

**February 2023**

**Volume 21 Issue 2**

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**Wednesday  
February 1, 2023**

**HCYEC**

**Meeting 1:00 pm  
CEU 2:00 pm**

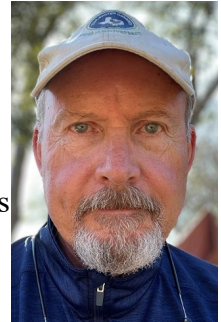
**Kamron Newberry and  
Cassie Marbach, our  
scholarship recipients,  
who will update us on  
their research projects.**

**Bios for scholarship  
recipients on page 8**

"Texas A&M AgriLife Extension provides equal opportunities in its programs and employment to all persons, regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, or gender identity".

## President's Message

**Dave Kinneberg**



A common characteristic of Hill Country winters is a sudden, short period of low night-time temperatures (usually in the teens) followed by several spring-like weeks with highs in the 70's. I cover sensitive plants when the first hard freeze is predicted hoping to take advantage of the warm weather when temperatures go up. Sometimes I win and sometimes I lose. The thrill of an occasional "win" keeps me going.

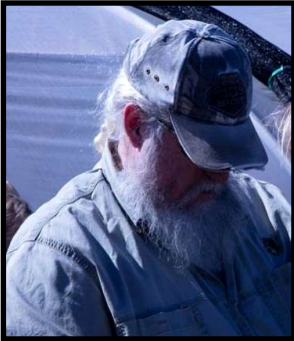
To be clear, I am referring to my vegetables and the "sometimes" perennials in flower beds and pots. Anything taller than about three feet is on its own. For foundational plants, I've learned to go native, carefully consider location before planting, and, in times like February 2021, keep my fingers crossed. The few plants that are "near and dear" are brought into the house.

Of course, there are other approaches that I could take. For example, cold frames are popular up north. But, for several reasons, I prefer to test plant varieties and apply some basic principles of heat transfer. And each year I learn a bit more.

Some lessons: First, (as every serious hiker knows) "cotton kills." Cotton fabrics lose their insulating properties when wet. Second, wind conditions are as important as temperatures when trying to prevent freezing. A plant that is protected from the wind stands a much better chance of surviving than one that faces the full fury. Third, root crops do well in Hill Country winters.

How is it going so far in 2022-23? This morning (January 13), I cut some asparagus (!) and will wait before harvesting the broccoli and cabbages. The kohlrabi, Brussels sprouts and kale are alive but don't look terrific. My onions, shallots, and garlic look great. The "sometimes" perennials have proved to be annuals this year. A few blue agaves have drooping leaves and I lost a large hairy prickly pear (but the one in the demo garden seems fine). The bunny ears cactus may be alive but shows a great deal of damage (as does the one in the demo garden). The other cacti are in great shape.

All of which proves that gardening in Hill Country is challenging. Thank goodness for HCMG and the experts among us who are willing to share their experiences. Being able to discuss my situation with other master gardeners is, for me, the greatest benefit of being a member of HCMG.



## Hill Country Veggies

By Allen Mace, MG

Here it, the beginning of yet another year. I hope everyone had a wonderful Holiday Season. Now its time to get back to the garden, the vegetable garden that is. Most of you know that I tend to grow some sort of vegetables in my garden throughout the year. This year was no exception. I went into the winter season with some Swiss chard, cabbage and broccoli. Everything was going well until we had a very cold snap just before Christmas. I did not expect anything to survive and I was disappointed when I lost everything. I don't think that covering my plants would have helped at all. It was just too cold for too long. That's OK, most years I'm able to grow some vegetables through the winter. The last few years have been a challenge, but nothing ventured, nothing gained and life goes on.

I am preparing for the spring season and that means Tomatoes. Most of the time I just wait until the tomato plants show up at the nurseries and buy seedlings. Last year I started my own plants from seeds. I have not done that for many years. This year I'm going to start my plants from seeds again. Some, from seeds that I collected and some from seeds I had purchased last year. This means that I need to do a germination test of the seeds that I have saved to check for viability. The tomato seeds that I purchased last year were Black Beauty, Orange Hat, Black Strawberry and Thorburn's Terra-Cotta. All four are Heirloom tomatoes from Baker Creek, a seed company in Mansfield Missouri. The seeds that I collected are Cherokee Purple and Arkansas Traveler, both of which are favorites of mine.



