

February 2018  
Volume 16, Issue 2

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**HCMG will meet on  
February 7, 2018**

**Location:  
AgriLife Building Classroom**

**Noon - Potluck Lunch  
Get 1 CEU for networking  
1:00 - Meeting  
2:00 - Program**

**"Introducing Cacti and  
other Succulents into your  
Landscape"  
Dr. Jimmy Black**



**TEXAS A&M  
AGRILIFE  
EXTENSION**

*The members of Texas A&M AgriLife will provide equal opportunities in programs and activities, education, and employment to all persons regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation or gender identity and will strive to achieve full and equal opportunity throughout Texas A&M AgriLife.*



*Jackie Skinner*

## President's Message

The unusual cold we have suffered in this early phase of winter has caused me to ponder how exactly our low temperatures damage our green darlings. According to the internet, water inside plant cells is released when ice forms between them. This shrinks or even collapses the cells. In extreme cases, the roots become unable to take up water and plants die from lack of moisture. Then, a quick thaw can swell the cells so suddenly, cell walls break. Evidence of such a phenomenon can be seen in the dieback on shrubs exposed to morning sun after a hard freeze.

Such goings-on sound altogether excruciating. I would not be even mildly interested in having my cell walls dance an accordion jig as they swell and shrink and break and dry out. As it is, my "winter indoor heater skin" would qualify me for the starring role in "The Mummy Returns."

So how do we show our plants a little bit of kindness when the weather is dreary? Covering them with old bed sheets and blankets works best. If precipitation is also in the forecast, put a layer of plastic OVER the sheets. (Never cover plants directly with plastic. How would you like to have someone put a plastic bag over your head to keep you warm?) The frost cloth available in local big box stores helps somewhat. The general rule there is you'll gain two degrees of warmth for every layer. (If your yard is the size of mine, you'd want enough to stretch to Fredericksburg and back to the extension office.) Another idea is to invert empty pots over individual plants. Whatever your chosen method, be sure to secure the coverings with heavy objects to keep them in place. Mother Nature gets a big kick out of blowing your coverings into a heap beside the plant, but she waits until you've gone into the house for a nice hot toddy. When you check on your yard the next morning you discover you saved the weeds while your prized specimens stare up at you in withered resentment.

With so many sub-freezing nights this winter, my guide to "Common Yukon Roadside Flowers" just might come in handy. Quoting a favorite author, Jack Aulis, "Hardy plants are those that can stay outside all winter without dying from the cold. Half-hardy plants can survive if the winter isn't as rotten as all winters are. Tender plants have better sense than to try. They either die in the first frost, move inside, or go to Florida."

# **HCMG 2018, Calendar of Events** prepared by Raeann Reid

*Attendance at events other than Master Gardener meetings is optional. We list events for those wishing to attend other educational offerings. We try to limit the listed events to those that would earn our members CEUs.*

*Please verify the event with the provider.*

**February 2, Gillespie County TAMU AgriLife Extension Service,** Registration 8:30 a.m., programs 9:00 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. AgriLife, assisted by HCMGs, will present "Plantastic Mini Vegetable Gardening Seminar." \$20 pre-register, \$25 at door. See the eMinder for more details. Contact Beth McMahon at Elizabeth.McMahon@ag.tamu.edu to register. Gillespie County Farm Bureau Building. Open to the public.

**February 6, NPSOT Boerne,** 6:30 p.m. social, followed by the meeting at 7:00 p.m. Charlie Flatten, Hill Country Alliance, will present "Water 101" to answer questions about how much water we use and on what, where we get our water, how we manage our limited water resources, and how we will provide water for our newly arriving population. Cibolo Nature Center Auditorium. Visitors welcome.

**February 7, HCMG,** 1:00 p.m. business meeting, 2:00 p.m. Dr. Jimmy Black, grower and propagator of succulents, will present "Introducing Cacti and Other Succulents into Your Landscape, Hill Country Youth Event Center. HCMGs, interns and trainees.

**February 13, NPSOT Kerrville,** 1:30 p.m. Ray Dunton - entomologist, will present "Bees and Pollinators." Riverside Nature Center. Visitors welcome.

