



Of Leaf & Limb

Hill Country Master Gardeners Association

"Promoting education on horticulture and the environment"

April, 2007

Volume 5, Issue 4

**THERE IS NO
APRIL
MEETING
BECAUSE OF
THE
CONVENTION**

**Meetings will
resume in May.**

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President's Message:



**Anne
Brown**

**Hi
Everyone**

It's
getting
closer

to convention time, and most of my time has been spent working on the convention. More about that later.

Marie Brown has the greenhouse full, and plants are ready to go to market. The first market days will have happened by the time you read this. If you haven't participated in market days, you might want to consider so doing. It's a great way to meet the public and tell them all about our program. Along with the plants we sell, every purchaser gets an information sheet, which tells them about the plant they are buying. This sheet also tells them about the Master Gardener program. It has been an effective way to distribute information to the public. We also provide information about rainwater harvesting at market days, and answer any questions the people who drop by have. It's a lot of fun.

John Osborn is the Chair of Market Days, so get with him if you have any questions.

Tony Pacini has been hard at work on the demo garden, and has some of the grass installed. He has done a great job in working with Maldonado's to obtain the materials for the garden. They are also providing the sod.

Now to the convention. We are very busy confirming tours, working on speaker assignments, answering all the questions people call in with, and generally working toward making this the best convention ever. We have lots of "goodies" to put in our hand made bags, and we are all hoping they will not be too heavy! The tours are almost set, pending last minute changes, and two of them have been cancelled due to lack of interest. One tour, to Diane Matthews garden and other places, has turned into two. We really appreciate Diane, a Blanco County MG, for allowing us the flexibility to do this.

We also have three other tours that have been closed due to being full.

As far as the speakers go, three exceeded the capacity of the meeting room at the Inn and we have had to reassign registrants to other speakers. That really means that the speaker committee did a great for this conference job of finding interesting speakers

We have about 18 vendors who will be selling their "wares" in booths in the lobby of the ballroom.

MG's love to shop at this conference, and I am confident our vendors will be glad they agreed to purchase a booth.

Carol Johnson has processed 567 registrations, and more are coming in. Confirmations will go out to all by mail this week.

As you can see, everyone is busy getting his or her particular part of the convention finalized. We all want to thank each and every one of you who have volunteered to help during the days before and during the convention. I know with all of us working together, we will have much success.

Work from Home

Want a way to earn your hours without leaving the comfort of your home office? Betty West and Carol Biggs are off on a big new project, SO the newsletter group needs someone to replace Betty who has loyally done the *Calendar of Events* since the beginning.

Requirements include an organized mind and computer skills enough to accept and send emails. Betty will train. Contact Eleanor Baldwin 895-2992 or baldwin@ktc.com.

HCMG Website of the Month
<http://texassuperstar.com/>



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

Be sure to call and confirm event.

Betty West

April 3 – MG State Convention Chairs meet at 10 a.m. at the Extension Office.

April 3 – Native Plant Society of Texas, Kerrville Chapter, will meet at Riverside Nature Center (RNC) at 2:00 p.m., 150 Francisco Lemos St., Kerrville. Elizabeth Drozda-Freeman will discuss “Conservation Landscaping with Native Plants.”

April 4 – There will be **NO** HCMG monthly meeting. Regularly scheduled monthly meetings will resume in May.

April 7 – “Mostly Native Plant Sale” will be held at the Kendall County Fair Grounds on Hwy 46 in Boerne. Adm is \$2 for adults. For further information, contact Cibolo Nature Center at 830/249-4616 or e-mail to nature@cibolo.net.

April 10 – MG State Convention Chairs meet at 10 a.m. at the Extension Office.

April 11 – All MG State Convention Volunteers will meet at Inn of the Hills at 1:00 p.m. for Orientation. **It is imperative that all our convention volunteers attend!!!**

April 11 – Fredericksburg Garden Club meets at 3 p.m. at the Central Texas Electric Co-Op Bldg., 386 Friendship Lane, Fredericksburg. *Note the time change for this meeting only.* Kathy Lyles will discuss “Native Plants and Wildflowers in Our Landscapes.”

April 12-14 – **Our HCMGs will host the 2007 Texas Master Gardener Conference here in Kerrville.**

April 17 – Kerr Cactus and Succulent Society meets at 7 p.m. at Butt Holdsworth Library, 505 Water Street, Kerrville.

