

January 2012
Volume 10, Issue 1

Meet & Greet New Class	1
New President's Letter	2
Events Calendar & Green Step	3
Christmas Party Photos	4
January Gardening	5
Ecological Garden	6
December Meeting Minutes	7
Drought Scarred	8
All Things Edible	9
Website of the Month	10

*Check out the pictures
from the Cowboy
Christmas Party.*



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.

**Next meeting is January 4, 2012,
1:00 P.M. at Kerr County AgriLife
Extension Office**

***The new class is coming and will be
introduced - meet and warmly welcome them
as well as your new officers.***



Jackie Connelly
Secretary

Patty Zohlen
Vice President

Pat McCormick
President

Diane McMahon
Treasurer

Photo by Carol Brinkman

**Refreshments will be provided.
Please wear your name badges.**

MG WEAR AVAILABLE AT JANUARY MEETING

All Certified Master Gardeners will have an opportunity to pre-purchase shirts and caps with our beautifully embroidered Master Gardener logo at the January meeting. The complete line of items will be available for review and in a variety of sizes. Please bring your checkbooks as change will not be available for cash purchases. All members can pick up their purchases at the February meeting.



New President's Message - *Pat McCormick*

It's a new year and new beginnings for me as part of a most honorable group of people, the Hill Country Master Gardeners. I am enjoying so much getting to know you better and understanding our collective needs in depth. I have had a chance to meet with Roy Walston and the AgriLife Agents in Kendall, Bandera and Gillespie Counties. At some point I will ask those of you in those counties to contact your county agents and invite them out to your projects. All of them have had terrific previous experience with master gardeners and are eager to get to know you!

I hope to learn more about the successes and the difficulties (if any) that the committee chair people are facing and find ways to help if possible. *Chris Seifert* is a tough act to follow, so if you would help me to get up to speed by talking to me, I would be thrilled. I have my "listening ears" on!

Cowboy Christmas Party Photos



Outgoing President Chris Seifert and new President Pat McCormick. All photos by Carol Brinkman



Above right: Party Host Patty Zohlen greets members (only half the attendees are pictured).



Above: Caryl Hartman and Terri DeBusk



Right: The barbecued brisket was wonderful, thanks to David and Dorothy Buchen



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 4 - HCMG Executive Committee meets at 9:30 am and Committee Chairs join them at 10:30 am. HCMG monthly meeting at 1:00 pm at Kerr County AgriLife Extension Office. Our *HCMG Class of 2012* will be introduced and refreshments provided. Please wear your name badges. "*Orientation*" for the 2012 Students begins at 3 pm.

January 10 – HCMG 1st classroom training session for 2012 at 1 pm at the Ext. Office. Ext. Ofc. staff will present "*Introduction to the AgriLife Extension Office.*" Kathy Lyles will discuss "*Native Plants and Why They are Important.*"

January 10 - Kerrville NPSOT meets at Riverside Nature Center at 5 pm. Light refreshments served at 4:30 pm. State Representative Harvey

Hilderbran will address "*Native Plants and Politics: Texas 2011 Legislative Thoughts on Key Water and Natural Resources Legislation.*" Visitors welcome.

January 11 - Rose Garden Club of Medina meets at Medina Community Center (13857 St. Hwy. 16 N at 2 pm. Dee Tusch will present a program on "*Ferdinand Lindheimer 1801-1879... Father of Texas Botany.*" Visitors welcome.

January 17 - 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. Mary Ellen Sum-

January 17 - HCMG classroom training session at 1 pm by Dr. Tom Harris on "*Organics*" at the Union Church instead of the Ext. Ofc. this week only.

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.*"

Green Step

Laundry Tips



All detergents loosen dirt and "grab it" but using too much actually prevents a full rinse and leaves dirt on clothing to "cook" in the dryer. Try using half of the manufacturer's suggestion (I have been doing this for four years with success). Most of the work in washing comes from the water and the agitation of the clothes, not the detergent. For hard water, add borax or washing soda to the wash cycle because they break down the minerals that interfere with detergent. For soft and fluffy clothes, add half a cup of vinegar to the wash or rinse cycle. Vinegar breaks up trapped grease and oil and dissolves uric acid, making it perfect for baby clothes.

