

**April 2021**

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**HCMG**

**April 7, 2021**

**Zoom and In-person  
Meeting HCYEC**

**1:00 p.m. Meeting**

**2:00 p.m. CE**

**Vegetable Gardening in  
the Texas Hill Country**

**Connie Townsend, MG**



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**President’s Message**

*Anne Brown*

Just when I was thinking 2021 was going to be as bad as 2020, this past week or so has proven me wrong. I have salvias, Russian sage, Zexmenia, Jerusalem sage, fall obedient plants, and fall asters all peaking out from the ground telling me that there is hope for this year. Others still look dead from the big freeze,

but I still have hope that more will survive. While I was in our refugee camp (Jackie C., Poncho and Lupe opened their house to us), I had moved the peach trees that I am growing for the B&B inside my house to hopefully protect them. I can say that the inside of my house did not freeze, as the peach trees got lots of chill hours and some of them had blooms on them! They are definitely ready to be sold and put in the ground. Sadly, all my African violets, including the mama at age 45, did not fare so well. I lost one that was close to a window, but all the others are fighting to stay alive. They have one little clump each among dead leaves, but at least they are trying. I don’t know if I will be able to provide the propagation committee with leaves next year for their class, but they are trying. I hope everyone is seeing our wonderful native and adaptive plants coming back from their trauma of 3.4 degrees.

On the ranch we were without power for 9 days. After spending 4 days with only a fireplace to provide heat, my neighbor slid on the ice coming in my driveway and announced he would be back to take us into town (I had no car or truck as both were in the garage which doesn’t open without electricity). We had several offers to stay in town, but chose to take Jackie C. up on hers because we thought my dog would be able to get along with her dogs. We were able to shower when we got there and then lost power there. We got power on but not water, but we were fine and had a great time. When I got back to the house, a pipe to the well had burst, but my rainwater system worked like a champ and we had water. We lost lots of trees and it will be a year before we can clean all that up.

As everyone knows, we are going full blast with our plant and barrel sale. It has been quite the challenge this year, because of the freeze, to obtain plant material. Fernando (Fernando more than me) and I have made way too many trips this year to obtain the plants we need, but it looks like we will have around 1600 plants. I’m sure most of you know we buy plants in 4” pots and bump them immediately to gallons. Then the babying begins. They are put on a fertilization program, and all their blooms are removed continuously.

**Continued on page 9**

# TEXAS SUPERSTAR<sup>®</sup> PROMOTIONS FOR 2021

by David Rodriguez, County Extension Agent-Horticulture



## Celebrity Tomato

*Solanum lycopersicum* 'Celebrity'

The F1 hybrid plant Celebrity tomato was first produced in the USA by Colen Wyatt with the seeds being commercially distributed in the late 1980s by PetoSeed Co., today Seminis Vegetable Seeds. In 1984, the plant was judged by various experts in the field of horticulture and recognized as a recipient of the All-America Selections award due to its favorable characteristics compared to other tomato cultivars. This tomato cultivar remains a popular choice for gardeners and is the standard by which tomatoes are judged.

**Exposure:** Full sun exposure is required for optimum production.

**Height:** Plant is determinant though it is thought by some to be semi-determinate as it will easily attain 4 to 6 feet in height.

**Plant type:** Perennial, but grown as an annual in Texas due to cold.

**Planting time:** Best as transplants in early spring. Can be planted in mid-summer for fall harvest though white flies and virus hinder production.

**Soil type:** Almost any well drained soil.

**Suggested uses:** Vigorous plants typically produce 20 or more very plump, robust tomatoes. Fruits weigh approximately 8 oz. and are 4 inches across. Plants need caging or staking, and produce fruit throughout the growing season. Plants are resistant to Fusarium wilt races I and 2, Verticillium wilt, Tobacco mosaic virus and Root-knot nematode. The root-knot resistance is significant as very few tomatoes have this tolerance today.