**February 14, Rose Garden Club of Medina,** 2:00 p.m. Ric Boucard, cedar wood distiller and co-founder of Texarome, will present "Cedarwood Essential Oils." Medina Community Center. Visitors welcome.

**February 20, Hunt Garden Club.** 10:00 a.m. Kevin Pillow, owner of the Wild Birds Unlimited Kerrville franchise, will present "Bats, Birds and Boxes" to prepare for the influx of spring migrants. Hunt United Methodist Church. Visitors Welcome.



**February 20, Kerr County Cactus & Succulent Society,** 7:00 p.m. Program to be announced, Butt- Holdsworth Memorial Library. Always confirm date time and location. Visitors welcome.

**February 27, NPSOT Fredericksburg,** 6:30 p.m. social, followed by the meeting at 7:00 p.m. John Huecksteadt, Hill Country Master Naturalist and NPSOT member, will discuss forbs and how to identify them. Memorial Presbyterian Church. Visitors welcome.

**HCMG Training,** 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Hill Country Youth Event Center. Trainees. HCMGs and interns sign up on VMS to ensure enough seating.

**February 6:** Class orientation/Ed Committee, Ray Walston and Backyard Wildlife/Jessica Alderson, strategies to encourage beneficial and discourage unwanted wildlife.

**February 8:** Soils of the Hill Country/Travis Waiser; Composting, Soil Amendments/Chris Seifert, Patty Zohlen.

**February 13:** Plant Biology/Brenda Fest; Water Conservation/Anne Brown

**February 15:** Texas Super Stars/Duane Robinson; Herbs - Care and Culture Adaptive to Hill Country/Carol Semnara

**February 20:** Entomology 101/Molly Keck; Worm Farm field trip/Patty Zohlen

**February 22:** Weed Identification and Chemical Safety/Elizabeth McMahon; Fire-wise Landscaping/Carol Hagemeyer

**February 27:** Fruit Trees - Dr. Larry Stein; Trees - Selection, Maintenance and Disease Management/Erin Wieser



## **Addresses for Events Listed Above**

Butt-Holdsworth Memorial Library, 505 Water Street, Kerrville  
Cibolo Nature Center Auditorium, 140 City Park Road, Boerne  
Gillespie County Farm Bureau Bldg, 237 Equestrian Drive, FBG  
Hill Country Youth Event Center, 3785 Highway 27, Kerrville  
Hunt United Methodist Church, 120 Merritt Road, Hunt  
Medina Community Center, 13857 State Hwy 16N, Medina  
Memorial Presbyterian Church, 601 North Milam Street, FBG  
Riverside Nature Center, 150 Francisco Lemos Street, Kerrville

Pictures by  
Raeann Reid  
Left: Belinda's  
Dreamcicle  
Above: Pepper &  
Tomatocicles

## Meet the New Members of the 2018 Executive Committee

### **Patti Schlessiger, Secretary**

As a young girl growing up on a farm in south Texas, one could find me often playing in the vegetable garden, corn fields, orchards, cotton or grain fields. The most fun I remember is making mud pies. They weren't as good as my Mama's pies, but were so much fun to make! I guess you could say dirt was in my blood from an early age. Working at the AgriLife Office I became acquainted with the Master Gardeners as we assisted them in many ways. They all seemed so friendly and enjoyed what they were doing. I knew once I retired I wanted to be a part of this amazing group. I wondered what I would do to fill my days after I retired. Becoming a Master Gardener has helped with answering that question. I have made so many wonderful friends through being a Master Gardener. Helping the community solve their plant questions has filled my desire to solve things. Guess I should have been a private investigator! Playing in the dirt has renewed wonderful childhood memories. I can't imagine another group I would rather belong to than the Hill Country Master Gardeners.



