

December 2020

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**HCMG  
Christmas  
Lunch & Meeting**

**December 2, 2020  
12:00 noon  
Riverhill Country  
Club**

**Merry**

**Christmas**



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## President’s Message

Rachel Garrison

*“A mind that is stretched by new experiences can never go back to its old dimensions.”*

**Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.**

December already? It hardly seems possible!

As we move into the final month of 2020, I begin the last month of my term as your president. When the ride began in January of 2019, my head was filled with “what was I thinking” by agreeing to step into this position. I’m a very novice gardener; speaking in public terrifies me; I don’t like making decisions for others, etc., etc..... all of these thoughts plagued me. But, all of that was **before** I got to know all of you so well. You have been patient and supportive. You have made the duty easy and enjoyable. The time as president has caused me to grow and stretch in areas that started as uncomfortable, but evolved into enjoyable experiences as I became more familiar with all that the position required.

From our hard-working committee and project chairs, to those of you who are our unsung heroes putting in countless hours without much recognition, we are a team. Each one of us plays an important role in the success of Hill Country Master Gardeners. Since most of us are retired, we have time to do more of what we enjoy, and for most of us, that is gardening. As we meet together, learn together, and work together, we can appreciate all the gardening challenges living in the Hill Country provides. We use our knowledge and experience to help others with that challenge too.

As our President elect, Anne Brown, begins her term in January, I plan to support her in every way possible. With all the difficulties COVID has caused to each of us personally and to us as an organization, HCMG faces some unknowns and obstacles to get back to our more normal activities. I certainly don’t plan to “retire” from the organization. 2021 will provide me with a job change within the organization and I’m looking forward to some new opportunities to serve. The children’s television icon Fred Rogers said it best when he remarked, “Often when you think you're at the end of something, you're at the beginning of something else.”

Thank you to all of you who have been so supportive. Best wishes to our new Executive Team. I am confident that we are in good hands!

## Trees and Their Color

By Carol Hagemeyer, MG



I want to show the different trees and colors if gardeners want to have a variety.

1. My native Sumac.
2. This is my neighbor's big tooth maple in her front yard. Absolutely gorgeous.
3. This is a Shantung maple. It does very well here, even though some people says it doesn't I say otherwise, shows more yellow in the fall.



4. This tree is a Sumac. Not a native Sumac, but it has done very well here. If we had more rain they would probably be more colorful.





## Hill Country Veggies

By Allen Mace

Fall is a great time of the year. I love the cooler weather. There is nothing like sitting on the back porch in the cool of the morning with a cup of hot coffee to start the day.

I still have one jalapeno pepper that is still producing and a few tomato plants that are trying to produce as well. We had some colder weather a few weeks ago that slowed everything down. I pulled the last of the squash plants last week. I suspect the pepper and tomatoes might not last too much longer. Any day now we could get that frost that will be their demise.



**Jalapeno Pepper**



**Tomato**

I ordered three different garlic's this year, a Deerfield Purple, a Purple Glazer and a Transylvanian. I will plant them next week, hopefully. Normally garlic is planted in mid-October. I just got them a few days ago but they should be OK.



**Garlic**

This is the time of year to be thinking of green leafy plants. My favorite green leafy plant this time of year is Swiss Chard. Swiss Chard is easy to grow and tolerates cool weather. It will grow into the spring and early summer. One thing I like is that it does not get bitter if we get a temperature spike. It can be eaten raw if picked early or it can be cooked as the leaves get bigger. The larger stalks can be cut up and cooked and added to soups and stews. The young leaves make a nice addition to a salad mix. If you do not pick all the leaves at once, it should produce on and on throughout the seasons.



**Swiss Chard**

My Lambs Quarter has produced a lot of seeds and I look forward to collecting the seeds soon. I left it alone this year because I wanted a seed crop. The last seeds were starting to lose their viability and now I should be good to go for a few more years.



**Hiking the Trails  
at  
Joshua Springs  
Park & Preserve**

Photo Credit:  
Pat Wolters

Great trails for  
hiking, biking,  
birding &  
picnicking

See page 10 for more  
details



Above: Capturing water for wildlife-Right: Bird blind





Photo Credit: Pat Wolters

**More details on Page 10**

**Biking the Trails  
at  
Brazos Bend  
State Park**



**A Magnificent Migration...**



Millions of monarch butterflies undertake an incredible 3,000-mile journey each year—even though each one weighs less than a paper-clip! Isn't that amazing?

