

March 2021

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**HCMG
March 3, 2021
Zoom Meeting**

**1 p.m. Meeting
2 p.m. CEU**

**Landscaping with Cactus and
Succulent Plants and How to
Grow Them Successfully**

Alice Liles



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President's Message

Anne Brown

Hi Everyone,

Here I am trying to write this column when the sun is out and it is 32 degrees outside, with no TV or internet. This doesn't bother me too much as I have just spent 4 days out on the ranch with no electricity or water. Now

I am visiting Jackie C (she is very generous to take in us refugees). We were delivered yesterday by my great neighbors just before everything closed down. There are lots of stories I could tell about my 4 days in the house on the ranch, but I'm not going to bore you. Suffice it to say that it sure is nice to have heat that doesn't come out of a fireplace where you have to go outside to get the wood.

So what's going with the Master Gardeners. We got all of the end of year documents to Texas Master Gardeners (pretty boring huh). The fun that is going on now is in the greenhouses. Fernando and I have been spending our Mondays driving to nurseries to pick up our baby plants. Then we announce a pot party and we moved all these 4" plants into gallon pots. We have had a lot of help with the potting process and thanks very much for that. The plants are all in the greenhouses now being carefully watered by our waterers (sign up on VMS is you want to help with that). If you haven't been trained on our watering procedures, let Fernando know and he will arrange for one of us to train you). And yes, we are very particular about how our plants are watered. We have a reputation of producing beautiful, disease and insect free plants, and we don't want to let our customers down. Fernando has been spending these last days carefully checking the temps in the houses to make sure everything is ok for the plants. Thanks Fernando.

Speaking of customers, Janell and her committee have been working on a plan to actually have the plant sale of old, with a few changes. There will be no garden shed (Nobody volunteered to run it), no vendors and fewer MG workers at the sale, and no educational programs. Just lots of customers and lots of beautiful plants waiting for their forever homes. Angela has approved the plan based on what is happening Covid wise now so we are very optimistic.

The demo garden is pretty covered up now. Volunteers have been busy trying to save the plants. We will probably need lots of help in the recovery of the garden. Stay tuned how you can help. There's not much news right now because of Covid and weather. I hope everyone stayed safe during the cold temperatures, and I look forward to our March 3 Meeting.

THANK YOU SANDY and CA MARTIN they delivered 250 gallons of water to water the greenhouses. We lost water due to several broken pipes.

Here We Grow Again!

By Vickie Killeen, MG



By afternoon, our 120 potted geraniums are settled and ready to be pampered by greenhouse volunteers.



Fernando Gonzales, Lola Auger, Allan Perry and Janice Walker are able to enjoy being outdoors and maintain safe social distancing while accumulating volunteer hours. Meanwhile, Anne Brown set up her potting station inside the greenhouse.

January 18 marked the start of our Blooms & Barrels growing season. Greenhouse Committee chairman Fernando Gonzales and HCMG President Anne Brown drove to San Antonio to buy popular Fantasia geraniums. Volunteers have signed up to care for them, and these first arrivals will soon be joined by a variety of perennials and annuals that flourish in our Hill Country conditions.



While Fernando and Anne bought plants in the early morning hours, Vickie Killeen helped Janice Walker mix fertilizer into soil and fill pots.

Photo Credit:
Janice Walker
Anne Brown
Vickie Killeen



Potter volunteers Lola Auger and Allan Perry transplant geraniums into larger, permanent pots that they can grow into until our April sale. Blooms and buds are snipped off to encourage root growth. Janice Walker moves the finished plants into our heated greenhouse.

Hill Country Veggies

By Allen Mace



Well, this week has been fun. I hope all are doing well. We survived the rolling blackouts but I did have a few waterline breaks. Only two so far. My garden, on the other hand, not so good.