Purchased Seeds

**The way I do a germination test is quite simple.** I first wet a paper towel then squeeze out the water. I then place 10 seeds on the moistened paper towel, this gives me a percentage of viability. Don't forget to label the sample. Next, I fold the upper half of the paper towel over the seeds. Then I place the seed bundle into a plastic bag. You should try and find a warm area to store the bag flat for a few days. I find that when testing tomatoes, you can expect 4 to 5 days for the seeds to germinate. Remember to be very careful when unfolding the paper towels. The newly germinated seeds are very delicate. Normally I would throw the bundle away and plant fresh seeds. This year I am going to try and plant the seeds that germinate on the paper towel. One, I want to see if I can do it and two, a few of those purchased seeds, ten seeds were all I had. Next month, hopefully, I will have some pictures of sprouted seeds and as well as sprouted seeds that have been successfully transplanted.



Germination Test



Saved Seeds



Seed Test Bundle



## First Arrivals of Our 2023 Growing Season

Popular geraniums are always the first to settle in as the greenhouse committee begins operations.

By Vickie Killeen



Janice Walker maintains the inventory list as well as the all-important fertilizer schedule.



Sandy Lewis (left) and Kay Nelson snip roots on pot-bound geraniums before transplanting them into larger pots.



Surrounded by color, Anne Brown gives the geraniums more growing room by moving them into larger pots.



This last step is the most difficult for some master gardeners. Removing the plant's blooms encourages the development of more roots and leaves.



## Just what exactly is a "Master Gardener"?

By Beth McMahon, CEA Horticulture

If you are new to town or have been here a while, and you enjoy gardening and volunteering check into becoming a Master Gardener.

The Texas Master Gardeners are a state-run program with versions that can be found across the United States. Master Gardener promotes gardening and horticulture education and works with their local AgriLife Extension Office (my office) to educate the community on horticultural topics. It's a volunteer-service and education based organization, ideal for the person who likes to share plant knowledge they have learned with others and is looking to volunteer in their community. Our local chapter is the Hill Country Master Gardener group which includes Gillespie, Kerr Kendall and Bandera counties. There are also Master Gardener (MG) groups in Llano, Blanco, Brady and Burnet counties.

Though our group is based out of Kerrville, they have an impact in every member county. In Gillespie County, the Master Gardeners are in charge of projects such as the Lipe Demonstration garden, located at the USDA building at the intersection of Frederick Road and Texas 16 North. The garden has a diverse selection of native plants that helps you get an idea of what they look like before you plant them.

The Master Gardeners also assist my office by helping put on programs, as well as teaching in a few of them. An example of this is the Plantastic Vegetable Gardening Seminar on Feb 24. They help plan the program and decide program topics, set up the meeting room, handle registration and hospitality, and teach most of the programs.

In the past, Master Gardeners have helped my office set up research trials. MGs also help me with my youth programs.

One of the common misconceptions is that one has to be a "master" to be a Master Gardener. Not true, although it's not a problem if you are. You don't even need to be the kind of person that can get up and talk about landscape design to a crowd of 100 people.

I'd say the only requirement that you need to have is a passion for plants. Most people don't know much about gardening when they join and there is a place for every member.

To become a Master Gardener, you first start as an intern. In your intern year, there is a 60-plus hour training class, with 40 volunteer hours, that you must complete before you can become a master gardener.

The training course gives you the knowledge, while the volunteer hours are a practical application of those trainings. A final requirement is a background check. This is required by the state because Master Gardeners work with children from time to time.

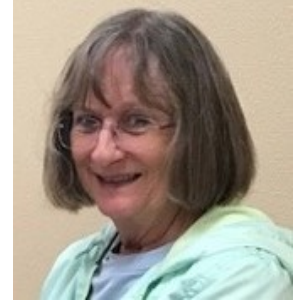
The learning doesn't stop after the MG has completed their classes.

***Cont'd on page 6***



## Amazing, Annoying Ants

reprinted from May 2015 with permission from Barb Banks



Have you accidentally disturbed ants on your property lately? **Ouch!**

Remember when as a child, you were intrigued by ants and may have spent a lot of time watching them in their natural habitat or perhaps a store-bought ant farm? My how things change with age! To adults ants are often frowned upon as picnic intruders, household horrors and garden enemies to plants and humans.

