



Of Leaf & Limb

Hill Country Master Gardeners Association

"Promoting education on horticulture and the environment"

July, 2006

Volume 4, Issue 7

Wednesday,
July 5,
1:00 p.m.

Extension Office

Speaker:

This month's program is on compost and vermiculture presented by Art Stokes..

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President's Message:

Hi Everyone!

I hope you are all tolerating lack of water and the heat (or escaping somewhere cool).

Because of a couple of questions I've had lately, I thought this would be a good time to talk about the volunteer opportunities that exist within our Master Gardener program.

We have lots of committees who need people to help fulfill their goals and responsibilities. The Education Committee, chaired by Debbie Russell, will be starting work in August and is looking for members to help assist in all the classes. The Greenhouse and Market Days Committee, Tony Pacini, Chair, needs volunteers to work in the greenhouse and, of course, to staff our booth on the days we have sales at both the office and at Market Days. We're looking for someone who is willing to chair the Public Relations Committee, and additional volunteers in Fredericksburg and Bandera to be liaisons to their newspapers. The Program Committee, chaired by Phyllis Knight, could use another member. The Junior Master Gardener Committee, chaired by Fay Drozd, is currently

working on a connection to a school and will need members as soon as that program matures. The Horticultural Inquiry Committee, chaired by Pam Bresler, has a full committee, as does the Newsletter Committee, Martha Stevens, Chair. However, if anyone is interested in working on either of those committees, I'm sure the help would be welcome.

In addition to the committee structure of the organization, there are several opportunities for practical volunteer work. In Fredericksburg, the Hill Country Master Gardeners support the Good Samaritan Center's garden, and volunteers are needed for that project; contact Peggy Benson if you are interested. In Bandera, Sherlie Vangsnes usually has several projects ongoing. In Kerrville, we have the gardens at the Extension Office, which need to be pruned and weeded regularly. If anyone is interested in helping with that project, contact Beverly Weidenfeller.

As the demonstration garden evolves, there will be lots of volunteer opportunities arising. Sandy Martin, Fay Drozd, and I are attending a Specialist

Training session on Rainwater Harvesting, and we will be designing a catchment system for the Extension Office. This project won't start until after the convention next year, but it should be a fun and worthwhile venture.

Our primary job as Certified Master Gardeners is supporting Roy and the Extension Office, and we can always use volunteers to answer phone inquiries. Volunteers providing responses to horticultural questions are a significant help to the Extension Office and a big part of why we trained as MGs.

And last but not least, there is lots of work to be done as we get ready to host the State MG Convention next April.

I have heard it said that there are not very many volunteer opportunities within the organization, but anyone who reviews the above would think otherwise. And we all have fun doing good work.

I hope to see everyone at the meeting on the fifth.
by Anne Brown

HCMG Website of the Month

<http://vegipm.tamu.edu/> For home vegetable gardeners, this site contains valuable information of identifying and managing insect pests.



Much Ado about Mulching

By Carol Seminara

Summer is officially here with its long hours of sunlight, triple-digit temperatures and threatened water rationing. If you haven't already mulched, then sooner is better than later. Julie Bonnin, writing in the May 20 edition of the Austin American Statesman said it well: "Heading into summer without tucking a protective blanket of mulch around your plants is like forgetting to install insulation in your house and then wondering why your air-conditioning bills are so high."

Next to good, organic compost, mulch is just about a garden's best friend and a beneficial one, too. Mulch moderates soil temperatures in both scorching and frosty months, helps retain soil moisture, prevents soil splashing to stop erosion and protects plants from soil-borne diseases (think red-tipped photinia) and retards the growth of weeds. And, too, an attractive layer of mulch makes a flower bed just look well-groomed.

Picking the right mulch can be tricky and depends, in part, on the application and desired result. There are basically two types of mulches: inorganic and organic; each having a place in the garden.

If stopping weeds is the number one priority, then black plastic or landscape fabric is a good choice, although these add no nutrients and little aesthetic appeal. Some inorganic mulches like gravel, decomposed granite and pebble are more attractive. Trendier urban gardens are sporting layers of crushed and tumbled glass mulch and even titanium screws. There's a café in Austin that mulches their garden with old wine corks. All these share the benefit of not attracting pests but, again, they do nothing to improve the health of your soil.

Organic mulches nourish the soil as they decompose, but they don't always perform well as weed inhibitors and may attract insects, slugs and cutworms, and the birds and mice that feed on them. Because they eventually become part of the soil, organic mulches have to be replenished or replaced. Grass

clippings, leaves and leaf mold, pine needles (very good for acid-loving roses), shredded hardwood mulch and pecan shells are all good examples of readily available organic mulches. One caveat: while straw makes a good choice for mulching garden paths because it decomposes quickly and improves the soil, don't use hay for mulch. Hay almost always contains too many weed seeds.

