy hot-weather annuals and succulent fruits and vegetables and think about what we can plant for this transition period before winter's frost.

A visit to plantanswers.com, the Texas Cooperative Extension Horticulture/Texas A&M University System Web site, features a column last month on fall planting recommendations by Dr. Jerry Parsons. In his essay, Dr. Parson divides fall vegetable crops into two categories: short-term and long-term.

Short-term crops are generally frost-susceptible and include vegetables such as beans, cantaloupe, corn, cucumbers, eggplants, okra, peppers, squash and tomatoes. These should have already been planted or transplanted to provide an adequate growing period to allow harvest before cold damage can occur.

Long-term, frost-tolerant crops include beets, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrots, garlic, lettuce, onions, spinach and turnips.

Check out this article for specific information on the importance of soil temperature on seed germination, especially for these frost-tolerant crops, and a list of quick-, moderate- and slow-maturing vegetables, as well as an informed discussion on the advantages and disadvantages of using hybrid varieties.

If you bought a copy of the 2006 Garden Planner, then you have another handy inventory of season-appropriate seeds and plants for fall gardening, as well as a check list of maintenance activities. If you don't have a copy of this handy reference, then contact Christine Millar, coordinator of the project. The cost for each planner is \$9.50, plus \$2. shipping and handling fees. That \$2 fee is waived, if you decide to pick up your garden planners at the Kerr Extension Office. Mail orders and payment -- either check or money order payable to Hill Country Master Gardeners -- to Christine Millar, Garden Planner, P.O. Box 1479, Center Point, TX 78010.



Calendar of Events: (Attendance at events other than Master Gardener Meetings is

optional; events are listed for those wishing to attend other educational offerings)

October 4 – Native Plant Society of Texas, Kerrville Chapter will meet at 2:00 p.m. at the Riverside Nature Center.

October 5 - HCMG monthly meeting at the Kerr County Extension Office at 1:00 p.m. This month's program will be presented by Karen Welch, The Garden Shed, on Herbs – How to grow them and ways to use them.

October 8 – HCMG has a booth at Market Days, Kerr County Courthouse from 9:00 am – 4:00 pm. If you need some fall plants for your garden, be sure to drop by and check out our plants.

October 8 – Native Plant Society of Texas, Bandera Chapter, will meet at 2:00 p.m. at the Medina Community Library meeting room, in Bandera. Lotie Millsaps is the featured speaker and the subject is using family characteristics in learning to identify wildflowers.

October 18 – Kerr Cactus and Succulent Society meets at 7:00 p.m. at Butt-Holdsworth Library, Kerrville.

October 20 – Deadline for HCMG newsletter articles (send to Martha at hnews@ktc.com)

October 22 – HCMG has a booth at Market Days, Kerr County Courthouse from 9:00am – 4:00 pm. This is our final '05 Market Days participation, so it's your last chance to pick up your Fall plants.

October 25 – Gardeners of Kerrville. A fieldtrip/workday is planned at the Lions Camp greenhouse.

October 25 – Native Plant Society of Texas, Fredericksburg Chapter, meets at 7:00 p.m. at the Gillespie County Historical Society Bldg. 312 W. San Antonio St., Fredericksburg.

Committees

Education:

Judy Schaefer, Chair
Greenhouse/Market

Days:

Tony Pacini, Chair
Horticultural Inquiry:
Pam Bresler-chair
Carol Johnson, Betty West

Newsletter:

Martha Stevens-editor
Carol Seminara-
assistant editor
Contributors: Betty West, Pam Bresler, Tommie Airhart, Jean Anderson, Georgia Roth, Fay Drozd

Nominating:

Tommie Airhart-chair
Otis Fox, Betty West

Program:

Eileen Haden-Chair

Volunteer

Hours/Record Keeping:

Tommie Airhart, Chair
Mentoring:

Naoma Peacock, Chair

H/C Garden Book

Publication:

Christine Millar, Chair

Greenhouse & Market Days Committee

We have wonderful healthy plants for our two remaining Market Days, October 8 and 22, 2005. If you are doing fall plantings now is the time to get first selection.

Our Watering Calendar is full for October. Thanks to our great and loyal volunteers. You are SO appreciated.

I think it has worked out very well with our Phone Desk Volunteers watering as well. Thanks for taking the extra time to work in the greenhouse/pavilion.

by: Jean Anderson,
Tony Pacini, Chair

Horticultural Inquiry Committee

Education Report: We're having another "refresher class" for seasoned Master Gardeners on Phone Desk duty after the HCMG monthly meeting on October 5th. If you missed the initial class, here's another chance. We now have a written handout for phone desk training. You don't need to make reservations ...simply show up in the HCMG office after the meeting.

by: Pam Bresler, Chair

Phone Desk Calendar Report: There has been a bit of recent confusion relating to all the calendars posted on the bulletin board in our office. I only maintain the "phone desk duty" calendar. Jean Anderson handles the watering schedule. If you wish to volunteer for both duties (watering and phone desk) then it's a good idea to let both Jean and I know. You may contact me, Betty West, at dwest@omniglobal.net <mailto:dwest@omniglobal.net> or 895-5996 and I can tell you whether the date you wish to volunteer is open. Luckily we're covered through the end of October but we'll need help in November so keep us in mind.

by: Betty West, Phone Desk Calendar

Volunteer Hours Record Keeping Program

The third quarter closed 9/30/05 so I'm expecting all the MGs to provide me with their quarterly timesheets at the October meeting, if not sooner. If you haven't completed your volunteer hours and CEU's by now, you only have three months left to complete them and be eligible for recertification.

by: Tommie Airhart, Chair

MG State Convention Update

The Steering Committee for the upcoming Texas Master Gardener State Conference met September 9 to further plans for the 2007 event. In addition to several committee chairpersons present, Marie Woodard from the Kerr Convention and Visitors Bureau attended the two-hour meeting. The Steering Committee wants to include gardening information from and for Kerr, Gillespie and Bandera counties.

