

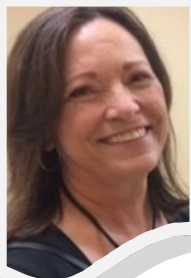
December, 2019

Volume 17, Issue 12

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President's Message

Rachel Garrison

"What good is the warmth of summer, without the cold of winter to give it sweetness"

John Steinbeck

December is upon us and many of the enjoyable outdoor gardening activities have all but ceased.

Planting trees, raking leaves into beds, covering and uncovering tender vegetation, planning a garden expansion project, or dreaming of spring may help to chase away the winter doldrums. As Christmas approaches, a gardener's interest just might turn indoors to keeping the Christmas tree from drying out and quickly dropping its needles or, perhaps caring for a beautiful poinsettia. I'd bet most people are unaware that December 12 is National Poinsettia Day!

My early childhood years were spent in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas, a climate very favorable to growing citrus trees. With plenty of sunshine, humidity and moderate temperatures, the climate is also favorable for growing poinsettias. Many of our neighbors had large, leggy poinsettia shrubs bearing pale red flowers growing in their front yards. Most of the poinsettia shrubs I remember bore little resemblance to the beautiful, lush plants available to purchase just about everywhere this time of year.

The poinsettia (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*) is native to Mexico where it is commonly known as the Flor de Nochebuena. Nochebuena, meaning a good night, is also the name Mexicans use for Christmas Eve. The Nochebuena is a Christmas flower of Mexican legend. It is said that a little girl on her way to Christmas mass had no gift to present to the Christ child. She picked some leafy green weeds on her way to church. When she placed the plants on the altar, they miraculously turned to bright red making the gift more fitting. In addition to the legend, the star-shaped leaf pattern is thought to symbolize the star of Bethlehem. The red color represents the blood sacrifice of Christ.

The plant gets its English name from Joel Roberts Poinsett who was the first United States ambassador to Mexico. A physician and an amateur botanist, Poinsett brought the poinsettia to the U.S. in about 1828. Poinsett found the plant in southern Mexico and sent cuttings back to his home in South Carolina. Albert Ecke, a German immigrant living in the Los Angeles area, loved the plant and sold it along with dairy and orchard products. Ecke's son, Paul, developed a grafting technique. The Ecke family is credited with advancing the association of the poinsettia with Christmas.

Continued on page 2

President's message continued from page 1

For many years the Ecke family has had a monopoly on the sale of poinsettias in the U.S.

Through the years, I have often tried to nurse my poinsettias along during and after the holidays without much success. In doing some research for this article, I discovered some of my reasons for failure. Neglect. Especially during the holidays, my plants seem to be in the "survival of the fittest" mode. Very little of my time is devoted to caring for them. The poinsettia is a finicky indoor plant. It likes semi-cool, humid locations in bright, indirect light. It also needs plenty of moisture, but doesn't like "wet feet." After the bracts have fallen, decrease the watering and relocate the plant to a cool, dark area until spring. In the spring, cut the canes back to about 6 inches, pinch off the tips to encourage branching. Continue the pinching process once a month until mid August. As nights get longer, move the plant indoors. From September through November, the plant needs complete darkness for 12 hours per day, with plenty of light during the day. The poinsettia should then be ready for your holiday enjoyment.

One interesting tidbit of information if you are nervous about having a poinsettia around young children. The plant is only mildly poisonous. It is a common misconception that the plant is highly toxic. In a study of more than 22,000 cases reported to the American Association of Poison Control Centers there were no fatalities from exposure to poinsettias. Most exposures required no treatment. Although the sap can be mildly irritating to the skin or stomach if ingested, a study showed a 50 pound child would have to consume 500 bracts to ingest a harmful level of toxin.

As you enjoy Christmas with your family and friends, remember D. Poinsett, the amateur botanist who introduced us to the beautiful poinsettia! Merry Christmas!

Poinsettia information was gathered from various sources

Minutes continued from page 9

Charitable donation— Gillespie County, Food 4 Kids. Linda Proffitt will be collecting donations at the December meeting

Certification Presentations—Congratulations to Trudy Boardman and Laurie Kilpatrick who are mentored by Linda Proffitt.

Important reminder—January 8, 2020 Business Meeting, UGRA Office with the CEU presentation by 2 of our scholarship recipients.

Adjournment

Next meeting—Christmas Luncheon, December 4, 2019, Riverhill Country Club, Social at 11:30, lunch at 12:00 pm.