Organic mulches are usually applied in layers from 2 to 6 inches in depth. Coarser mulches can be applied more thickly than those with smaller sized particles, 4 to 6 inches. Fine textured mulches, which include many wood and bark mulches, generally should not be more than 2 to 3 inches deep. According to Malcom Beck, too-thick layers of fine textured mulch can block air circulation and suffocate plant roots, resulting in yellowed leaves and poor growth. Grass clippings and shredded leaves, too, should be kept at a depth of about 2 inches since these materials tend to mat together and may inhibit the water and air supply to the plant's roots.

To determine how many cubic feet of mulch you need, you must calculate the surface area and the depth of coverage. For example, you know there are 27 cubic feet in one cubic yard (3X3X3). One cubic yard of mulch will cover a 324-square-foot area to a depth of one inch. To determine the square footage of your square or rectangular beds, multiply the width times the length. To determine the square footage of a circular bed, multiply the radius (distance from the center of the circle to the outside edge) by itself and then by 3.14 (pi). Then multiply the square footage of the bed's area by the depth in inches of mulch desired and divide that number by 324 (square feet area covered by one inch, see above).

Recently an urban myth was making the e-mail circuit warning about using hardwood mulch from downed trees in hurricane devastated areas. These mulches, we were warned, contained ravenous tropical termites that would

devour our homes in days. Truth is, we already have subterranean termites nesting in our soil and, as is their nature, termites feed on cellulose. It's always a good idea to keep mulch 6 to 12 inches away from the wall of your home to prevent termites from using it as a bridge to your tasty wooden home.

As for that termite-tainted mulch from hurricane-ravaged areas, according to a missive from Michael Merchant, an urban entomologist with TAMU, wood-waste from those areas is quarantined. If you're still worried your hardwood mulch might contain termites, Merchant recommended a quick dousing of a garden insecticide labeled for control of ant mounds, or you can raise the temperature of the mulch to 120 degrees to kill off any existing insect life by placing the mulch in a black plastic garbage bag and exposing it to the hot sun for several days.

Merchant added a warning that recycled railroad ties present a bigger problem than termites in your mulch.

The Garden Guides Web site <http://www.gardenguides.com/TipsandTechniques/mulch/mulch-noframe.htm> has a fun interactive mulch guide where you click on a type of mulch and an information window pops open that rates the selected mulch by appearance, cost and effectiveness as insulation, moisture retention and weed control, as well as recommended thickness of application and decomposition speed. The gamut of mulches listed range from the uncommon: aluminum foil (who knew that one layer of foil would repel aphids?) and paper pulp, to the more usual grass clippings, cottonseed hulls and straw.

More information on selecting and using mulch is also available through Texas A&M at: <http://www.aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu>

Kudos to:

Carol Biggs for getting the information for our 2007 State Conference posted to our website. Check out all the tours that have been planned.

Dusty Gilliam for donating a large composter for use with our greenhouse and demo garden.

Ron Richerson for donating plants to our greenhouse. We've sold these plants and added funds to our treasury.

Judy Russell for cataloging the library in our office. At long last, we know what reference materials we have available.

Extraordinary Kudos to:

The Tierra Madre Garden Club for their contribution to HCMG's in recognition of Anna Osborn's two years as President of their organization.



Calendar of Events: (Attendance at events other than Master Gardener Meetings is optional; events are listed for those wishing to attend other educational offerings)

July - Native Plant Society of Texas, Kerrville Chapter is on summer hiatus. Meetings will resume in September.

July 5 – HCMG State Conference Steering Committee Chairs meet at 10:00 a.m. at the Extension Office.

July 5 - HCMG monthly meeting at 1:00 p.m. at the Kerr County Extension Office This month's program is on compost and vermiculture presented by Art Stokes. A Department Chairs committee meeting will follow.

July 11 – Harold Pieratt - "Garden Roses for the Hill Country" at the Heritage Hill Country Clubhouse, 204 Heritage Hills Drive, in Fredericksburg at 6:30 pm Tuesday, July 11th. The program is open to the public.

July 18 - Kerr Cactus and Succulent Society meets at 7:00 p.m. at Butt Holdsworth Library, 505 Water Street, Kerrville.

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

July 24 – Texas Master Naturalists meet in Kerrville at Riverside Nature Center at 7:00 p.m.

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

Committees

Education:

Debbie Russell, Chair;
Cheri Bolden, Fay
Drozd, Otis Fox,
Eileen Haden, Ida
Luckey, Sandra Martin,
Mary Allen Meriwether,
Judy Russell, Judy
Simmons, Huibert Van
Demmeltraadt, Beverly
Weidenfeller

Greenhouse/Market

Days:

Tony Pacini, Chair

Horticultural Inquiry:

Pam Bresler-chair
Carol Johnson, Betty
West,
Judy Simmons

Jr. Master Gardeners

Committee – Fay
Drozd

Newsletter:

Martha Stevens-editor
Carol Seminara-
assistant editor

Contributors: Betty
West, Ida Luckey,
Anne Brown, Carol
Biggs

Nominating:

Tommie Airhart-chair

Program:

Phyllis Knight, Chair

Volunteer

Hours/Record

Keeping:

Ida Luckey, Chair

Mentoring:

Judy Simmons-Chair

H/C Garden Book

Publication:

Christine Millar, Chair

Hours and Tracking

Master Gardener Interns, you have until March 21st, 2007 to complete your volunteer and telephone hours.