Last fall I planted Swiss chard and garlic. They both handled cool weather fairly well until last week. You can expect temperatures to drop into the low 30's and sometimes into the 20's during the winter in this area. I had 2 or 3 days where the temperature never got above 20. It got as low as 5 degrees one night. We also had around 5 or 6 inches of snow. The snow piled up on my plants and froze everything, or so I thought. The Swiss chard is toast. I will be surprised if any of them come back. If the roots survived, they may start to grow again. The garlic looks pathetic. I have no idea if they will come back or not. The spearmint and the sorrel both have died. I even noticed around the barn, a good thing, that thistles have died. Oh well, time will tell.



Garlic



Swiss Chard

There is a bright spot though. Last month I wrote about a new plant that I had found, Corn Salad. These were buried under the snow all week just as the Swiss chard and the garlic.

When the snow melted, both plants were nice and green. Both looked great and the leaves were crisp. I am hopeful they will continue to grow. I may have found my new favorite winter green. Another bright spot, the tomato plants I had just gotten before the cold snap seem to be doing fine. Of course, they spent the last week and a half sitting on the counter by the back door. They are now outside enjoying the warmth of today's sun. It is time to get back to repairing busted waterlines.



Corn Salad



Tomatoes

Devil's Claw

By Sandy Martin, MG

We have Devil's Claws on our property. I started noticing the young pink flowers in our goat and donkey yard. The animals probably ate them and spread the seeds. The other common names are devil's horn, ram's horn, or unicorn Plant.

The plant produces long, hooked seed pods. Proboscidea is a genus of flowering plant in the family Martyniaceae. The pods resemble a long nose. It has many hairy leaves much like a pumpkin. There are two varieties. One is an annual with triangular leaves and white to pink blooms. The yellow flowering type is a perennial with much of the same characteristics. Both have a feral quality of sticking to pants legs or animal fur transporting the seeds to new locations.

They are very easy to grow, almost like a weed. Just gather the seeds from inside the pod, soak them over night and plant in a sunny spot. Native to the southern United States, it is called a fruit. Native people used them in weaving baskets and as a food item. Young pods resemble okra and are like a vegetable in stir fries, stews, and as a cucumber substitute for pickles.

They were introduced in Europe in the early 1900s where the dried roots have been used to restore appetite, relieve heartburn, and reduce pain and inflammation. It is used widely in Germany and France to fight inflammation and relieve arthritis pain, headaches, and lower back pain.

We had one plant grow from soil that we brought in to fill our front yard. It got so big that it grew across the sidewalk. I cut off the pods and got close to one hundred. I made several art projects but my favorite is a wreath I hang on our gate.



PLANTASTIC VEGETABLE GARDENING SEMINAR

MARCH 5TH, 2021



MARCH 5TH, 2021
8:30 AM - 3:30 PM

NEW EXTENSION OFFICE, 38 BUSINESS COURT, FREDERICKSBURG, TX

Program topics include improving garden soil, vegetable garden pests and pollinators, basic food preservation, gardening 101, square foot gardening and more!

Cost is \$40 program w/meal pre-registered, \$30 program only pre-registered, \$40 at the door, no meal. Call 830-997-3452 for more information and for the registration form please see our website at <https://gillespie.agrilife.org/agriculture-2/horticulture/upcoming-programs/> Face masks required.



EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS OF THE TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION SERVICE ARE OPEN TO ALL PEOPLE WITHOUT REGARD TO RACE, COLOR, RELIGION, SEX, NATIONAL ORIGIN, AGE, DISABILITY, SEXUAL ORIENTATION, GENETIC INFORMATION OR VETERAN STATUS. THE TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY SYSTEM, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND THE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURTS OF TEXAS COOPERATING. INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES WHO REQUIRE AUXILIARY AID, SERVICE OR ACCOMMODATION TO PARTICIPATION IN ANY EXTENSION ACTIVITIES ARE ENCOURAGED TO CONTACT THE GILLESPIE COUNTY EXTENSION OFFICE FOR ASSISTANCE 14 DAYS PRIOR TO THE ACTIVITY.

Grow It Cook It 2021

Come learn how to both grow and cook the theme vegetable/fruit. Cost is \$15 per program, or \$25 for the series. Programs are from 12-1 pm at the extension Office, 38 Business Court, Fredericksburg. Call 830 997 3452 or email Elizabeth.mcmahon@agnet.tamu.edu for more information.



