

**April 2024**

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**Wednesday  
April 3, 2024  
HCYEC**

**Graduation 11:30**

**Potluck 12:00**

**Meeting 1:00 pm**

**CEU 2:00 pm**

**“Live, Learn, and  
Grow – It’s Never-  
Ending”**

**Jennifer Smith**

**Bio page 8**

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, gender identity, or any other classification protected by federal, state, or local law.

## President's Message Sheryl Landrum

### Planting by the Moon and Planets

It is time to plant and I am very excited; I have onion, potato, and milkweed started, but I am now ready to explore container gardening for other vegetables and ornamentals as well. In my enthusiasm to have success, I have reinstated my Farmer's Almanac subscription and I am being very diligent about using my ephemeris to track the placement of the moon before I plant. Why might this help? Planting by the moon cycles is an ancient tradition founded by the premise that as the moon's gravitation pulls affect water in the ocean, it also affects the water in our soil. This gravitational pull directly influences the growth of our plants; by planting, pruning, fertilizing, and harvesting your crops through this process, you should produce more fruitful yields and healthier plants (see link understanding the ancient practice of planting by the moon below). Moon Sowing is the practice of planting by the lunar cycle. For example, a waxing moon provides additional light for plants which provides them additional energy, stimulates growth and abundance, and it is the moon cycle for above ground crops. A waning moon is decreasing its energy and the earth is building energy during this cycle. The ancients believed this was a time for rest and reflection; root crops were more successful when planted at the waning moon, as root crops need a longer growing season to mature. It was also believed the waning moon was also the time to harvest crops, as it was alleged that during this cycle they were at their highest nutritional value. The cycles of the moon, new moon, crescent, 1st quarter, etc., are too long for this newsletter, but to learn more about Moon Sowing and all of the different cycles of the moon and what they represent, please see: <https://www.awateaorganics.nz/post/understanding-the-ancient-practice-of-planting-by-the-moon>. Another site is, <https://www.charlesdowding.co.uk/post/moon-sowing>, discusses the results in crop yields experienced in planting seeds at different phases of the moon. I think my favorite writer is Dr. William M. Johnson, a horticulturist with Texas A&M. Dr. Johnson's family has been planting by the moon cycles for generations, 02-10-21-by-the-Moon-by-Dr.-William-M.-Johnson.pdf (agrilife.org) **Cont'd on page 8**



# Meet the HCMG Class of 2024

Photo Credit: Pat Wolters



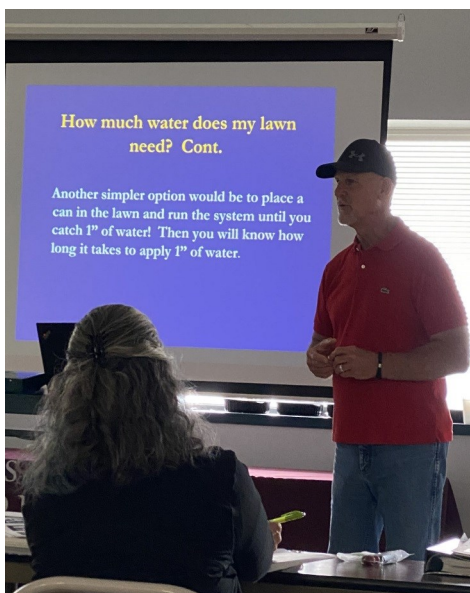
**Front row left to right:** Peggy Clark, David Dolan-Wallace, Barbara Dolan-Wallace, Becca Taylor, Suzanne Jacobson, Judy Childers, Shawn Holliman

**Middle row left to right:** Holly Green, Bernie Pearce, Tina Pierson, Mary Ann Wood, Lori Lester, Caroline Meurer, Carleen Brenner, Phyllis Sample

**Back row left to right:** Pat Strockbine, Jeff Cluff, Vanessa Williams, Dawn Piel, Marti Caldwell, Joan Connor, Bev Munns