There are many projects ongoing and many projects that can be initiated by any one of our knowledgeable volunteers.

Master Gardeners thank you for turning in your Volunteer and Education Hours. Our Association has fifty seven active volunteers. Twenty four members have already been recertified as of this month.

In April Christine Millar and Carol Seminara were recertified. Liz Althaus and Harold Pieratt were recertified as of May. CONGRATULATIONS!

by Ida Luckey

Green house Committee

In April a number of Master Gardeners and Intens attended a meeting concerning working in the greenhouse. The people are being asked to serve as the "Greenhouse Committee" We will have an organizational meeting on Thursday, July 13 at 1:00 pm in the Extension Office.

The committee will consist of Howard Platte, Anne Brown, Cheri Bolden, Diane McMahan, Nina Wagner, Leo Wagner, Eleanor Baldwin, Sandy Martin, Mildred Coggin, Jean Anderson, Margaret Belec and Phyllis Knight. If anyone no longer wishes to serve, please notify me. Also, if anyone is interested in working in or learning about greenhouse management, talk to me.

by Fay Drozd
367-2567,
fdrozd@cebridge.net

2007 Master Gardener Conference Online

Want to know the latest tours that are scheduled?

Do you know who our speakers are?

What museum in Kerrville is hosting the conference reception?

Who is our keynote speaker?

To obtain the answer to these questions and much more, log on to our HCMG website at www.hillcountrymastergardeners.org then click on 2007 Conference.

by Carol Biggs, Carol Seminara, Betty
West, Jane Clint
PR Committee, 2007 Conference

HCMG June 7, 2006 Monthly Meeting Minutes

The meeting was called to order by President Anne Brown at 1:40 PM on June 7, 2006 following a presentation on deer resistant plants by Mitzi McCollom from Alltex Nursery.

Treasurer's Report. Anne reported for Carol Johnson. There is a balance of \$6175.92 in the account. Approximately \$3800 has been advanced to the 2007 Convention expenses.

Demo Garden. A clarification regarding the expenses for the Irrigation System was made. Two thirds of the cost of the system will be donated. HCMG will be required to pay for the remaining one third. A motion was made to spend approximately \$1200 to cover the cost of one third of the expense and was unanimously approved by those in attendance.

Speaker's Bureau. The speaker's bureau still needs more speakers and topics. Forms were available at the meeting. A booklet of speakers will be put together.

Greenhouse. Tony Pacini reported that plant sales for the May sale at the Extension Office and the May Market Days were \$900.

Denim Shirts. Last call was made for anybody wishing to order denim shirts.

Convention. The committee has been doing an outstanding job. The project is running ahead of the time schedule. Speakers have all been confirmed. Expected attendance is between 650 -700. Anne gave an outline of the conference schedule as follows: Thursday night – reception at the Museum of Western Art; Friday- tours all day as well as concurrent workshops (Every tour needs at least 3 volunteers. 12 volunteers are still needed for the tours.); Friday evening- banquet; Saturday- education seminars. Conference dates are April 12-14, 2007

There is still a need for a chairperson of the registration committee. Contact Anne to volunteer.

Education Committee. Debbie Russell gave an update. The committee held a wrap-up about 2 weeks ago. A topic of discussion was how to get the word out into the community about Master Gardeners. There was a discussion of going back to one class per week for the 2007 class. Debbie asked for input from the group and took a vote of those in attendance. The majority voted for going back to one class per week in 2007.

Miscellaneous. Two guests attended the meeting and introduced themselves. Barbara Bush is a Master Gardener who has moved into the area from Colorado. Tom Collins is a Master Naturalist and Master Gardener who has moved into the area from Brazoria County.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Sharon K Johnson

[
The flowers are nature's jewels,
with whose wealth she decks her summer beauty.
-George Croly
]

Hill Country Master Gardener Association 2005 Executive Committee

Anne Brown – President
Harold Pieratt - Vice
President
Sharon Johnson -
Secretary
Carol Johnson -
Treasurer
Fay Drozd - Ex-officio
Advisor
Roy Walston - C. E. O.
Advisor

Of Leaf & Limb Newsletter

Editor - Martha
Stevens
Assistant Editor -
Carol Seminara
Contributors –Betty
West, Anne Brown,
Ida Luckey, Carol
Biggs

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@kctc.com.
Indicate "Editor HCMG Newsletter" in the subject line.