



Of Leaf & Limb

Hill Country Master Gardeners Association

"Promoting education on horticulture and the environment"

June, 2007

Volume 5, Issue 6

1:00 p.m. June 6, 2007 meeting

Our speaker is Tim Goode on Turf Performance. Mr. Goode is owner of Turtle Creek Sod Farm and a terrific communicator.

Highlights

President's Message	1
Calendar	2
Kudos	2
Over the Fence	3
Plant Chats	4
Lavender	4



President's Message:



Anne Brown

Hi Everyone!

Right now, I am sitting in front of a fire in the fireplace

enjoying 45-degree weather. It sure is nice to have a bit of cool weather in anticipation of the coming summer. I am in Michigan helping a friend open up their cabins on the Upper Peninsula. It is quite different from home – since it is so cool, the trees are just budding out, and the geese are swimming around with their new off spring. The cabins are on an inlet of Lake Huron, and as such, we have a lot of waterfowl swimming by. Now that I have made you jealous, on to business.

As most of you know, the convention came out on the positive side, both in terms of favorable comments and dollars. At the last meeting, the membership voted to create a scholarship, which would fund a horticulture student. We are very lucky as a group to have the opportunity to create such a testament to all the hard work you all did on the convention. We plan to invest the money, and use the interest to fund the scholarship. To that end, there are a lot of details which need to be formalized as we establish this scholarship. Anyone who is interested in serving on the committee, which develops the policies and procedures, may do so. Please let me know at the next meeting if you would be interested in working on this project. We will then develop a

plan as to how to administer this program, and present the results to the membership as a whole for their approval.

I have one last comment to pass on to all of you about the convention. Most of you know Doug Richards. He is the Webmaster for TMGA, and volunteered to help us with our website. As such, he was responsible for putting up all the information about the convention on our website, after it was developed by Carol Biggs, and Doug is generally credited with generating a lot of interest in our convention. I got a note from him thanking us for our hospitality. He stated that our convention was the best he had been to, and everyone he talked to said the same. I guess it is time to rest on our laurels and get down to the business of HCMG.

We have three new projects which are quite fun and will generate some positive publicity for our group. I received a call from one of the County Commissioners wanting us to help him with some landscaping projects. The first involves the new terminal at the airport. They have money already budgeted to landscape around the building, and they want us to design the project and supervise the installation of the materials. To this end, because they had such a short time frame (they wanted it done by the 5th of June), John Osborn took over meeting with the committee of the airport board, and together with John Coleman, is developing the plan. We will need some help when time comes for installation; so if you would like to help get the plan installed, let Tommie know.

The second project he would like us to help with in coming up with a plan for the courthouse. Of course, there is no money budgeted this year, but he does plan to put some money in the 2008 budget. We will begin looking at that project after the airport one is done. As always, if you want to help, let Tommie know and we will notify you when we start work on it.

The third project involves installing an herb garden at Dietert Center. Carol Biggs and Betty West are in charge of this project and will be keeping us posted on its progress, and when they will need help.

Market Days continues to be successful, and a lot of fun. Be sure to sign up to volunteer in the office, or by contacting Tommie. The Demonstration Garden is growing, and all the turf is in. We need to install some more plants, and to weed. Thanks to all of you who are watering the greenhouse. It is an important part of our program.

Not that I am jumping the gun, but the Nominating Committee will soon be meeting to develop a slate of officers for 2008 for your consideration. If any of you are interested in serving as an officer for next year, please let Randy Simmons, Chair, know of your interest. Otherwise, he and his committee will develop the slate and present them at the October meeting for vote in November.

See you on the 6th.



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.

June 5 – Native Plant Society of Texas, Kerrville Chapter, will meet at Riverside Nature Center (RNC) at 2:00 pm, 150 Francisco Lemos St., Kerrville. Tom Collins, HCMG member, will present a program on “Butterflies of the Texas Hill Country.”

June 6 – HCMG monthly meeting, 1 pm at the Kerr County Extension Office. Tim Goode, owner of Turtle Creek Sod Farm, is our speaker and will discuss “Turf Performance.”

June 9 – Adult Learning for Living Program Series at RNC 10 – 11 a.m. Molly Keck, Program Specialist IPM TX Co Op Ext., will discuss “Reducing the Fire in Fire Ant Control.” Fee \$5 per adult; half price for RNC members.