Left to right:

Connie Townsend covers tomatoes  
Sonja Wilke made a beautiful herbed  
focaccia bread for the herb lecture  
Dennis Hale covers landscape plants  
Photo Credit: Bev Munns



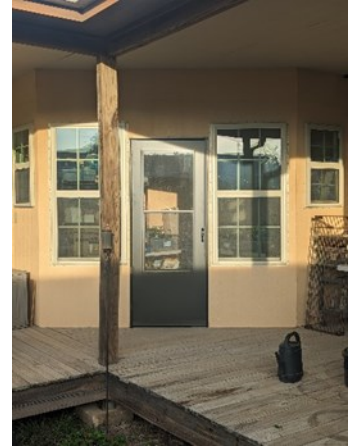




## Hill Country Veggies

**By Allen Mace, MG**

This is my favorite time of the year. Winter is now just a memory. Summer is still off in the future. It is now Spring and my focus has turned, once again, to my Springtime Vegetable Garden. This year is particularly exciting with the completion of the plant room addition on my deck. It's now fully enclosed with insulated windows and storm door. I just need to build cabinets, shelving and add some electric plugs strategically along the walls.



**New plant room**

Well, I guess it's not completely finished. Eventually this will be where I start my seeds to grow my own seedlings. Because I was still in construction mode during the time that seeds needed to be started, this year I will head south on my hunt for seedlings.



**Greenhouse #5**

As in past Springs, it's once again time for my annual Springtime Pilgrimage to one of my favorite plant nurseries just south of Boerne Texas. This year proved to be very successful. This nursery has many greenhouses in which to explore and lots of space outside full of shrubs and trees destined for landscapes throughout the area. This is a fun place to go. As with any adventure,



**Seedlings**

one always has favorite spots to visit. At this nursery, my favorite greenhouses are number #5 and #11. The number #5 greenhouse is full of vegetable seedlings and the #11 greenhouse is full of herbs. The variety of seedlings available will change throughout the seasons, so multiple trips throughout the year is recommended and eagerly anticipated. This year I was amazed as to the many varieties of tomatoes that were available, many of which I had not seen before. I thought I was finished experimenting with different varieties of tomatoes, but apparently this is not the case.



**Greenhouse #11**

This proves to be an interesting Spring growing season with lots of changes to my garden. I have new wicking pots to build and new vegetables to try in them. If I can pull it off, I'm going to try and move the garden to a new, permanent location. There is always so much to do and so little time in which to do it, but that's what keeps me going.





Clockwise from top left:

Demo Garden co-chair Bee Evans trims a perfectly blooming Red Bud tree.

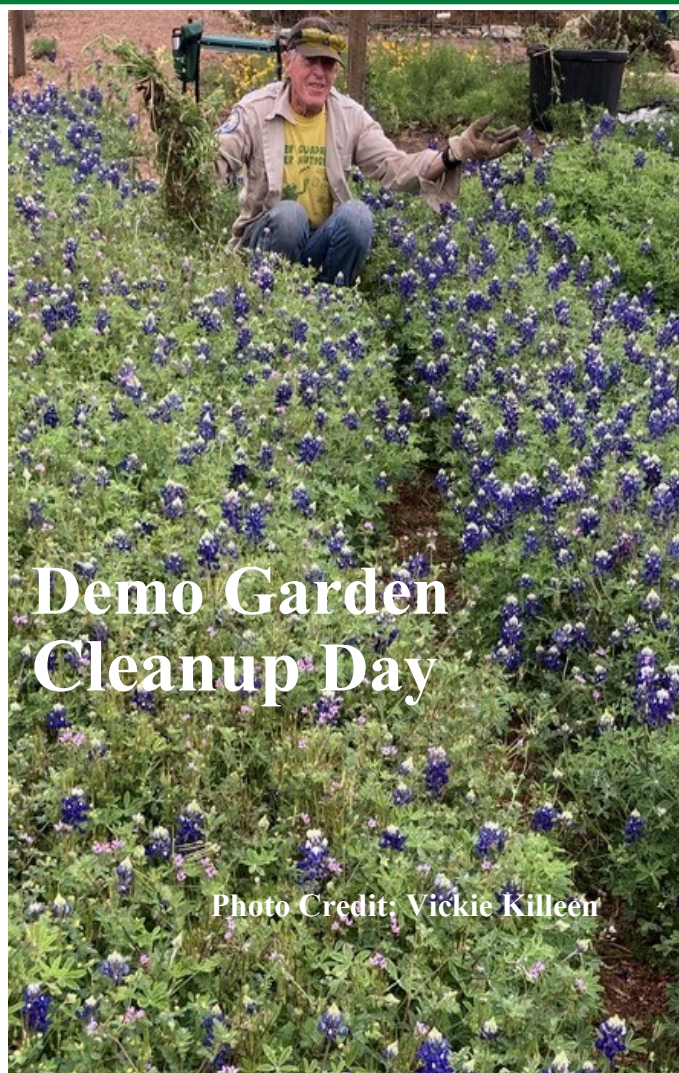
Tom Collins pulls weeds from the sea of Blue Bonnets.