April 20 – Deadline for HCMG newsletter articles. Send to Eleanor Baldwin at baldwin@ktc.com. *Please note our new Newsletter Editor and her address.*

April 21 – Earth Day will be celebrated at Riverside Nature Center from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. The focus this year will be on “water” plus a great plant sale.

April 24 – Native Plant society of Texas, Fredericksburg Chapter, meets at 7 p.m. in the Gillespie County Historical Society Bldg., 312 W. San Antonio St., Fredericksburg. Dale & Pat Bulla, Austin Chapter members, will present a program on “Backyard Wildlife Habits.”

April 28 – HCMG will have a booth at Market Days on the grounds of the Kerr County Court House from 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. Plants for sale will be: *Rosemary, Prostrate Rosemary, Salvia Greggii (Hot Lips), Salvia Theresa, Gold Lantana, Plumbago, Blue Buddleia, Mexican Bush Sage, and Althea.* The volunteer sign-up sheet for Market Days is in the MG office.

**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. A. Advisor

Of Leaf & Limb Newsletter Committee

Editor – Eleanor Baldwin
Assistant Editors -Carol Seminara, Betty West and Kathie Marlow
Regular Contributors – Anne Brown, Ida Luckey, Sharon Johnson

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:

baldwin@ktc.com.

Indicate "Editor HCMG in the subject line.

Kudos to...

Our newest 2007 Interns! We hope you enjoyed your classroom training and are ready to start work towards getting certified. We're so proud of all of you!

Tony Pacini for staying on top of our Demonstration Garden and getting the grass donated to us.

B.B. Browning, Tony Pacini, Randy Simmons and Roy Walston for laying the railroad ties in our garden.

B.B. Browning, Otis Fox, Ida Luckey, Carolyn Nall, Jerry Peebles, Nina Wagner and Leo Wagner for removing all the weeds from our Demo Garden.

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



HCMG March 7, 2007 Monthly Meeting Minutes

The meeting was called to order by President Anne Brown at 2.15 PM on March 7, 2007 following a presentation on Cacti and Succulents by Larry Fargarason. Larry was introduced by Bill Gibson, a member of the first HGMG class.

Treasurer's Report. Carol Johnson reported an end of month balance of \$89,717.18. Thus far 524 conference registrations have been processed. Expecting around 600 total.

Market Days and Greenhouse. John Osborn is putting up a signup sheet for Market Days volunteers. The first Market Days of the year is March 24. We need a minimum of 2 volunteers per shift. John will be setting up the booth in the morning but would like a co-chair to break down at 4PM end of day. There are about 200 plants in the greenhouse ready to sell. Jim Whittaker has donated 10 cork oak trees. A signup sheet for greenhouse watering was passed around.

Membership Directory. The membership directory was passed around for anyone to make updates to their phone, address or e-mail information

Herb Garden Project. Carol Biggs and Betty West submitted a proposal for creating an herb garden at the new Dietert Center. The proposal has been approved by the executive committee.

Member ID Cards. The 2007 member ID cards were available from Tommie Airhart at the end of the meeting.

2007 Class Graduation. Debbie Russell announced that 19 students will be graduating on March 26. The celebration is at Noon. All are welcome to attend. Those attending were asked to please bring finger food. Jerry Parsons will be the speaker.

Convention Updates.

Volunteers. Tommie Airhart gave an update on volunteer needs and had signup sheets available. Special attention will be given to stuffing and rechecking the envelopes to ensure that attendees get correct information. There will be a volunteer orientation day at 1PM on April 11 at the Inn of the Hills to familiarize volunteers with the facilities.

Goodie Bags. Bev Weidenfeller requested help from somebody who lives in Kerrville to ask for and pick up items from Kerrville area businesses.

Meeting. There will be no April meeting due to the convention.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:30.

Respectfully submitted,
Sharon K Johnson



Carol Seminar

A Weed by Any Other Name, Methods of Last Resort

Sometimes it seems, to paraphrase the old song, that if it weren't for crab grass I'd have no grass at all

Not that I'm a big grass fan, per se.