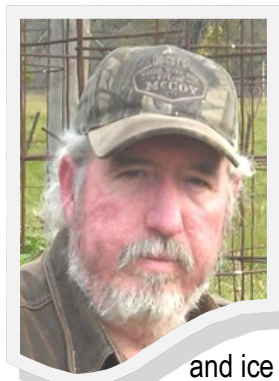
### **Bernadell Larson, Treasurer**



My husband, Stu Thompson, and I purchased land in the Hunt area Labor Day weekend in 1996 and were weekend campers until moving here full time in late 2004. Being an outdoor person, I thoroughly enjoyed working in my yard in Houston. Family and friends were concerned how I would adapt because almost none of what I grew in Houston would grow here. I was not deterred - I would just find something else. A Hunt neighbor told me about the master gardeners and I signed up right away. I became a Master Gardener in 2006. Enjoying the outdoors and wanting to take care of it, my husband and I built our house using LEED principles. LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) is a rating system devised by the US Green Building Council to evaluate the environmental performance of a building and encourage market transformation towards sustainable design. We were part of the LEED Residential pilot project and were awarded a LEED Silver in 2008. (The first LEED award in the Central Texas Hill Country.) One of the requirements was water conservation, which complemented native and adaptive landscaping. We were one of the first in the area to install a whole

house rainwater harvesting / catchment system and rely totally on rain for our water needs. This presents some challenges but we made it through the 2010-2011 drought and did not run out of water. I retired from ExxonMobil in 2004, where I had several positions. One of those was financial accounting for the department that ensured the refining department made enough product for ExxonMobil to market. Hopefully some of that training will come in handy in my new position of HCMG Treasurer.





## Hill Country Veggies

February 2018

By Allen Mace

Here we are again, struggling to survive, "The Texas Blizzard of 2018", (Texans don't do cold and ice very well). We all survived "The Texas Blizzard of 2017", last month as well.

When will winter be over? In just a few short weeks, all eyes will focus on the town of Punxsutawney Pennsylvania, awaiting the emergence of the local groundhog to see whether or not he's able to view his shadow. This year, I will be waiting to hear from Pistol Pete, the pistol packing prognosticating prairie dog of Saddle Mountain Oklahoma, who just happens to reside on the ranch of a friend of mine. Hopefully, between these two prophetic weather forecasting rodents, we will be able to see an end to this winter madness and set our sights once again on spring time and vegetable gardening. I still have two varieties of kale and some



**Swiss Chard**

frost bitten Swiss chard in the garden. The chard pulled through the cold and ice last month, but this latest northern blast has done it in. The chard is not looking good. The kale on the other hand seem to have handled both the cold and the ice. Kale is a biannual, meaning that it goes through two growing seasons. The first season it puts out its leaves and the second season it produces a seed stalk. I plan on leaving a few of the kale plants in the garden and see what happens. A few years ago, I did the same with a

few collard plants. I collected those seeds and have used them the past few years.

I will be cleaning up the few raised beds that I have, in order to prepare them for planting onions. Onion sets are now available from your local nurseries. I have mine sitting in some moist soil in a plastic container for now. I purchased them before this latest cold front and wanted to wait until the temperature was a bit warmer before I put them out. I found the web site for Dixondale Farms out of Carrizo Springs, Texas. This farm has been in the business of growing and providing onion sets to growers for over 100

years. The web site has lots of good information about growing onions. I'm starting to get seed catalogs in the mail. Even though we are a few months away from planting our spring garden, it's never too early to start preparing the beds and planning what we want to grow this year. During the winter months, I like to look back at what worked and what did not work the year before.

I'm always trying to do things better. In order to do that I have to look back at what I did or did not do, the year before. Growing vegetables in the Hill Country of Texas is always a dynamic process. No two years are ever the same. Each year we should be able to draw insight from previous years and hopefully not make the same mistakes twice. Through experience we gain knowledge. By expanding that knowledge base, we should have a productive and enjoyable growing season.



**Purple Kale**



**Green Kale**



## Tournament of Roses 2018

by Sue Hall

On New Years Eve, my husband and I along with two OU friends took our first UBER ride to the J. Paul Getty Museum. We could have spent 3 days there but having just one afternoon, I knew I wanted to fit in the gardens since I had read/seen pictures of them. Especially striking was the famous azalea maze located at the bottom of the Central Garden. Quoting from the information brochure, "Central Garden is the creation of artist Robert Irwin, who has called it 'a sculpture in the form of a garden aspiring to be art.' At the bottom of Central Garden, water cascades over a stepped stone wall into a reflecting pool with a maze of 400 azalea plants." As you can see in the picture I took, some of the plants were blooming. Los Angeles featured the maze on their Rose Parade float which won the "Best Use of Roses" award. The announcers referred to the maze as the floating azalea maze constructed out of 6,000 hot pink roses.