**Special notes:** Celebrity fruit are resistant to cracking and splitting which usually occurs when there is an excess of water and sugar movement in the fruits. Tomatoes do continue to ripen after being picked and are typically harvested when they start to "break" or change color.

The red tomato is listed on most nutritional lists as a superfood. It is packed with the antioxidant vitamins A and C, potassium and the B vitamins for heart health, and a carotenoid called lycopene.

<https://texassuperstar.com/>





## Hill Country Veggies

By Allen Mace, MG

I would like to thank Beth McMahon, CEA-Horticulture for Gillespie County, for another successful *Plantastic Vegetable Gardening* program that she hosted this year, along with the Gillespie County Extension Office. This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> year she has organized this event and it gets better each year. Several of the Hill Country Master Gardeners volunteer their time and gardening experience to help attendees become, hopefully, better gardeners. It is a lot of work, but it is a lot of fun as well.

The past few years, I have been doing a talk about growing tomatoes. I enjoy the opportunity to pass on a little bit of insight to new gardeners. Every year I start off by asking who is new to the Hill Country then ask where some of these folks are from. We get people from all over moving into the Hill Country. We all usually have a good chuckle when I say, “you’re not in Kansas anymore are you”. Then I have everyone hold up their thumbs to confirm that nobody has a black thumb or a green one. I assure them that growing tomatoes is not rocket science and anyone can do it.

Every year we have folks with different amount of experience and knowledge. Some have never tried to grow tomatoes, but a few are experienced tomato growers. I usually give those the opportunity to take over for me so I that I can sit down and listen to them. I am of the belief that you can learn something new from most everyone you meet. You just have to listen to them. Most people enjoy talking about themselves and what they do. To date, nobody has taken me up on the offer.

### **A few things that stood out about this year:**

I am amazed at how much information there is on the internet, specifically on You Tube. I am a visual learner. I can get a fair idea from reading books and articles but show me and let me get my hands on it, then it becomes mine. The phrase, “you’re not in Kansas anymore are you”, definitely applies to You Tube. Pay attention to the environment that is in the background and the type of soil they are working in. The conditions that the You Tuber is working in generally are not the same as the ones we have in the Hill County, that being said, you can still glean useful information from some of these videos.

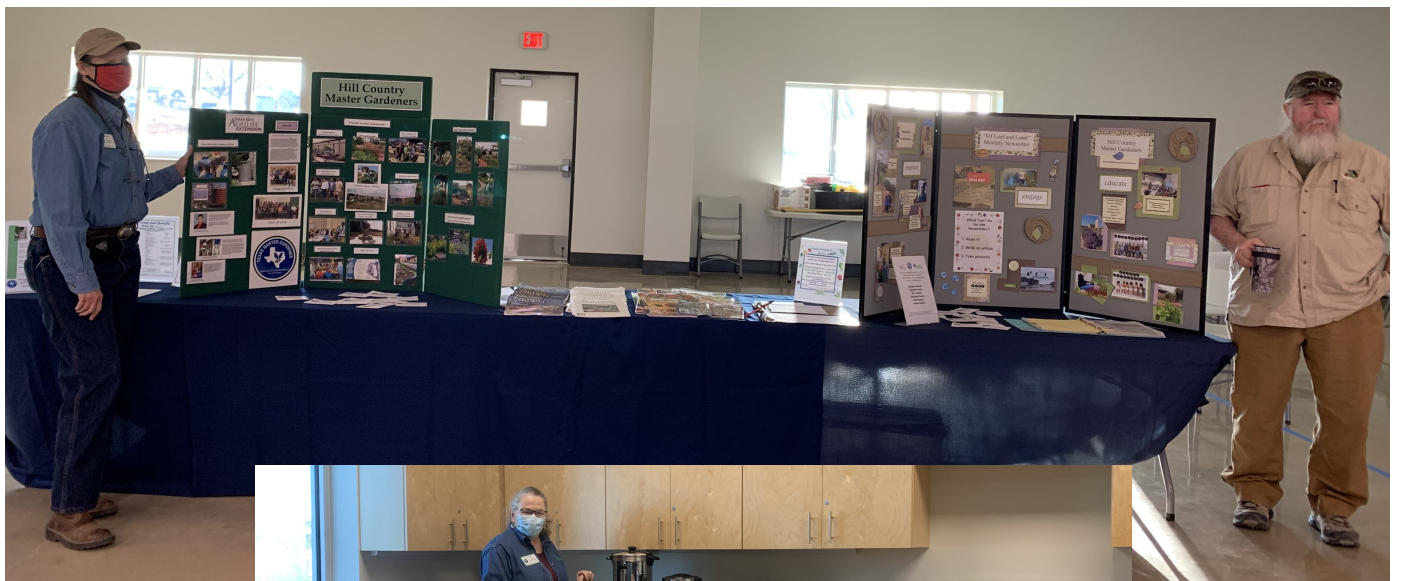
This year I was able to get lots of hands on participation from the attendees. It is always fun to get your hands dirty and this year we did. Lots of transplanted tomatoes went home with new owners. I had an interesting conversation with a gentleman. I commented that I generally pull my tomatoes in July, then plant new ones in the fall. He said that he just cuts his back to about 14 to 16 inches, keeps them alive and they will start growing again in the fall. I have never done this before. Hmm, something new to try. My interest has been perked.

