

February 2020

Volume 18, Issue 2

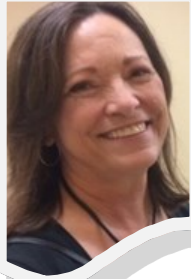
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HCMG will meet on
February 5, 2020
Kerr Co Youth Event Center

1:00 Business Meeting
2:00 Program:
Organic Gardening:
Garden in Harmony with
God’s System of
Agriculture
Ray Lang, former HCMG



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President’s Message

Rachel Garrison

“I’m like the trunk of a cactus... I take in a dose of culture and time with friends, then I retreat and go live on it for awhile until I get thirsty again.” Nancy Horan

During December and early January, my husband and I did a little traveling—two road trips to be exact. While some hate to spend long hours on the road, I rather enjoy the travel time. I must admit, my husband does most of the driving, allowing me to sit back and enjoy the ride. As a master gardener, I’m delighted with the variety of plants we see as we drive through so many different growing environments.

On our most recent trip, we drove to Phoenix, Arizona to visit family. Driving through west Texas, New Mexico and into Arizona provides quite a variety of plants to observe. The desert conditions surrounding El Paso make me very thankful to live in the Hill Country. Especially at this time of year, the landscapes in far west Texas are not very impressive. Driving through some parts of New Mexico are a little more rewarding to the eye, as one can see pecan, pistachio, and apple orchards. At times, remnants of the most recent cotton crop and assorted tumbleweeds blew by as we drove along through some parts of the state.

Arizona has mountains and desert, so there is a wide variety of plants to observe. Perhaps the most outstanding plant to see in Arizona is the saguaro cactus, pronounced *suh-WAR-oh*. The saguaro should be the poster plant for endurance, as it thrives in the most difficult conditions. This fascinating plant is found only in the Sonoran Desert, which includes southern Arizona and western Sonora, Mexico. As is the case for all plants, the conditions must be correct for the saguaro to grow. Temperature and available water are the most important factors. If the elevation is too high, cold temperatures kill the saguaro.



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HCMG 2019 Continuing Education Opportunities prepared by Raeann Reid

This list is for those wishing to attend educational offerings in addition to those offered by Hill Country Master Gardeners.

February 1, 11:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m., Cibolo Nature Center. Keith Amelung of Have Space, Will Travel will present a hands-on workshop: "Fruit Tree and Rose Pruning." \$15 members, \$20 non-members. Register at Cibolo.org. Herff Farm Teaching Garden.

February 4, 6:30 p.m. social, followed by the meeting at 7:00 p.m., NPSOT Boerne. Ryan Bass, City of Boerne Watershed Coordinator, will present "Riparian Conservation and Restoration." Cibolo Nature Center Auditorium. Visitors welcome.

February 5, 1:00 p.m. business meeting, 2:00 p.m., CE program, Hill Country Master Gardeners. Ray Lang, former HCMG, will present "Organic Gardening: Gardening in Harmony with God's System of Agriculture." Ray will discuss his own unique method of organic gardening that emphasizes the soil, humus and do-it-yourself techniques. Ray developed a small commercial organic garden in Dripping Springs that sold its produce to markets in the area. Hill Country Youth Events Center. HCMGs, interns.

February 7, 2020. 8:30 am-3:30 pm., Gillespie County AgriLife. Plantastic Vegetable Gardening Seminar. Special guest speaker Dr. Joe Masabni, Texas A&M, will present topics on organic gardening, cover crops and weed management. Other topics include tomatoes, beans, drip irrigation, herbs, basic gardening, when to harvest vegetables, etc. Preregistration by February 4 is \$40 with a box lunch, \$30 without lunch. Registration at the door is \$40 without lunch. <http://counties.agrilife.org/gillespie/files/2019/11/Plantastic-Gardening-Seminar-PreRegistration-Form4.pdf>. Gillespie County Farm Bureau Building.

February 8, 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., Monarch Larva Monitoring Project (MLMP) volunteer training. Speakers Cathy Downs of Monarch Watch and Craig Hensley of TPWD will cover MLMP project tagging, citizen science involving the monarch butterfly, and how volunteers can help with the declining monarch populations. Trained volunteers can join the team at the Kerr Wildlife Management Area or other monitoring sites or can monitor their own property. Register at gwaggener@flow-apps.com. Kerr Wildlife Management Area Bass Conference Facility.

