HILL COUNTRY MASTER GARDENERS

Of Leaf & Limb

" Promoting education in horticulture and the environment"

August 2021

Volume 19, Issue 8

HCMG
August 4, 2021

HCYEC
In-person ONLY

12:00 Social Hour - Brown Bag Lunch
1:00 Meeting
2:00 Continuing Ed

"What's in Your Garden"?

Virginia Sawin

See page 8 for Bio

TEXAS MASTER GARDENER
TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

President's Message

Anne Brown

Hi Everyone,

We had a wonderful social hour before the July meeting, and once again all had a great time. We will continue to have a social hour before the meeting begins at 1, and everyone who attends gets an hour. You also get an hour for the meeting and an hour for CEU regardless of the length of the meetings.

For those of you who weren't at the meeting, you missed hearing the history of the neighborhood where the Glory Community Garden is and what it is today under the leadership of Allen Noah and with assistance of the Hill Country Master Gardeners. Allen has been retired from the Church and will be moving to San Antonio. He wanted to thank the MGs for all the support and help on the garden, which became a reality in 2013. It was inspirational to hear the progress the neighborhood has made and that is now recognized and supported by the city. He feels the Master Gardeners were a large part of this transformation and thanked us for our support and help.

We then presented Allen a Certificate of Appreciation and a gift certificate to the Plant Haus to get a plant to take with him when he moves so he can plant it and remember our 8 years together.

On another note, do you know that 32% of our current MGs have been with the organization for 10 years or more? Or that 13.5% have been here for 10-14 years. Or that another 13.4% have been here for 15-19 years. Or that another 4% have been here for 20+ years. That's some longevity for a volunteer organization.

Those percentages convert into 4 MGs who have been here for 20 years or over. Tommie Airhart, our co-founder, began as a MG in 1999 in Galveston Country. Tom Collins and Dusty Gilliam became MGs in 2000 and Brian Strickland became a MG in 2001.

Those MGs with 15+ years of service include Liz Althaus, Peggy Benson, Anne Brown and Shanna Ciano.

TEXAS SUPERSTAR® PROMOTIONS FOR 2021

by David Rodriguez, County Extension Agent-Horticulture

Ipomea batatas

Ornamental Sweet Potatoes

are selections of the same species that produces the tubers that are loved by foodies everywhere. Grown primarily for its colorful and tropical looking foliage (the tubers can be bitter), it has become a staple of Texas landscapes. Foliage comes in a wide variety of colors including chartreuse, purple, bronze, red, and variegated. Leaf shape can be from ovate to heart shaped to deeply lobed. Vines can be quite vigorous with newer types being less aggressive. Prized as a heat and drought resistant annual ground cover.

Exposure: Full sun is best but some shade is tolerated. Some of the chartreuse types will bleach in full sun but perform well with some shade.

Height: Grows from 8 to 14 inches tall. Older types can ramble in excess of 4 feet from the crown, but newer types are less aggressive.

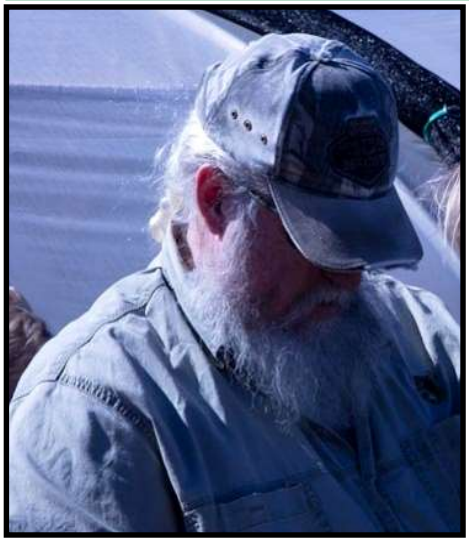
Plant type: Warm season annual.

Planting time: Best to plant actively growing plants from containers in the spring when night temperatures are regularly above 55°F. If colder than 45°F, plants can suffer from chilling damage. Tolerates summer planting well.

Soil type: Widely adapted to soil type so long as drainage is reasonably good with no standing water. Adapts to a wide range of soil pH.

