

January 2011
Volume 9, Issue 1

**January 5, 2011,
1:00 P.M. at Kerr
County AgriLife
Extension Office**

***The new class is
coming - meet
and warmly
welcome them.***

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President's Message - *Chris Seifert*

I know this is the January newsletter, but since you are receiving it in late December, I simply

must conclude 2010 with public applause to **Julie Bartosh, Pam Bresler, Jane Clint, Dorothy and David Buchen** for a delightful Christmas luncheon!

Extra thanks to **Julie, Carol Brinkman** and **Judy Fleming** for all their research and work in applying our new logo to hats and shirts! That was a lot of work and it is hard to please so many.

Barbara Elmore and **Eileen Haden** master-minded all the name tag changes, thank you!

Now for 2011 news!

Members, you have another chance to order shirts, caps and name tags at the January 5th meeting. If you can't attend, call Julie to order a shirt or cap. Call Eileen to confirm your name on the name badge. Let her know if you have a pacemaker, if so, no magnetic clasp for you!

Due her father's declining health, **Marilyn Pease** has resigned as the Greenhouse Co-chair. **Anne Brown** will take her place. Thanks to both of you for your faithful dedication to this backbone of HCMG effort.

Projects pending, date to note- Harvest Partners of Kerr County has accepted an invitation from the Dietert Senior Center to develop a community garden there. **Chris Seifert** and **Connie Townsend** are advisors in the

early planning stage. **Craig Tucker** will soon be involved as well.

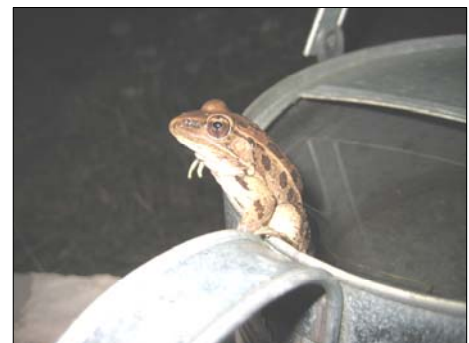
As Harvest Partner gardens emerge, HCMGs will have the opportunity to mentor young and old "town-farmers" keen on learning better ways to grow!

Kendall County AgriLife Agent, Stephen Zoeller, has invited HCMG to host a booth or give a talk at the first Kendall County Conservation event, April 16, 2011. Over 12 non-profit organizations promoting eco-friendly living are participating. What shall we do to promote our HCMG message?

Three Kendall County schools have begun using Junior Master Gardener materials. **Carrie Musetti** is hoping to mentor young gardeners at Fabra Elementary. Details are pending.

Aren't you proud of us? Aren't you proud of each other? There are more good ideas in progress, that I'd love to share with you, but we'll have to wait for firmer details to emerge. In the meantime, get out those seed catalogs and start ordering for spring!

Does anyone else have a leopard frog living in their watering can?



His name is Fred. Happy 2011 to you!



Calendar of Events by Betty West

(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.)

January 3 - Kerrville Garden Club meets at 1:00 p.m. and visitors are

welcome. Larry Fagarason will discuss "Succulents." Contact vkilleen@stx.rr.com to make reservations and get this month's meeting location.

January 4 – Kerrville NPSOT meets at Riverside Nature Center (RNC) at 2:00 p.m. Travis Gallo of Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center will discuss "Invasive Species in Texas." Visitors welcome.

January 5 - HCMG monthly meeting at 1:00 p.m. at Kerr County AgriLife Extension Office. Our HCMG Class of 2011 will be introduced and refreshments provided. Please wear your name badges.

January 11 – HCMG 1st classroom training session for 2011 at 1 p.m. at the Ext. Office. Ext. Ofc. staff will present "Introduction to the Ext. Ofc." Kathy Lyles will discuss "Native Plants and Why They are Important."

January 12 – Fredericksburg Garden Club meets at 2:00 p.m. at the Memorial Presbyterian Church Fellowship Hall, 607 N. Milam. The topic

is "Mason Bees for the Garden" by Wild Birds Unlimited staff. Visitors welcome.

January 18 – Hunt Garden Club meets at the Hunt United Methodist Church's Activity Hall. Brunch is served at 9:30 a.m. followed by the program at 10:00 a.m. Dayton Archer, I.S.A. Certified Arborist, will discuss "Tree Management." Visitors welcome.

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

January 18 – HCMG classroom training session at 1 p.m. Jessica Jobe will discuss "Soils of the Hill Country." The other portion of the class will be on "Composting." *This one class will be held at the Union Church* (1200 Broadway @ Travis; edge of Schreiner Univ. campus) instead of the Ext. Ofc.