February 8, 1:00-3:00 p.m., Riverside Nature Center Association. Karen Rockoff, ISA certified arborist, will pre-

sent and demo pruning dos and don'ts and equipment sanitization. Free; donations welcome. Riverside Nature Center.

February 11, 1:00 p.m. social, followed by the meeting at 1:30 p.m., NPSOT Kerrville. Kelley Conrad Simon, TPWD Urban Wildlife Biologist, will present a program on Texas wildscapes to assist in creating landscapes that are both visually appealing and attractive to appropriate wildlife. Riverside Nature Center. Visitors welcome.

February 12, 2:00 p.m., Rose Garden Club of Medina. Marcia Kauffman, Victoria County Master Gardener, will present "Growing and Arranging Succulents." Medina Community Center. Visitors welcome.

February 14, 12:00-1:00 p.m., Gillespie County AgriLife. GC AgriLife agents Beth McMahon and Shea Nebgen, will present "Grow It, Cook It: Caring Cabbage," the first of a three-part series in 2020. Recipes and tastings included. \$15 each or all three programs for \$25. Call GC Extension Office at 830.997.3452 to register. Gillespie County Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Office.

February 15, 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., Cibolo Nature Center. Craig Hensley, TPWD Texas Native Trackers, Biologist will present iNaturalist as a Land Survey Tool. Learn to use this app as a land management tool and to ID and document plants, birds, insects and more while contributing to citizen science. A nature walk documenting biodiversity with your phones and/or cameras will follow indoor classroom instruction. \$30.00 for members, \$40.00 for non-members. <https://www.cibolo.org/experience/events/calendar.html/event-form/i-naturalist-workshop/43316/tickets>. Cibolo Nature Center.

February 18, 1:00-2:00 p.m., Riverside Nature Center Association. Susan Longacre, Master Naturalist, will present "Gleaning Wildflowers." Riverside Nature Center.

February 24, 6:15 p.m. social, followed by the meeting at 7:00 p.m., Hill Country Master Naturalists. Craig Childs, program and ranch manager for Rogers Ranch, will present "Feral Pigs in the Hill Country: Confessions of a Novice Hog Trapper." Childs will provide an overview of the problem, will review management strategies, and will provide insights on how to integrate the tools for hog management that would be appropriate for a given property and management goals. GBNARC Auditorium. Visitors welcome. **Cont'd page 4**



Hill Country Veggies

By Allen Mace

It's a new year, a new decade and time to make those new year resolutions. I tend not to make the traditional kinds of resolutions. I like to make realistic kinds, you know, the ones you can keep. For instance, this year I will most likely not join a gym, just being real. It's doubtful that I'll eat any different. It's taken many, many years developing the habits I have now, why change. OK, seriously, I might eat better and exercise a little more, maybe. The average resolution has been blown by the time February rolls around, so this year I'm waiting until March to make any. But I am starting to think about the Spring planting season.

Last summer I collected seeds from the tomatoes that I grew. Before I get too involved in starting new tomato plants, I want to check and see if the seeds I collected are even viable. So how do I conduct a germination test? I'm still many weeks away from planting so now is a good time to see if the seeds are good or not. First thing I do is check to see if the seeds still look OK. I store them in a vial, the vial is dated and labeled. I shake the vial to make sure the seeds don't stick together. If they do then there might be moisture in the vial, that's not good. If moisture is present, then the seeds may not be viable.



Stored seed



Toweled seed

I then fold a paper towel and label it. I usually do batches of 10, that make the math easy to determine percentages later. I then moisten the paper towel. You can use a spray bottle and mist the towel, or you can wet it and squeeze excess water out. Either way, you don't want the towel soaking wet. Now place the seeds on the towel, under the numbers then fold the top part of the towel over on top of the seeds. Now the seeds are tucked away between two layers of moist paper towels. Carefully slip the moist paper towel into a plastic bag. This will help the towel to remain moist long enough for the seeds to germinate. I like to leave the top of the plastic bag

partially open. This allows for air exchange inside the plastic bag. Next, you want to place the bag in a warm area. At this point, light is not a factor. The temperature around the plastic bag should be above 70 degrees. Some folks will just leave it on the counter, some place it on top of the refrigerator. I put mine on top of the water heater in my utility room because my house tends to be a bit cool this time of year.

