

October 2011
Volume 9, Issue 10

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Educational programs of the Texas AgriLife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, sex, disability, religion, age, or national origin. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas are cooperating.

OCTOBER PROGRAM:

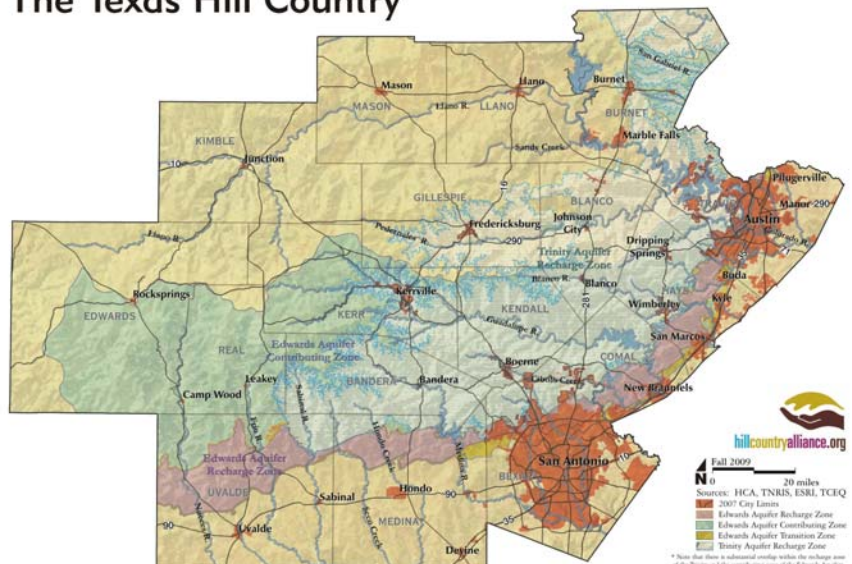
Come learn about the Hill Country Alliance (HCA) from Christine Muse, Executive Director, and Peggy Sechrist, Assistant Director, at 1:00 pm on Wednesday, October 5th at the Kerr County AgriLife Extension Office.

Why? Because HCA is a seven year old, nonprofit organization focusing on informing Hill Country citizens about current issues relating to the growth and development in the Hill Country. The long term objective of HCA is to bring Hill Country groups together to preserve open spaces, water supply and quality, as well as the unique character of the Texas Hill Country.

The rapid development in our sensitive ecosystem and the current drought are issues affecting Master Gardeners as citizens and as gardeners. How do we preserve the natural beauty of our environment in a responsible way? How do we help our gardens survive a drought? Let us become part of the solution, not part of the problem.

Come with your questions and concerns for an informative and interesting program. Check them out beforehand at <http://www.hillcountryalliance.org/HCA/Home>.

The Texas Hill Country





President's Message

Chris Seifert

October 2011

How I love to brag and give credit where it is due! Much of this was announced at our recent meeting, but I want *all* of you to know that eight more interns completed their certification process already! We extend a warm welcome and congratulations to **Sandy Lewis, Meg Scott-Johnson, Milton Wilson** and **Denise Ferguson**, all from Kerrville. Congratulations to **Roylynn Broksch** and **Angela Jordan** from Fredericksburg. **Don Walzel** from Rio Frio adds a new town to our membership, and **Michelle Godfrey** from Bandera strengthens our team there. Well done everyone, including your mentors and trainers! I hope you find your participation with HC Master Gardeners as fun and rewarding as I have.

Welcome back to **Ida Luckey**, returning after a five-month leave of absence. She immediately assumes duties as the Membership Chairwoman, which **Barbara Elmore** has been covering for almost two years. Barbara intends to manage the Demonstration Garden as soon as her vice presidential duties are finished! Thank you to Ida and to Barbara too!

Because Nomination Chairwoman, **Dorothy Buchan**, can't attend October's meeting, she announced the 2011-12 officer nominees early. What capable and fine candidates! **Pat McCormick** will run for President, and **Patty Zohlen**, for Vice President. **Jackie Connelly** will remain Secretary, and **Diane McMahon** will run for Treasurer. Be sure to thank them for being willing to take on these important roles. Thanks also to Dorothy and her assistant, **Tommie Airhart**.

Since **Melva Chancellor** became our Program Chairwoman a year ago, we've had many outstanding speakers and subjects. She will continue to arrange for our speakers, so keep those good contacts funneled her way. Now **Jane Rackley**, is assisting Melva with much of the clerical aspect of

the job. Thank you both! Mind-expanding topics and fascinating speakers keep us all growing, even if our plants aren't.