January 25 – HCMG classroom training session at 1 p.m. Dr. Joe Masabni's topic is "Vegetables."

January 25 – Fredericksburg NPSOT meets at 7 p.m. at the Gillespie County Historical Society Bldg, 312 W. San Antonio St. Visitors welcome.



Make Your Own Glass Cleaner

Here is an economical glass cleaner that works. Mix 1 cup rubbing alcohol, 1 cup water, and 1 tablespoon white vinegar. Lightly spray the glass and wipe with a microfiber cloth. (The first time, you may have to do it twice to remove the oily film commercial cleaners leave on the glass.)

Bernadell Larson



Officers for 2011 dutifully wearing their nametags:

*From left: Barbara Elmore-Vice President
Chris Seifert-President
Randy Simmons- Ex-officio Advisor
Jackie Connelly-Secretary
(Not pictured is Roy Eliff-Treasurer)*

Photo by Carol Biggs

HCMG Christmas Party Photos

Right: Of course we all lined up to look at the shirts and caps with our beautiful new logo. Many were ordered..

Photo by Carol Brinkman



Left: Look at those outstanding table decorations made by the Christmas Party Committee. Some committee members are pictured below after their anti-turf skit.

Below from left: Dorothy Buchen, Cindy Anderson, Pam Bresler, Chair Julie Bartosh, and David Buchen.

Both photos by Jim Latham



Left: Outgoing Secretary Eileen Haden was presented with the very first cap bearing our new logo.

Photo by Carol Brinkman





INSECT BALANCE IN OUR GARDENS (Part 2)

by Bernadell Larson

Last month we discussed the reasons for a doubling of the percentage of crops lost to insects and disease within the last 50 years. Those reasons being 1) loss of soil fertility, 2) “fence row to fence row” clean cultivation, and 3) heavy and ill-timed use of pesticides. The last two are primarily responsible for the death of beneficial insects that used to keep the pests in check. Last month we learned to identify what type of pest is devouring our plants, so that we know what type of beneficial insect we want to attract to the garden. We will discuss how to attract the beneficials in this article.

All animals, including insects, need food, shelter, water and the right conditions to reproduce. Some plants attract beneficial insects. These plants may provide pollen and nectar, foliage for the larvae to feed on, or habitat for prey species. They all furnish food in some form.

The beneficial insects that we want to attract are: Ladybug, Tachinid fly, Minute Pirate bug, Hoverfly, Parasitic wasps, Big-eyed bugs, and Lacewing. Some plants attract only one of the beneficial insect species, such as the Hoverfly to English Lavender and the Lacewing to Angelica. However, many plants attract a variety of these beneficials to one plant. Some of these are: fennel, basket of gold, buckwheat, crimson thyme, dill, fern leaf yarrow, marigold, hairy vetch, parsley, lemon balm, zinnia, and maximilian sunflower. (I have a list of 53.) Many of these plants serve other purposes, such as food (herbs) or medicine.

The predator and parasitic insects will not hang around if they do not have prey to feast on. Providing hedge rows or weedy spots harbor aphids and other prey, and provide food for the beneficials. Remember you need a few pests to keep the beneficials around.

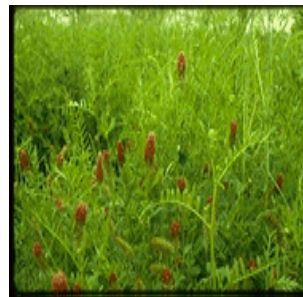
The beneficials also need a place to stay and will not stay around if they don't have one. Try to incorporate dense foliage, mulch, leaves, rock piles, and walls into your garden design. Shrubs,

hedges, and thick perennial beds are ideal. Many beneficial insects overwinter or lay eggs in dead vegetation, so you should delay your postseason cleanup until spring.

In addition to providing food, shelter and moisture, food also needs to be available at the right time. Try to grow many species of flowers so that several types are always in bloom. This gives the insects a better chance of fattening up so they can breed.

As you can see, the plant – insect relationship is complex. Each one balances the other and also other factors in our environment. There is a distinct advantage to using native plants in your gardens. The relationships have been honed over thousands of years and are continuing to perfect.

Many garden supply stores sell beneficial insects and that is one way to get them. But, if you do not have the food, shelter, water and the right conditions, the beneficials will leave for greener pastures. To attract beneficial insects, plant the right type of flowers and provide habitat and “they will come”. Diversity and soil health are the keys.