***See Plantastic pictures on page 4***

# Plantastic Vegetable Garden Seminar



32 masked and socially distanced gardeners attended the Plantastic Seminar in the new Gillespie County Extension Building in Fredericksburg. Beth McMahon, CEA-Horticulture, introduced the first speaker, Travis Waiser, Soil Scientist. Not pictured: Connie Townsend presented Vegetable Gardening in HC and Pat Wolters presented Square Foot Gardening.



Above  
Chris Davis and  
Allen Mace beside  
the HCMG display.  
Allen taught two  
sessions on  
Tomatoes. Chris  
covered registration.



Left:  
Raeann Reid makes  
sure the participants  
had plenty of coffee  
and snacks and the  
program stayed on  
time. Lunch by  
Woerners  
Warehouse Café.



## Backyard Bee Keeping

Bees are under assault. And that may mean bad news for all Texans, from those who like honey to those who enjoy looking at wildflowers. Researchers are finding that without bees the state might not have bluebonnets, foxgloves or columbines, all of which are pollinated by bees.

Bee populations — both domesticated and wild — are falling. Lower honey prices combined with introduced natural threats such as Africanized bees and varroa mites, an Asian bee parasite, have crippled the Texas bee business. Other threats include pests such as tracheal mites and diseases such as foulbrood and chalkbrood. The combination of these forces could be catastrophic. Not only do honeybees pollinate some \$587 million worth of crops every year in Texas, they also play a key role in pollinating wild plants. “We feel like we are a vital cog in the wheel of the flora and therefore the fauna in the wild,” says Binford Weaver (a Texas beekeeper).

Read the whole article, *The Trouble with Bees*, by Robert Bryce at the Texas Master Gardener Association website <https://txmg.org/resources/pollinators/the-trouble-with-bees>

On a positive note, backyard bee keepers like my grand daughter, Dorothy Jean Ross, who lives in New Orleans, Louisiana are managing hives in their yards.

Dorothy is bottling her honey, D’s Bees, to give to friends. She is also doing her part to eat honey and keep the bee population flourishing.

Pat Wolters, MG



## Black-eyed Susan: a N.I.C.E. addition to a sunny garden



A hallmark of prairies and meadows, the Black-eyed Susan is one of the best-known and best-loved of all American wildflowers.