BLISSFUL BLACKBERRIES
4/16/2021



BETTER BELL PEPPERS
8/20/2021



BEAMING BEETS
10/1/2021

GROW IT COOK IT 2021

HCMGs love to celebrate our successes!

Tav Heistead, Class of 2020, was honored last week by some of the team at The Coming King Sculpture Prayer Gardens. Giving him his Texas Master Gardener certificate and badge was project coordinator Chris Seifert. Tav actually achieved certification status last October, but during the pandemic restrictions we couldn't get together and show him our appreciation.

Photo: Janell Dahms



After all the Oohh's & Aahh's of a record-setting winter storm, it all came down to this...buckets of snow harvested for flushing. Photo Credit: Vickie Killeen



Esperanza limbs form ice sculptures.
Photo Credit: Vickie Killeen



Rodeo Tomato for 2021

Ruby Crush

Larry A. Stein and David Rodriguez
Texas A & M AgriLife Extension Service

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service led by horticulturists David Rodriguez and Larry Stein Ph.D. and assisted by the Bexar Master Gardeners and Dr Jerry Parsons have again named a rodeo tomato. This year's winner is **Ruby Crush**, a determinate grape tomato. Now before you hang your head in disgust over a grape tomato being given this honor, let us familiarize you with this plant and its qualities.

This year the selection is the **Ruby Crush**. Ruby Crush is a widely adapted, mid-early maturing grape tomato, on mid-compact, determinate plants with good vigor and foliage cover. Setting and size is very good through the plant with final yield potential being quite high. Limited to no pruning is appropriate for this variety, with caging being ideal. **Ruby Crush** has deep red fruit that are very smooth, uniform and firm with a good flavor profile for a determinate grape tomato.

Ruby Crush has performed exceptionally well in field trials with less-than-ideal growing conditions. It produces a strong plant and if caged with adequate fertility will come out the top of a 4-foot cage. For several years it has been the best variety in the field even though it is a grape tomato. In addition, the variety will perform splendidly in a container. The fruit matures early, often 60 days from transplanting. Fruit weight ranges from 12 to 17 grams or about half an ounce.

The variety has a good disease package in that it has high resistance to fusarium wilt 1 & 2, fusarium crown rot and tomato mosaic virus. It is intermediate in resistance to gray leaf spot. Seed is readily available from several online sources and transplants from local nurseries.

For ongoing educational opportunities, visit the
Bexar County AgriLife Extension Service website:

bexar-tx.tamu.edu

TEXAS A&M
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EXTENSION



Getting a Head Start on Growing Your Own Tomatoes

David Rodriguez and Larry Stein
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service - Horticulture

Have you ever wondered how some gardeners always harvest the first tomatoes of the season? In most cases these “early bird” winners are “potting-up” their plants in one-gallon containers prior to setting them out in the garden for spring, when the soil and air temperatures have warmed up enough to support tomato plant growth and fruit setting (early March through the first week of April).

To “**pot up**” your **transplants**, fill your gallon black plastic nursery containers with a pre-moistened peat based potting mix. Enrich the potting mix with copious amounts of a slow-release fertilizer made especially for containers, such as an 18-6-12 Osmocote Plus analysis. If an organic fertilizer formulation is preferred, consider a 4-2-3 or similar analysis. The **key plant nutrient will be nitrogen**. If adequate plant fertility is not maintained, the tomato bush will be small, yellow in color and produce much less fruit.

Upgrade the transplants in the container. They can be planted deeply; tomatoes are one of the few plants that can tolerate deep planting. Adventitious roots will form along the whole stem. This is especially important if your transplants are leggy or top heavy. Start with healthy, dark green, well established transplants. They should **acclimatize to the wind and sun**.

The goal of the “potting-up” activity is to maintain the fast growth rate established at the nursery. Place the potted-up tomato in a full sun location out of the wind. The wind can injure foliage and reduce overall plant growth, so a small plant stake might be needed anchored to the main stem. A greenhouse is ideal, but many locations on the patio or the south side of the house also work well.

