

*February 2012
Volume 10, Issue 2*

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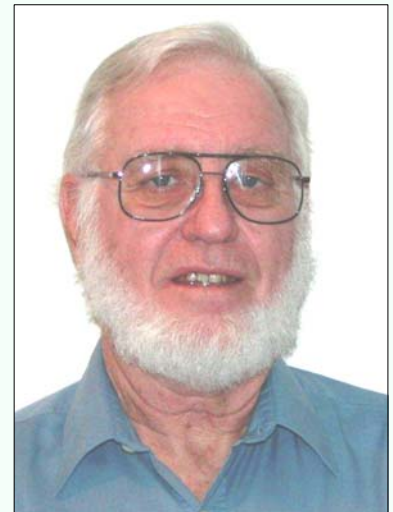
Check out the article and pictures of the work on the Demonstration Garden on this page and Page 8



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.

**HCMG Monthly Meeting,
1:00 p.m. February 1, 2012
at the AgriLife Office**

**Jim Stanley will speak on
*Cedar: Myth, Reality
and Management***



Jim Stanley is a member and past president of the Hill Country Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalists. He created and oversees the Land Management Assistance Program of that organization. He is the author of the book, "Hill Country Landowner's Guide" as well as the "Hill Country Naturalist" weekly column in the Kerrville Daily Times.

Jim is also speaking to the HCMG Class on January 24th, on native grasses.

Stanley is a native of the High Plains of West Texas receiving his education at Texas Tech, Indiana University, and Louisiana State University. He spent 25 years in research and development in the chemical industry before moving to the Hill Country in 2000.

Demo Garden Workers

The last of the volunteers proudly show off their clippings pile.



*Back row: Tom Collins, Diane Sellers, Carol Brinkman, Vickie Killeen, Beatrice Borton, Cindy Anderson, Jackie Connelly & Eileen Haden.
Front row: Anne Hamm, Caryl Hartman, Barbara Elmore & Anne Brown.*

*Photo by
Roy Walston*



Note from our President, Pat McCormick

This week the days are glorious with the wind sweeping up the hill bringing the freshness of the winter season. It's what I would call cold, a time of hibernation for some, but for the spotted towhee, cardinals, wrens, finches and sparrows at my feeders, it is a bustling rush to fill their cheeks with as much seed as they can even when the wind is howling. The drying Christmas tree propped up, yet listing to one side outside my bedroom window, is loaded with suet. The dense, brittle evergreen shields their little bodies from the wind as they hop around searching for fallen seeds scattered on the bare caliche. I know that sometime soon some of those seeds will sprout and an unmanaged variety of green things will appear. I am not sure how excited I am about that. I think I need to get something planted in that area to disguise the unkempt

reality that my back "yard" will become.

It was exciting this week to have been able to prepare the thin bit of rocky soil outside my laundry room door for a little gravel path. Pushing the shovel into the ground was unfamiliar. I was inspired to keep digging!

What a thrill it was to finally be able to light the burn pile, the flames were exciting for a few hours, then the thrill subsided into satisfaction as the unwanted tree stumps shrunk down to a pile of ashes. It signifies a new beginning, a clean slate and new opportunities since I can now spread some seed in that area.

Our "inner seeds" in the Hill Country Master Gardener organization are sowing themselves as we look forward to the new year. I look forward to sharing the sprout and growth at our meeting on February 1st.

Is Your Poinsettia (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*) Ailing?

Holiday plant care – Keep in a sunny area. Minimum 50° degrees. No drafts. Remove decorative wrap when watering. Keep soil moist but no standing water. Leaf drop usually means it is not getting enough light.

Maintaining plants after Christmas – When leaves drop, cut stems back to 2 buds. Reduce water to a minimum. Store in a cool place. When danger of frost has past, set pots in sun outdoors. Pinch back new growth several times during summer for many branches. Stop pinching by mid-August.

Encouraging "blooms" in potted plants – Poinsettias "bloom" when they experience long nights (12 hours darkness) and temps in the 60's, usually late November here. What is commonly referred to as the "bloom" is actually a modified leaf called a bract that turns red. The true blooms are small yellow flowers clustered in the center of a group of bracts.

Garden use – Poinsettias are tropicals, native to Mexico, and are not dependable in our area. If you are a "risk-taking gardener", select a well protected, sunny site with a southern or southeast exposure. Requires well-drained soil. Fertilize in early spring and midsummer.

Vickie Killeen



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 24 - HCMG classroom training session at 1 pm. Jim Stanley will discuss "Native Grasses" followed by Danny Cullins' program on "Turf Grass."