**By Cindy Anderson**  
Master Gardener &  
Native Plant Society of Texas



Texas is a large, diverse state and plants that work for one region may not always be the best choice in a different region. The Native Plant Society of Texas (NPSOT) created the N.I.C.E. Native Plant Partners program to help nurseries offer natives that are right for the local environment. Two local chapters of NPSOT, the Kerrville and Fredericksburg chapters, implement this program by choosing one native plant to promote each season – in cooperation with wholesalers, in order to assure availability – and in cooperation with participating local nurseries.

The N.I.C.E. acronym stands for “Natives Improve and Conserve Environments.” The goal of the program is to introduce people to great native plants that are available locally to use in place of non-native species.

### WHY PLANT NATIVES?

The home page of the state website, NPSOT.org, says:

- Native plants are drought tolerant, naturally conserving our precious water resources
- Native plants provide habitat and food for birds, butterflies, bees and other wildlife
- Native plants don't need special pampering or fertilizing
- Natives are natural to their eco-system
- Natives help us maintain biological diversity

### BLACK-EYED SUSAN

This spring season (which begins on Saturday, March 20), the Kerrville and Fredericksburg NPSOT chapters are featuring the popular flower known as **Black-eyed Susan** (*Rudbeckia hirta*), at five local nurseries as their N.I.C.E. Plant of the Season. Also referred to as Brown-eyed Susan, Gloriosa Daisy, or Yellow Oxeye Daisy, *Rudbeckia hirta* is a cheerful and widespread prairie plant with bright yellow daisy-like flower rays and a dark chocolate central cone.

Exceptionally showy and easy to grow, seeds of Black-eyed Susan may be sown directly in the soil after the last frost date. If started indoors, seeding (or transplants from a N.I.C.E. nursery) should be set out after the last frost date. They will grow strongly upright into clumps 1-3 feet tall. Their sturdy stems are covered with bristly hairs (the species name “hirta” means hairy) and scratchy dark green leaves.

*Continued on page 7*

Literature describing the **Black-eyed Susan** is a bit confusing, sometimes calling it an annual, a biennial, or a short-lived perennial. Well-rooted transplants from nurseries will bloom the year they are planted, and will easily self-sow onto open soil to continue a perennial display. A late-germinating seed may become a biennial by forming a rosette of leaves the first year, followed by flowers the second year.

Easy to grow and very drought tolerant, *Rudbeckia hirta* plants tolerate heat, drought and a wide range of soils. They worship sunshine (but may bloom longer with some afternoon shade) and will forgive a great deal of neglect. They will thrive in average moist-but-well-drained soils – but they do not like poorly-drained, overly wet soils. They have no serious insect or disease problems, though you should watch for snails on young plants. And happily, deer tend to avoid this plant!

A profuse bloomer, this hardy native plant has a prolonged bloom time (June to October) that attracts pollinating insects, butterflies and birds. The seed heads produced late in the season specifically attract finches and other granivorous birds. Or the seedheads may be removed and discarded to encourage extended blooming and to prevent possibly unwanted seedlings next season. If left to reseed and spread, the plants may eventually become crowded, thus needing dividing every three years or so to help the plants and the roots get good air circulation and enough nutrients.

Black-eyed Susans are great candidates for mixed borders, cutting gardens, prairies, and meadows, and as accent plants when planted in mass. They also make excellent cut flowers, with a vase life of 7 to 14 days – especially when the stems are quickly immersed into cold water with a sugar additive.

Extensive breeding has produced a range of sizes and colors (referred to as cultivars) including oranges, reds and browns. The larger-flowered cultivars with these special colors are commonly called Gloriosa Daisy in the nursery trade.



### WHERE TO FIND IT

Our local N.I.C.E. nurseries have happily agreed to stock up on our Plant of the Season in order to have it available to the public. These independent nurseries carry only the best plants for our area, as well as high-quality soil amendments and gardening supplies.