Wil Rolfe takes a break from raking next to a blooming Trumpet Vine.



HCMG Intern Shawn Holliman removes clears overgrowth along the parking lot.

Demo Garden co-chair Dave Kinneberg contemplates the placement of soil near the dry creek bed.



## Demo Garden Cleanup Day

Photo Credit: Vickie Killeen





## KERR 4-H LIVE, LEARN, AND GROW!

By Rita Aliperto, MG

As it turns out, 4-H has a whole lot more to offer than just showing barnyard animals, as if that alone isn't awesome enough. Located just behind the Kerr County Extension Office is an educational, outdoor program for young 4-H'ers led by Kerr Extension 4-H Agent, Jennifer Smith, a five-year veteran of the County. The project, called Kerr 4-H Live, Learn, and Grow Outdoor Education Program was the brainchild of Jennifer and has been working tirelessly to make this program a reality. Master Gardeners Rae Raiford and Debbie Castillo have partnered with Jennifer to create hands-on learning opportunities for our youth to experience life lessons, all while having FUN.

The previously under-utilized area now has an old-fashioned bathtub at the entrance gate, is fenced and has several raised beds that were kid-assembled. The beds have been filled with a layer of cardboard, soil and mulch using kid muscles. The beds will be used to teach youth to prepare soil, plant seeds, care for plants, learn about vermiculture and entomology, harvest and gain enough knowledge to maintain a successful garden.

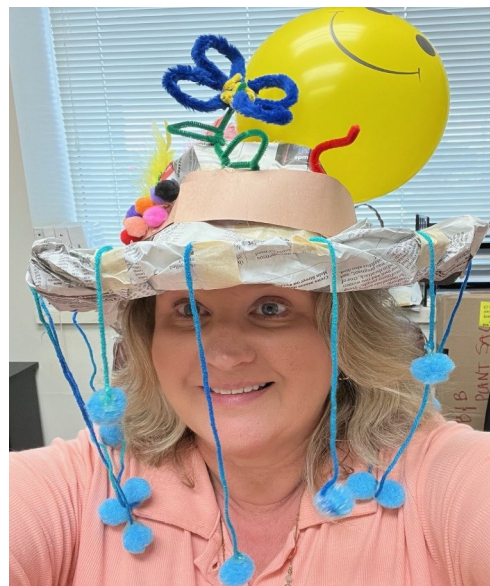


Above: Debbie Castillo teaching 4-H kids about Vermiculture.

Below right: Rae Raiford demonstrating to a group of Clovers the things plants need: soil, worms, sun, rain, & pollinators.



Young 4-H'ers recently assembled two compost bins and filled them with greens, leaves, manure and water.