If all works well, you should check in about a week and hopefully the seeds will be sprouted. Divide the number of sprouted seeds by the total number of seeds, and you will have the percent germination, stay tuned.



Bagged seed



HCMG Training, 9:00 a.m. to noon and 12:30 to 3:00 p.m. Hill Country Youth Event Center. Trainees, interns and members. Class details on VMS. HCMGs/interns sign up on VMS to ensure enough seating.

February 18, a.m., introductions, orientation

February 18, p.m., Jessica Alderson TPWD, Backyard Wildlife

February 20, a.m., Travis Waiser, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Soils of the Hill Country

February 20, p.m., Chris Seifert, HCMG, Composting, Soil Amendments

February 25, a.m., Brenda Fest, HCMG, Plant Biology

February 25, p.m. Erin Davis, Texas A&M Forest Service, Trees: Selection, Maintenance and Disease Management

February 27, a.m. Jake Gosschalk, Texas A&M Forest Service, Fire-Wise Landscapes

February 27, p.m. Kim Cochran, Texas A&M AgriLife Research, Plant Pathology

February 25, 6:30 p.m. social, followed by the meeting at 7:00 p.m., NPSOT Fredericksburg. Robert Edmonson, Biologist, Texas A&M Forest Service, will discuss the vital role of understory trees and bushes that were a part of our Hill Country landscape heritage. He will offer advice on how to re-establish these trees/bushes. Memorial Presbyterian Church. Visitors welcome.

February 29, 8:00 a.m.-3:45 p.m., NPSOT and LBJ Wildflower Center. Native Plant Spring Symposium, teaching the benefits of native plants for maintaining biodiversity and attracting local wildlife. \$50 NPSOT or LBJWC members, \$60 non-members, for speakers, program topics, registration see

<https://npsot.org/wp/event/spring-symposium-2/>. Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center.

February 29, 1:00-5:00 p.m., HCMG. Fruit and Nut Program, including stone fruits, blackberries and nuts. See HCMG website home page for details. \$25 registration. Hill Country Youth Event Center.

February 29, 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Llano County Master Gardeners present "Llano Back to Basics Fair," a free sustainable living event. For more information, see <https://llanocountylibrary.wixsite.com/llanobacktobasics/attendee-information>. Llano County Library.

Addresses for programs on page 11



Cedar Elm: a really N.I.C.E. tree for the Hill Country

Cindy Anderson is a member of the Native Plant Society of Texas (Kerrville Chapter) and the Hill Country Master Gardeners.



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 Native Plants?

Paula Stone, new president of the Fredericksburg Native Plant Society, answers this question by referencing the points listed on the home page of the state website, NPSOT.org:

- 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

CEDAR ELM is the most prevalent elm in Texas. It is a very popular shade tree, medium-sized and nicely proportioned, with graceful branches and a single straight trunk. It grows in many soil types, is drought tolerant once established, and is easily transplanted. It is considered a relatively fast-growing tree. It normally reaches 30-50 feet tall in the Hill Country. It is deciduous – meaning it loses its leaves in winter – after providing beautiful golden yellow fall color. Its leaves are small and rough, and glossy green in the spring.

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Cedar Elm continued from page 5

This tree is called Cedar Elm because of the rough, cedar scale-like texture of the leaves and because it is often found in the western part of its range with Ashe Juniper (*Juniperus ashei*), which is locally called Cedar. The Latin species name *crassifolia* means “thick leaves.”

Cedar Elm grows naturally in Central and South Texas, eastern Oklahoma, and continues eastward to Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi. Though tolerant of drought, it also grows very well in flat river bottoms, can withstand poorly drained clay soils and heavy seasonal flooding, and can grow much larger in those areas.

Cedar Elm is the only native Texas elm that flowers and sets seed in the fall. The flowers are in small inconspicuous clusters of green at the bases of leaves, followed by small brown winged seed, about 3/8 inch long.

Like most natives, this tree is important to many species of wildlife. For birds it provides cover, nesting sites, insects, and seeds. The seeds are also consumed by turkey and many small mammals. Several species of butterflies – including the Mourning Cloak, the Question Mark, and the Painted Lady – use it for larval (caterpillar stage) food.