Look for the “**N.I.C.E. Plant of the Season**” sign stake at these nurseries and growers in Kerrville, Fredericksburg, and Medina:

Natives of Texas, 4256 Medina Highway, Kerrville, 830-896-2169

Plant Haus 2, 604 Jefferson Street, Kerrville, 830-792-4444

The Gardens at The Ridge, 13439 S. Ranch Road 783 (Harper Rd.), Kerrville, 830-896-0430

Friendly Natives, 1107 N. Llano Street, Fredericksburg, 830-997-6288

Medina Garden Nursery, 13417 Tx. Highway 16, Medina, 830-589-2771

Our chapter website contains articles of past N.I.C.E. plants, going back as far as 2009. To peruse the list, go to the following link: <https://npsot.org/wp/kerrville/nice-2> and scroll to the bottom of the page for the list of featured plants.

**AGENDA**  
**HCMG Business Meeting**  
**March 3, 2021**  
**HCYEC**

**Approval of Minutes of January Executive Meeting-** Approved

**Treasurers Report and Approval -** Approved—  
Details are available on VMS

**Committee Reports**

**B & B**—Janell Dahms reported that all three work-days have 28 volunteers signed up to help. There are five spaces open for sale day and room for more volunteers for spa day and move day also. Masks are required for spa day and move day, with k95 or kn95 masks required for sale day. Janell mentioned that HCMG has ordered masks for sale day and mentioned that checkout volunteers will need to wear clear shields as well. Janell reminded members that this year due to COVID there will be no resale shop, no vendors, no food, no education booths, and no shed. She said there will be a counter to monitor the number of people inside. Janell said the advertising banner will go up on March 22, 2021.

**Greenhouses** – Fernando Gonzalez reported the loss of 29 plants from the winter storm, less than he had expected. He said there are currently 1,317 plants in the greenhouses, expects to purchase 70 more over the weekend, and expects to purchase some vegetable plants in the last two weeks prior to the sale. He expects approximately 1400 plants come sale day. He mentioned problems with suppliers, especially with availability of ornamental grasses. Fernando announced that the plant list is on the web site, updated regularly with all changes, and that MG's can purchase plants on spa day, move day, or early on sale day. He noted that watering is currently every third day, will increase to every 2<sup>nd</sup> day and reminded volunteers to continue grooming and notifying Fernando of any issues with plants. Fernando requested help following this meeting to relocate pallets. Fernando mentioned that a broken water line was repaired by himself and Mark Schultz.

**Demo Garden** – Jackie Skinner updated the group on the butterfly garden progress, including berms, arroyos, and trellises and a completed design by Frank Dunlap and Marge Muniz. Thanks go to Darla Cluster, Sue Hall, and Mimi Bouslog for protecting areas in front of the office, and to Dave Kinneberg and Wil Rolfe for saving the Cactus Garden. A wildflower garden is coming soon with a hillock built by Debbie Bacon, an herb section is progressing courtesy of Bee Evans, with species compatible with the Hill country, and Jackie said she and Rita Aliperto are renovating the dry garden bed. A native grass section is scheduled to be complete by Kerry Brittain by summer. Jackie did request more volunteers, especially to help with weed control, as well as to help caring for a peach tree. Contact Jackie by email ([jackiebaby195@windstream.net](mailto:jackiebaby195@windstream.net)) to volunteer. Jackie also gave a detailed and thorough report on the proper treatment of freeze damaged plants. She emphasized patience and the importance of postponing pruning, especially with perennials, until after April 3, the last annual freeze date for Kerrville. When pruning begins, she recommends pruning from the tips gradually back to the green wood. She also said to remove anything mushy to avoid smelly complications and nasty pest issues. She suggested checking for butterfly eggs on the undersides of the leaves to protect them. Jackie also pointed out that frost cloth prevents or lessens frost damage better than blankets or beach towels. Kathy Lewis suggested it would be a good idea for members to document tree damage. Jackie recommended a reference on the Smith County MG Facebook page as an excellent resource on this topic. <https://www.plantanswers.com/articles/dealing-with-freeze-damage-on-plants.asp>

**Old Business**

**Covid** – Anne Brown updated the membership on the COVID situation. She said that the B&B sale has been officially approved by the Agrilife Office and that the office itself is now open but limits visitors to 5-7 at a time.