January 31 - HCMG classroom training session at 1 pm. Jessica Jobe will discuss "Soils of the Hill Country." Chris Seifert will present "Composting."

January 31 - Fredericksburg NPSOT meets at 7 pm at United Methodist Church, 1800 North Llano St. The speaker will be Dr. Kent Rylander, noted ornithologist and professor. Visitors welcome. *Please note the change in location to the United Methodist Church.*

February 1 - HCMG monthly meeting at 1:00 pm at Kerr County AgriLife Extension Office. Jim Stanley will speak on "Cedar: Myth, Reality and Management."

February 6 - Kerrville Garden Club meets at 1 pm. This month's program is *"Japanese Gardens"* presented by S. J. Derby. Visitors are welcome. Contact vkilleen@stx.rr.com to make reservations and get this month's meeting location.

February 7 - HCMG classroom training session at 1 pm. at the Ext. Office. Dr. Larry Stein will address "Fruit & Nut Trees."

February 8 - Fredericksburg Garden Club meets at 2 pm at the Memorial Presbyterian Church Fellowship Hall, 607 N. Milam. Visitors welcome.

February 8 - Rose Garden Club of Medina meets at Medina Community Center (13857 St. Hwy. 16 N) at 2 pm. Sue Crawford Tracy will speak on *"Native Ferns of Texas."* Visitors welcome.

February 14 - HCMG classroom training session at 1 pm. "Plant Biology" presented by Anne Graves (HCMG.)

February 14 - Kerrville NPSOT meets at Riverside Nature Center at 5 pm. Light refreshments served at 4:30 pm. This Valentine's Day special will feature noted culinary critic, Wayne Este, sharing *"The Wonders of Cooking Native."* Visitors welcome.

February 21 - 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. Peggy Sechrist will discuss *"The Slow Food Movement."* Visitors welcome.

February 21 - HCMG classroom training session at 1 pm. Dr. Mark Black will discuss "Concepts of Plant Diseases."

February 28 - HCMG classroom training session at 1 pm. "Concepts of Insects" presented by Dr. Chris Sonsone.



Meet the (first half) of the Class of 2012



Pat McGlothlin lives in Willow City on the family ranch. It has been in her family for four generations. She has two children, a son who is married, and a daughter. She enjoys music, and is a beginner quilter and painter. Reading about land and ranch management is one of her pastimes as well as gardening of all kinds.

Suzy Keepers loves gardening but she also loves doing anything that has to do with water, being on it or near it. She has two sons, 18 and 23 and a husband of 28 years. They have rescued three cats and three dogs. Suzy love, love, loves her Kindle since she is an avid reader.

A recent transplant to Kerrville, **Keith Kincaid** was probably the most liked guy in the job before he retired. He cooked for 200 people on an oil drilling rig. He likes to bake as well: cookies, pies and cakes are his favorite. Besides cooking and baking, Keith likes classic car shows and working with wood.

Kathy Farrell is a very talented lady. She is a weaver, quilter, seamstress, and crafts person. She learned to weave when she lived in Taos, NM and she even built her own Rio Grande Walking Loom that she uses to weave rugs. She moved to Kerrville to be close to her daughter, son-in-law and two grandsons. Both boys attend Kerrville schools. Kathy retired after 19 years with the Orange County CA Library system. She loves reading mysteries, biographies and anything about gardening.



Roy Ramirez is a man of many talents. He is a spinner and likes spinning, wool, flax, and cotton. Besides spinning he likes weaving as well on a rigid heddle loom. Roy is a home canner and cheese maker. He likes gardening and growing his own culinary herbs which he uses in his cooking. He looks forward to being in Costa Rica some day to enjoy the beauty and culture of that country.



Margi Ramirez is also a weaver on a rigid heddle. Her husband Roy taught her how to weave. They both enjoy weaving scarves. Margi is very involved in the Humane Society and is a foster parent and also a pet parent to ten K-9s. She loves birding and all kinds of nature.



Greg Smith is renovating an older home in Fredericksburg, which he shares with a young border collie. Before moving to Fredericksburg he was on the National Board of Multiple Sclerosis. He was a certified National Ski Instructor and taught at the National Special Olympics competition at Vail. Greg has earned degrees from Baylor and SMU.



Nancy Alford grew up in Kerrville and graduated from Tivy High School. She uses only environmentally friendly people-powered gardening equipment. She has raised five children and in her spare time is a bicyclist who has done 15 MS150 rides. Nancy is a bit of a nomad since she has moved more than 20 times in her adult life. I hope she is here to stay.





TIMELY TIPS for FEBRUARY GARDENING

by Kathie Marlow

February is the time to complete your garden inventory and plan the spring plantings.