In addition, the leaves provide browse for deer. To prevent this, since the trunks of all young trees must be protected from deer rubbing, a wire cage can be extended up to the height of browsing deer to protect the lower leaves.

Cedar Elm is a tough, adaptable shade tree, often used in parking lots because of its very high heat tolerance. Although it is susceptible to Dutch Elm Disease, that appears to be much less of a problem with Cedar Elm than it is with American Elm or Winged Elm. Cedar Elm should be selected instead of any of the non-native invasive trees from China, such as Chinese Pistache, Chinese Tallow, and Chinaberry. In addition, Cedar Elm is a good substitute for Live Oak because of the slow-spreading but persistent Oak Wilt Disease that has decimated so many live oaks in the Hill Country.

Planting Instructions: Space plants 20-30 feet apart. Dig a hole at least two times wider than, but the same depth as the root ball in the nursery container. Sides of the hole should be irregular, not smooth. Remove plant from container, taking care to support the root ball. Loosen exterior roots gently with your fingers. If the plant is root-bound and cannot be loosened by hand, the outer roots may be cut in several places. Lift the plant by the root ball and place into the hole. Backfill hole, using soil that was dug out. Do not add any soil to the top of the root ball. Gently firm the soil with your hands, but do not tamp it down. Place 3-4 inches of mulch over the bare soil around, but not touching the base of the plant.

Watering Instructions: Water deeply after planting to settle soil around roots. Then every 7-10 days, as needed, during the first growing season. Before watering, check for soil moisture at a depth of an inch or two at the edge of the root ball. Skip a watering after a rainfall of ½ to 1 inch. Maintain this watering schedule until the first fall. Reduce watering during the cool fall and winter months. In a “normal” year, no watering may be necessary during the fall and winter, but during a dry period, monthly watering may be needed. Second Spring and thereafter: water monthly only during periods of drought. Once established, natives will survive with little supplemental irrigation.

HCMG Monthly Business Meeting

January 8, 2020,

Guadalupe Basin Natural Resources Center

Minutes

Call to Order (Please silence your cell phone.)-Rachel Garrison called the meeting to order.

Pledge of Allegiance-Christine Snyder led the membership in the pledge.

Invocation-Ray Tiemann gave the invocation.

Verification of Quorum – Patti Schlessiger verified a quorum was present.

Approval of December 4, 2019 Minutes-Approved as presented.

Executive Committee Reports

Treasurer’s Report – Jackie Connelly provided handouts of the Treasurer’s report. It was approved.

2020 Budget approval-Jackie Skinner moved we accept the budget for 2020, Patty Zohlen seconded and all approved.

Standing Committee Reports

Education – Donna Bellis announced the classes start February 18th. There are nine registered and one inquiry to date. The next Education Committee meeting will be January 23rd, at 1:00 p.m. in the Extension Office meeting room.

Green House–

Fernando Gonzalez said the committee will be buying plants starting January 20th or 27th. He said April 9th will be Spa Day, April 10th will be move day, and April 11th will be Blooms and Barrels.

Membership - Liz

Althaus said she would be emailing 32 members who need their background checks renewed. She asked for 2 or 3 volunteers to



review the transfer form. Pam Umstead and Keeley Porter volunteered.



Mentors – Debbie Bacon asked for mentor volunteers to sign up, and passed around a sign up sheet. Seventeen members signed up.



Propagation-Rachel announced that Peggy Ryan will be the new Propagation Chair. Peggy asked for everyone to be patient with her, as she is new to propagation.



Public Programs – Ray Tiemann announced an upcoming program on Fruits and Nuts. It will be held February 29th, 1:00-5:00 p.m. in the large classroom at the Hill Country Youth Event Center. The cost will be \$25.00. Roy Walston will present on

Pecans, Tim Hartman will present on Stone Fruits, Beth McMahon will present on Berries, and there will possibly be a Canning & Preserving Fruit presentation.

Publicity – Tina Woods asked members to spread the word of our upcoming class, and provided flyers for those who wish to post in different locations in their area.



Research Desk-Mark Schultz has volunteered to be chair of this committee. He will send out an email of when the meeting will be.

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Minutes cont'd from page 7

Unfinished Business

Demo Garden sprinkler repair-Rachel reported the work has been done, and we went over the budgeted amount. The cost is \$2,500. Debbie Bacon moved and Melayne Arnold seconded we pay the overage. Jackie Skinner explained the work done. All approved.