Another method of composting without spending money on purchasing bins was also created. A pallet enclosure was constructed, once again using kid-power. This compost bin can be used by Master Gardeners (under strict supervision) who work on the Demonstration Garden and Greenhouse Committees. More instructions, I'm certain, will follow.

*Continued on page 6*



### ***Kerr 4 H continued from page 5***

The Learning Coop, which is a fully functional chicken coop with fenced yard, used to educate youth on chicken breeds, nutrition, health, housing, predators and coop maintenance. The kids will learn how to raise and care for chickens, then decide whether they just sell eggs or if they want to sell chicks or adult chickens. Incidentally, the baby chicks (Golden Sex Links) were delivered on March 7th, so check them out while they're still super cute. The coop has a viewing window so the public can see them without going inside. Jennifer and crew have made some truly innovative chicken-pampering amenities within the coop.

A HCMG-donated rain barrel will be installed to demonstrate a water catchment system to our community. It will collect water from the Learning Coop roof and will be used for the chickens. Kids of all ages can participate in this project starting with Clover Kids (1st and 2nd graders), Junior Members (3rd – 5th graders), Intermediate (6th – 8th graders), and Senior (9th – 12th graders). Starting in September 2024, this program will start certifying qualified kids as Junior Master Gardeners.

Jennifer's long-term goals for the area include obtaining more raised beds, installation of a native grass and forbs area, creating a pollinator garden with tables, and creating a covered pavilion for an outdoor classroom with a countertop, electricity, running water and tables. With the produce grown by the kids, Jennifer hopes to have a self-sustaining 4-H Market where the vegetables can be sold to the public with proceeds going back into the program. Jennifer has tentatively set a Grand Opening date of May 31st. Details will be announced as that unfolds. All the money for this program has been paid for with grants but they still need more donations. Donations are accepted at the Extension Office.

Contact Jennifer if you have ideas on other things to incorporate into this Kerr 4-H Live, Learn, and Grow Outdoor Educational Program. If you wish to volunteer at this project, please contact Rae Raiford or Debbie Castillo.



A young 4-H'er demonstrates the new raised garden beds after they were assembled, and cardboard placed.



Above: A pallet enclosure was made using kid power.  
Right: Jennifer Smith getting the cardboard ready to fill the beds.





## Glory Community Garden Cowboy Breakfast

*By Pam Umstead*

What a glorious Saturday morning! Clifton brewed his famous cowboy coffee, and visitors enjoyed it with grilled sausage tacos. Gardeners were onsite, too, harvesting some of their bounty. Several of them picked salad radishes, French Breakfast radishes, lettuce, kale, Swiss Chard, parsley, and dandelion during the event. And we noted the strawberries are already blooming! The next public event will be **Music in the Garden on Sunday April 28, 5:30-7pm.**





***Planting by the moon and planets continued from page 1***

Dr. Johnson warns us that “gardening by the moon is not about planting at night but involves planting and harvesting by the lunar cycle.” I appreciated that, as a scientist, he felt that “condemning an age-old practice which has not been undoubtedly proven or disproved is risky and foolish.” I agree with that! I’ll try just about anything to have a successful gardening experience!

Now I plan on doing more research on Moon Sowing. What I have relied on in the past, for best times to plant, is astronomy and an ephemeris. An ephemeris gives us a daily view of where the moon and all the other planets are on a given day. This is the link I use the most: [file:///C:/Users/landr/Downloads/ae\\_2024-1.pdf](file:///C:/Users/landr/Downloads/ae_2024-1.pdf), to find out what sign the moon is in. I love planting in water signs: Cancer, Scorpio (the best, deep roots), and Pisces as well as earth signs: Taurus (the earthiest of all), Virgo, and Capricorn. I always avoid planting in a fire sign if I can: Aries, Leo, and Sagittarius, I will sigh, but plant, in air signs: Gemini, Libra, and Aquarius. The zodiac signs and planet symbols are given below so that you can read the ephemeris. Also, this is a rather different newsletter, so I hope you enjoy it. I’m off to plant as the moon is in Taurus!