Did you meet the amazing guest **Patty Zohlen** brought? "He" reminded me of a Star Wars character.



Patty Zohlen and Rhinoceros beetle larvae from her garden.



Hatched from a tiny egg, larvae munch plant detritus for two years before pupating,



"Baby" larvae grow and grow, but adult beetles do not grow further.



SAFER INSECTICIDES? (MAYBE)

by Marilyn Pease

Newly released "safe" insecticides produced by *Envincio* and marketed under the name "*Essentria*" are being advertised as "a

new kind of insecticide from an ancient source" and are made of essential oils from plants such as mints and rosemary.

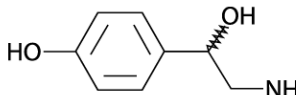
According to *Envincio*'s website, "the essential oils that comprise the active ingredients in *Essentria* products work by disrupting neurotransmitter function in target insects." This means that nerve and, therefore, motor function is impaired and the offending insect pest is not

able to move, eat or reproduce. The neurotransmitter (which mammals, fish and birds do not have) is

called *octopamine*, first discovered in the octopus and common to most invertebrates.



Chemical model of *octopamine* neurotransmitter common to most invertebrates.



This is not really new technology. As any herbalist will tell you, essential oils have been used for hundreds of years to repel insects. The oils in herbal plants naturally evolved as the plant's own natural defense against insect predation. Pennyroyal and other members of the mint family have been used around doorsteps to keep ants out of a house. Tansy, a member of the aster family, was used during colonial times in a tea to get rid of internal worms and also in embalming practices of the time.

While the development of safer insecticidal products is a great step towards cleaning up our environment, it must be remembered that just because a product is made of natural ingredients doesn't mean that it should be used indiscriminately. Always follow the label directions and use IPM principles. As master gardeners, I feel we should all remain healthily skeptical of marketing techniques aimed at the "natural products" market niche.

Green Step



Make Your Own Deodorant

If you are concerned about the metals in the over the counter deodorants and antiperspirants, try making your own.

Take:

- 1/2 cup baking soda, 1/2 cup cornstarch and antibacterial essential oils such as cinnamon, rose, birch or lavender, as preferred
- Place the baking soda and cornstarch in a glass jar. Add the essential oils; stir and cover. Dampen a powder puff, cotton ball or sea sponge and dab into the mixture (or sprinkle the mixture on the sponge); pat underarms. Makes 1 cup.

Recipe from: *Better Basics for the Home* by Annie Berthold-Bond



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.

by Betty West

September 20 - Hunt Garden Club meets at the Hunt United Methodist Church's Activity Hall. Brunch is served at 9:30 am followed by the program at 10:00. Cary Burgess (Dr. Doppler) will discuss "*Weather Patterns Affecting Gardening*". Visitors welcome.

September 23 - Cibolo Nature Center hosts a "*Fall Grasses Workshop*" from 9 - 11 am. Pre-registration required. Fees & information <http://www.cibolo.org/calendar/event/fall-grasses-workshop-2>

September 27 - Fredericksburg NPSOT meets at 7 pm at the Gillespie County Historical Society Bldg., 312 W. San Antonio St. Paul Tybor will address "*The State of Underground Water Resources (Aquifers) in Gillespie County.*" Visitors welcome.

October 1 - Riverside Nature Center in Kerrville will host "*Down by the Riverside Fall Festival*" from 8 am - 3 pm. Free admission.

October 3 - Kerrville Garden Club meets at 1 pm. Contact <mailto:vkillen@stx.rr.com> for reservations and meeting location. Visitors welcome.

October 4 - Kerrville NPSOT meets at Riverside Nature Center at 5 pm. Light refreshments served at 4:30 pm. Visitors welcome.

October 5 - HCMG Executive Committee meets at 9:30 am and Committee Chairs join them at 10:30 am. Our HCMG monthly meeting is at 1:00 pm at Kerr County AgriLife Extension Office. Christine Muse and Peggy Sechrist from the Hill Country Alliance (HCA) will speak.

October 12 - Fredericksburg Garden Club meets at 2 pm at the Memorial Presbyterian Church Fellowship Hall, 607 N. Milam. Visitors welcome.