It is important to **keep the tomatoes adequately watered, BUT NOT OVER-WATERED**. That is why we start out with a Premium peat based potting mix. Watering frequency will depend on the water-holding capacity of the potting mix used and the plant size. Check the mix moisture by digging around in the pot—if you feel moisture—DO NOT WATER. Too much watering of young plants can cause roots to rot and you will have to get replacement plants. Also, you should apply a diluted water-soluble fertilizer, such as 20-20-20 or Hasta-Gro, at least once a week when watering. The high-quality potting mixes are very well drained so they usually will not become soggy. Reduce watering when the weather is overcast and/or cool. If the plant is subjected to more than a few hours of sub 40° F temperature it will stop growing. You will recognize this when the plant stops growing, and you see purplish coloring on the leaves. This condition often happens if you plant the tomatoes directly into the garden in early March and are not **covered with a plant cover like N-Sulate until mid to late April**.

To maintain the tomato transplant in a growing state, move it to **shelter** when temperatures below 40 degrees F. are forecasted, and winds are over 15 miles per hour. That may mean, moving the containers into the house on cold, windy evenings.

If you do everything as described above, your “potted up” plants will become quite large and may even begin blooming by **late March or early April**. The plants can then be **transplanted to the vegetable garden** or a much larger 20-inch diameter container. DO NOT let plants set fruit before moving to a permanent location. If fruit are allowed on transplants, the plants will be stunted when establishing them in the garden location. So, remove these early fruits for ample plant establishment!

Continued on page 9



While others worry about a major winter storm, MGs are taking pictures of their plants

Clockwise from above: Vickie Killeen says, “I’ve never considered window boxes *inside* before today!”, “Frozen in Time: Nandina berries and English Ivy look well-preserved in ice. Pam Umstead says, “A new variety of Ice Plant” and “Frozen Four-Nerve Daisies.”



Tomatoes *continued from page 8*

DO NOT apply organic **mulch around tomato plants** until **early May**, when soil temperatures have warmed. Then mulch two inches with an organic double shredded hardwood mulch that has some finished compost. If the plant is grown in a container, be sure to water and continue feeding every week with a water-soluble fertilizer as recommended on the label.

A tomato plant will **produce a higher quality fruit if caged**. Cages should be at least 4-5 feet tall with a 16-20-inch diameter. Anchoring the cages will minimize the wind from turning over the cages. Drip irrigation is the best method to water. In six-to-eight weeks, you should be potentially harvesting up to 20 plus pounds of tomatoes and you will be the talk of your neighborhood!

AGENDA**HCMG Monthly meeting
February 3, 2021****Call to Order**

Verification of Quorum – Donna Nutt- Verified

Executive Committee Reports

Approve Meeting Minutes as listed in Of Leaf and Limb-Approved

Treasurer's Report – Jackie Connelly–Details available on VMS

Annual Audit –Jackie Connelly –Jackie reported that the audit was completed and the Charter Agreement Forms have been filed timely.

Committee Reports

B&B report – Janell Dahms – Janell explained that the B&B sale will be a one day sale this year, with expanded hours; 8:AM-4:PM. There will be no pollinator station, no vendors, no hospitality and no educational booths due to Covid restrictions. Janell said the final go no-go decision will be made at the end of February. VMS is open for volunteer registration for April 8, Spa Day, April 9, Moving Day, and/or April 10 the official sale day. The sale barn will be limited to 75 individuals at a time. HCMG is buying 25 N95 or KN95 masks to distribute to volunteers. All volunteers will need to wear these masks or provide their own N95 or KN95 masks. Jackie Connelly suggested the possibility of using Plexiglas at the cash register. Due to shortage of Plexiglas and higher prices, the alternative could be clear face shields, available at Hobby Lobby for about \$5.00 a piece. Tickets will be handled like we handle raffle tickets, customer keeps half of the ticket and HCMG keeps the other half with the customer's name and phone number. Anne Brown said there is a list of plants posted on the HCMG website which will be updated as more plants are acquired. She also said there will be maps printed showing the aisle number and table number of each of the listed plants. In the event Covid cases increase and we have to cancel the sale, we will run a member only sale as was done last year. Jackie Connelly mentioned the need for wagons and said loans of wagons would be much appreciated. Volunteers may act as personal shopper for friends and family but must have payment ready.