Monarch butterflies stopover at Brazos Bend State Park on their way to Mexico each fall. After overwintering in the Mexican Sierra Madre Mountains, these amazing insects fly north through Texas and stop here again to lay eggs on native milkweed plants in our butterfly garden.

Monarch butterfly populations have sharply declined in recent years due to increased use of pesticides, habitat destruction, and loss of overwintering habitat. YOU can help us protect these amazing creatures!



With some social distancing,  
**Dave Kinneberg**  
received his certificate and pin  
at an Executive Committee  
meeting from mentor,  
Anne Brown.

Photo Credit: Rachel Garrison



Above: Chimney sweep tower at Joshua Springs Park



**Wil Roff** taking the plant out while the fence is being fixed in the Demo Garden

Photo Credit:  
Anne Brown

**HCMG Monthly Business Meeting  
November 4, 2020,  
Hill Country Youth Event Center &  
Zoom Minutes**

**Call to Order** (Silence your cell phone.)  
**Pledge of Allegiance**- Rachel Garrison  
**Invocation** –Patti Schlessiger  
**Verification of Quorum** – Donna Nutt  
**Approval of October 7, 2020 Minutes** - approved

**Executive Committee Reports**

**Treasurer’s Report – Jackie Connelly –**

Jackie reported the purchase of rain barrels and said the detailed treasurers report is on VMS. Rachel then discussed the scholarship fund, its history, the effect low interest rates have on the corpus and the contribution of rain barrel sales to the corpus. She said we award two scholarships per semester. Candidates must be juniors with excellent records, attending one of the four Texas schools with horticulture programs.



**Standing Committee Reports**



**Demo Garden – Jackie Skinner-**

Jackie brought in a worn garden sign and asked for artistic volunteers to restore the sign for the demo garden. Melayne Arnold volunteered. Jackie also reminded the group of the demo

gardens sections needing to be adopted. Rachel held up the Monarch Waystation certificate and said it would be framed and hung in the office.

**Education - Rachel Garrison**

- Rachel mentioned that Donna Bellis is working toward a February class. She said the room is large enough to accommodate social distancing, but mentioned that MG’s may be limited in auditing sessions. Rachel mentioned the ongoing need for facilitators and mentors and suggested combining auditing selected classes with volunteering as facilitators for those classes. Classes need two facilitators and Donna pairs a new volunteer with an experienced volunteer.



Rachel and Melayne at meeting

**In-House Programs – Edna Platt–**

Edna reminded the group of her December retirement as Chair of In-House Programs. She said she has no programs scheduled for 2021 but is progressing on programs for February and March and she has a list of interesting programs to provide her replacement with to investigate for the rest of the year

**Junior Master Gardener -Rachel Garrison**

Rachel reminded the group that the Jr. Master Gardener committee needs a replacement chairperson for Kim Courtwright. She said Kim has training resources and supplies to share with a willing volunteer.

***Continued on page 8***

**Photo Credit:  
Mark Shultz**

Minutes continued from page 7

**Unfinished Business**

**Volunteer of the Year –Rachel Garrison –** Rachel asked members to submit nominations for volunteer of the year by 11/15/2020. She asked for a paragraph or two in support of the candidate.

**Christmas Charity - Meeting – Bandera County – Rachel Garrison-** Rachel reported that Jan Grimes recommended Bandera County Helping Hands and the Executive Committee accepted the suggestion. She invited Sue Hall to the podium to share details of her visit to the charity and the many benefits they provide to Bandera County.

Rachel said in kind donations will be accepted during the last week of November at the extension office. Dave Kinneberg will monitor a donation box on the extension office porch. Gift cards and checks payable to Bandera Helping Hands should be mailed by November 27 or brought to the Christmas Luncheon.



**Sue Hall**

**New Business**

**Election of 2021 Officers–Rachel Garrison-** Rachel presented the 2021 slate of officers. Debbie Bacon moved to vote by acclamation. Melayne Arnold seconded the motion. The membership voted to accept the slate as

presented. The candidates will be installed in December.

President-Anne Brown  
Vice President - Patti Schlesiger  
Treasurer - Jackie Connelly  
Secretary - Donna Nutt

**Announcements**

**Advanced Training - Duane Robinson –**

Duane reported that Steve Cheney, director of advanced training, produced two Zoom training programs in 2020 with three upcoming 2021 programs. Check the TMG website for details.