October 15 - Cibolo Nature Center hosts a "*Rainwater Harvest Workshop*" from 9 am - noon. Fees & information <http://www.cibolo.org/RainwaterHarvestOctober>

October 18 - Hunt Garden Club meets at the Hunt United Methodist Church's Activity Hall. Brunch is served at 9:30 am followed by the program at 10 am. Debbie Russell, HCMG, will present "*Nineteenth Century Flowers and Vegetables.*" Visitors welcome.

October 27 - HCMG hosts Kelly Bender's workshop on "Texas Wildscapes - Gardening for Wildlife" at the Kerr County AgriLife Ext. Ofc., 10 am - 3 pm. Copies of her book will be on sale. Reservations on stand-by basis now. Don't forget your sack lunch.



OCTOBER GARDENING TIPS
by Kathie Marlow

Start spraying roses with full-strength fungicides as needed as the weather cools. Water as needed (or able) as now is when the dry weather begins. We sure hope not! Control

weeds with shallow cultivation or hand pulling. You can plant alyssum in the beds to provide living mulch.

It is time to begin to plant pre-chilled spring-flowering bulbs. Prepare the beds with compost and mulch before planting. Apply high-phosphate fertilizer to the beds as needed. Apply fertilizer to all shrubs and 3-4 inches of mulch.

According to Doug Welch, timing is critical for applying fall fertilizer to lawns. When you don't need to mow for two weeks, the time to fertilize is at hand. October 15th is the usual fall fertilizer date in Central Texas. Apply fertilizer high in nitrogen and low in phosphorus (or no phosphorus) to your

established lawn at recommended rates. Nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P) and potassium (K) are represented on the three-number analysis on every bag of fertilizer. Each number is the percentage (by weight) of that nutrient in the bag. Example: 15-5-10 has 15 percent N, 5 percent P, and 10 percent K. A 2-1-2 or a 1-0-1 ratio of nutrients is preferred. The potassium can be added to increase the lawn's tolerance of cold weather. The nitrogen portion of the fertilizer should be a combination of quick-and slow-release forms to encourage product of carbohydrates. The amount of fertilizer to apply is 1 pound of actual nitrogen per 1,000 square feet.

It is time to purchase bulbs to store in the refrigerator until the cooler planting time begins. Hopefully the rains will have come to soften the flower beds for planting and next spring will once again provide all the beautiful color we enjoy.



Hummingbird on Lion's Tail
Photo by Carol Brinkman

Hill Country Master Gardeners Class of 2012: We began accepting applications on August 1, 2011. Applications must be received by October 31, 2011. Class size is limited.

Download an application at http://hillcountrymastergardeners.org/pdfs_forms2/2012_application.pdf and share with friends and neighbors who might be interested in becoming a member.

Check out the plants that our members say have made it (so far) during this drought. You will find website links to the "reports" from our Home Page, from "Resources" page, and/or from "Members Gardens" page. Mexican oregano, Esperanza, Plumbago, Desert Willow, Jerusalem Sage, and Xexmenia are mentioned often as survivors,





A ZERO PACKAGING GROCERY STORE

by Burnadell Larson

The United Kingdom got its first zero packaging grocery store “Unpackaged” in London in 2006.

It is a very simple idea, but no one in the United States has implemented it yet. A trio of brothers, along with a couple of friends, is changing that. They plan on opening America’s first zero packaging grocery store in Austin, TX in the fall of 2011.

The trio wanted to go beyond the recycling concept and eliminate the waste involved in single use packaging. Americans add 570 million pounds of food packaging to their landfills daily (according to *Good* magazine), and 27% of food brought into our kitchens gets thrown out. We are forced to buy more than we need because of pre-packaging. If you look at bulk foods, they are approximately 35% cheaper than their packaged food equivalents; you are paying for additional packaging or marketing. With this idea you can buy as little or as much as you need.

Many people bring tote bags to the grocery store, but this grocery store encourages you to bring your own containers to pack items like grains, oils, and dairy. If you choose not to bring containers, the store will provide compostable ones for free. The concept was to use an old idea and make it convenient for our current lifestyle. Nature is a zero waste environment and this will help consumers

mimic nature by choosing a zero-waste lifestyle. The store promises to carry organic food whenever possible. When that is not possible, the item will

be natural (no artificial flavorings or preservatives). And, the store plans on carrying everything regular grocery stores carry (grains, seasonal produce, spices, daily products, meat, beer, wine, and cleaning materials), except for the junk food.