Ants belong to the same order Hymenoptera as bees and wasps. In fact, they evolved from wasp-like ancestors after the appearance of flowering plants. Although termites live in colonies like ants, there are several distinguishing differences. The body of the termite doesn't have that tiny waist-like section (petiole); termites have a broad waist. The fore and hind wings are the same size for the termite whereas a winged ant's hind wings are smaller than the fore wings. Also, the ant's antenna has a bent appearance. **Good news: ants are the greatest predator threat to termite nests!**

Velvet ants certainly look like large hairy ants but they are in fact wingless female wasps! As insects, ants have six legs which are attached to the thorax, compound eyes, and two antennae to detect air currents, vibrations and send and receive signals. The queen and reproductive males/females have wings unless they belong to a few "wingless species". Queen ants shed their wings after mating and usually show their "wing-stubs" thereafter. Better to be a wingless female queen than to die shortly after your honeymoon as the males do!

Ants go through complete metamorphosis (4 life stages) eggs, larva, pupa and adult. Termites only go through 3 stages (no pup stage). Most ants we see are the female workers, Several species have workers in different sizes depending on their purpose within the colony. As you can observe from their nests, a lot of labor has gone into its construction! Ants are one of the most important predators on small invertebrates (slugs, snail, et.) worldwide! Depending on their habitat, ants may also be important consumers or dispensers of seeds. According to some experts, ants turn over and aerate the soil as much as earthworms, depending on their habitat. Although garden ants eat aphids and other garden pests, they may also eat ripe fruit like strawberries, or they may farm aphids for the honeydew they excrete (they carry the aphids in and out of the nest as needed).

If you have fire ants they may or may not be native to Texas. They may be tropical fire ants. You probably won't be able to tell the difference by their stings! According to an article in the last issue of Archaeology, searchers have now concluded that fire ants were —HOLD ONTO YOUR HATS—native to the Americas! (However it is theorized that their habitat was in Mexico). But we don't have to claim them since the researchers postulate that the tropical fire ants were carried in soil on Spanish ships from Acapulco to Manila to Taiwan, as well as from the Americas, Asia and Africa!

No doubt you've tried several different methods to get rid of ants inhabiting an area as uninvited pests. Ant colonies can be surprisingly enormous—several feed deep and/or wide depending on the species. One ant authority that I heard recently on TV said that we really don't entirely rid ourselves of an ant nest. He said we may eliminate a large part of the colony, but the surviving reproducers will begin anew in another location. Because I don't want to use pesticides and risk harming anything beneficial, I prefer to use my garden hose and flood the nest very frequently until it appears they have moved. You could even boil the water and pour it onto the nest.

***Continued on page 6***



## Newly Certified Hill Country Master Gardener

Shannon Stuteville, Class of 2022 intern, completed all her requirements and received her Hill Country Master Gardener certification from President Dave Kinneberg at our January meeting.

Photo Credit: Vickie Killeen

### Just what is a “Master Gardener” continued from page 3

To keep their knowledge current, they must get continuing education hours each year. For some topics, there are even advanced trainings that can help a Master Gardener specialize.

These advanced trainings are detailed, in-depth programs that cover a specific topic. Examples include plant propagation, oak wilt or vegetable gardening. To complete their advanced training Master Gardeners usually have to do a project or a couple of presentations.

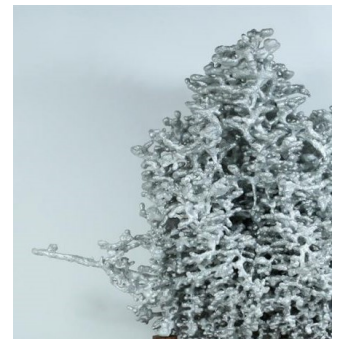
Sometimes it is just the intensive education that appeals to someone looking to become a Master Gardener. I can understand that. One of the things I have tried to do is have programs on a variety of topics, so that those interested in just learning, not volunteering, can still have the opportunity to do so.

The 2023 Master Gardener Intern class will start soon. Contact my office at 830 997 3452 for information of how to become one.

### Ants continued from page 4

Ant hill art, which involves pouring molten metal down an ant nest is another way to eliminate those invasive fire ants. I recently saw some very artistic, interesting and educational ant hill artwork by David and Cindy Gleason, at the River Rustic Gallery in Fredericksburg. Check it out for yourself. You'll be amazed even if you realize that those annoying ants may probably be here indefinitely.