Some of the business conducted was the creation of an event timeline and a review of the preliminary draft budget. Additionally, a total of 14 committees were identified and some of their duties assigned. Those committees and their chairpersons are: Accommodations-Roy Walston and Laurinda; Awards-Fay Drozd; Budget-Anne Brown; Exhibitors-John Osborn; Hospitality -Carol Johnson, Beverly Weidenfelder; Protocol-Fay; Publicity-Carol Biggs, Carol Seminara; Registration-Tommie Airhart; Speakers-Dusty Gilliam; Sponsors-Annese Thomas; and Volunteers-Tommie. Three committees -- Meals, Tours and Transportation -- still do not have chairpersons.

Currently the Publicity Committee is fielding ideas for the event 's theme. Everyone agreed that a western theme was wanted, and some suggested slogans included: "These Boots are Made for Gardening," "Boots and Blossoms," "Blue Bonnets or Bust!" and "Boot Scootin' Texas Gardening." The Speakers Committee has begun research on speakers and will present a report at the next steering committee meeting. Annesse, too, has started identifying corporate sponsors and hopes to have some preliminary names for the October meeting. Roy is confirming if the convention will be set at either the YO or Inn of the Hills and should have an idea of room rates.

The Steering Committee plans to meet every month until the Convention and has scheduled their meetings from 10:30 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. before the monthly MG meetings.

by Carol Biggs, Chair

Hill Country Master Gardener Association 2005 Executive Committee

Fay Drozd – President
Anne Brown – President Elect
Tony Pacini - Vice President
Diane Whitney - Secretary
Barbara Robbins - Treasurer
Kristi Gebauer - Ex-officio Advisor
Roy Walston - C. E. O. Advisor

Of Leaf & Limb Newsletter Committee

Editor - Martha Stevens
Assistant Editor - Carol Seminara
Contributors – Fay Drozd, Betty West, Pam Bresler, Tommie Airhart, Jean Anderson, Georgia Roth

Comments, Submissions...

We welcome and encourage any comments or suggestions regarding this newsletter. Also, if you would like to submit an article for an upcoming edition, please send to: hnews@ktc.com. Indicate "Editor HCMG Newsletter" in the subject line.

Minutes of the Monthly Meeting September 05, 2005

The monthly meeting was called to order by President Fay Drozd at 1:00 p.m. on Wednesday, September 5, 2005, at the county extension office.

Fay thanked everyone who sent cards, letters and gifts to her while she was in the hospital and was recuperating from her recent surgery. She greatly appreciated the good thoughts and well wishes she received from her friends and colleagues. She said she is doing well and has good reports from her doctors.

1. Secretary's Report. The minutes of the August meeting recorded by Judy Simmons were published in the August Newsletter. There were no additions or corrections from the members present and were approved as read.
2. Treasurer's Report. Barbara Robbins presented the treasurer's report. The original is on file records of the Hill Country Master Gardener Association. The Hill Country Master Gardener Association 2006 Garden Planners were available for purchase at the meetings.
3. Vice President and Greenhouse Committee chair Tony Pacini reported that Jean Anderson is in charge of watering the greenhouse. Anne Brown was in charge while Jean was on vacation. The watering scheduled was filled and the plants well cared for. There are days available in the coming month and volunteers are still needed. No Volunteers for Market Days on Saturday, September 10 are needed, but we still need volunteers for Market Days on Saturday, September 24.
Other Business
 1. Betty West reported and phone duty volunteers are needed for September 21 and 28 and most of the October dates are open.
 2. Anne Brown is in charge of the finding volunteers for committees for the upcoming State Advance Master Gardener Training program in 2007. She thanked our members for the response to her email. Those members who did not respond may be appointed to something!
 3. Fay added that Roy Walton says we need a lot more people for committees and to be available for odd jobs. Sign up sheets for committees were at the back of the room. Please sign up. You will be called when needed. Specifically, 7 more people are needed to serve on the education committee.
 4. The annual Christmas party will be held on Friday, December 2 at the Ag barn. Volunteers are needed to plan the party. It will be Pot Luck and bring your own bottle. New officer installation will also be held that night.
 5. Junior Master Garden training will be held at September 30, 2005 at 1:00 p.m. This training will be held for Master Gardeners who want to help with the Salvation Army gardening program.
 6. John Osborn will hold a Container Gardening Class for the Adult Education program on September 17, from 10-12.
 6. The following newly certified Master Gardeners were presented with their Certificates, Membership Cards, membership badges and refunds. Phyllis Knight, Marguerite Belec, Cheri Bolden, Mildred Coggin, Sharon Johnson. Congratulations and good work. There are only 4 more 2005 interns left who are working on Master Gardener certificates.
 7. Fay stated that she was postponing her propagation class that was scheduled for today. As a result of her recent illness, she was not up to presenting the class. Fay will present the class at the November meeting. Those interest in participating in the propagation process, please sign up or otherwise notify Fay so she can have the appropriate supplies and number of pots available for her students.

There was no other business and the meeting was adjourned at 1:15. Fay announced that Eileen Haden was not present today, but Eileen had found a wonderful speaker to replace Fay's plant propagation program. Fay introduced the program on Water Lily ponds and bog plants, presented by Richard Thornbur to an enthusiastic membership.

Respectfully Submitted,
Diane S. Whitney