**Zodiac Signs**

♈ Aries  
♉ Taurus  
♊ Gemini  
♋ Cancer  
♌ Leo  
♍ Virgo  
♎ Libra  
♏ Scorpio  
♐ Sagittarius  
♑ Capricorn  
♒ Aquarius  
♓ Pisces

**Planet Symbols**

☉ Sun  
☾ Moon  
☿ Mercury  
♀ Venus  
♂ Mars  
♃ Jupiter  
♄ Saturn  
♅ Uranus  
♆ Neptune  
♇ Pluto  
♎ North Node  
♏ Chiron



***Have You Met Clover? This frisky kitty is the new Extension Office mascot. Stop by & introduce yourself!***

Photo Credit: Vickie Killeen

**Jennifer Smith, Kerr County 4-H Agent**

I live in Boerne with my husband, Robert, of 26 years. We have 2 children, Dustin (son) is 24 and works at Discount Tire and lives in Boerne, and Corrie (daughter) is 18 and attends college at Blinn College in Brenham. I grew up in San Antonio, graduated from Churchill High School, but always thought of the hill country as home. My dad’s family is from Kendall County, so Comfort was more home than San Antonio. I graduated with my Bachelors in Agribusiness from Southwest Texas State University and my Masters in Adult Education from Texas State University. I have been the Kerr County 4-H and Youth Development Agent for almost 5 years. Prior to Kerr County, I worked at Alamo Industrial in Seguin and as an Agriscience Teacher at Marion Middle School. My family has been very involved with livestock shows, Boerne FFA, and Kendall 4-H. Like every other family, we were extremely busy with extracurricular activities up until my daughter’s graduation last year. With my children’s involvement in everything, they were my hobby. But now that we are empty nesters, I finally have time to find hobbies of my own.





"Gold Star" Esperanza, the most prolific flowering variety, is "a must" for Central Texas gardens.



## Esperanza – a native plant I cannot live without

By Cindy Anderson  
Native Plant Society of Texas  
Hill Country Master Gardener

As you may know, the Native Plant Society of Texas (NPSOT) passionately advocates for the use of landscape trees and plants that are native to each area, and each climate, of Texas. This spring season, which begins on March 20th, the Kerrville and Fredericksburg NPSOT chapters are promoting the Esperanza (*Tecoma stans*) at local nurseries as part of the N.I.C.E. Native Plant Partner program. (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.

### ESPERANZA

Many plants just can't handle the high temperatures we face in June, July, and August. However, today we are celebrating a plant that can. The sunshine-yellow blooms of the south Texas native, Esperanza, or *Tecoma stans*, will see you through the hottest days and right up to the first hard freeze. It's no wonder that esperanza is a favorite choice in the Hill Country year after year. Esperanza, also known as "yellow bells" and "yellow trumpet," is a native shrub with a tropical feel. Call it eye candy for your summer landscape – if you get it planted during the spring!

Esperanza is seen all over the Hill Country, listed and pictured in every single landscape book around Austin or San Antonio, because of its long bloom time, heat tolerance, and low water use. As the headline says, I can't live without this plant. The one in my back yard, up against the house in a southern exposure, is pictured above. I have several more that are free-standing (not up against the house) and they, too, are beautiful, but not so large. This one regrows each year to nine feet tall, eight feet wide, and leans out over several feet of the patio. The house shelters it from north winds in the winter, and in the summer it is in shade by mid-afternoon. **Cont'd on page 10**



### *Esperanza continued from page 9*

It truly loves this location, and has outperformed any other esperanza I have ever seen.

In the wild, the native esperanza will be found growing on rocky slopes near San Antonio and in the Trans-Pecos, north into New Mexico and Arizona, east to Florida and south into Central and South America, in well drained soil and full sun. The species that is native to the southwestern U.S. and adjacent Mexico is *Tecoma stans* var. *angustata*, which is shorter, more drought-tolerant, and more cold-tolerant than some of the tropical varieties sold in nurseries. Over the last fifteen to twenty years, however, the variety “Gold Star” has become the “gold standard” if you will, because it is the most prolific flowering variety.