Editor's note: River Rustic Gallery is at 234 W. Main in Fredericksburg



## True Flower of Valentine's Day

By Linda E. Allen

*Roses may steal the show on Valentine's Day, but it is the tiny crocus that played a major role in our Valentine traditions.*



While roses rule the day and the economy on Valentine's Day, the small, delicate crocus is actually the flower of Valentine's Day. Its bright splash of purple or yellow attracts our attention as it peeks through the snow or drab winter landscape. It promises that spring is on its way to once again brighten the landscape.

Tiny as it is, the crocus is highly prized and priced for its gift to the culinary world – saffron. The pollen from the stigmata of the crocus is gently gathered by hand. Such intense labor makes it the most expensive spice in the world. Native to southern Europe, Asia and the Middle East, its beauty and taste have made it a popular plant worldwide. But it wasn't its rich taste that gave it a prime role in the history of Valentine's Day. Legends tell of Valentinus, a physician who defied the orders of Claudius the Cruel to give up his Christian beliefs and worship Roman gods instead.

Valentinus was imprisoned for his refusal. While in prison, he became friends with a jailer who had a blind daughter. The jailer recognized that Valentinus was an educated man. He began to bring his daughter, Julia, to the jail where she could learn from Valentinus' education. Valentinus taught her arithmetic, history, literature and about God and His great love for all beings. He also taught her to pray. They often went on long walks in the nearby woods and fields where they gathered the colorful flowers of the crocus for the jailer. As the date of his execution drew near, Valentinus wrote a special letter to Julia to thank her for her friendship and loyalty and to encourage her faith in God. He gave the letter to the jailer to deliver to his daughter. When Julia



opened the letter, a yellow crocus pressed between the pages, fell into her hand. She touched the delicate flower, a reminder of her special friendship with Valentinus. At that moment, she saw the flower's bright yellow color, the first sight her eyes had ever seen. The miracle message was signed "From Your Valentine," a signature we traditionally use to express our sentiments of love to special people in our lives. Valentinus was executed on February 14, 270 AD. In his honor, Julia planted a pink-blossomed almond tree near his grave. Pope Gelasius declared the day of Valentinus' death St. Valentine's Day in 496 AD.



## February CE will be the Scholarship Recipients updating us on their research projects



**Cassie Marbach** will present on: **What is verjus and how is it going to change our Texas wine industry?**

At the age of twenty, Cassie Marbach graduated with bachelor's from Texas Tech and began pursuing a PhD in Horticulture at Texas A&M University. Two years later she is half-way through her degree program and doing research for the Texas wine industry with a focus on the economic aspects of growing grapes and selling wine. She has been a teaching assistant for Texas A&M's Intro to Floral Design course for the past two years and hopes to continue in this position for the rest of her PhD. This past year, she earned her Level 2 Sommelier award in wine from WSET and is hoping to continue her wine education after graduation. Her goal after graduating is to become a promoter of Texas wine as a professional sommelier and be a consultant for Texas grape growers and winemakers.

**Kamron Newberry** will present on: **"Analysis of Spray Durations within an Aeroponic Crop Production System."**

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. He is the Assistant Greenhouse Manager of the Texas Tech Horticulture Gardens and Greenhouse Complex. This entails growing plants from seed, to doing maintenance work, to planning and conducting plant sales twice a year. 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.



**HCMG Monthly Meeting  
January 4, 2023  
Dietert Center, Kerrville**

**Call to Order (Please Silence Your Cell Phones)**

Dave Kinneberg called the meeting to order.

**Pledge of Allegiance** was recited by the group.

**Invocation** – Pam Umstead delivered the invocation.

**Welcome/Opening Remarks** – Dave Kinneberg welcomed everyone to the first meeting of 2023. He hoped all had a good holiday season with family and friends. He thanked Kathy Enke for her hard work on the Christmas party at our last meeting. He said he heard nothing but good comments about it. Dave thanked Rita for getting the nice room at Dietert.

**Verification of Quorum** – Rita Aliperto verified a quorum had been met.

**Approval of Minutes from December 6, 2022 Meeting** – a motion was received by Imelda Horne and seconded by Rae Raiford to approve the minutes.

**Treasurer's Report** – Rachel Garrison explained line items on the December Treasurer's report. She also received a round of applause for receiving the 2022 Volunteer of the Year Award last month.

**Business Items**

**New Member!** Shannon Stuteville has met all the requirements and is now a HCMG. She, along with her very camera-shy mentor, Keeley Porter accepted her certificate and official name tag.