June 19 – Kerr Cactus and Succulent Society meets at 7 p.m. at Butt Holdsworth Library, 505 Water Street, Kerrville.

June 23 – HCMG will have a booth at Market Days on the grounds of the Kerr County Court House from 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. on both days. Drop by and pick up some plants for your landscape. The volunteer sign-up sheet for Market Days is in the MG office.

June 26 – 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. Flo Oxley, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, will discuss “Sex in the Garden.”

Kudos to

Liz Althaus for setting up our recent private garden tours at the homes of **Diane Matthews** and **Bobbie Schonaerts**. We had quite a turnout for these tours (plus lunch) and everyone had a great time. Thanks again, Liz!



More Kudos for Lavender Days: HCMGs were well represented at the 9th annual Lavender Fest held on the Becker Vineyard grounds Saturday, 5/19, and Sunday, 5/20, with four of our members participating as speakers.

Above **Sandra Martin**, left, and **CA Martin**, center, present a session on "Rainwater Harvesting." On Sunday, **Beverly Weidenfeller**, right, gave a talk on growing lavender in the Hill Country. Beverly works as a part-time landscape gardener for Becker.

Also on Saturday, **Harold Pieratt**, not pictured, talked about Hill Country roses and led his group on a brief field trip to examine some of the specimen plants on the vineyard grounds.

Additionally, **Carol Seminara** hosted a cooking demonstration on Saturday, preparing her Pecan Scones Provencal and serving them with homemade lavender and Riesling jelly.



Over the Fence

By Carol Seminara

TOOL TALK



Last month we asked the HCMB membership to tell us about their favorite tools for our first *Over the Fence* and we are pleased to share the responses here:

Intern **Carol Stacy Brinkman** wrote that a long-ago Christmas gift from her two sons still ranks as her number one gift and favorite tool even though her “boys” are now in their thirties. Carol’s **Oriental garden tool** is absolutely indispensable and, in her opinion, is the “best all-around, do-everything implement ever invented.” She admitted the one she now uses is a replacement. “When I misplaced that original gift, I frantically searched every bed and compost pile but never found it.” She was distraught until she found another one in a San Francisco garden shop a couple of years ago. She said her Visa card was “out in a flash” and she happily paid about \$21 for the replacement. Carol gives us a couple of Web sites where you can find an incredible Oriental garden tool of your own, although she did offer the caveat that she’s never ordered from either of these on-line purveyors. Here are those Web addresses:

<http://store.emerysgarden.com/tlkorean.html>
<http://www.amleo.com/index/item.cgi?cmd=view&Wor ds=e z1>



Pres. **Anne Brown** said her favorite tool is a **Yankee Forge weed digger** that has a curved piece of metal attached to the side of the blade. She said the extra piece rests against the ground like a brace and gives you leverage when you dig out weeds. We found this photo on eBay where the tool was selling for \$4.95 plus a flat shipping fee of \$5.

MG **Ida Luckey** is a big fan of the **CobraHead Weeder and Cultivator**. She said she does not go into her garden without it, calling it well made and versatile. Ida said she has spoken with several other gardeners, all of whom said they love this tool. CobraHead was a vendor at our State MG Conference where the tools were selling for a special price of \$20.

Here’s their toll-free number: (866) 962-6272 and their Web address: <http://www.cobrahead.com>

Intern **Kathie Marlow**, shared the details of her favorite shears, which she described as small and sharp, just right for deadheading flowers. Kathie received her **Thinning Shears by Burgon & Ball of Sheffield England** as an HCMG graduation present. The finely pointed blades are made of fully hardened & tempered, high-carbon steel and the “lightweight but robust” nylon/resin handles are a proper Racing Green.

Another intern, **Anne Moss** said her favorite garden tool is her **rain gauge** because it’s the “only way I know exactly how much rain my yard got,” adding that the “official rain fall measurement for Kerrville” is rarely the same amount of precipitation she experiences. She said her brand of rain gauge is “cheap plastic.”

VP **Harold Pieratt** thanked us for branding him with Felco pruning shears and likened a good pair of classic pruning shears to a surgeon’s scalpel. Harold prefers the **Felco pruner model 2** (the original) with its trademark red handles and by-pass blades. He said the sharp angle of the short blades facilitates good clean cuts. Harold praised the ergonomic design of his scissor-action shears saying the handles are shaped like those on a pair of pliers and fit comfortably in the groove of his hand. Just talking to us about his Felcos “got his juices flowing.” When we last spoke with him, Harold was heading outside to deadhead his roses with his Felcos on his hip.