Suggested uses: Mainly used as a summer ground cover or as an accent plant in mixed borders. Less aggressive types are very effective as spillers in mixed containers. A few specific cultivars can be grown vertically on a trellis.

Special notes: Vigorous growth precludes the need for very much fertilization. May be pruned freely to keep in bounds. Foliage is tolerant to deer grazing. Many ask if the tubers are edible. The answer is yes, but they are not very palatable as they can be bitter. Flea beetles can sometimes cause shot hole-like damage.



Hill Country Veggies

By Allen Mace, MG

This month has flown by. It has been a fairly mild, and for the most part, wet summer here in Comfort. The tomatoes and squash have produced well this season and are about played out. I'll be pulling them soon and get the beds ready for fall. Last fall's new crop was garlic and it produced well. I'll most likely plant a few bulbs that I still have and see if they will produce again. This year's beds are limited so I won't be planting much. I'm focusing on two vegetables that I have not planted in a long time.

Hit or Miss

Carrots have always been marginal at best for me. I use to plant them every spring. They would grow until it got hot then they would just sit there and burn up. The few carrots I got were always small, short and miss shaped. This was back when I planted directly in the soil, before I switched to raised beds. Like I said it was hit or miss and I stopped planting them.

I've been enjoying watching gardening videos on You Tube and it seems that a lot of folks like to grow carrots in their fall and winter gardens as well as in early spring. Some even say that a slight frost enhances the flavor of carrots. Carrots need deep, loose and well drained soils. There in lies the culprit of my past failures. Carrots need room to grow.

Needs to be Thinned

The seeds are very small so it's hard to space them properly when you first sow the seeds. You have to thin them out after they begin to grow, thin to 3 to 4 inches apart. You only want to sow them about ¼ inch deep. The best way would be to place the seeds on the surface of the bed then lightly rake or brush soil over the seeds. It they're planted too deep they may not germinate. Lots of compost, deep well drained soils, regular water and fertilizer and maybe a slight frost now and then. That seems to be the ticket for carrots.

Good Deep Soil

2021 HCMG Scholarships Awarded

By Carl Luchenbach, MG

Kamron Newberry grew up in the Wolfforth community, immediately southwest of Lubbock, where he graduated from Frenship High School. There, he was active in FFA, serving as Chapter Vice-President and showing market barrows in many state qualifying events, as well as leadership events. After high school, Kamron entered Angelo State University. After completing his freshman year, he transferred to Texas Tech University, from which he graduated in May of 2021 with a GPA of 3.5. He majored in Plant and Soil Science, specializing in Horticulture and Turf Grass Science. During the Fall Semester of 2019, Kamron participated in a study abroad program at the University College Dublin, in Ireland. There he attended classes ranging from Vegetable Production to Protected Crop Production to Crop Breeding. His eyes were opened to large-scale hydroponic tomato production.

He has been recognized on the President's list two semesters as well as being on the Dean's List. In his spare time, he has coached a youth soccer team, assisted in Arbor Day at Texas Tech, and volunteers at the South Plains Food Bank Grub Farm where he helps clean out vegetable beds. He operates a small landscaping business tending and installing flower beds and other landscape features. He has his own vegetable garden where he grows tomatoes and peppers. He has built his own hydroponic nutrient film technique (NFT) system where he grows lettuce and spinach for a spring mix. Kamron is pursuing a Master's Degree in Horticulture so that he can research ways to improve various hydroponic growing techniques through automation. He considers hydroponic production to be the newest sustainable technology for growing food. He aspires to a career in commercial greenhouse crop production.

Cassandra Marie Hutcheson grew up in Rockwall, where she was home schooled for her last three years of high school. After studying Horticulture at Stephen F. Austin for two years, she went to Lubbock for two years, where she earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Horticulture, maintaining a 3.9 Grade Point Average. After spending the summer of 2020 in Harper, she entered graduate study in Horticulture at Texas A&M University, where she aspires to complete her PHD degree in August of 2024. She has made the Dean's List and President's list at all three universities. During May through June of 2019, Cassie participated in a program in Spain studying Wine Production and Culture.