November CEU—Jan Wrede-Attracting Hill Country Birds (picture on right) Photo by Mark Shultz

Respectfully submitted:
Debbie Bacon Vice-President for Patti Schlessiger,
Secretary

Jan Wrede





Hill Country Veggies

By Allen Mace

Having just gone through the second cold snap of the season, its safe to say that all my tomatoes are done. I was able to pick 4 nice Cherokee Purple tomatoes before the freeze and they have ripened nicely sitting on my counter in the

kitchen. I have two small tomato plants, from seed I gathered this summer, but between going in and out of the house, cooler temperatures and less sunlight, they are fairly small, I doubt they will produce anything. I'll keep them for now. It's weird not having a winter garden this year. It has been many years since I had nothing growing in the beds. This is probably going to be a wet and cool winter so maybe it's a good time to take a break. An old friend of mine told me the other day that the acorns are falling without their hats on, the acorn cap. He said when this



Clean up time

happens that it signals cold and wet winters. This is a new one for me so I guess I will wait and see.

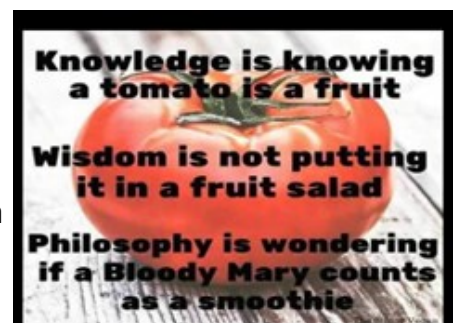


Ripening on the counter

There are still things to do this time of year, even through you may not be growing anything. It's always a good idea to clean up the garden area. There are lots of leaves falling and now is a good time to compost these. You can always buy compost next spring but homemade just seems to be better. If you can get some rye grass seed or some clover seed, throw it on you beds and water the seed in. Both rye and clover will add nitrogen and organic material to

the soil, and both are a good thing. Note to self: don't let it grow too tall as this will make it hard to till in.

For those hardy folks bound and determine to grow something, lettuce, collards, mustard greens, cabbage and Swiss chard are my go-to winter crops. Turnip should do well this time of year. Years ago, I use to grow onions. If you watch, the nurseries are getting their sets earlier now days, get them when you see them. I don't think you can get onions in too early. This winter, I plan to take it easy, clean things up, thumb through the seed catalogs when they come and hit the ground running in the Spring.



Just for fun



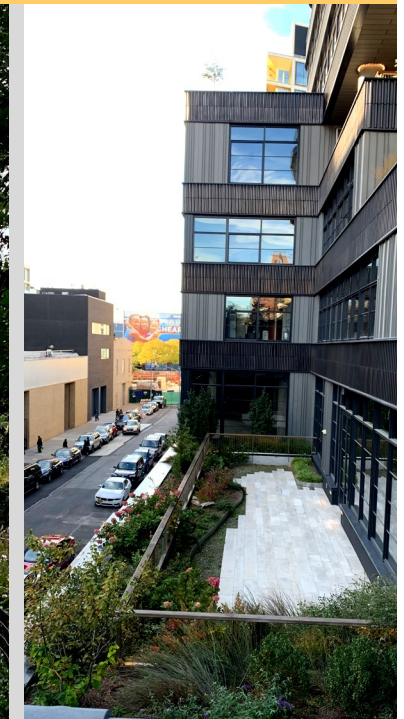
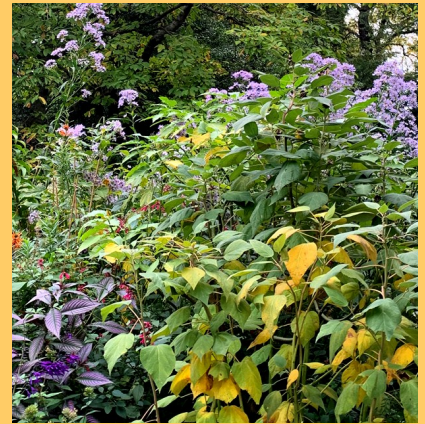
New York City on a Fall Day in 2019

My two daughters, Amanda and Sarah, and I visited New York on our way to Italy.

Clockwise from upper left

1. Shakespeare Garden in Central Park
2. Stairs leading to the Shakespeare Garden
3. Last bit of color before winter
4. Plantings around a patio in the city
5. Walking a path in Central Park
6. Rails to trails hiking path high above the city

Photo Credit: Pat Wolters





Greenhouse Rehab

The Greenhouse Committee has done an excellent job repairing greenhouses, and clearing the area around and behind the greenhouses. Thanks for your hard work!