**Certificate Presentations**

Rita Aliperto/Bee Evans  
Linda Kaiser/ Patti Schlessiger  
**(see pictures on page 9)**

**Christmas luncheon- Rachel Garrison -The**

Christmas luncheon will be held at Riverhill Country Club at 12:00 on December 2, 2020. Social distancing will be implemented. Jackie Connelly announce 38 reservations had been paid so far. The reservation deadline is November 20. Rachel announced that Roy Walston and his wife Serena will attend the Luncheon and be awarded thank you gifts for their years of service.

HCMG volunteer agreements and 2021 dues are due by December 31.

**Photo Credit:  
Mark Shultz**



Minutes continued from page 8  
**HCMG volunteer agreements  
 and 2021 dues are due by  
 December 31, 2020.**



**Next meeting –  
 December 2, 2020  
 at  
 Riverhill Country  
 Club**

**Adjournment**

**Submitted by Donna Nutt  
 HCMG Secretary  
 November 11, 2020**

CE Program for November

Below: **Rick Fink, Beekeeper**  
 presented on his work with bees and his  
 business of bee consulting  
 and removal in the Hill Country.



Above: Patti Schlessiger hands the Master Gardener Certificate to her mentee, Linda Kaiser.  
 Below: Rita Aliperto receives her Master Gardener Certificate.



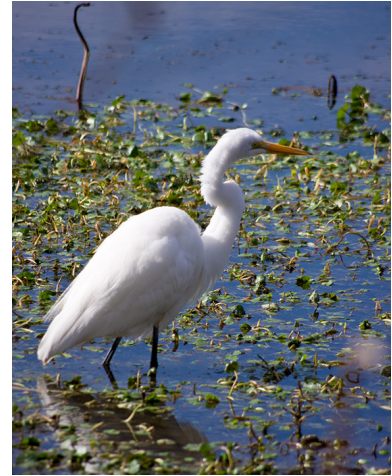
**Humans & Honey Bees**

*Past, Present, Future*



**Photo Credit:  
 Mark Shultz**

**Brazos Bend State Park** is a 4,897-acre state park along the Brazos River in Needville, Texas, run by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. The park is a haven for a diverse mix of native wildlife and plants covering an equally diverse range of ecosystems. Brazos Bend contains areas of coastal prairie, bottomland forest, and a wide range of wetlands including open and semi-open lakes and transitional marshlands. Highlights of the Park's numerous inhabitants include over 300 species of resident and visiting migratory birds and mammals such as the white-tailed deer, nine-banded armadillo, raccoon, and North American river otter. The most noteworthy and popular residents of the park are the relatively large population of American alligators. The park is open year-round, with the exception of several weekends a year during which it is closed for controlled hunts to manage the white-tailed deer population.



A great egret wades in the shallows of 40 Acre Lake, Brazos Bend State Park, TX

**The 365-acre Joshua Springs Park** has plenty of things to do. The preserve has three bluebird trails, two chimney swift towers, and tons of picnic areas. You can also hike to the waterfall (not there now because of the draught).

**Park Office: 716 FM 289  
Comfort, TX 78013 : Exit 533  
Phone: 830.537.3470  
Park Hours: 11/6/20—2/28/2021  
7:00 am - 6:00 pm**



## Plants That Grow Here



**Persimmon**  
*Diospyros texana*

Texas persimmon has fed man and beast for millennia. It produces black berries that taste like sweet prunes. Male and female flowers grow on separate plants and it is not uncommon to see a barren tree next to a fruit-laden tree.

American Indians used the fruit to treat mouth sores and hemorrhoids and used the juice to dye leather and hair. The bark was chewed to relieve heartburn. The wood has been used to make digging sticks, tool handles, and walking canes.

Deer, coyote, foxes, ringtails, and raccoons depend on persimmons for food. These animals, along with turkeys and other birds, disperse the tree through unchewed seeds in their feces. Little mounds of consumed seeds can be found throughout the natural area.



**Lindheimer Muhly**  
*Muhlenbergia lindheimeri*

Native only to the Edwards Plateau of central Texas, big muhly or Lindheimer's muhly has become popular as an elegant, large-scale specimen grass. The species is named for Ferdinand Jacob Lindheimer (1801-1879), the Father of Texas Botany, due to his work as the first permanent-resident plant collector in Texas.