### **IT’S A SUPERSTAR**

Because this drought-tolerant species has been shown to perform outstandingly across a wide spectrum of climates and soils, making it well suited across Texas and beyond – the “Gold Star Esperanza” was recently awarded the status of a Texas Superstar. Texas A&M AgriLife created the Texas Superstar plants program to help Texans select the best plants for quality and reliability. To be designated a Texas Superstar, a plant must not only be beautiful, but perform well for consumers and growers throughout the state. Texas Superstars must be easy to propagate, which should ensure the plants are not only widely available but also reasonably priced. There are also a few orange-flowering varieties of esperanza which go by the names Orange Jubilee, Orange Bells, Chicklet Esperanza, Flaming Bells, etc. Some of them have slightly different heights and widths.

South of us, esperanzas are considered almost evergreen, depending on the severity of the winter. Here in central Texas we call it a deciduous perennial – deciduous because it loses its leaves in the winter, and perennial because it comes back every year. The first winter, however, can be stressful or even fatal to esperanzas. That is why they should be planted in the spring, to have many months of root growth before the first hard freeze. And lots of mulch over the roots during that first winter. But at this time of year, that also means waiting to plant it until AFTER our last freeze of the winter. So if you are lucky enough to find one now in one of our nurseries listed below, you might want to hold off on planting it until you feel sure it will not freeze again. Our official “average last freeze” here is April 10 – still a few days away.

My five esperanzas have survived our droughts, our occasional heavy rains, the 2021 “Snowmageddon”, the 2022 drought, and the 2023 winter freeze. I recently gave it the only maintenance it needs – an annual trimming of dead wood back to 6-8” from the ground. Shaping is not necessary, but you can trim it back if needed anytime. This fast-growing shrub will transform itself from a few dead sticks in March to a large blooming shrub by late May. And it does not require any deadheading to bloom continuously. I almost never water mine, now that they are well established. And did I mention deer resistance? The deer might try a nibble once or twice, but they basically shy away from this plant.

### **GOLD STAR ESPERANZA SPECIFICATIONS AT A GLANCE**

Exposure: Full sun (will tolerate afternoon shade)

Size: 4-9 feet high

Planting time: Spring, after the threat of a freeze has passed

Soil type: Extremely easy to grow in alkaline to acidic, well-drained soils

Suggested uses: Use esperanza as a single specimen or plant it in groupings for a large swath of color.

Special notes: Esperanzas tolerate very high temperatures and drought – once established – but they do not tolerate poorly drained soils. During its first year, irrigate regularly, every week to 10 days, allowing plants to dry out between waterings.



**Hill Country Master Gardeners  
HCYEC  
March 6, 2024**

Call to Order (Please silence cell phones)

Welcome/Opening Remarks – Sheryl Landrum welcomed the group. She recognized those leading the invocation and welcomed anyone who would care to assist to let her know.

Pledge of Allegiance was recited by the group.

Invocation – Pam Umstead delivered the invocation.

Verification of Quorum – Marge Muniz verified a quorum had been met.

Ten of the interns that joined the meeting introduced themselves.

Approve Minutes from February 7, 2024 Meeting. Anne Brown moved to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Melayne Arnold. Motion carried by acclamation.

Treasurer's Report – Jackie Connelly presented the Treasurer's Report and explained items on the report. There were no questions or comments from the group.

**BUSINESS ITEMS**

Logo Wear – Melayne Arnold stated that t-shirt and apron orders are now being accepted through 3/10. Only the t-shirts and aprons are being taken at this time. Samples of the shirts and colors were available to review. Interns will be allowed to order logo wear once they have completed their certification requirements.

**STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**B&B** – Jackie Connelly announced they had their organizational meeting. There are fliers in PDF or JPEG available on the eMind-er to print and post. She announced that she and Dave Kinneberg will be interviewed on The Lead right before the B&B. It was noted that only on Spa Day, members will be al-

lowed to purchase 3 plants. Also, if anyone has a wagon that could be used for the day to assist our customers with carrying their plants, please bring them the day of the sale. They will be marked to ensure their safe return.

**Education** – Donna Bellis stated there are 21 interns in the class. The graduation is set for 11:45 on April 3rd. With a potluck honoring the graduates at noon. Project leaders should have their table setup by 10 to allow the interns to learn more about the projects. The room will be open at 9 for setup. There is an opening on March 14th for a project presentation during the class. She encouraged the Class of 2023 to keep up the tradition to lead the interns in for the graduation. They should be available at 11:30 a.m. It was later noted that for the Propagation class on March 19th, cuttings are needed. A list will be provided of cuttings that are needed.

**Demonstration Garden** – Bee Evans stated there will be a spring cleaning day in the Demo Garden on Wednesday, March 13th, starting at 9 a.m., and should be done by noon. Sign-up is available on VMS.

**Greenhouse** – Kay Nelson reported there are now 1438 plants. A few more items are to be purchased prior to the B&B, such as trees, herbs, vegetables and specialty plants. All watering slots have been filled for March. They may need help to move some plants outdoors next week.

**Membership** – Barbara Castillo stated that if anyone needed a new membership card to contact her.

**Research Desk & Rain Barrels** – Anne Brown reported that there are 44 rain barrels available for the B&B. She stated that she needs a couple more people to assist. The barrels are \$70 to the public.

Refresher Training on the Research Desk for mentors will take place on March 25th at 1:30 in the Extension Classroom. The interns will start working the research desk beginning April 16th.

*Continued on page 12*



**Hospitality** – Rachel Garrison noted that for graduation day it is a potluck, starting at noon. An extra hour of volunteer hours can be recorded. For the B&B, she noted that there will be a light breakfast available to the volunteers. She sent around a sign-up sheet to provide muffins for the day.

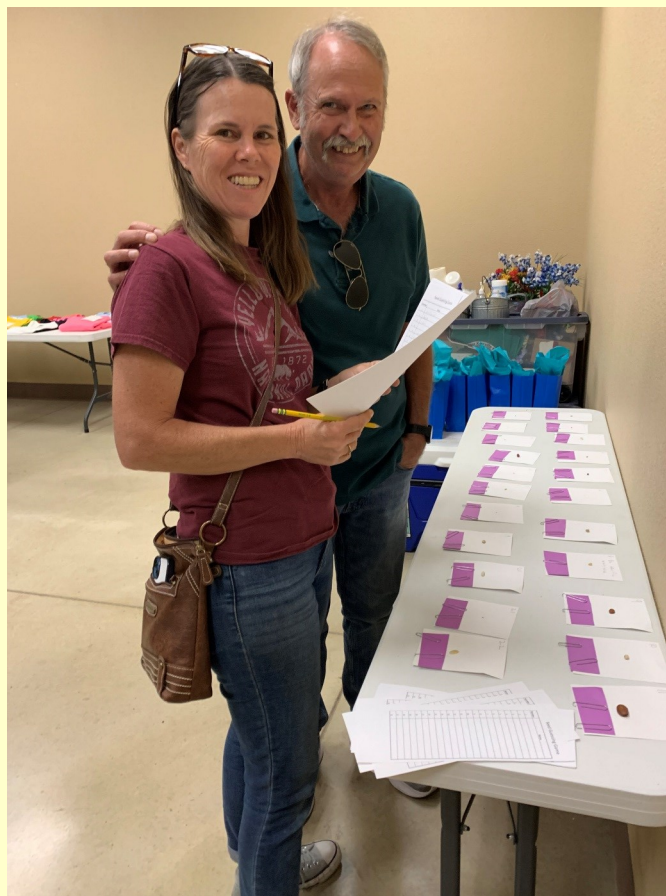
**Other Announcements –**

Sheryl Landrum presented Rae Raiford with her Advanced Training Certificates for her specializations in Texas Superstars, Herbs, Vegetables, and Junior Master Gardeners. Rae then explained the process of applying to become a specialists.