- Order the seeds and supplies you will need. Plan to try a few new varieties and combinations.
- Test the soil to determine the need for fertilizer. Save wood ashes from the fireplace to add potassium to beds before they are planted in the spring.
- Lay out locations of plants by height, foliage texture, season of bloom and adaptability to sun or shade.
- On a mild, still day spray roses with dormant oil to kill overwintering insects, their eggs and disease spores. In late February you can plant all



kinds of new container grown roses.

- Test the soil pH for needed treatment with wettable sulfur.
- Pot cool-treated spring bulbs and spring-flowering annuals. Monitor all of your container plants daily. Pinch back and deadhead as needed.
- Be sure to protect tender plants against any possible surprise frosts.
- It is also time to inventory your lawn supplies that will be needed for spring. If you have not done it already, you can perform a soil test to determine nutrient needs for your lawn.

Enthusiasts claim that gardening “with the moon” – planting, sowing, and carrying out other tasks according to the moon’s phases and the constellations – pushes plants to their optimum performance in the garden. If you want to give moon gardening a try, refer to yearly almanacs or look for books on the subject; you’ll often find them listed in specialty catalogs or advertised in organic gardening or astrology magazines.

Planting Roses

Since Kathy Marlow suggests in her article above that late February is time to plant roses, try this:

1



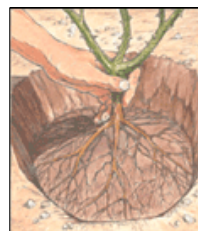
When you bring your roses home, immediately soak roots in lukewarm water for 24 hours. If you cannot plant right away, leave them in their container for up to a week in a cool, dark place. Sprinkle the roots with water every few days. (Note: You can also grow roses in containers that are at least as big as a bucket, which is what I intend to do because deer LOVE roses.)

2



Your hole should be about 18" deep and 24" wide. Loosen the soil at the bottom and sides. Build a mound in the center of the hole and set rose on top.

3



Then fill the hole with two thirds of the remaining soil. Add water, let it soak in, then fill the hole with the remaining soil. Tamp down lightly to remove air and water well. Spread mulch around the plant to suppress weeds and retain moisture. Water 3-4 times a week until leaves begin to grow, weekly thereafter.



SMOOTH AS SILK
(WORMS)

By Marilyn Pease

Was anyone lucky enough to receive a beautiful silk item for Christmas this year? There is nothing like silk for lightweight warmth in the winter as well as moisture-wicking comfort in summer, not to mention the lovely, shimmering quality of the fabric. This wonderful fiber comes from the cocoons of four main types of silkworm moth larvae, the most common of which is *Bombyx mori* or the Mulberry Silkworm moth. These insects are actually considered to be domesticated much the same as honey bees. Other insects, such as bees, wasps and ants, as well as spiders, do produce silk but their silk is not suitable for use in the silk industry due to their chemical composition and difficulty of extraction.



Silkworm moth

Mostly confined now to Asia, with some in Brazil and Iran, silk production or sericulture was attempted in the U.S. during colonial times. This was unsuccessful mainly because the mulberry trees needed to feed the larvae did not grow well in our climate. Later attempts to cross the silkworm moth with the non-native gypsy moth that could eat other kinds of plants resulted in the escape of the gypsy

moth and subsequent periodic defoliation of forests in the U.S. which plagues us even today.

Silk production begins with eggs laid on special paper. After hatching, the larvae are fed chopped mulberry leaves for around 35 days. When they have increased in size sufficient to trigger metamorphosis, the larvae begin to spin their cocoons.



Racks of cocoons in Vietnam

Upon completion, the cocoons are either pierced with a needle or heated to kill the larva inside. This part of the process has brought criticism upon the silk industry by PETA! Each cocoon is made from up to a mile of silk filament which is carefully unwound resulting in a usable half mile of silk fiber. It is then spun into 3 to 10 plies for strength.

Besides clothing, silk is used in many home furnishings such as rugs, curtains and upholstery as well as other more unusual applications in disposable cups, surgical sutures and bicycle tires. It takes 5000 silkworm cocoons to produce one silk kimono. This may help explain the high cost of silk products and, thus, makes one appreciate that Christmas gift even more.

Green Step



TEAK CUTTING BOARDS

Wood cutting boards made from sustainably forested trees are a healthy substitute to plastic boards that have to be replaced when tiny plastic pieces start breaking off.

A company, based in Wimberley, has reclaimed ranch land on Mexico's Pacific Coast and has become one of the largest teak growers in the Western Hemisphere using responsible forestry and harvesting techniques. Their sturdy teak cutting boards are bacteria and moisture resistant.