Lindheimer muhly is a two to five feet perennial bunchgrass with fine foliage and a fountain-like form. It is a fair to good livestock and wildlife forage and its leaves provide nesting material for birds.



**Prickly Pear** *Opuntia engelmannii*

The much maligned, incredibly useful prickly pear, the official Texas state plant, is one of the most historically important plants in the state.

Split pads sewn together and used as water bags, carrying pouches, and cooking pouches have been found in archaeological sites. After removing the spines, the pads can be eaten raw, steamed, boiled, or roasted.

The inner mucilaginous gel from split pads is a centuries-old ranch remedy to treat minor burns, wounds, and tarantula and snake bites. Mixed with charcoal, the gel is an emergency sun block.

Nothing on the prickly pear goes unused. Every part of the cactus, including stems, flowers, fruit, seeds, spines, and even sap, has been used from prehistoric to contemporary times.



**Agarita** *Berberis trifoliolata*

Virtually every part of the agarita plant is used for food, medicine, dye, or shelter.

The yellow coloring of the stems and roots was prized by American Indians and settlers as a source of dye. Crushed berries became face paint and paint for ceremonial objects.

Valued by both humans and wildlife, the abundant spring crop of red berries feeds birds and can be made into jelly that Texans have been producing for generations.

The roots contain antimicrobial alkaloids and decoctions were used to relieve joint stiffness, toothache, stomach troubles, and constipation. A cold tea treated scorpion stings and the bark was chewed to treat gum diseases.



**Little Bluestem**  
*Schizachyrium scoparium*

The dominant forage of the tall grass prairie and one of the "big four" grasses. It provides screening and nesting cover for wildlife and good forage for cattle. Its roots, which grow five to eight feet long, enable it to resist moderate drought conditions. The plant turns a brilliant bronze after frost.



**Switchgrass**  
*Panicum virgatum*

Switchgrass is a dominant bunchgrass found in the original tall grass prairie and is one of the "big four," along with indiangrass, little bluestem, and big bluestem. It is a perennial and grows in large clumps up to nine feet tall. Its roots are quite vigorous, sometimes growing 10 to 11 feet long, making it good for soil erosion prevention.

Switchgrass is very nutritious. Birds and mammals eat the seeds and foliage and use the plant for cover. It serves as a larval host for many different butterfly species.



**Sideoats grama**  
*Bouteloua curtipendula*

Not only is sideoats grama the state grass of Texas, this medium-tall bunch grass mixes well in plantings with spring wildflowers because it stays short during spring. It is often found growing with little bluestem.

Purplish, oat-like spikelets uniformly line one side of the stem, bleaching to a tan color in fall. Birds love the ripe seeds. Sideoats grama increases rapidly when its site is damaged by drought or grazing.




**Hill Country Master  
Gardeners 2020  
Executive  
Committee**

Rachel Garrison  
*President*

Debra Bacon  
*Vice President*

Donna Nutt  
*Secretary*

Jackie Connelly  
*Treasurer*

Jackie Skinner  
*Ex-officio Advisor*

*C.E.A. Advisor*  
Angela Fiedler

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

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**Cistern at Brazos Bend State Park**

This structure is a “cistern” or underground tank for holding water. It dates to the mid-nineteenth century. The builders used low fired bricks made from locally available sandy clay to construct it. Before the advent of running water, cisterns such as this one provided a means to collect and store rainwater for cooking, washing and drinking. People rarely use cisterns today, because modern running water is much easier to keep clean and safe to drink. We still collect rainwater in barrels for our plants—right Anne?



**Last of the Harvest**

Several of our most popular vegetables are members of the large nightshade family, or Solanaceae. This family also includes some extremely toxic plants, such as bittersweet and deadly nightshade (belladonna). But even our familiar garden crops can be poisonous if eaten in large enough quantities. All of these vegetables contain chemicals called glycoalkaloids to some



Pat Wolters' latest garden harvest.

extent, potatoes can be the most toxic. An adult who eats 2-4 pounds of potato skins or 3 pounds of whole baking potatoes (who would do this?) can suffer severe digestive distress if the potatoes were high in glycoalkaloids. Don't eat a potato with green skin, which indicates the presence of solanine. Also never eat a shoot from a potato “eye”.

**“Book of Garden Wisdom” by Cynthia Van Hazinga**