New Year's morning we had to be in our hotel lobby by 4:30 to pick up our box breakfast after which we boarded our bus at 5. (It helped that our bodies were still on Central Time). Our grandstand seats were located at the very beginning of the parade which started promptly at 8 AM. This year's theme was Making a Difference.

Being a MG vegetable gardening specialist, I was especially interested in the floats that featured veggies and they did not disappoint. At least 3 had vegetable gardens: the "Salute to Farmers" float, the Rotary "Planting the Seeds of Service" and Kaiser's "Inspiring Healthy Communities". Although it did not win an award, you can tell the Kaiser float emphasized community gardening as a way of "making a difference." The float had 46 moving parts with sunflowers waving, Monarchs flying and bees buzzing. The Monarchs were covered with orange marigolds and black onion seeds, the caterpillar with green and

**Continued on page 6**





## Tournament of Roses 2018 continued

yellow mums, and the carrots with orange lentils. Other plant materials on the float were fresh manzanita leaves, shades of statice, palm fronds, ilex berries, red carnations, strawflower petals, parsley flakes and gorgeous orange Santana roses. The base was covered in 12,000 green roses plus thousands of real fruits and vegetables were “growing” in the beds. Really whimsical and magnificent.

Another float that caught my eye was the Donate Life creation that featured “The Gift of Time.” Set in a tropical jungle in Mexico, it featured an Aztec calendar that was modified to display pictures of organ donors. This amazing piece was created with ground walnut shells, plus cinnamon, sesame, glove and caraway seeds. The magnificent macaws were covered in tea leaves that were then covered in a bright array of flower petals. Organ donors and recipients walked along this float which won the award for best depiction of Theme.



After seeing animation, gorgeous flowers, especially roses, and so many breathtaking floats, the last one was the perfect way to end the parade. Elegant is the best word to describe it. Evidently the Mission Inn is to California what the Alamo is to Texas. The City of Riverside sponsored this float and it won the Golden State award for best depiction of life in CA. The building façade is covered in rolled oats colored with ground cinnamon. Accents are covered in sesame seeds, cream colored corn husks and coffee beans and the roof in oak aged bark. To create the stately bougainvillea that grow on the side of the mission, the creators used orchids and alstroemeria.



## Take-all Root Rot can Really Take All

By Beth McMahon, Gillespie County AgriLife Extension, CEA Horticulture

I don't know about ya'll in Kerr County, but in Gillespie County we have been getting a lot of calls about lawns dying. More often than not, it's due to take-all root rot. Take-all root rot hurts St. Augustine grass the most, though it can affect Bermuda grass and zoysiagrass too. Symptoms include patchy die off, yellowish coloration, iron deficiency and short roots that allow the grass to be easily pulled up. These symptoms can appear spring through fall or as dead patches in a lawn that never greened up after winter. Unfortunately, these symptoms look like other lawn problems, including chinch bugs, grub worms, gray leaf spot, too much shade or a real iron deficiency. What differentiates take-all root rot is the presence of black fungal hyphal strands and puzzle piece shaped dots called hyphopodia on the runners of the grass. Unfortunately, it takes a dissecting microscope or a really good magnifying glass to see these. Eliminating the presence of other diseases and insects can help indicate take-all root rot, though the grass may have this disease and other disease problems at the same time.

When talking with my fellow horticulture extension agents, one of the odd things that they have noticed is that take-all root rot seems to start underneath trees. Now we don't have any research to support that, so don't spread that information as fact. But logically it makes sense. Stressed turf grass is more susceptible to take-all root rot. Turf under shade is more likely to be stressed due to a lack of light, and in competing with the tree for nutrients and water. Whether it's under shade or not, decreasing the stress on your turf can help prevent the disease. Don't "scalp", aka cut your grass too short. Choose a slow release fertilizer and avoid overwatering your lawn. I dislike diagnosing take-all root rot, because it's a difficult disease to treat. The best method is to apply peat moss and even this recommendation isn't foolproof. Apply one 3.8 cubic foot bale of peat moss per 1000 square feet, which is about a 1/3 inch thick layer. Applying this much peat moss isn't going to acidify your lawn, but it will around the runners. The peat moss works because the disease doesn't like acidic conditions. Application is recommended in either fall or spring, but if you see symptoms now, you can go ahead and apply.