New Business

Announcements

State Conference, May 12-14, 2020
Discounted Registration ends January 20th.

Certification Presentation-Susan Mills received her certificate from her mentor, Raeann Reid.

Rachel gave a brief report on the Advanced classes that will be available this year and every three years.

Adjournment

Next meeting
February 5, 2020,
1 PM, HCYEC

February CEU
Ray Lang, Organic
Gardening

Respectfully
submitted:
Patti Schlessiger,



Pam Umstead receives 10 year certificate

Photo Credit:
Mark Shultz



Rachel was ready to present Tommie Airhart with her 20 year certificate

2019 Awards Presentations-Jackie Connelly presented awards to: 5 years-Debbie Bacon, Jackie Skinner & Wil Rolfe (pictured on right); 10 years-Pam Umstead; 15 years-Liz Althaus and 20 years-Tommie Airhart (not present).

Rachel reported that our donation to the Needs Council netted \$1,320 cash and three large boxes of food and miscellaneous items.

Duane Robinson was not present, but



HCMG 2019 Projects Report by Bob Huff, Special Projects Chairperson



In 2019, HCMG actively supported eight projects in Kerr County, five projects in Gillespie County, two projects in Bandera County, and three projects in Kendall County - for a total of 18 community projects. Three projects were de-activated this year for lack of support from the community, (The Girl Scouts building in Fredericksburg, Our Lady of The Hills in Kerrville, and the KISD Early Childhood Center in Kerrville). Total hours recorded for each project were as of 12/31/2019.

Kerr County

1. Demonstration Garden Jackie Skinner is the MG coordinator. This of course is our showcase garden. Total hours, 590. New irrigation system will be installed this winter.

2. Hill Country Crisis Council Shelter The Hill Country Crisis Council Shelter is committed to helping victims of family violence and sexual assault put the pieces of their lives back together. The butterfly, patio and vegetable gardens are a place of healing. Total volunteer time was 8 hours.

a. Butterfly and Patio gardens - Meg Scott-Johnson is the coordinator. The Butterfly garden is well established with one intern volunteer helping this year.

b. Vegetable Garden - Mindi Skaggs is the coordinator. MG's added green beans, okra, peppers, and cucumbers this year. A large 20 ft. long bed is used.

3. Hunt School Discovery Garden Dusty Gilliam is the MG coordinator. This is a collaborative effort among the Hunt School 4th and 5th grade classes, the Hunt Garden Club, and the HCMG's. Each fall and spring a 12 week program is designed with classroom lessons based on the JMG curriculum and hands on work in the garden. The program is well established and very successful. Total MG hours, 65.

4. Glory Community Garden Allen Noah is MG coordinator, with Donna Guthrie in charge of the Butterfly Garden. This wonderful project has been very active this year. There were four big community events. In May there was "Music in the Garden" with a band. In June they celebrated graduating seniors with "Burgers in the Garden." September had "Music in the Garden with hot dogs." October celebrated a fall festival where they decorated for Christmas. Community volunteers are raising money for permanent restrooms. Total hours, 327. 5.

5. Special Opportunity Center Garden Donna Bellis is the MG Coordinator. The center provides support and services to people with intellectual and develop mental disabilities. The adult clients work with MGs to create and maintain a vegetable garden for their enjoyment. Fifteen volunteers work this project (four to five MG volunteers). They have both a spring and fall garden. Plans are for a new irrigation system. Total hours, 85.

6. The Coming King Sculpture Prayer Garden Chris Seifert is overall coordinator and Terry Debusk is in charge of the daily activity. This is a new project this year with a lot of activity. Biblical plants will be added along with a guided tour/walking tour. Total hours, 164.

7. Riverside Nature Center: Decomposer Educational Station Chris Seifert is the coordinator. This is an on-going project. Volunteers are on-call to teach classes but there was no activity this year. Last class was Nov, 2018.

8. UGRA Total hours, 89

Bandera County

1. Bandera County Library Jan Grimes is the coordinator. This project was not as active this year. Volunteers include 3 MGs with community and library board members also. Future activity includes adding native plants and getting an improvement grant. Total hours, 12.