A drawback is that you will not be able to buy produce that is not in season. As an example, they will not be flying in okra or blueberries in the winter. Sourcing their food locally is extremely important for the store.

The plans are also to use the store as a community center with cooking classes, gardening workshops and art shows, etc.

Howard S. Schiffman, a professor of environmental conservation at NYU, said that although the idea is a step in a good direction, the company may be overlooking the importance of packaging products. Though it may cost more, packaging does prevent foods from going bad. It will be an interesting experiment for Austin.

This business model may never become mainstream, but they are hoping to teach the community that just a few changes to the way we live can reduce waste and help the environment. Maybe just a few changes to the current grocery store model can help consumers, suppliers, and the environment, by reducing waste.

Precycling is at the core of this model *and* it’s easy. Here’s the skinny:



HILL COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS September 7, 2011 MINUTES

The meeting was called to order by **President Chris Seifert** at 2:24 p.m. Sept. 7 after a presentation by **Lee Ann Barton** on "Backyard Orchard Culture." There were 57 members in attendance.

Members unanimously approved minutes from the August meeting as written.

Treasurer's report: **Roy Eliff** reported that there is \$19,309. in the general fund and about \$58,300 in the scholarship fund.

Announcements by Chris Seifert:

Congratulations and welcome to newly certified Master Gardeners: **Roylyne Brocksch, Sandy Lewis, Meg Scott-Johnson, Milton Wilson, Don Walzel, Michelle Godfrey, Denise Ferguson** and **Angela Jordan**.

Kudos to **Dorothy** and **David Buchen** for taking charge of the demonstration garden since 2007. They are retiring from the project and will chair the new propagation committee in 2012.

Barbara Elmore will chair the demo garden project in 2012.

Ida Luckey will be membership chair.

Chris asked HCMG members to think about how the drought might affect our projects and email her with recommendations so they can be discussed by officers and committee chairs.

Other announcements:

Anne Brown announced two volunteer opportunities: a rain barrel workshop for Sept. 14 and a greenhouse fix-up day Sept. 21. At the time of her announcement, only nine rain barrels were left in our inventory. On the greenhouse, members will install a new top, shade cloth, pump and water wall.

Anne Brown suggested anyone interested in tracking wildfires in Texas could go to Texas Forest

Service website

<http://texasforestservice.tamu.edu/main/default.aspx>.

They have responded to 176 fires in the last seven days.

Mentor Committee Chair **June Sher** passed around a mentor sign-up sheet for the 2012 class. Any certified MG can be a mentor.

Carrie Musetti has been attending the meetings for the *Herff Farm Redevelopment Project* near Boerne. The advisory panel plans to refurbish the buildings, farm and create community gardens. The project is still in the development stages but she hopes HCMG members will serve as advisers for garden planning.

Carrie also gave an update on the *Fabre Elementary School Junior Master Gardener Garden Project* in Boerne. The second-graders made salsa at the end of the school year from the produce they grew. Pictures are on the HCMG website.

Webmaster Carol Brinkman is looking for ideas to keep the website fresh and updated. She is adding a new feature called *Drought Reports* and asked members to send her photos of plants that survived summer and the methods used to keep them growing.

Volunteer opportunities:

Two sign up sheets were passed around: We will have a booth at Riverside Nature Center's Fall Festival, Oct. 1, 8:30 to 3:30; and at Kerr County Fair, Oct. 28-30. These will also be included in the weekly Volunteer Opportunities column.

The Christmas Committee (**Vickie Killeen, Betty West, Patty Zohlen** and **Jackie Connelly**) has rented the Union Church this year for the Dec. 7 Christmas party. The committee asked for a budget to spend, and members voted to allow up to \$500, which would include the purchase of beef brisket.

Office Manager **Liz Althaus** has placed a box for lost and found items in the office.

Continued on Page 10, middle column



Save a tree's life--water now

By Barbara Elmore

If that tree outside your window is dropping its leaves, don't put "water trees" on your list of things to do in the next few

weeks.

The tree is telling you it needs water now. So, keeping in mind community watering restrictions and the time of day (water after 6 p.m. and before 10 a.m., generally) gather up whatever you can--gray water you've saved from your shower, condensate from your air conditioner, whatever is left in the bottom of your rain collection barrels--and give it to the tree. A tree that's dropping its leaves is in emergency mode and it won't survive without a drink.