Cassie has been exposed to various aspects of Horticulture through various jobs, internships, and teaching assistantships. During the past school year, she worked in floriculture labs and demonstrated floral designs. She designed and conducted experiments on the effects of cold stratification and potassium nitrate on the germination speed, flowering rate, and biomass for a particular seed. She worked on research projects in viticulture and enology, collecting and processing data, on enzyme digestions and gel migrations for a microbial enology project. She also spent a summer in Dayton, Ohio, interning for Monrovia Nursery Company, acquiring skills and knowledge in tissue culture, grafting, seedling propagation, perennial production, and the associated shipping, sales, and marketing. Her dissertation projects include consumer analysis regarding willingness to pay more for sustainably produced wines and researching the economic benefits of using "green juice" in grape and wine production practices. When she was 16, Cassie set a goal to graduate from college by the age of 20, which she has achieved. Another goal is to complete her university education while being debt-free. She appreciates our scholarship to help her in that effort. After graduating with her PHD, Cassie hopes to be an independent representative for the entire Texas grape industry on the benefits of producing grapes in environmentally friendly ways. After graduating with her PHD, Cassie hopes to be an independent representative for the entire Texas grape industry on the benefits of producing grapes in environmentally friendly ways.

Chile Pequin produces a feast for the birds in the dappled shade of a tree.

By Cindy Anderson
Native Plant Society of Texas
Master Gardener

Chile Pequin: a spectacularly NICE plant for summer

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

CHILE PEQUIN

This summer season (which begins on Sunday, June 20), the Kerrville and Fredericksburg NPSOT chapters are featuring **Chile Pequin** *(Capsicum annuum)* at five local nurseries as their N.I.C.E. Plant of the Season.

Also known as Chile Petin or Bird Pepper, Chile pequin is a much sought-after perennial native hot pepper that is well behaved in the garden. It makes a delightful woodsy-looking small shrub in the semi-shade of a tree, or as a small accent plant in sunnier locations. It has beautiful small, smooth, heart-shaped leaves. It blooms continuously throughout spring, summer, and fall with small white flowers. The flowers soon produce a profusion of small, elongated, very hot edible red peppers loved by many birds -- especially our state bird, the mockingbird.

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These peppers often spread from seed, but is not invasive by any means. It adapts to a wide variety of soil types (sand, loam, caliche, or limestone) and either moist or dry conditions. Plants grown in full shade will be somewhat thin, while those grown in more sun produce a thicker branching structure. It is happiest in the dappled shade beneath a tree.

As for deer-resistance, young plants are very susceptible to browsing until the red hot peppers appear. Unlike birds, who will happily eat the hottest of chile peppers, deer (and most other mammals) are quite affected by the painful effects of capsaicin (the substance that makes chile peppers hot.) So if a deer takes a bite of this hot pepper, it will not return for more.

Chile pequin is the native chile pepper from which many edible chilies have been derived. Its natural range extends from tropical America through the southernmost tip of Texas, north to Waco, east to Florida, and west to Arizona. In the Hill Country, Chile pequin is deciduous (loses its leaves in winter) and rarely reaches over two to three feet tall. It may freeze to the ground during the winter, but its dead stems can be cut back to the ground and it will come back from its roots the following spring. Further south it may be evergreen and grow up to 5' tall.

Add a few Chile pequin plants to your landscape this summer, near a window if possible, to enjoy watching the mockingbirds pick from them daily. Mass plantings of Chile pequin are spectacular. And if you'd like to add some fire to your cooking, dry some of the mature red peppers on a sheet of newspaper for a few days, then grind them up and keep in a shaker by the stove. They are very good in egg and meat dishes or can be used like crushed red pepper (though much hotter) on pizza, grilled veggies, etc.

Chile pequin has a close relative, the Chiltepin, which is even smaller and hotter. Chiltepins grow wild from Peru to the southwestern U.S. In 1997, Texas designated the Chiltepin (or Chile tepin) as the Official State Native Pepper of Texas. About the size of peppercorns, this pepper, smaller and rounder than the Chile pequin, is usually sold dried.