Left: Hairy Vetch and Crimson Clover: Ladybugs, Minute Pirate bugs, Lacewings



Right: Fern Leaf Yarrow: Ladybugs, Hoverfly, parasitic wasps, Lacewings



Lemon Balm: Tachinid fly, Hoverfly, Parasitic wasps



INSECT VECTORS

by Marilyn Pease

An insect vector (from the Latin for “carrier”) is an insect capable of transmitting a pathogen either from plant to plant or in the case of mosquitoes, ticks, fleas etc. from insect to mammal. Generally, insect-vectored diseases that infect people or pets need to complete their life cycle inside the insect first before it can be transmitted. Therefore it is not likely that an insect can spread disease directly from person to person.

Below are some common insect plant vectors and their corresponding diseases:

Aphids	150 plant viruses	Especially mosaic viruses
Beetles (esp. Bark Beetles)	Many plant viruses	Dutch Elm disease Chestnut blight
Flies (apple & cabbage maggots)		bacterial rot of fruit
Leafhoppers	80+ pathogens	viruses (esp. Pierce’s disease of grapes & aster yellows)
Thrips	many	bacterial, viral and fungal (Tomato spotted wilt virus)
Whiteflies	20+ viruses	esp. yellow mosaic & leaf curl

The transmission of a pathogen takes place either through the piercing-sucking mouth parts or just from their six dirty little feet tracking from plant to plant. This is the case with the *nitidulid beetle* that feeds on the fungal mats of oak wilt stricken trees. The pathogen is picked up on their bodies and spread as they fly to other oaks. (See photos below)

Even beneficial insects are capable of vectoring diseases from plant to plant. Our beloved honey bees can transmit fire blight of apples, pears, and other woody ornamentals simply by collecting pollen.

Unfortunately, there is not much that can be done once a plant is infected with these types of pathogens. With oak wilt and other viral, bacterial or fungal plant diseases about all you can do is replant with disease resistant varieties. Removal of weeds that may be harboring insects or use of crop rotation, if space allows, may also help.

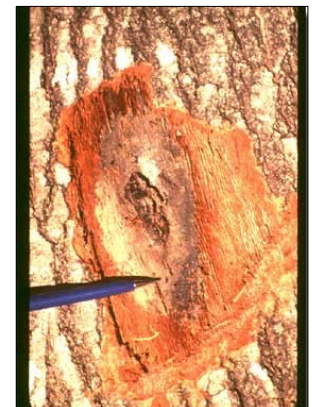


Nitidulid beetle that feeds on the fungal mats of oak wilt stricken trees



Left: Crack in bark caused by fungal mat

Right: Oak wilt fungal mat under the bark of a red oak tree.



Photos courtesy US Forest Service



Julie Bartosh, Christmas Party Chair, stood to greet HCMG members before one of her team's beautifully decorated tables.

Photo by Carol Brinkman



Left:
Lion's Ear
Phlomis leonurus

Photo by Carol Brinkman

Gardening Tips for January

by Kathie Marlow



- Keep an eye on house-plant pests.
- Get your garden tools in order. Clean and sharpen your tools.
- Rework your garden design.
- Review last year's journal and start a new one for this year by recording your seed/plant catalog orders. Finish up your seed and plant orders for 2011 gardens.



- Check your stored bulbs and veggies.
- Recycle your Christmas tree as garden mulch or a bird feeder.
- Feed the birds and provide them with some unfrozen water.

- Take a gardening class. Attend HCMG classes and meetings.
- Set out transplants of cool season flowers like pansies, snapdragon, sweet pea, petunia and violets.



- Start pruning roses.
- Keep watering evergreens.

Some writers & editors for our newsletter & website bid goodbye and thanks to long-time vegetable gardening writer, Christine Millar.



From left: Anne Moss, Marilyn Pease, Christine Millar, Kathie Marlow, Barbara Elmore and Betty West.



Thinking outside of the box(wood)

By Barbara Elmore

Shrub-planting time is upon us, and I face the same dilemmas I did last year as I look at the area around my shady front porch.

Dilemma 1: Most of my perennials, many of which reach shrub-height, are not evergreen. That translates to a bleak-looking winter landscape.

Dilemma 2: Many shrubs prefer full sun instead of partial shade.

Dilemma 3: I don't want to add boxwoods. I was happy to move into a yard with a blank slate that I could develop as I wished. I don't wish for boxwoods, even though they are evergreen, tough, and not required by law to assume a box shape. You can also keep them to a compact height. For all of these reasons, the boxwood is a popular choice of gardeners.

But in the spirit of out of the boxwood thinking, I am shopping for shrubs appropriate to my situation and considering several listed below. Maybe you will find some ideas here, or have some of your own to send me. I would enjoy hearing about your experience.