Bernadell Larson

HILL COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS JANUARY 4, 2012 MEETING MINUTES

The meeting was called to order by **Pat McCormick**, President, at 1 pm. After a brief business meeting, the HCMG class of 2012 was introduced. There were 58 members in attendance.

Members unanimously approved minutes from the November and December 2011 meetings as written in the newsletters.

Diane McMahon, Treasurer, said the chapter has \$19,000 in checking, \$58,000 in savings.

Announcements:

Membership committee: **Ida Luckey** congratulated newly certified Master Gardeners **Pat Johnson** and **Barbara Noblin**. Pat McCormick welcomed back **Eileen Haden** from a leave of absence.

MG program overview: The president provided an overview of the HCMG program, which was presented to the AgriLife Extension Office Agent. The presentation is available to all and posted on the bulletin board in the office.

The Texas Master Gardeners Association's website, <http://txmg.org/> President McCormick said information on the upcoming state conference (May 3-5), upcoming workshops and training

sessions can be found. The International Master Gardener's Conference will be held in September of 2013 in Alaska.

<http://www.uaex.edu/imgc2013/default.htm>

Deborah Russell, chair of the education committee, reported there are several new classes and presenters this year and that all certified Master Gardeners could audit most of the classes to earn their required education units. Class schedules are available on the Calendar of Events on our website, <http://www.hillcountrymastergardeners.org/calendar.htm>.

June Sher, chair of the mentor committee, introduced the 2012 mentors who then introduced their assigned students. After introductions, refreshments were served and HCMG members welcomed the class of 2012.

There being no further business or announcements, the meeting was adjourned at 1:45 p.m.

After the meeting, **Julie Bartosh** took orders from certified master gardeners for logo wear. Orders will be delivered at the February meeting.

The next HCMG meeting will be held at 1 pm, Wednesday, February 1, 2012, in the AgriLife Classroom.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jackie Connelly, Secretary

I have quite a few houseplants, and at times, usually in warmer weather, I have a problem with fungus gnats. Online research produced differing solutions, but most involved pesticides which I try to avoid. One solution, however, was to spread sand on top of the potting soil to prevent the gnats breeding in the moist soil. It works!

Carol Brinkman

If your potted porch plants have become "Winter Texans" in the warmth of your home, remember to water them sparingly. If you have a water softener that uses salt, do not use indoor tap water. Use your collected rain water, reverse osmosis tap water, or fill a bucket from your outdoor source.

Vickie Killeen



A day in the garden

By Barbara Elmore

A riddle: Where can you visit with your dog, dress as if you were at home, enjoy

the company of others, perform manual labor—and still have a good time?

You know the answer by now: the *Hill Country Master Gardeners' Demonstration Garden.*

On a balmy, mid-January day, right after a 2-inch rain and right before a windstorm, 15 Master Gardeners convened to clean up garden areas by raking leaves, cutting back dead plants and picking up trash.

Rosarians among the volunteers did a light pruning on the Cecile Brunner rose in the corner near the greenhouse. And Buddy, HCMG President Pat McCormick's dog, generally roamed the garden sniffing out treasures.

The cleanup was the first official activity of the year in the garden. The next change members might notice will be a new coat of paint on the fence that borders the garden.

And stay tuned. Members of the committee charged with the garden's revamping are gearing up for more.



Anne Hamm takes advantage of a glorious day to help in the Demo Garden



Demo Garden Chair Barbara Elmore surveys her domain.



Above: Sprucing up the office entrance are Diane Sellers, Caryl Hartman & Anne Brown



Right: Dusty Gilliam makes the entrance beds tidy



Right: Rosarians Sherry Egloff and Jackie Connelly tackle our overgrown Climbing Cecile Brunner



Tom Collins & Cindy Anderson combine efforts pruning perennials.

All photos by Vickie Killeen

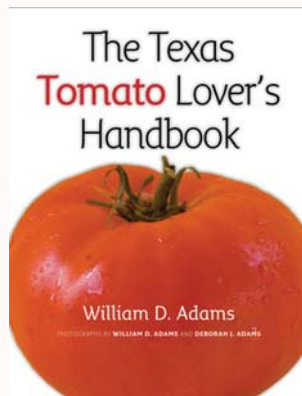


**ALL THINGS EDIBLE -
February 2012**

by Pam Bresler

Putting luscious red tomatoes on the cover of seed catalogs and magazines is a sure attention grabber, and the current issue of "Texas Gardener" is no

exception. The cover story is by Bill Adams, whose book "The Texas Tomato Lover's Handbook," gives Texans a much-needed regional reference. Adams names his Top Ten list of tomatoes: *Champion*, *Tycoon* (the 2011 San Antonio Rodeo Tomato), *Corona PS*, *Persimmon*, *Momotaro*, *Sun Gold*, *Viva Italia* (an improved Roma), *Jaune Flamme*, *Fourth of July* and *Cherokee Purple*.