Greenhouse – Fernando Gonzalez-

Fernando announced that there are currently 845 plants in the greenhouse, with 133 geraniums. Fernando said the inventory is a bit low on perennials as wholesalers are slow releasing them but he expects that to improve. announced that the watering schedule is up on VMS, running all the way through the sale date. In March the watering schedule will expand to watering every other day. He said there are watering info sheets in the greenhouses and a log sheet. He said it's important to login every time and if there are any issues with the plants he needs to be notified. The log sheet also is the only way Fernando knows the watering has been done. His phone number is on the log sheet. Anne Brown reminded members that anyone signed up to water, must show up or must notify Fernando, as the watering is critical. Fernando said he's hoping to buy more plants on Monday Feb 8.

Research Desk – Mark Schultz–Mark announced that the inquiry web site is up and running. The address is www.hcmgrd.com. The website will only recognize registrations from email addresses listed in VMS. Mark said after registering with your VMS email, navigate to the tab marked inquiries. The inquiry form is uploaded here for you to open an inquiry with name and contact number of inquirer. Fill out the form as you would the paper form, but be very careful tagging on to research already entered on an inquiry. Make sure you scroll past any text already entered before entering your findings. Jackie Connelly pointed out this counts as volunteer time. Patty Zohlen asked if the inquiry response is sent back to client. Mark said the member handling the inquiry must manually contact the inquirer. Mark said the process is the same as before; fill out the form, type in the response and contact the inquirer. Any questions should be forwarded to Mark at jmschultz9@gmail.com, rather than calling.

Member Handbook - Patty Zohlen –Patty announced that member handbooks have been emailed to everyone. Anyone not in receipt of a handbook should email Patty and she said she would resend.

Continued on page 11

Unfinished Business

Program Chair-Anne Brown—Anne thanked Dave Kinneberg for volunteering to be the 2021 Program Chairperson and thanked Edna for all her hard work. Dave also thanked Edna for her assistance and mentioned member suggestions of good speakers or interesting topics will be gratefully accepted.

Update on the latest Agrilife Covid 19 rules—Anne Brown explained that the office is closed to in-person meetings with more than 10 attendees. Outside work in the garden is allowed. She said we are not allowed to give presentations to the public or staff education booths at public events either.

Announcements

March CEU – March CEU will be Alice Liles from West Texas who will speak on cacti and succulents.

Adjournment

Next meeting

March 3, 2021.

Location/format to be announced

Donna Nutt
Secretary



Many Master Gardeners help at the Pot Party

Clockwise from above: Anne Brown, Patty Zohlen & Rachel Garrison, Dee Dunton, & Jackie Connelly



Photo Credit: Patti Schlessiger





Snow Day at Vickie Killeen's House

Clockwise from above:
My terraced back yard
Rain barrel full of frozen rain water
A shivering prickly pear cactus
Looking towards downtown from my back porch



**Hill Country Master
Gardeners 2020**

**Executive
Committee**

Anne Brown
President

Patti Schlessiger
Vice President

Secretary
Donna Nutt

Jackie Connelly
Treasurer

Rachel Garrison
Ex-officio Advisor

C.E.A. Advisor
Angela Fiedler

**Committees &
Project
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listed on our
website**

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“Italian Cypress turned into Weeping Cypress –sure hope they recover,”
Pam Umstead



*For never-resting time leads summer on
To hideous winter and confounds him there;
Sap cheque'd with frost and lusty leaves quite gone,
Beauty o'ersnow'd and bareness everywhere*

Shakespeare Sonnet 5



“This Yaupon was the last tree standing in my front yard after 2020’s spring storms took out three Mountain Laurels. Beneath the Yaupon’s ice-covered branches is a crushed bed of Mexican Bush Sage.” Vickie Killeen