One of the chief complaints with the peat moss, and I can attest to this myself, is that it is difficult to apply. Fortunately, one of my fellow horticulture extension agents, Skip Richter, has tips on making that application easier. He recommends breaking it apart into a wheel barrow first, then dumping small piles within a 1000 square foot radius on your lawn. Use the back of a rake to gently smooth it. It must be moist to work, so apply half an inch of water to activate it. If the turf is already dead, it's not going to work and you are either going to need to replace the turf or wait for it to grow back in.

Several fungicides are labeled for take all root rot. These include myclobutanil and propiconazole. These aren't as effective as the professional lawn products, which include azoxystrobin (Heritage) or triadimefon (Bayleton). These may be difficult and expensive for the ordinary household to obtain.

Take-all root rot can take out your entire lawn if you aren't careful. If it's too late to treat, or if the treatments fail to work, you aren't doomed to a trashy landscape, only a different one. Plant a different grass species in your lawn and/or landscape it instead of having turf. It won't be the gentle softness of St. Augustine grass underneath your bare feet, but a different type of landscape may potentially save water and attract more pollinators and wildlife.

## Horticulture for February from the 1857 Texas Almanac,

A 1986 Facsimile Reproduction by Glen's Sporting Goods, Inc., Irving, TX

In January, 1857, the crude press of the Galveston News brought forth the first edition of the Texas Almanac. For many families in Texas or those heading for the new, rich lands of the Southwest, The Texas Almanac and Holy Bible represented their entire library. In the decades since, the 1857 Texas Almanac and the subsequent volumes, published by Richardson and his successors have been invaluable references, contemporary histories that cannot be duplicated anywhere else.

**Editor's note:**  
**I hope you enjoy this advice for Galveston Gardeners from 1857.**

Continue to prepare ground for planning. Set out cabbage plants from the seed beds, also Lettuce, Celery, and young Onions. Divide your Eschalots to increase your stock, and replant them; plant the Butter Onion, sow a succession crop of Red Turnip Radish, Long Scarlet or Salmon Radish, Black Spanish Radish, and Red or Yellow top Dutch Turnip, Blood Turnip Beet, Sugar Beet, Cabbage Lettuce, Drum-Head Cabbage, for a late crop. Sow Red Pepper, Tomatoes, Egg-Plants, Parsley, Endive, Log Scarlet Carrot, and Early Frame, Washington or Dwarf Marrowfat Peas.

English Peas, planted last month, and which are tolerably formed, should be kept clear of weeds, and hilled up on both sides. When they are about four or five inches high, they will begin to acquire support; they should therefore be struck \* with brush on both sides,

as they are more convenient to gather from and yield much better when permitted to lie prostrate on the ground. A few beans may now be planted in a scattered situation; the Early Six Week, or Early Dun Bean is preferable at this early season. Plant a few

Bush Squash, Cucumbers, Cantaloupes, or Musk Melons; also Water Mellon for early crops.

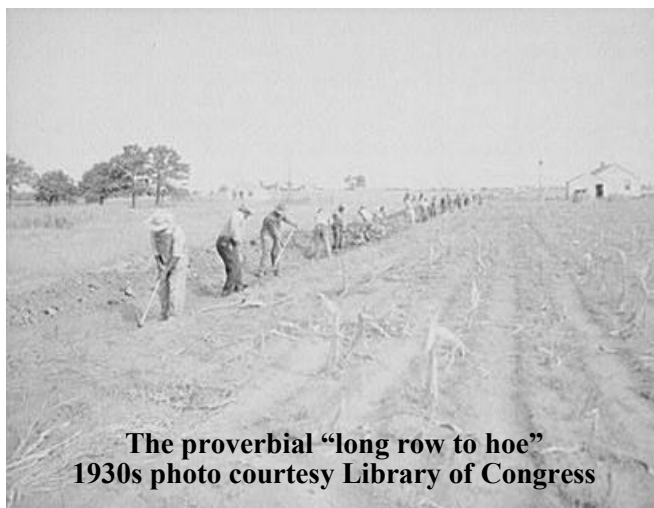
There should now be no time delayed in setting out shrubby and fruit trees. Trees that have not been pruned, should be attended to forthwith; this is also

the best time to set out cuttings and slips of all kinds.