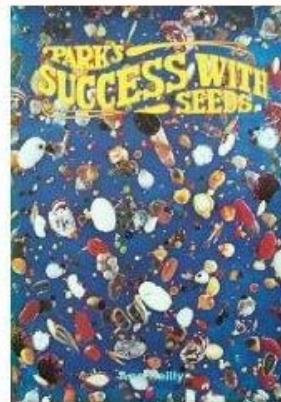


Cherokee Purple, with a complex sweet flavor, is a real winner in my garden. Most of the black or purple tomatoes have the gene for sweetness and women seem to enjoy these tomatoes more than men. Men tend to like a true "tomatoey" tang to their tomatoes.

Other black or purple tomatoes I've grown are *Black Cherry* and *Eva Purple Ball*, an heirloom from Germany. A friend sent me seeds of *Black Krim* and *Black Prince* which I'm trying this year.

Several of the black tomatoes come from Russia, so you'd assume they would be a poor fit for the Hill Country. However, in roses, a breeder once explained to me that the gene for cold tolerance also conveys a tolerance to heat. This is counter-intuitive, but a prime example is *Carefree Beauty*, a

rose from Dr. Griffith Buck's breeding program at Iowa State. This rose is excellent in Texas, as well as the frozen North. My hope is that the Russian black tomatoes will also do well in Texas.



Reilly. The Park's book has an appendix which lists the seeds needing special conditions to germinate: light, dark, soaking, cool temperature, warm temperature, etc.

For vegetables, the critical factor is temperature. For example, peas like 55° and tomatoes like 75°. The Park's book also has a glossary of horticultural terms and a pronouncing index. Both ornamentals and edibles are covered in the book. One handy tip for seeds such as calendula that need darkness to germinate: cover the germination pot with aluminum foil.

February is an excellent time to replenish your soil with compost, pull any weeds and thicken mulch. You can place mounds of compost where you intend to plant tomatoes, so you can pop in transplants at the end of March.

Peach trees need pruning and a dormant oil spray by March 1.



Two books are my go-to references for seed starting: "The New Seed-Starters Handbook" by Nancy Bubel and "Park's Success with Seeds" by Ann

Hill Country Master Gardeners 2012 Executive Committee

Pat McCormick - President
Patty Zohlen - Vice President
Jackie Connelly - Secretary
Diane McMahon - Treasurer
Chris Seifert - Ex-officio Advisor
Roy Walston - C.E.A. Advisor

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All Things Edible continued:

Remove any dead plants from the fall garden, but don't add them to your compost if your plants had fungal disease.

While there's a lull in gardening, crafty types might want to make gardener's soap. Use plain glycerin soap, cut into 1/2" cubes, and melt in the microwave at 30 second intervals, stirring. You can also use a double boiler. When soap is melted, add one of the following: lavender buds, cornmeal, steel-cut oats or clean sand. Pour into molds, such as muffin tins, that have been sprayed with cooking spray. Voila! gardener's soap!

If you are growing your own food, you are very trendy according to the New York Times: "[Vegetable Gardens Are Booming in a Fallow Economy](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/06/us/vegetable-gardens-booming-in-a-fallow-economy.html)" <http://tinyurl.com/7yeh3o2>

This February, join the trendsetters and start planning your spring garden.



Website of the Month

By Carol Brinkman



IT HASN'T BEEN THIS CLOSE SINCE 2007!

I'm referring to the 2012 **Texas State Master Gardeners Conference** to be held in San Antonio, Texas, May 3 - 5, 2012. For those of you who have never attended a state conference, I recommend that you consider it this year. Classes feature noted speakers, and tours include sites that are seldom open to the public.

Registration is now open. Visit <http://www.2012tmgaconference.org/index.html> where you will find full descriptions and schedules as well as a printable registration packet.

Pam Bresler found these weird bits while perusing the internet:

Couple are forced to demolish their £300k four-bed home after it was invaded by Japanese knotweed. *We may have roving hordes of whitetails and Axis, but at least we don't have knotweed!*

USDA threatens \$60,000 fine, federal raid against woman in illegal possession of indoor lemon tree *Maybe it is better to just buy those Meyer lemons at H.E.B.!*

British Columbia Man Faces Six Months in Jail for Growing Food. See below:



<http://tinyurl.com/85p42m2>