**Continued on page 9**



**President's message continued from page 1**

We want them to concentrate on getting a full root ball, so we almost need a fulltime bloom remover. They are watered as necessary by a lot of volunteers (we thank you so much), are inspected regularly for any sign of bugs or diseases (thanks Vickie), anything found treated immediately and isolated as best as we can, and then when we are 3 weeks and 4 days out from the sale when we stop cutting blooms and turn them loose to do their thing. Then they have their spa day where we groom them and make the final decision on whether they are good enough to be sold (we do have a community reputation to maintain). Then they are moved to the show barn, once again inspected to insure none of them were damaged in their move, signs and plant sheets are put out, lights are left on to make sure their blooms aren't affected, and then the big day is here and we say goodbye to them. If any are left (I predict a sellout out, which would be our second). Master Gardeners are free to buy any in excess and those who did not make it to the sale (at a reduced price)

Obviously it takes a lot of manpower to pull this event off. We are very thankful for all volunteers who come out to help us during the growing process, from the pot parties, to the watering and cutting of blooms to moving them to the pot yard (now deer proofed, the first year we have had to do that) and for the three days of events. Thanks to Fernando, who is in charge of the green-

house, and Janell, who is in charge of all things that need to be done to pull this event off, and all the others already mentioned. It's a pleasure to work with so many talented and dedicated people. When this is over, we can concentrate helping Jackie S. rejuvenate our demo garden and all the other gardens in our communities which will need help.



**Pam Umstead submitted this photo.**  
**She said, "This is interesting - my Purple Stock is dying the snow!"**

**Minutes continued from page 8**

New Members – Anne Brown welcomed two new members to the group, Candi Douthit from Kansas and Linda Fawcett from Taylor County, TX.

**Announcements**

Anne Brown announced Janell Dahm's retirement from 3M and thanked her for arranging a \$500.00 grant for HCMG.

Rachel Garrison announced the State Convention this year will be a Zoom virtual convention, scheduled for May 18 – 19, 2021.

Information will be available soon on state Agrilife website.

Rachel also announced that the Aggie Horticulture Facebook page has gardening programs lasting 30 minutes to an hour on Wednesdays and Fridays at 1:00PM

**Next Meeting: April 7, 2021**

Adjournment  
Submitted by Donna Nutt  
Secretary

**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 Coordinators are listed on our website**

**Newsletter & Website**

*Newsletter Editor*  
Pat Wolters

*Associate Newsletter Editor*  
Patti Schlessiger

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proofreading

*Photographer*  
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**None of us truly Wins, until we all Win!**

There was a farmer who grew excellent quality corn. Every year he won the award for the best grown corn. One year a newspaper reporter interviewed him and learned something interesting about how he grew it.

The reporter discovered that the farmer shared his seed corn with his neighbors. “how can you afford to share your best seed corn with your neighbors when they are entering corn in competition with yours each year?” the reporter asked.

“Why sir” said the farmer, “Didn’t you know? The wind picks up pollen from the ripening corn and swirls it from field to field. If my neighbors grow inferior corn cross-pollination will steadily degrade the quality of my corn. If I am to grow good corn, I must help my neighbors grow good corn.”

So is with our lives....Those who want to live meaningfully and well must help enrich the lives of others, for the value of a life is measured by the lives it touches. And those who choose to be happy must help others find happiness, for the welfare of each is bound up with the welfare of all...

*Call it power of collectivity...  
Call it a principle of success...  
Call it a law of life.*

***The fact is, none of us truly wins, until we all win!***



*Editor’s note: I found this story on Facebook. I tried to verify the truth of it and was unable to do so, but the morale of the story was one that resonated with me and I hope you enjoy it.*