Irish Potatoes may still be planted, and Sweet Potatoes bedded for slips. Plant Corn for early roasting ears. Use the hoe freely amongst all young plants. Whether there are weeds or not, it is best to keep the earth stirred) lightly about the roots of all young plants.

Grafting trees after the method called Split Grafting, can now be commenced. Trees intended to be grafted, should be trained up to the height at which it is intended to insert the scion.

**\*Editor's note:**  
**I am not familiar with the word struck and couldn't find it in the dictionary.**





## Bug Boxes

A great way to make beneficial insects feel welcome in your garden

By Pat Wolters

Nature does a lot to help our fruits and vegetables along, not least by providing a legion of beneficial insects to pollinate our crops and prey on pests. If you don't want to spray a crop to within an inch of its life whenever the tiniest pests show up, killing both pests and beneficial insects, try striking a balance in the garden, nurturing the beneficial creatures so that they in turn take care of the undesirables. Making a bug box is a great way of achieving this balance.

A bug box offers free accommodation to its occupants. They'll be right on site to go about their pollination and pest predation - a beautifully symbiotic relationship. The good news is it costs nothing to make a Bug Box, just a little time and effort. Invertebrates aren't fussy as long as they



have somewhere to bed down and lay their eggs, so you can go as elaborate or simple as you want. Use salvaged or recycled material to build the walls and roof of your box. Old shelving planks, bottles, pallets, and pipes

can all be re-purposed. The simplest structure is a wooden box open at one end and stuffed with the material that your insect will bed down in. Make sure your box is watertight so its residents don't get a drenching after every rain. Tiles or corrugated roofing are some of the options for weather proofing. You can make lots of small boxes or one major high-rise. These pictures give a few ideas. Decorating the rooms of your bug box is the creative part. Attract different types of insects by diversifying the material used.

**Drilled wood:** solitary bees and wasps are attracted to holes drilled into wood as they are the perfect place to lay their eggs. Drill holes in different sizes, between 0.2 to 0.4 inches in diameter, in order to offer space for different species.

**Rotting logs:** perfect for wood-boring beetles

whose larvae will feast on the decaying wood. Place at the base of your box so the logs stay nice and damp and mix with other decaying plant material to attract centipedes (which devour slugs). This is also a great spot for spiders.

**Twigs, sticks and stems:**

bundled together, sticks and twigs of different sizes offer welcome lodging for ground beetles. These beetles chomp away at many of the pests that hinder our crops, including aphids and carrot root fly larvae. You'll also be offering a spot for ladybugs, which eat up aphids and nuisance insects such as mites. Hoverflies will also be attracted to this material. Hoverflies are both pollinator and pest patroller. The larvae carry an insatiable appetite for aphids while the adults feed on nectar as they pollinate flowers.

**Bamboo canes:** hollow stems such as bamboo canes provide another hidey hole for solitary bees. Bees like a sunny location.

**Straw, dried grass or rolled up cardboard:** just the material for a cozy lacewing hangout. While lacewings may be beautifully intricate to look at they are truly the gardener's best friend, devouring aphids and other pests such as scale insects, many types of caterpillar, and mites. Place your straw or cardboard inside an old open-ended plastic bottle to prevent it turning soggy. Set your bug box in a sheltered area of the garden away from prevailing wind. Most insects prefer slightly damp conditions.



Information for this article was obtained from  
*Pests, Beneficial Insects and Plant Diseases*

Benedict Vanheems



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**Green Stormwater  
Infrastructure Seminar**

**January 31, 2018**

**11:45—2:00 pm**

UGRA, the City of Kerrville, Texas AgriLife Extension Service, and the Hill County Master Gardeners are hosting a free seminar.

Seminar will discuss strategies to control stormwater like rain gardens, permeable paving, infiltration basins, terracing and rainwater harvesting. We encourage both professionals and home owners to attend.

Free of charge and includes lunch!

Eligible for 2 CEUs for Master Gardeners, Engineers, Landscape Architects, and Floodplain Managers.

Seating is limited, so pre-registration is required.

For more information and to register, view the following link:

<http://www.ugra.org/pdfs/StormwaterFlyer.pdf>

or call UGRA at (830) 896-5445.



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