2. Bandera Natural History Museum Brenda Fest coordinator. Opened in 2016, the native plant pollinator garden is a mature project. A dedicated group of MGs and Master Naturalists designed and volunteer for this project. Since a lot of the MGs are also Master Naturalists, volunteer hours are often logged on the Master Naturalist website. Future plans for the eight acre museum grounds include removal of the many invasive Ligustrum trees on the site. Total hours, 23. *Continued on page 10*

Special Projects continued from page 9**Gillespie County**

- 1. Biblical Garden** at United Methodist Church Peggy Benson coordinator. The well-established Biblical garden display only plants mentioned in the Bible. A printed brochure explains each species. This is a very active project with a lot of tours. Peggy has 10 to 13 volunteers (church members and MGs). This fall they planted vegetables (barley, wheat, lavenders, onion and lettuce). Total hours, 73.
- 2. Good Samaritan Center** Peggy Benson coordinator. The garden surrounding this social service center continues to attract many butterflies and complements from visitors. Regular maintenance is a team effort between MGs and community volunteers. Volunteer support is outstanding with 12 to 15 volunteers. Holy Ghost Lutheran young people put in mulch. Three or four benches are going in for outdoor teaching. Volunteers also put bird seed in feeders. Total hours, 139.
- 3. Dr. John Lipe Memorial Garden** Jim Wilhite coordinator. This garden continues to exemplify an outdoor classroom and tour site to view native plants and Hill Country adapted plants. One of the principle efforts this year has been to trim back the plants and remove many volunteer plants that have encroached into other plants. The goal was to make the garden attractive so that visitors can not only see the value of using native plants but also to be interested in using native plants for their own gardens. There were four big tours this year hosted by the Lipe Garden team. In March a tour was given for the 2019 interns in the MG class. Also in March, the Lipe Garden team hosted a group from the Virginia Native Plant Society. In April, a group of 4-H Club students donated a plant for the garden. In early summer, the Texas Native Plant Society used the Lipe Garden as part of their Level 3 Certification program. There is still much to be done in the landscape structure, and we are asking assistance from the city and county for maintenance along the highway, and for mulch. Total hours, 161.
- 4. Gillespie County Historical Society & Museum** Kathy Lewis coordinator. The Pioneer Museum preserves an important piece of Fredericksburg's history and many visitors each year tour the site. Volunteers answer many questions about the area and our local plants. There is normally 4-6 MG volunteers who meet the 1st and 3rd Thursdays of each month. During spring break, the museum hosts a lot of children's activities. This year a local contractor donated a beautiful rock wall and gate to the site. The garden looked great with many butterflies also visiting the Gregs Mist. Many visitors were seen stopping and looking at the large number of butterflies that were there. Total hours, 390.
- 5. St. Mary's Catholic School** Stan Zwinggi coordinator. Set-up in 2018, the St. Mary's Catholic School vegetable garden is well established and doing great. Sixty students (6th/7th/8th grades) participate in lessons and maintaining the six beds. Three teachers, (Texas A&M Grads) teach and work the program. The garden is next to the Pioneer Museum. Many visitors have stopped and looked at the fabulous and lush vegetables and plants. Total hours, 18.

Kendall County

- 1. Cultivar Farms** Judy Beauford and Shirley Smith coordinators. This was a very productive year. The farm is a half-acre demonstration and production vegetable garden. The focus of the garden is to demonstrate successful gardening principles and techniques. Volunteers teach visitors how to grow fruits and vegetables using organic principles. Church groups, community groups, and low-income members of the community participate in the garden. This year the garden donated 1500 pounds of fruit and vegetables to the Hill Country Mission for Health and to Hill Country Family Services in Boerne. Total hours, 527.
- 2. Herff Farms** Christine Snyder coordinator. The Herff Farm Inspiration Garden's goal is to inspire others to grow plants and nurture nature. Many varieties of vegetables and ornamental plants are grown. In addition, MGs and local plant experts and volunteers teach gardening methods and techniques using organic methods. An adjacent teaching garden is being built in collaboration with the Cibolo Nature Center. The teaching garden will cover such projects as water conservation, soil management and plant sustainability among other related topics. The teaching garden will focus on children, families, and those with special needs. The volunteers also meet monthly to develop a garden plan. Total hours, 299.
- 3. Kronkosky Place Rainbow Senior Center Boerne** Total hours, 218

President's message continued from page 1

Consequently, one can observe them growing only on the west facing slopes at higher elevations in the northern parts of their growing region.