How much of a drink depends on the size of your tree, but think big. A mature, large tree needs 50 gallons once a week, said Mark Duff, a staff forester with the Texas Forest Service.

The signs of a drought-stressed tree include these:

- > No growth
- > Yellowing leaves
- > Dropping leaves (on live oaks especially)

Think of the dropping leaves as the tree's "last gasp", Duff said. "Water between the trunk and the drip line. A soaker hose is better than a sprinkler."

Where you put the water is important, too. Duff advised watering between the trunk and the drip line, instead of at the drip line, because the center area is where the major roots are. That's a critical spot for a tree in stress. It's also shady there. "The drought is so severe that a lot of smaller roots have died," he said.

Once you have watered, follow up by mulching to cap in the moisture. "There is an argument over whether to mulch or not," Duff said. "The consensus is to water first and then mulch." If your trees

have mulch already, rake it back and water the tree, then replace the mulch over the watered area.

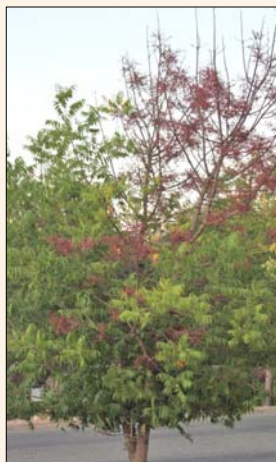
If you see apparent dead wood on the tree, don't cut it back yet; although it's OK to cut dead wood, the wood you cut may not be dead. Cutting back live trees just puts more stress on the tree and more heat in the ground, Duff said. "Dead wood doesn't matter, but it's hard to tell where it ends and the live part begins." It's better to wait until next year to cut back trees, when you can more easily tell what is dead and what is alive. Also, even dead wood provides shade, Duff noted.

Here are more watering ideas for watering from the Texas Forest Service and from the Texas Chapter, International Society of Arboriculture:

Water 6-8 inches into the soil. A long screwdriver should go into the ground easily if the water you applied is sufficient. If it doesn't, your tree needs water.

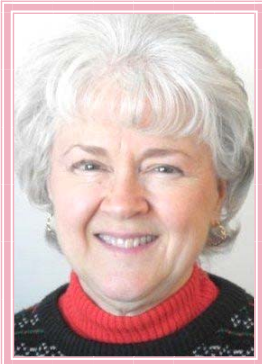
- > Water young trees--those that measures 6 inches in diameter--three times a week, about 30 gallons at a time
- > Watch out for trees planted within the last seven years; even though established, they will struggle to survive without water.
- > Consider replacing the grass around new trees with a 6-foot diameter, 2-inch deep circle of mulch.
- > Avoid high-salt, quick release fertilizers during a drought.
- > Avoid digging under a tree canopy.

Dying Chinese Pistache (left) and Cypress



ALL THINGS EDIBLE

October 2011 - by Pam Bresler



Beginning an herb garden can be as simple as placing a pot of rosemary on a sunny windowsill. Container gardening is a great way to begin growing herbs. Annuals like the various basil are good candidates for containers. My basil grown in full sun in the garden had tiny leaves, but my container basil, with only a few hours of morning sun, had lovely large leaves. When making a platter of Caprese salad, these large, lush leaves looked beautiful layered with fresh mozzarella slices and sliced 'Cherokee Purple' tomatoes. You can even grow herbs, like thyme and oregano, in a hanging basket. Try a cherry tomato plant in a large hanging basket, with basil planted around the cherry tomato.

If your container plants are in a very sunny place, be sure to water frequently to prevent wilting. Using water-grabbing polymer crystals in your potting soil will cut down on watering. Some polymer products are: *Terra-Sorb*, *Hydro-source* and *Agrosoke*. Pots can be "double-potted" with sphagnum or ball moss stuffed between the larger pot and smaller pot for insulation. I've also heard of putting Styrofoam peanuts between the pots. Be sure the outer pot has drain holes, or elevate the inner pot with small rocks.

If you already have a sunny flower garden, many herbs can be tucked in with ornamental plants. If you plan to eat the herbs, however, don't spray them with pesticides that you might use on ornamental plants. 'Purple Ruffles' basil looks great with pink, white, lavender and blue flowers. The low growing thymes, like lemon thyme, make an attractive edging for flowerbeds. Lavenders, with their purple and blue tones, look wonderful mixed with yellow daylilies or under planting roses. Garlic planted with roses reportedly helps minimize fungal diseases like black spot. Dill and fennel adds height when mixed with shorter, mounding perennials like scabiosa and melampodium.