1. **Cast iron plant, *Aspidistra elatior***. Ok, this is not a shrub, but it does get a couple feet tall, tolerates all kinds of weather and poor soil, and likes dry shade. Those are the pros. The cons: It's a notoriously slow-growing plant and it does not flower – or at least not to speak of.

2. **American beautyberry, *Callicarpa americana***. This IS a shrub and one that thrives in our soils. Some of its good points include its yummy-looking purple fruit and yellow-green fall foliage. But once the leaves drop, it looks a bit scraggly. It needs lots of room to spread out, too – between 3 and 5 feet.

3. **Yaupon holly, *Ilex vomitoria***. This one gets tall (12-45 feet) but it is evergreen and shade suits it just fine. Perhaps this shrub is best in front of an exterior wall but away from a porch. Another plus is the berry, usually a beautiful red. Berries grow in great profusion on the female yaupon.

4. **Texas mountain laurel, *Sophora secundiflora***. Yes, this can also be a tree – it can get 30 feet tall – so consider that when planting. It does grow slowly, however, and its normal mature height is about 15 feet. It is evergreen and offers the added benefit of showy and aromatic flowers in early spring. It also tolerates dry growing conditions.

5. **Evergreen sumac, *Rhus virens***. This is another tall shrub, growing from 8 to 12 feet. It is evergreen and produces blooms and orange-red fruit. It is drought-tolerant and part shade is OK.

How about cast-iron plants and columbines in that shady spot?

According to a Bexar County extension agent, plants that are extra hardy, such as dwarf yaupon and dwarf burford hollies, aspidistra (cast-iron plant) and nandina do not die except in the case of prolonged, severe freezes.



Most of these ideas are from the Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center website, www.wildflower.org. To find plants, click on the "Explore Plants" tab at the top of the page. Scroll down until you see the U.S. map, then click on your state. You may have to do this twice. When your area comes up, look on the right side of the page under "Explore Plants" and see "Narrow Your Search." Here you can plug in your state, what kind of plant you want, and other information.

Then decide and get planting – spring is just around the corner.



A New Year, A New Chance

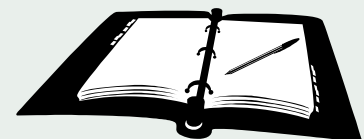
by Carol Brinkman

I gave up on New Year's resolutions a long time ago. I never seemed to get beyond writing them down. However, this year is going to be different – a new year, a new chance.

As all good gardeners know, there is always something to do in the garden. For me, that something is often brought about because I didn't do something when I should have. This year will be different! I resolve to do what I know *should* be done in the garden *when* it needs to be done.

Here's my list of pre-emptive resolutions.

1. **First things first. Get soil samples** done before the spring growing season. Preventing deficiencies and problems is easier and less expensive than trying to correct them.
2. **Inspect drip and soaker hose irrigation for leaks** regularly. Living in Texas we know that water is too precious to be wasted.
3. **Become a more vigilant and up-close observer in my garden.** Unwanted insects are more easily removed, often without the need for chemicals, before the entire extended family arrives.
4. **Resist impulse purchases.** Knowing a plant's cultural requirements before buying and knowing you have the proper place to plant it is key to successful gardening. Saves money and heartbreak, too.
5. **Cut back and dead-head as needed.** A lush or exuberant look is one thing, unkempt is another.
6. **Mulch the perennial beds.** This is a no-brainer; after all, mulching should be done all year long to replace the nutrients, hold moisture, and maintain an even soil temperature. Extra mulch *will* be added before the first freeze.
7. **Keep garden tools maintained and contained.** Sharp shears work better and knowing where they are when you need them is better, too.
8. **Pace myself.** Physical exercise is good, but working to exhaustion is not healthy and makes me cranky.
9. **Document happenings in the garden.** Making a few notes can make the work easier and more successful next year.
10. **Take time to smell the roses** or read some of the many gardening books I have collected.





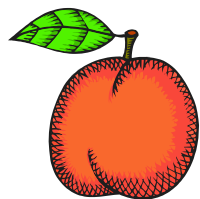
ALL THINGS EDIBLE

by Pam Bresler

The title of this column says it all. You can't eat grass, so why not grow an edible landscape? A pioneer of this concept is Rosalind Creasy, whose best-selling 1982 book, "Edible Landscaping" started a movement. The

Washington Post recently interviewed Creasy: http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/11/25/AR2010112503004_pf.html.