While the saguaro is not listed as threatened or endangered, Arizona has very strict regulations for harvesting, collecting, or destroying the species. The iconic plant is very slow growing yet has a very long life. Perhaps slow growing is a gross understatement since a 10-year-old saguaro may only be 1½ inches tall. A saguaro can live 150-200 years and reach heights of 60 feet. They don't begin to flower until about 35 years of age and grow the first arm or branch at about 50 years of age. They are considered an adult at about 125 years of age. Much like we wear elastic waist pants to an all you can eat buffet, the plant has pleats like an accordion that expand as it drinks in water, then contract as the water supply is used. A fully hydrated saguaro can weigh as much as 4 tons. It has one tap root that extends down about 2 feet and other roots that only extend down 4-6 inches but radiate out as far as the plant is tall. The root system along with the slow growth make the plant valuable to plant pirates who dig up the saguaro from public lands to resell for profit.



Saguaros are important to many desert animals and birds for food and shelter. When flowering in the spring, it is visited by birds, bees, and insects. After the flowers mature into fruit in early summer, the moist fruit is an important food source for mammals, birds, and insects. Saguaros provide nesting for many species of birds. Some excavate nesting holes in the fleshy stem of the cactus, others build nests in the crook between the main stem and a branch.

As you travel, even if it is a drive through your neighborhood, take time to enjoy the variety and unique plants in the area. You might be surprised with what you find and be inspired to try something new even if you don't have 125 years to see the plant in maturity.

Addresses for programs listed on page 2 & 4

Cibolo Nature Center Auditorium, 140 City Park Rd, Boerne
 Gillespie County Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, 95 Frederick Road, FBG
 Gillespie County Farm Bureau Building, 237 Equestrian Drive, FBG
 Guadalupe Basin Natural Resources Center (GBNARC) auditorium, 125 Lehmann Drive, KRVL
 Herff Farm, 33 Herff Road, Boerne
 Hill Country Youth Event Center, 3785 Highway 27, KRVL

Hunt United Methodist Church, 120 Merritt Road, Hunt
 Kerr Wildlife Management Area Bass Conference Facility, 2625 FM 1340, Hunt
 LBJ Wildflower Center, 4801 La Crosse Ave, Austin
 Llano County Library, 102 E Haynie, Llano
 Medina Community Center, 13857 State Hwy 16N, Medina
 Memorial Presbyterian Church, 601 North Milam St, FBG
 Riverside Nature Center, 150 Francisco Lemos St, KRVL

**Hill Country Master
Gardeners 2020
Executive
Committee**

Rachel Garrison
President

Debra Bacon
Vice President

Patti Schlessiger
Interim Secretary

Jackie Connelly
Treasurer

Jackie Skinner
Ex-officio Advisor

Roy Walston
C.E.A. Advisor

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

Newsletter & Website

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Special thanks to
Judy Beauford for
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**The Carnation:
Secret Agent of Flowers**

From *The Old Farmer's Almanac Book of
Garden Wisdom*

Today there are few cultivated flowers more common than the carnation (*Diathus caryophyllus*), that ubiquitous fixture of floral arrangements that seems to fit almost any occasion. Earlier in its history, though, the carnation served a very different purpose, totally unrelated to its beauty or popular clove-like fragrance.



In the eighteenth century, the carnation became fashionable as a lover's flower, a symbol of hidden passion and secret confidences. Someone discovered that a message could be concealed in the carnation's calyx (the little leaf like structures at the base of the flower), to be read by the object on one's affection and hidden from the prying eyes of jealous husbands or disapproving parents.



The most famous story of the carnation's cloak and dagger past concerns Marie Antoinette, who remained imprisoned in the Temple, awaiting trial and execution, after the beheading of her husband, Louis XVI, in 1793. A bold young royalist, the Chevalier de Rougeville, somehow gained access to the queen's cell and "accidentally" dropped a single carnation at her feet. Marie read the message hidden under the flower, which outlined the knight's bold plan to rescue her, and used a pin to prick out a sign on the paper indicating that she had read and understood the note. Unfortunately for Marie, her jailers also discovered the paper and foiled the

attempted jailbreak. Today the note is preserved in the French National Archives in Paris—bearing silent testimony to the carnation that almost saved a crown.

Happy Valentines Day!