Purple Ruffles basil
[Lamiaceae Ocimum basilicum](#) among flowers

If your yard is shady, you can still grow herbs like mints, lemon balm, catmint, parsley, chives and garlic chives. Violas will take some shade, providing winter color and lovely edible flowers for garnishing salads or desserts.

Herbal "theme gardens" are a popular way to enjoy herbs. Children especially like a pizza garden:

- Pizza Garden: basil, oregano, thyme, tomato, chives, bell pepper
- Tea Garden: lemon balm, mint, chamomile, lemon grass
- Fragrance Garden: lavender, scented geraniums, mint, lemon balm
- Biblical Garden: aloe, wormwood, coriander, mustard
- Kitchen Garden: thyme, sage, dill, chives, rosemary, basil, parsley, fennel, garlic
- Edible Flower Garden: calendula, viola, pansy, nasturtiums, borage, chive flowers
- Medicinal Garden: catnip, valerian, horehound, rue, mullein, borage, rosemary
- Potpourri Garden: lavender, old garden roses, lemon thyme, scented geraniums

Herbs enhance our lives in many ways, providing us with medicines, perfumes, cosmetics, craft material and culinary herbs. They are the original low-maintenance plants, needing mainly full sun and good drainage. Have fun incorporating herbs into your landscape and Bon Appétit!

Hill Country Master Gardeners 2011 Executive Committee
Chris Seifert - President
Barbara Elmore - Vice President
Jackie Connelly - Secretary
Roy Eliff - Treasurer
Randy Simmons - Ex-officio Advisor
Roy Walston - C.E.A. Advisor

Committees

Archivist: Ida Luckey

Demonstration Garden:
 Dorothy & David Buchen, Chairs

Education:
 Debbie Russell, Chair

Greenhouse: Vickie Killeen
 & Anne Brown, Chairs

HCMG Office Manager:
 Liz Althaus

Horticultural Inquiry: Anne Moss

Information: Betty West

Jr. Master Gardener Program:
 Sandy Martin, Chair

Market Days:
 Ron Smith II, Chair

Mentors: June Sher

Programs: Melva Chancellor
 & Jane Rackley

Public Relations: China Long

Record Keeping & Volunteer Hours: John LaRoche

Scholarship:
 Judy Fleming, Chair

Speakers Bureau: Kathy Lewis

Technology: Cindy Anderson

Volunteer Email Coordinator:
 Jackie Connelly

Newsletter & Website

Chair & Newsletter Editor
 Eleanor Baldwin

Assistant Editors - Betty West & Kathie Marlow

Columnists - Pam Bresler, Barbara Elmore, Marilyn Pease, Judy Fleming

Environmental Reporter

Bernadell Larson

Webmaster - Carol Brinkman

Web Assistants - Anne Moss, Julie Bartosh, & Betty West

Submissions to baldwin@kctc.com

September Minutes: Continued from Page 7:

John LaRoche is investigating a new online survey tool for HCMG members to gather pertinent data/information.

2012 Office Nominations – Nominating Committee: Dorothy Buchen and Tommie Airhart

Slate of officers for 2011 is:

Pat McCormick,

president;

Patty Zohlen,

vice president;

Diane McMahon,

treasurer;

Jackie Connelly,

secretary.

New officers will be elected in November and new terms begin in December.

Fun and Educational Opportunities

2011 International Conference is in Charleston, WVA – www.txmgo.org.

2012 TMGA Conference is in SA www.txmgo.org newsletter

The meeting was adjourned at 3:09 pm.

The next HCMG meeting will be held 1 p.m. on Oct. 5 in the AgriLife Extension classroom.

Respectfully submitted,

Jackie Connelly, Secretary

Webmaster Carol Brinkman's Website of the Month



At Tohona Chul Park in Tucson (<http://www.tohonochohulpark.org/wordpress/gardens/cereus-stories/>) you will find information on plants that we perhaps should be considering. Who knows how long this drought will last, but we do know it won't be the last! They even have a "Cereus Stories" page.



I know not everyone gets as excited about Night-blooming Cereus as I do, but seven blooms all at once is reason to be excited. A single cereus bloomed the next day (uh, night), and I immediately saw "clasped hands". Fay Drozd probably never dreamed a student in her propagation class could find so much enjoyment from one plant!



Photos by Carol Brinkman