Picking Chile pequins and Chiltepins is more like picking berries than anything else. The stem remains on the plant while the peppers just pop off. It is actually very satisfying to pick them. Just don't touch your eyes, and make sure to wash your hands afterward. It's probably not a job for young children.

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WHERE TO FIND IT—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

Special Opportunity Garden

Work has continued at the garden even though the clients have not returned since the Covid Shut-down

Photo Credit: Pat Wolters

Clockwise:

- **Donna Bellis with Imelda Horne showing off the new tool to turn the compost**
- **Cover crops were grown to improve the soil but we just couldn't have a garden without tomatoes**
- **Close up of compost tool**
- **After cutting the cover crops, cardboard was placed over the raised beds to protect the soil until we plant again—Maybe fall?**

Bio – Virginia L. Sawin

I grew up in rural Indiana, completed a bachelor degree at Indiana University majoring in Zoology. This was followed by masters degree in Biology at Boston University and then a doctoral degree at the University of Notre Dame, where my interest in insects started. The advisor whom I chose was a geneticist who used fruit flies (*Drosophila melanogaster)* as the subject of genetic studies. I was required to take a course in entomology taught by George Craig, a noted entomologist.

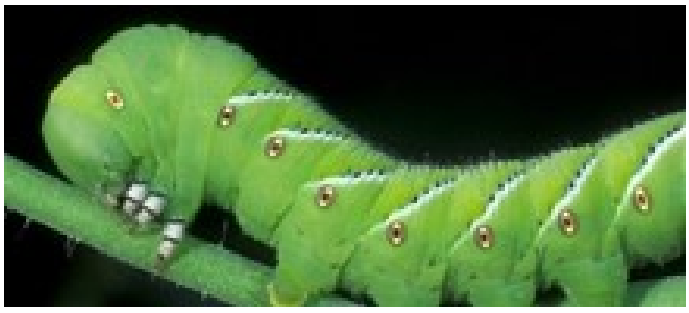
Completion of that degree was followed by several years of research, again using the fruit fly as the subject for genetic studies. Finally, I got a real job! I was hired by Shell Chemical in their Genetic Toxicology Department. Then an offer from Pittman-Moore (an animal health company) to manage their genetic toxicology testing took us to Indiana. After several years, I left that position to set up an independent consulting firm to monitor animal research studies. This decision gave us the opportunity to live wherever we wanted as long as there was a major airport in the area. We looked in Texas since my husband and I each had a son living in Houston. In 2001 we found a beautiful spot and with two dogs and five horses, we moved to Fredericksburg.

I have been a member of the Texas Master Naturalists and the Native Plant Society for several years, and taught Biology a couple of semesters at Austin and San Antonio Community Colleges. Mostly retired now and enjoying the Hill Country!

August Continuing Education Program

"What's in Your Garden?"

To learn more about these critters—attend the HCMG program in August!



Minutes
HCMG Monthly meeting
July 7, 2021
Hill Country Youth Event Center

Pledge of Allegiance
Invocation – Rev. Allen Noah
Verification of Quorum – Donna Nutt
Approval of June 2,2021 minutes as published in the newsletter
Treasurer's Report – Jackie Connelly

Jackie reported June 30, 2021 balances of $43,517.35 in Guadalupe Bank and $28,620.74 in Security State Bank.

Photo Credit: Mark Shultz

Committee Reports

Research Desk Committee
Anne Brown mentioned that the Research Desk needs volunteers and passed a sign up sheet around the room.

Junior Master Gardener (JMG)
Anne Brown reported that Angela Fiedler is running a camp for 4H Clovers, children K-3 through 3rd grade and needs help planning and executing some gardening activities. Anne said it would take 1-2 hours and will take place in the garden behind the extension office. The garden will be cleaned out by the older 4H kids prior to the Clover activity. Jackie Connelly mentioned that the time spent on prepping and planning the activity counts as volunteer hours as well as the time spent working with the children.

B&B report – Janell Dahms – Janell is ready to gear up for next year's B&B sale. Members signed up last month to assist in revamping the plant identification sheets and she said she'll contact them by the end of August.