You may enjoy photos of her garden on her website: rosalindcreasy.com. I've previously written on this topic ("Edible Estates" in the February 2008 HCMG newsletter). Now that you know my bias, let's talk about the January garden.



Last summer's bountiful peach crop has gardeners looking for a spot in their landscape for a peach tree. If you can spare an 8 x 8 spot, you can fit a peach tree into your yard. A spring show of beautiful pink blooms is a bonus. Now is the time to order and A&M's fruit specialist, Dr. Larry Stein, recommends Womack's Nursery in De Leon, Texas (www.womacknursery.com). I've had good luck with these cultivars from Womack's: 'Redglobe,' 'Loring,' 'Elberta' and 'Ruston Red.' Avoid 'Sentinel.' Pick a peach with chill hours between 750-850. The best time to plant is January and February, so order now for a good selection. When you have your tree's location chosen, put a big pile of compost or mulch down now to soften the ground before planting.

If you buy a 6-pack of tomatoes on April 1, just skip this paragraph, but if you want to have the first tomato in the neighborhood, or want to grow "one of everything" in a limited space, read on. Tomato Nuts start our tomato seeds as soon as the champagne glasses and confetti are cleared on New Year's Day. Tomatoes need warmth to germinate, so find a warm spot or use a heating mat. With bottom heat, tomatoes germinate in about three days. Once germinated, they can grow in cool conditions. I like to keep repotting them until

I've got 1-quart pots by April 1. Leggy tomatoes are great because you can bury 9-12" of the stem for sturdy plants in our April winds. I've grown many varieties of tomatoes, but my one "must have" is 'Juliet,' a hybrid with super vigor. It is classified as a "grape" tomato, but I consider it a small Roma. Summer heat is no problem, and it continues bearing all season until a hard freeze. Other tomatoes I like are 'Celebrity' and 'Merced,' and for heirlooms, 'Cherokee Purple,' 'Cuore de Toro' (bull's heart) and 'Amish Paste.'

On warm January days, make sure your weeds are under control and cover bare soil with compost or mulch. This gets the soil ready for spring planting. Your fall-planted vegetables may be running out of fertilizer, so apply granular fertilizer once a month or liquid fertilizer every two weeks.

Spray fruit trees with dormant oil or Neem oil when the temperature is between 40 and 85 degrees. Spray the ground under the tree to kill overwintering insects. Watch for weeping borer holes.



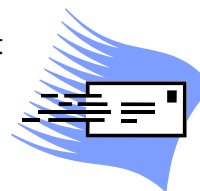
Onion plants go into the ground this month. You can plant them 2" apart if you thin every other plant for winter salads. Otherwise, plant 4" apart. Plant in full sun.

Transplants: lettuce, mustard, broccoli, cabbage, chard and kale

Seeds: peas, kale, mustard, carrots, spinach, snow peas, lettuce, beets, bok choy and radish

Plants: asparagus crowns, artichoke crowns, strawberries, blackberries and grapes

Feel free to e-mail questions or topics you want to see covered in this column: bregal@ktc.com. Please put "HCMG" in the subject line.



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Roy Eliff - Treasurer
Randy Simmons - Ex-officio Advisor
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Web Assistants - Anne Moss & Julie Bartosh

Submissions to baldwin@kcg.com

HCMG TimeKeeper Summary Report Volunteer Hours and Contacts 2010 (As of 12/1/2010)

	# MGs Reporting	Volunteer Hours	Contacts
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Quarter: 1

January	53	330	89
February	58	382	132
March	67	600	274
Totals:	181	1312	495

Quarter: 2

April	70	764	741
May	56	434	657
June	54	328	137
Totals:	180	1526	1535

Quarter: 3

July	53	335	219
August	51	367	52
September	55	466	294
Totals:	159	1167	565

Quarter: 4

October	47	432	107
November	30	280	81
Totals:	77	713	188



Webmaster
Carol Brinkman's

Website of the Month

The Texas Master Gardeners 2011 State Conference is coming up April 27-29 in Glen Rose, south of Ft. Worth. Their website is <http://2011tmgconference.org/>.

Are you considering attending? If not, visit this website and you might change your mind. The list of educational sessions and tours has something for everyone, and the list of scheduled speakers is an impressive list of who's who in gardening.

If we all plan ahead we can join forces to make the trip less expensive and have fun in the bargain. So check out the website and let's talk at the January meeting.

Some HCMGs have already signed up!



These ornamental sweet potato vines are *Ipomoea batatas* 'Blackie' (dark purple leaves at top) and *Ipomoea batatas* 'Margarita' (the bright green leaves). Several varieties of coleus were added to the pot for more contrast.

Photo by Carol Brinkman