1. Repairs to the greenhouse
2. New potting tables have been constructed and installed, also decomposed granite installed
3. Hard working greenhouse committee members (from left) Chuck Fitzsimmons, Jerry Clark, I'm guessing Terrie Clark, Linda Kaiser, Fernando Gonzalez, Janice Walker, Janell Dahms and Anne Brown
4. Janell Dahms, Greenhouse committee chair

Photo Credit: Mark Shultz



Certificates awarded to Interns from the Class of 2019



Two students completed the required hours to become certified as a Texas Master Gardener. They were presented certificates by their mentor at the November Hill Country Master Gardener monthly meeting.

Trudy Boardman and her mentor, Linda Proffitt



Laurie Kilpatrick and her mentor, Linda Proffitt

Photo Credit: Mark Shultz



Mentoring New Members is Fun!

By Debbie Bacon

Tommy Airhart is retiring as the Mentor Chair. Thank you Tommie for all your efforts over the years. Also thank you to Jackie Connelly for your help in this process!

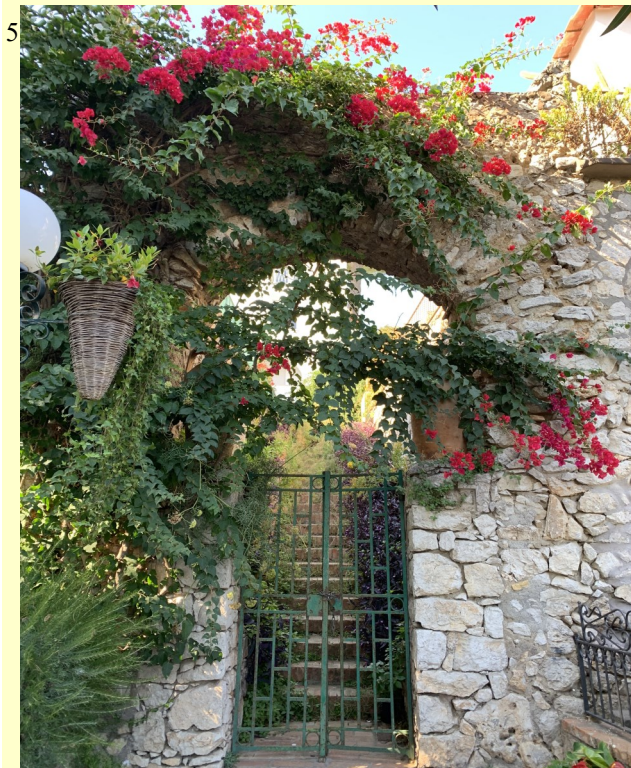
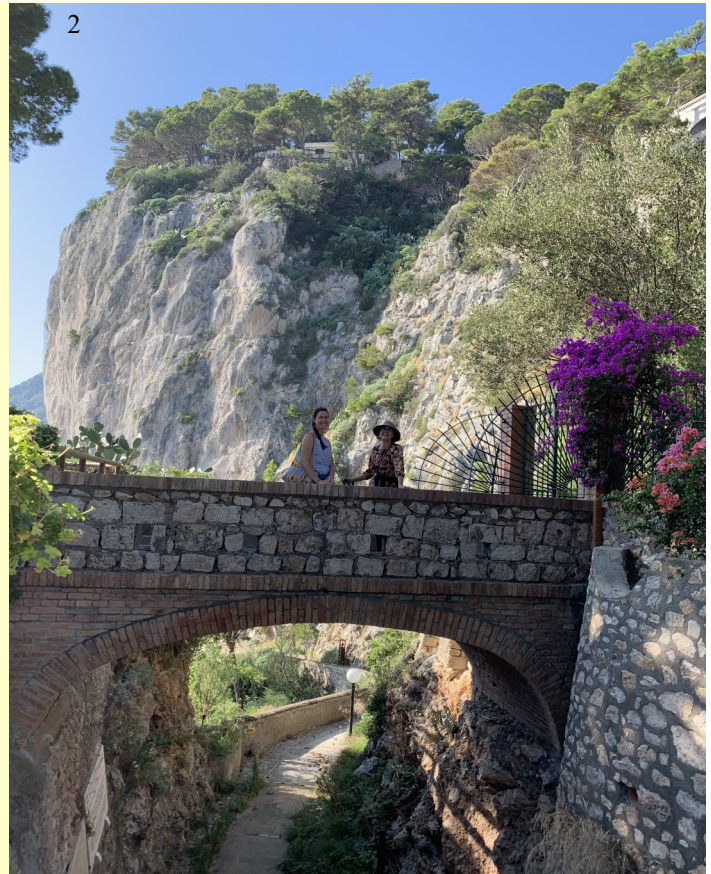
I am looking forward to taking over these responsibilities for the Class of 2020 along with Rachel Garrison as my co-chair. Please consider mentoring a student to guide them through the process of getting their certification. It is a great way to make them feel welcome to our group and get involved in our projects within the counties. We are already getting applicants. Please email me with questions or to sign up for this rewarding and fun experience