Slowly but surely we are reducing the square footage in our landscape dedicated to turf grass, but I can't help being amused at the irony of the situation. The only place grass appears to thrive is where it's not wanted: between the bricks on my patio and the joints of the sidewalk; in my flower, herb and vegetable beds (notwithstanding the four inches of mulch); even popping up in pots and hanging baskets (!?).

We've got weeds, and not just native plants I find amusing such as Henbit, Oxalis and Lambsquarter, to name a few. You probably have some weeds, too.

Like other plants, weeds are usually either annuals or perennials and are generally classified as either narrow leaf (grassy) or broadleaf. Fescue is an example of a narrow leaf weed; dandelion is one of the most common broadleaf weeds.

As we've discussed, the goal is to have such a healthy stand of desired plants that they choke out the weeds, or to use barriers (such as mulch or weed-cloth) to prevent weed seeds from germinating, or to physically remove--by pulling or digging--these flora intruders.

When these methods fail, a lot of folks turn to herbicides for help.

Herbicides are any chemical compounds used to destroy or prevent normal plant growth. The federal government classifies herbicides as "pesticides marketed specifically for killing or inhibiting the growth of weeds or other undesirable vegetation." Herbicides can be commercially available chemical compounds or natural/organic mixtures. Ortho is one company that makes a wide range of commercial herbicides; organic herbicides include some spices (oil of cinnamon), vinegar (in acidic solutions of 5 - 20 percent), sodium bicarbonate (a.k.a. baking soda), wheat flour and black walnut leaves (they contain an organic compound called Juglone).

Since 1945, the use of chemical herbicides has become the most common weed control practice in many farming areas of the world. Since the use of chemicals for weed control is almost as old as agriculture -- Theophrastus, in 300 B.C., mentioned killing trees by pouring olive oil on their roots -- what's significant about 1945? That's the year the American Chemical Paint Company was awarded a patent for 2,4-Dichlorophenoxyacetic Acid (2m4-D) for use as a weed killer.

There are two general categories of weed killers: nonselective and selective. As the names indicate, nonselective herbicides are toxic to a wide range of plants, while selective herbicides target specific plant species.

Roundup is an example of a nonselective herbicide; it kills pretty much everything it contacts.

2,4-D is an example of a selective herbicide; it is used to control broad-leaf plants such as dandelion, goldenrod, henbit, mustard, plantains,

ragweed, thistles and other susceptible broadleaf weeds. A highly selective systemic herbicide, 2,4-D was one of several chemicals in the herbicide blend known as Agent Orange that was used in the late 1960s by the U.S. military in Vietnam as a defoliant.

More recently, 2,4-D was back in the news, on the front page of the March 19 issue of the *Austin American Statesman*. Wine growers in Hays County are expressing concern that farmers and ranchers in the area are using the herbicide to clear hay field weeds and cotton stalks at the end of the growing season. While the use of 2,4-D is subject to some regulation by the Texas Dept. of Agriculture, vintners fear its use could have detrimental effects on their grape vines due to drift (the herbicide being carried on the wind beyond the fields where it was applied).

Post-emergent herbicides are applied to weeds that are already growing and kill the plants by impeding photosynthesis or inhibiting growth. These are mostly used to control specific broadleaf weeds; they don't kill other weeds or grasses. Most home-use post-emergents are systemic, which means they are absorbed by the plant's foliage or roots and then translocated (or moved through the plant's system) to kill the whole thing. Contact herbicides are also post-emergents, but they only kill those parts of the plant they touch. Again, Roundup is a systemic post-emergent, while horticultural grade vinegar (20 percent acidity) is a contact post-emergent. (More about horticultural vinegar in a moment.)

Pre-emergent herbicides are mixed into the soil of an area to be treated. They create a chemical film on the soil that kills germinating seeds and small seedlings. Barricade (active ingredient prodiamine) and Balan (active ingredient benefin) are trade names of two commercial pre-emergents, while corn gluten meal is an example of a natural pre-emergent. Concern Weed Prevention Plus is a commercially available version of corn gluten.

Most over-the-counter herbicides claim to be biodegradable when used correctly, but even with the "safest" weed killers there remains a possibility of some toxic reaction from skin exposure or inhalation before they have had a chance to break down.