After years of collecting a wide range of garden tools, including many duplicates, intern **Sherenna Spangler** picked as her favorite the one tool that she’s been unable to misplace: **her hands**. “Many are the times I wander out in the garden with no other thought than to admire it, but with twitching fingers I find myself deadheading a rose or pulling an errant weed.” My hands tell me about the soil, what it has and what it needs. They tell me where that weed is holding on and they help me get it out. Mostly, though, I just like the good feel of the earth.”

We got a big laugh when MG **Betty West** said her ideal fantasy garden tool was “a husband with an interest in gardening and landscape design willing to share the manual labor.” She then went on to share her favorite existing tool, one that she calls a “**boulder buster**.” Betty described it as a steel rod about 5-feet long and an inch in diameter with a

Continued on right on next page



Lavender, It's What's for Lunch

By Carol Seminara

When the folks at this year's annual Lavender Fest contacted me to do a demonstration, I immediately grabbed my gardening hat and pinned on a jaunty spray of lavender.

I have an affectionate, long-standing relationship with lavender. When I was a little girl my mother wore Old English Lavender cologne from Yardley's of London, a firm that's been producing lavender scented products since the 1700s. Every yoga class I've even participated in has ended with lavender oil as part of Savasana. Back in LA, our patio walk was lined with lavender bushes.

I was, alas, mistaken thinking the Becker folks were seeking my horticultural erudition. They had another MG for that. They wanted me to cook something. With lavender.

As an inveterate herbie in good standing, the only activity I enjoy as much as growing herbs is using them. Even though my then to-date experience with culinary lavender was limited to tea (or more accurately tisane), lavender sugar, herb-spiked lemonade and a deliciously different lemon, pine nut and lavender cake, I immediately hit the books -- plant and cook -- to find out more about cooking with this darling of the aromatherapy set.

The hardy perennial herb lavender is a member of the mint (Lamiaceae) family and is native to the Mediterranean region, which is why we accurately associate it with Tuscany and Provence. For centuries, lavender has been used for perfumes and medicinal purposes. The Egyptians used it as one of the embalming agents for their mummies, and the ancient Greeks and Romans used lavender oil for scenting their laundry wash waters as well as in their own baths. In fact, the herb's name is probably derived from the Latin word *lavare*, meaning to wash. Washing women in Medieval and Renaissance Europe were known as "lavenders," partly because they dried their freshly scrubbed laundry on lavender bushes.

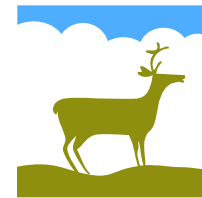
Lavender, under the name nard or spikenard, is even mentioned several times in the Bible, including the Song of Solomon and a passage in the Gospel of Luke when Mary (of Bethany, sister of Lazarus) uses a pound of spikenard ointment to wash Jesus' feet.

As a medicinal herb, lavender oil was and is sometimes still used to treat everything from hyperactivity to flatulence, depression to anxiety, snake bites to sunburn. "Lavender water," a mixture of lavender oil and vodka, gin or brandy, was used to treat severe headaches in the 12th century by a German nun named Hildegard of Bingen. Later, the first Queen Elizabeth used lavender infusions to treat her frequent migraines.

Lavender, continued on Page 5:

OVER THE FENCE continued:

pointed end useful for chipping out and moving large rocks. She said it's thicker than a crowbar and doggone heavy. Gibson's stocks these "wonder bars" and Betty said there's a 10 per cent discount for seniors on Wednesdays. BTW, if anyone knows the real name of this tool, please pass the word to *Over the Fence* and we'll share that info with everyone Thanks to everyone who was willing to talk tools with us. We hope you had some fun and learned something, too.



Next month our topic is **deer resistant plants**.

We've all seen the lists of recommended plants and we all know that, if hungry enough, deer will eat just about anything. We're looking for specifics, your real-world experiences landscaping with or in spite of Bambi.

Please e-mail your deer resistant plant stories to our editor Eleanor Baldwin or to me, Carol Seminara, at: carol@carolworld.tv by June 15.