Dbake1010@live.com



Isle of Capri

1. View from the platform in the garden
2. Garden clinging to a cliff
3. Flowers in the Mediterranean similar to Hill Country but the statues let you know you're not in Texas
4. Daughter, Sarah, overlooking lemon trees
5. Bougainvillea at the garden gate **Photo Credit: Pat W**



The Amalfi Coast, Italy

The scenery is stunning with it's hill and harbor hugging towns and winding roads along a rock cliff with the Mediterranean a sheer 500 foot drop below. I have never seen towns with so many stairs. Rock planter boxes were everywhere so they can grow their favorites: eggplant, tomatoes, basil, potatoes, & peppers. You can't get a motorized vehicle close to many of the homes so they use donkeys to haul. These pictures are from the town of Praiano where we stayed in a B&B.



Photo
Credit:
Pat
Wolters



HCMG Monthly Business Meeting November 6, 2019

Call to order: Rachel Garrison called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance: Dee Dunton lead the pledge

Invocation: Was given by Patty Zohlen

Approval of October 2, 2019 minutes: Approved

Executive Committee Reports

Treasurer's Report—Bernadell Larson provided a handout of the expenditures and income and discussed pertinent issues. Approved

Standing Committee Reports

Demo Garden—Jackie Skinner reported two bids were submitted for repairs and refurbishing the pergola. The irrigation repairs might exceed \$2,000. A new hose bib was installed.

Education Committee:
Donna Bellis reported the next Education Committee meeting will be November 21st at 1:00 p.m. in the Extension meeting room. She said the new



manual cost \$100, there fore the tuition will be increased to \$200 to cover the cost of the book. Donna asked for an advance of \$2,500 to order new manuals as soon as they become available for 2020 class. Janell Dahms motioned to make advance, Melayne Arnold seconded, motion carried. The tuition of \$175 will be charged for the second person of a couple.

Greenhouse Committee:
Janell Dahms said the Blooms and Barrels will be Easter weekend, Saturday, April 12, 2020. Spa Day will be Thursday, April 9th with Moving Day being Friday, April 10th. There will be another function at the HCYEC on the same



weekend. The Greenhouse Committee will start buying plants in 2 months. They have worked very hard in clearing the area around and behind the greenhouses. New potting tables have been construction and installed, decomposed granite has been spread and repairs to greenhouse #1 are finished.

Karen Fuller requested assistance with getting the information accordion files up to date. Imelda Horne volunteered to help.

Public Programs:
Ray Tiemann gave an overview of the Tree Care Class and stated it was well attended. He thanked



all those who helped. There are 15 tree books remaining and are for sale for \$15.00. There have been numerous suggestions for additional classes.

Unfinished Business

*Photo Credit:
Mark Shultz*

New Business

Election of 2020 officers—Nominations for officers were presented to membership as follows: President –Rachel Garrison, Vice-President-Debbie Bacon, Treasurer-Jackie Connelly and Secretary-Patti Schlessiger (interim until Donna Nut is certified). The slate of nominees were confirmed by voice vote. They will be installed at the December meeting. Jackie Connelly was acknowledged for stepping up for the Treasurers position.

Announcements

Dues & Volunteer Agreement—\$20 due 12/31/2019

Christmas Luncheon—December 4, 2019 at Riverhill Country Club—\$20 due by Nov 22

Nominations for Volunteer of the Year Award due by Nov 13

Continued on page 2

**Hill Country Master
Gardeners 2019
Executive
Committee**

Rachel Garrison
President

Debra Bacon
Vice President

Patti Schlessiger
Secretary

Bernadell Larson
Treasurer

Jackie Skinner
Ex-officio Advisor

Roy Walston
C.E.A. Advisor

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

Newsletter & Website

Newsletter Editor
Pat Wolters

Associate Newsletter Editor
Patti Schlessiger

Special thanks to
Judy Beauford for
proofreading

Photographer
Mark Shultz

Continuing Education Editor
Raeann Reid

Webmaster
Stan Zwinggi

Submissions to

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Advice from a Tree

Stand tall and proud
Sink your roots into the earth
Be content with your natural beauty
Go out on a limb
Drink plenty of water
Remember your roots

Enjoy the view

Author unknown

I see this beautiful tree off Upper Turtle Creek Road on the Granada Spring Ranch every time I drive into town. Below—good morning daylight savings time Pat W



Merry Christmas from the Editor