Education – Donna Bellis – Donna asked for volunteers to sign up for the education committee and sent a sign up sheet around. She would like a meeting July 29 at 1:00 but is willing to be flexible about a regular meeting date. Jackie Connelly asked how many class applications have been submitted. Donna said 14-15. Donna and Anne encouraged members to encourage interested friends, neighbors, and associates to sign up early before class fills up. Donna mentioned the Texas MG website has an online class offering some modules but not all of the modules included in the HCMG class, especially hill country specific modules.

Unfinished Business
VMS = Jackie Connelly - Jackie reported VMS was down again but would be up soon

New Business

Announcements –Rev. Allen Noah from Glory Community Garden addressed the group with a touching thank you for the partnership between city of Kerrville, HCMG, and Glory, and Peterson Health.

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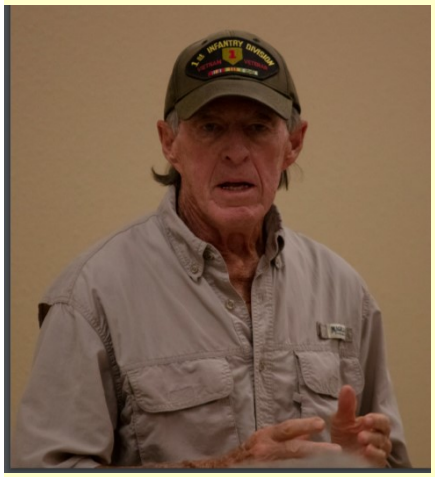
He thanked Anne Brown and HCMG for extending a scholarship for him to attend MG class and certify 8 years ago. He explained how this partnership changed the face of the community by easing food disparities, assisting with transportation needs, and increased access to health care. The latest benefit is a $500,000 grant from City of Kerrville to remodel the Doyle Center to accommodate a commercial kitchen and 2 new raised bed gardens to provide fresh vegetables for the food pantry and teach food preservation methods. He thanked HCMG for their role in improving the quality of life for citizens of Kerrville. Anne Brown presented Rev. Noah with a certificate of appreciation for his role in the partnership and thanked him for allowing HCMG to participate. She also presented a gift certificate from the Plant Haus 2.

President Anne Brown presenting Allen Noah with certificate of appreciation at July meeting



Tom Collins, MG Master Gardener for over 20 years

Butterfly Class and Count
Tom Collins announced a butterfly program at the library Sat, July 10th at 10:30 in the lower level classroom. He also announced that the Love Creek butterfly count was cancelled again due to rain. A new date will be scheduled for later this month.

Anne ended the meeting with a giveaway of a diverse selection of items, including logo wear, current and not so current, books, seeds, gloves, and other items.

Next meeting – August 4, at the Expo Hall
August CE "What's in Your Garden" (see page 8 for details)
Adjournment

Submitted by Donna Nutt
HCMG Secretary
July 14, 2021

Alien Fruit

By Dee Dunton, MG

So, we have an entire garden plot that popped up when Ray dumped the compost bin. When dozens of tomatoes came up, I decided to leave them for an experiment.

However, we identified some sort of "squash" vine in the mix but no squash appeared. Today when I was looking among the foliage for tomatoes, I was very surprised to find this melon. What's even more surprising is that I don't eat melons and we don't buy them.

Continued from page 6

Why go native? To sustain our local ecosystem, native plants are essential, and many non-native plants are extremely detrimental. Non-natives may seed out more easily, grow faster, and use more water – proliferating and crowding out native species until the natives become extinct. Native plants, on the other hand, have lived here for centuries (without fertilizer or pesticides); have evolved to withstand our temperature and moisture extremes and our poor soil; and have supported the local wildlife by providing food and shelter for our native animals, birds and insects. As they are forced to compete with non-native plants for resources, the native plants become fewer and fewer until they are crowded out or eaten to extinction.

– From the Native Plant Society of Texas, Kerrville Chapter and Fredericksburg Chapter:

The Kerrville Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas hosts monthly programs at the Riverside Nature Center, 150 Francisco Lemos St., Kerrville, September through May. See npsot.org/kerrville for details.

The Fredericksburg Chapter of NPSOT meets monthly at Presbyterian Memorial Church, 601 North Milam Ave., Fredericksburg. See npsot.org/fredericksburg for details.