If interested, check out the [txmg.org](http://txmg.org) website and get with Mike Morris, Kerr County Extension Agent. All Specialist were invited to stand and be recognized.

Mike Bell stated that due to the changes at Kronkosky Garden, there were iris' available for the taking after the meeting.



Louise and Bill Haney try to identify the seeds that Horticulture agent, Beth McMahon, made available. The HCMG students identified the seeds during the vegetable training.

Rae Raiford asked for cardboard to assist the Jr Master Gardeners with their composting pile.

Pam Umstead posed a fun, quick poll for frost predictions to the group. The majority of the group agreed no more freezes.

Adjournment – The meeting adjourned at 1:58 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Marge Muniz  
Secretary

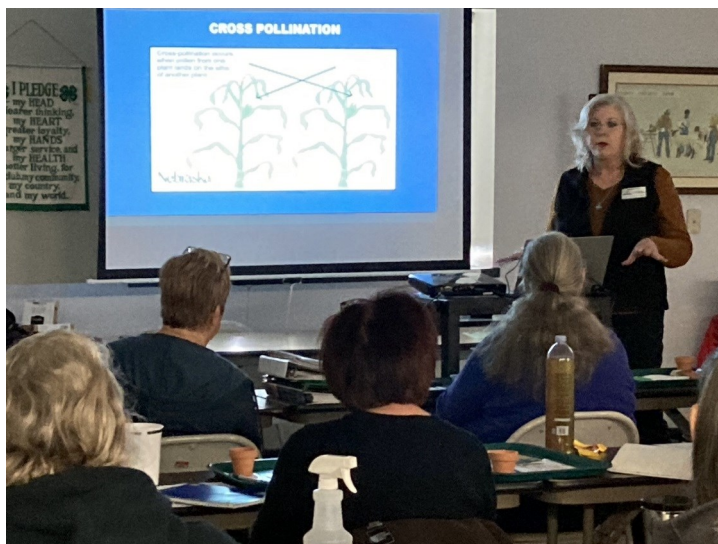
Next Meeting: April 3, 2024 at 1:00 pm in the HCYEC



## Making More Plants

Photo Credit: Vickie Killeen

Our Plant Propagation class gives students a chance to get their hands dirty.



- \* Propagation Specialist Debbie Bass opens the day-long program.
- \* Instructor for the class is Propagation Specialist Debbie Lea.
- \* The “Pit Crew” assisted instructor Debbie Lea by helping assemble, prepare and distribute plant material, containers, tools and potting medium. From left: Janice Walker, Sandy Lewis, Sandy Martin, Molly Lorch, Debbie Bass and Anne Brown. Not pictured: Vickie Killeen.

*More on page 14*





**Hill Country Master Gardeners 2024 Executive Committee**

Sheryl Landrum  
*President*

Rae Raiford  
*Vice President*

Marge Muniz  
*Secretary*

Jackie Connelly  
*Treasurer*

Dave Kinneberg  
*Ex-officio Advisor*

C.E.A. Advisor  
Mike Morris

**Committees & Project Coordinators are listed on our website**

**Newsletter**

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Vickie Killeen

**Submissions to**

**Pat Wolters, Editor**

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## Propagation

Clockwise from top left:

Photo Credit: Vickie Killeen

- \* Carleen Brenner and Becca Taylor show their containers are ready for African Violet leaves!
- \* Bev Munns & Dawn Piel toast to a successful African Violet leaf.
- \* Sandy Martin (far right) shows samples of propagated African violets to students Joan Conner & Vanessa Williams.
- \* During lunch break, Jeff Cluff shows the Pit Crew his rose cuttings in a "pot-sized greenhouse" that students learned how to create.