Concern Fast Acting Weed Killer is a non-selective post-emergent and was the first natural herbicide sold commercially. Made from ammoniated soap of fatty acids, it meets Integrated Pest Management (IPM) requirements that call for the herbicide to have low soil mobility, be biodegradable and non-toxic to people and pets, yet it carries a low-to medium risk of skin inflammation.

BurnOut Weed & Grass Killer is a non-selective natural herbicide made from clove oil, lemon juice and horticultural grade vinegar. Like the Concern products, it too meets IPM requirements, but it carries a very high risk of acute skin and eye irritation or inhalation danger.

My own results using 7 percent or "pickling" vinegar were less than spectacular. I sprayed grass growing between the patio bricks on a hot, sunny day (heat increases the effectiveness of the acid). The next day, the grass leaves were yellow and burnt, but three days later, the new sprouts greener and healthier than before. I repeated applying the vinegar three more times, hoping to kill the roots by damaging the food-producing top, but with no success.

Bottom line, play it safe when using any lawn chemical. Use them wisely, only when needed, and then work on improving your garden environment so you won't need them again.



Committees

Archivist – Judy Russell, Chair

Demonstration Garden: Tony Pacini, Chair

Education: Debbie Russell, Chair

Greenhouse: Marie Brown, Chair

Horticultural Inquiry : Diane Whitney-chair

Jr. Master Gardener Program: Fay Drozd, Chair

Market Days: John Osborn, Chair

Mentors: Judy Simmons, Chair

Newsletter: Eleanor Baldwin-Editor

Nominating: Randy Simmons-Chair

Programs: Dusty Gilliam, Chair

Public Relations: Sally Ritch, Chair

Record Keeping/ Volunteer Hours Ida Luckey, Chair

Speaker's Bureau: Pam Bresler, Chair

Volunteer Coordination: Tommie Airhart, Chair

Plant Chats

Our newsletter group is inaugurating a new column for our members to share their brief gardening comments and ideas. Our first "Plant Chats" by Harold Pieratt and Carol Seminara follow.

New Pest in Town

Not many insects bother pansy flowers, so you can imagine my surprise when I discovered the petals of my Majestic Giant pansies looking quite chewed up. Upon closer inspection, I discovered a brown caterpillar a little longer than one inch having a snack on my blossoms. Several smaller, i.e. younger, versions of the caterpillar were likewise engaged.

A quick trip on the Web revealed that this critter is called -- what else? -- a Pansy Caterpillar. The caterpillar is reddish brown, with white stripes and two rows of branched black spines running lengthwise down its body. Near the head are two long spines that are frequently mistaken for antennae.



Variegated Fritillary

The Pansy Caterpillar is larva of the fritillary butterfly. Common fritillary butterflies in Central Texas include the Gulf Fritillary (*Agraulis vanillae*), Variegated Fritillary and Mexican Fritillary (*Euptoieta hegesia*), all of which usually enjoy passionvine as their host plant.

Carol Seminara

Building a Good Garden Bed

Gardening in the Hill Country can be a challenge in that our caliche soil is very clayey and its compacted fine particle grit readily refuses root penetration. These shallow soils normally have poor drainage which may lead to salt and oxygen problems due to poor aeration. Root systems that typically lack depth will experience low oxygen and water levels reducing the plants tolerance to drought and hot windy weather and consequently plant production.

The best way to bed your plants is by raised beds or terraces whereby you ignore your poor alkaline soil to create a more favorable soil building program and to allow good water drainage and oxygen retention. Import good garden soil with fertility, texture, structure, and the new bed should be ideally 14 to 18 inches above the existing soil.

An ideal soil texture would be a sandy loam containing equivalent portions of sand, silt, clay, and organic matter. And structure is the physical condition of the soil in how these different soil particles fit together allowing air and water pockets. You want your garden bed to feel and look like a slightly damp sponge and amending with organic compost and mulch will achieve this desired structure.

I subscribe to a NoTill method for better absorbency and porosity by not stirring the soil causing channels to collapse through which water and air can filter to greater depths for a healthy root system. Also keeping your soil moist will aid the microbial activity which brings the earthworms and other physical decomposers which in turn breaks down the soil by their burrowing and channeling.

An optimum for plant bedding in growth and production is 50% soil, 25% air, and 25% water. A healthy soil will eliminate most gardening problems.

Harold Pieratt

Don't forget our website:

<http://www.hillcountrymastergardeners.org>