Bernadell Larson

More Cowboy Christmas Party Photos



Above: **The party planning team:** Vicki Killeen, Betty West, Patty Zohlen and Jackie Connelly



Right: Special guest Chris von Khon picked the prize numbers

Far right: Bernadell Larson, Randy & Judy Simmons, Eleanor Baldwin and Velda Workman



Above on left: Rose Marie Mazanke and Barbara Noblin— On right: Joyce Studer, Sandy Lewis, Carrie Musetti and China Long



Right: New Nueces Co. transferee Sue Hall and Bernadell Larson



Left: Kathie Marlow

Right: Joyce Studer, Tommie Airhart, Anne Brown, Fay Drozd and Pam Bresler



Photos by Carol Brinkman



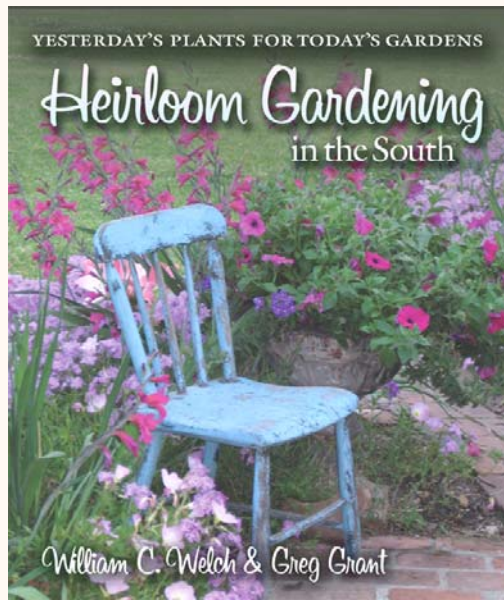
**TIMELY GARDENING TIPS
for JANUARY**
by Kathie Marlow

Scott and Lauren Springer Ogden, in their book *Plant Driven Design*, encourage consideration of the needs of a garden when planning or

creating a new area. Sometimes unfriendly garden spaces are inherited from a previous function. What is most essential element in any garden is not some particular object, plant or tool. What is vital is a gardener who loves it.

According to William Welch and Greg Grant in their book *Heirloom Gardening in the South*, the design principles of balance, repetition, proportion, dominance and contrast are essential to good landscape design.

Balance is the equalization of visual weight from one area of the composition to another. The two types of balance are Symmetrical (formal) which is achieved by repeating the arrangement of elements on both sides of the composition (a mirror image). Asymmetrical (informal) balance is created by implying equal weights, although the same plant



material are not repeated in the same relative position on either side of the axis.

Repetition is the technique of using one element, form, size, tone, or texture throughout a composition. It is a very important design principle as repetition provides a common tie among various parts.

Proportion or Scale is the relationship of one part to the other. All aspects of the design must be in scale with its users, its site, and its structure.

Dominance is the authority of one element of a design composition over all other parts due to its size, shape, texture or location. This principle should be used sparingly.

Contrast is the introduction of an element (such as shade or color). It serves to emphasize the similarity of the remaining features. Too much contrast results in chaos.

During these cold winter days read about other people's views on gardening. There are many good books available that will give you new and exciting ideas, inspiration or a new slant that will help you design a garden that you will love and enjoy.



We know mulch saves water and helps in retarding weeds. A really good mulch to cover **bare** areas is shredded leaves & trimmings from trees, composted material, and shredded cedar. This mixture will manage to keep the ground warmer in winter and cooler in summer. This is not a nitrogen robber as long as you don't till it into the soil and wait for it to break down into organic matter.



Plant Communities in the Ecological Garden

by Bernadell Larson

In the ecological garden, we choose plants that will collect minerals, water and air, shade the soil and renew it with leafy mulch; and give us fruits and greens for people and wildlife. But all these pieces have to be connected in the proper relationship to take advantage of the component synergies.