Thank you, and until the next time we visit Over the Fence, here's dirt under your nails!

Plant Chats

2007 Master Gardener interns: Do you have a Mexican bush oregano or Rex begonia plant that you would like to trade for a rooted plumbago, Christmas cactus or blue African violet plant from the Plant Propagation class? Contact Anne Moss, mossaemoss@aol.com

Send your special needs or searches directly to Editor: baldwin@kctc.com

HCMG Website of the Month

<http://www.DirtDoctor.com>

(organic gardening)



Hill Country Master Gardener Association

2007 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

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

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

Newsletter

Editor – Eleanor Baldwin
 Assistant Editors -Carol Seminara, Betty West and Kathie Marlow

Submissions to

baldwin@ktc.com

Lavender, continued from Page 4:

In addition to the calming and soothing effects of lavender scent, the herb is a natural astringent and antiseptic having both antibacterial and antiviral properties. During London's Great Plague in 1665, people wore bunches of lavender on each wrist to protect themselves from the Black Death; sometimes this practice was successful in warding off the bubonic bacteria. Nurses in WWI used lavender infusions to dress war wounds when supplies of other antiseptics were spent.

Lavender can even be used as an insecticide against aphids and as a cockroach repellent. According to one source, make a "tea" by pouring a pint of boiling water over a handful of lavender -- use mostly flowers and a few leaves, allow the mixture to steep for at least 20 minutes, strain, cool and use as a spray to deter aphids, gnats, ants, moths and some flies. Lavender sachets are purported to kill moths. As for repelling roaches, why not try leaving lavender springs under the fridge or in the cabinet. It couldn't hurt and it would certainly smell better than Raid.

There are dozens of species of lavender, but only a handful of them are generally used for culinary applications. The two most popular culinary types are English and Provence. Another lavender, Hidcot is noted for its vibrant color and is a good choice when making infusions used to make syrups, jellies and vinegars.

Also known as true lavender, the English variety (*Lavendula augustiflora*) is one of the hardiest and most popular garden lavenders. It tolerates cold fairly well and its sweet scented flowers and buds are used in cooking and as a primary source of essential oil for perfumes. This is the variety that formed the basis of England's lavender oil industry in the 18th century.

Provence (*Lavendula x intermedia*) is a hybrid and is thought an appealing culinary variety because of its lower camphor and resin content.

Lavender leaves are edible, but it's usually the flowers and buds that we use in cooking. Always look for culinary or food grade lavender and never use lavender purchased from craft suppliers; sachet quality lavender may have been treated with preservatives or other chemicals. Organic lavender tea is a good source of dried culinary lavender. Note, too, that in addition to being easier to find, dried lavender is nearly as good as fresh. When using dried lavender, remember that it has a stronger flavor than fresh. In general, use one-third to one-half as much dried lavender in your recipes as you would fresh. Store your lavender as you would any other herb: in an airtight container in a cool, dry place.

Since lavender is a relative of rosemary, you can substitute it, at least in part, for rosemary in some recipes, especially breads. In some dishes and sauces, lavender can be used in place of thyme or marjoram. Both lavender and rosemary have a woody, herbal scent and taste, but of course lavender has more floral overtones. Both herbs are ingredients in herbes de Provence, which also traditionally includes thyme and savory.

Like rosemary, a little lavender goes a long way in your recipe. Too much lavender can give your dishes an astringent, medicinal taste that's not always pleasant. It's best to start out with a little lavender to see what appeals to you.

One way to experiment with lavender in recipes is to make lavender sugar. There are a couple of ways to do this, but the simplest is to put about 2 tablespoons of dried lavender flowers (or 4 tablespoons fresh) and one cup of granulated sugar in a blender jar or food processor bowl and process until the flowers are well ground (the sugar will have a light pinkish lavender tint). Store in an airtight container and use to flavor icing, meringues, iced tea or sprinkle on top of sugar cookies.

One final word about growing your own. Lavender is best grown from cuttings since the seeds are slow to germinate. Like most herbs, it prefers a well-drained soil and absolutely hates having wet feet. For this reason, lavender does extremely well in pots. Lavender loves the sun but will grow in partial sun. And, good news for us here in the Hill Country, lavender prefers an alkaline soil and is considered deer resistant. Lavender does hate the cold, so protect your plants from freezing.

Remember our website:

<http://www.hillcountrymastergardeners.org>