Monocultures (planting a massive area of a single plant) deplete the soil and provide a sumptuous feast for pests. You can avoid these problems by practicing interplanting, companion planting, or creating plant communities. In previous articles we discussed interplanting and companion planting; this article will discuss plant communities, also known as *Polyculture*. According to Toby Hemeway, polycultures are dynamic, self-organizing plant communities composed of several to many species.

We can create gardens in which plants snuggle together in minimally competitive patterns and have mutually beneficial interactions, and also work together to provide a lengthy and varied harvest of food, blossoms and habitat.

Ianto Evans, a Welshman, is an inventor, teacher and architect who traveled at length. His observations of traditional polycultures allowed him to blend common vegetable varieties into combinations that would ripen over several months to give him up to nine months of continuous food. After trial and error, he developed a seven variety polyculture that mimics natural succession and fills niches in a garden bed to make a dense planting. The early germinating plants grow and create habitat for the other plant varieties, and they attract beneficial insects for pollinating as well as fighting pests. The thick planting forms a living mulch for the soil, reducing evaporation and the need for water. All these benefits come from placing the plants in the right relationship, one that takes advantage of the dynamic qualities of living beings.

Ianto's polyculture blends early-sprouting radishes, insect-attracting and edible dill and calendula, lettuce, parsnips, cabbage, and nitrogen-fixing

bush beans. The fast growing radishes cast shade, which keeps the soil moist and cool. This protects slow germinating seeds, particularly parsnips, from drying out. The strongly scented dill and calendula will confuse insects searching for the young radishes. Dill also hosts tiny predatory wasps that attack cabbage loopers and beans add nitrogen to the soil. The variety of leaf shapes and root depths minimize competition for sun, space, and nutrients.

This polyculture as a whole generally provides enough diversity to bewilder most pests. For a successful annual vegetable polyculture, use plants from each of three groups: 1) fast growing greens and early vegetables such as radishes and spring brassicas (broccoli, raab, and early cauliflower), 2) mid-season vegetables such as beans and onions, and 3) slow growing plants like fall cauliflower, cabbage, Brussels sprouts, parsnips, and leeks.

Ianto developed a set of guidelines based upon his long experience:

1. Seed several varieties of each species, thereby lengthening the harvest season.
2. Don't sow seeds too thickly. One seed per couple of square inches.
3. Harvest your plants, especially greens, when they begin to crowd, not when they mature. Young plants are especially tasty.
4. Mix plant families, not just species. Closely related plants compete for the same nutrients.
5. Include many seeds of fast growing shallow-rooted species. Radishes, greens, etc. cover the soil quickly to deter weeds.
6. Overlap the harvests. Plant several varieties of each species, each with a different ripening time.
7. Avoid root and light competition. Tomatoes and potatoes will shade out many plants and too many root plants will compete for soil space.
8. Harvest whole plants, with the exception of long lived herbs. This frees up space for emerging plants.
9. Save a few plants for seeds.
10. Examine your polyculture every day. After about three weeks, it will be at maximum density and will need daily harvesting to continue rapid growth.

Continues on Page 10

**HILL COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS
December 7, 2011
MINUTES**

The meeting was called to order by President **Chris Seifert** at 1:30 p.m. Dec. 7 after the holiday luncheon at the Union Church Building. Sixty-five members attended.

Officers for 2012 were installed. Minutes of the November and December meetings will be approved at the January 2012 meeting.

Treasurer's report will also be given at the January 2012 meeting.

Chris Seifert thanked the 2011 Executive Committee and Committee Chairs for their dedication and service during the year.

Ida Luckey congratulated and introduced newly certified Master Gardener **Carol Howard** and **Sue Hall** a transfer member from Nueces County.

Chris then introduced the newly elected 2012 officers – **Pat McCormick, President; Patty Zohlen, Vice President; Diane McMahon, Treasurer; Jackie Connelly, Secretary; and Chris Seifert, ex-officio adviser.**

President Pat McCormick presided over the remainder of the meeting. She and Chris Seifert attended meetings with AgriLife Extension agents associated with the Hill Country Master Gardeners. She reported that the agents expressed appreciation for our organization and all looked forward to working with us in 2012. Pat's focus next year will be outreach education, and she said she is excited and looking forward to serving as president.

The meeting adjourned at 2 pm.

The next HCMG meeting will be held 1 p.m. on Jan 4 in the AgriLife Extension classroom at which time the class of 2012 will be introduced.

Respectfully submitted,

Jackie Connelly, Secretary

My dear fellow gardeners,

*Thank you for your hearty support these last two years.
You made serving you (almost) and (nearly always) fun!*

Thank you also for your generous gift certificate to the Plant Haus. Did you know I've been yearning for a Meyer lemon? I already have the pot—next spring I'll get the plant. Thank you!

Chris



Drought-scarred? Here's a Plan

By Barbara Elmore

Welcome to 2012, gardening friends. It's the time of year to erase the scars of 2011's

drought with hope for a better year. Since many of us like to do things by the calendar, maybe fellow gardeners will find some benefit from my month-by-month gardening plan for 2012.

January. Get a new Leaf Hog, or use the one Santa brought in December to replace the one with a blown-out motor. (New Year's resolution: scour the yard for debris before using Leaf Hog.)

February. Consider whether to use Leaf Hog indoors. Decide it's a bad idea when reading an online list that says "You might be a redneck gardener if you've ever cleaned your house with a leaf-blower." Wonder if just thinking about it counts.



March: Uncover outdoor faucets. Decide that wearing a coat over a sweatshirt and two T-shirts might make moving difficult.

Mid March: Re-cover outdoor faucets. Find the packet of wildflower seeds that you were looking for last October. Put them in a safe place.

April: In a recurring bout of amnesia, buy plants based on pictures in seed catalogs and on the front of seed packets.

Mid April: Uncover outdoor faucets. Pull weeds

May: Look toward the sky hopefully and read the newspaper for watering times to figure out if there

are daylight hours to water grass. Resolve (again) to replace grass with something that can be watered after 6 p.m. as the wind usually blows from daylight until 10 a.m. Realize that only gardeners think about these things and count on neighbor's sprinkler spray to water grass.

Mid-May: Pull same weeds that you pulled in April. Collect neighbor's leaves and stand on ladder to turn compost pile.



June: Buy new hoses. Do not believe descriptive four-letter words (KINK-FREE!) on the front of the package. Pull weeds.

July: In a recurring bout of amnesia, buy new hose-end sprinkler based on package description. Decide weeds look OK where they are, as they are green.

August: Push index finger through sprinkler control while trying to reset it to water 30 minutes one day a week. Nurture thriving weeds by doing nothing.

September: Replace sprinkler control and get installer to set it.

October: Hunt for wildflower seeds safely stored away last March.

November: Take class in setting sprinkler control.



December: Remember that the Christmas cactus should have gone into the closet in October. Buy blooming Christmas cactus. Think about what you want to do in the garden in January.

Happy New Year!



ALL THINGS EDIBLE - January 2012

by Pam Bresler

The rain barrel is full, the fall garden is maturing and there's enough moisture in the ground to plant a winter garden. Welcome to

2012 and a very Happy New Year to everyone!

The new year is an excellent time to start a Garden Journal. A simple spiral notebook will do, or you might splurge on a lovely ten-year daily journal. The beauty of this bound volume is having weather observations and planting records over a ten-year time span, all visible on one page. If you are a numbers nerd like I am, you enjoy recording these things, especially RAIN!

When I lived in snowy Michigan, as soon as the Christmas cards stopped arriving, the seed catalogs and nursery catalogs filled the mailbox. A Master Gardener friend taught a class called "Armchair Gardening 101," because she was passionate about using only reputable nurseries and seeds that were appropriate for our climate. No Southern Exposure seed catalogs for her! My friend realized that to be a successful gardener it was important to choose the right varieties.

I am amused by the ads for a "Full-Acre Crisis Garden" or a "Survival Seed Bank." The ads promise non-GMO, heirloom seeds. Well, if the heirloom they send you is a package of "Brandywine" tomato seeds, you will get two or three delicious tomatoes, but you will not feed your family. That "Brandywine" is fabulous in Pennsylvania, but not necessarily in Texas. A

tomato that is fabulous in Houston is not necessarily a tomato that does well in Kerrville. Both locations have heat, but insects and diseases are different. So the message is: stick to the varieties that are successful in the Hill Country and avoid the "newest and greatest" in those beautiful, slick national catalogs. This chart will help you choose vegetable varieties:

<http://tinyurl.com/7bm82ak> Local nurseries should have the seeds or transplants you need.

Probably the best heirloom seeds are those open-pollinated seeds that you save year-after-year from your own garden. By making selections of the biggest, earliest, or most disease-resistant produce, you will be selecting for those traits that perform well in your particular micro-climate. Over time you will develop your own particular strain and that may increase your yield. In the age of GMO seeds, I like knowing that my seed-saving is preserving genetic material that works in my garden. I still have hybrid varieties that I would not be without ("Big Bertha" bell peppers, "Juliet" tomatoes), but whenever an appropriate open-pollinated variety is available, I try to use it.

Seeds to plant in January: Peas (English, Snow, Snap), Cool Season Greens (lettuce, kale, mustard, spinach) and radishes.

Indoor seeding: tomato seeds for transplants in the spring. Tomato seeds need bottom heat for quick germination which prevents seeds from rotting. Use a heating pad turned on low and seeds are up in three days. Then the plants like to grow in a cool spot under lights.

Transplants to add in January: leeks, bulbing onions, asparagus crowns, artichoke crowns

Continued bottom of Page 10

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

Committees

Archivist: TBA

Demonstration Garden:
Barbara Elmore, Chair

Education:
Deborah Russell, Chair

Greenhouse: TBA

HCMG Office Manager:
Liz Althaus

Horticultural Inquiry: Anne Moss

Information: Betty West

Jr. Master Gardener Program:
Sandy Martin, Chair

Market Days:
TBA

Mentors: June Sher

Plant Propagation:
Dorothy & David Buchen, Chairs

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
& Vickie Killeen

Plant Communities continued:

Others have expanded Ianto's work, adding new species to this seven-part polyculture. A village self-development organization in Nepal, the Jajarkot Project, has created an enlarged polyculture using more than twenty varieties of vegetables and herbs that can be planted in most North American gardens. (Due to space constraints, I will not describe it in this article, but you can research it and Toby Hemenway's version on the web).

Designing a polyculture for specific temperate climates is still in its infancy. More research is needed to develop new combinations that work in the different regions of the country. You can participate in the research; try experimenting with polyculture in your own garden.

**Website
of the Month**

By Carol Brinkman



I have limited control over conditions outside in my landscape. However, I do have control over the climate indoors where I now have many plants. Some of these plants remain indoors year-round, but this year I have moved most of the potted plants that usually remain outside inside.

If you have indoor plants, you might want to visit the Gardeners Network website to read their article about caring for indoors plants. You will find the article at <http://www.gardenersnet.com/hplants/>.

*In memory of former HCMG Master Gardener, Dorothy Powell,
who passed away December 7th*

All Things Edible continued:

For mail order, I recommend Womack's in De Leon, Texas: <http://www.womacknursery.com/> Get your orders in ASAP, as popular varieties sell out quickly. Local nurseries also should have appropriate varieties, but beware unsuitable ones at Big Box Stores. You will not be successful with "Concord" grapes, but "Champanel" will give you a bountiful harvest, if you can thwart the Mockingbirds!

You don't need to feel guilty about what you spend on plants. Last January someone on an eBay auction paid more than \$575 for one "E.A. Bowles" snowdrop bulb.