**2023 Budget** – Dave explained items on the proposed 2023 budget (attached). He asked for and fielded questions. It was put to a vote and was unanimously approved.

**December Directors Meeting** – Dave, Rachel and Anne attended the meeting via Zoom. The meeting was supposed to be interactive but only those present were able to participate. They elected a new slate of officers. They learned that dues would increase from \$2 to \$5. The lack of clarity on the new background check procedure was disappointing. We will hopefully use the interim system to submit background checks on our members through January. The new system will include a 60 to 90-minute training course and submission of \$12 via credit card. This will have to be repeated every three years. We'll just have to get through this.

**Standing Committee Reports**

**Education** – Donna Bellis said so far, she's received about 20 applications for the new class and probably has more in her mailbox. She is requesting a volunteer(s) facilitator for February 23<sup>rd</sup> at 8am to help with propagation; March 2<sup>nd</sup> all day for plant biology, house plants, chemical identification; March 21<sup>st</sup> all day for introduction to landscape. Please see Donna if interested. Rachel mentioned she needs mentors for the new class. She passed out a clipboard for sign up. Contact Rachel Garrison or Rae Raiford to volunteer.

**Public Programs** – Ray Tiemann & Beth McMahon, commonly referred to as the Punch and Judy Show (Ray is Judy), spoke about the upcoming Plantastic Gardening Seminar on Friday, February 24<sup>th</sup> in Fredericksburg. Ray brought informational cards as well as sign-up sheets. Ray also interjected on the background check procedure, stating his church also does it and he promises it is not difficult to complete.

**Greenhouse** - Anne Brown stated that the greenhouse has been sanitized. They are making their first trip to get plants the week of January 16<sup>th</sup> or 23<sup>rd</sup>. Watering schedule will be posted on VMS; pot parties will be announced via email. Anne mentioned that the greenhouse committee needs help from people with maintenance skills.

*Continued on page 10*

*Minutes continued from page 9*

**Membership** - Jackie Connelly (on Liz Alhaus' behalf) said membership cards are ready. If anyone needs them, Liz can mail them out.

**Other Announcements**

**New Ag Agent for Kerr County** – The new Kerr County Ag Agent, Mike Morris, starts Monday, January 9<sup>th</sup>. He will be shadowing other Ag Agents for a time before he starts in Kerr County.

**Booth Supplies** – the new procedure on booth supplies is to notify Karen Fuller if you plan on using the booth/materials. Make sure you give her a reasonable amount of time to make sure it is fully stocked, copies made...etc.

**AV Carts/Equipment** – The audio/video equipment will now be stored in the locked cabinet in the HCYEC storage room instead of in the cart. This way, our equipment is protected from damage or loss from others who may use the cart.

**Glory Community Garden** – Pam Umstead highlighted an article in the December issue of Hill Country Culture Magazine. The Glory Community Garden received a \$130,000 grant toward construction of a second building on their site. If anyone can volunteer labor or materials, please talk to Pam. Any donations will help toward construction and balance \$130,000 can be used elsewhere.

**Blooms & Barrels** – Jackie Connelly would like a volunteer to co-chair this committee.

**Other** - A question arose about the training sessions at Butt-Holdsworth Library. Patty Zohlen said the classes are posted on the library's calendar and begin at 10:30am. Dave asked about ideas for making the Demo Garden more visible. Also meeting places and field trip ideas. Let Dave know your thoughts. Dave spoke about the option of getting a whole house surge protector installed for areas that experience power losses.

**Final Comments** – Dave said the February CEU

will be our scholarship recipients.

**Adjournment**

Respectfully submitted,  
 Rita Aliperto,  
 Secretary HCMG

**Next Meeting: February 1, 2023 HCYEC**



I asked Pam Umstead to find me some color for the February Newsletter and she did.

Above: Possum haw Holly

Below: Color Guard yucca





**Hill Country Master  
Gardeners 2023  
Executive  
Committee**

Dave Kinneberg  
*President*

Rae Raiford  
*Vice President*

Rita Aliperto  
*Secretary*

Rachel Garrison  
*Treasurer*

Anne Brown  
*Ex-officio Advisor*

*C.E.A. Advisor*

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

**Newsletter**

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# Cold Color

by Vickie Killeen

You can brighten up a dull, drab winter landscape with pops of color that will tolerate winter temps....but not hungry deer.



Cheerful pansies will freeze and thaw at Mother Nature's whim.



Dianthus blooms may suffer cold damage but the plants will survive light freezes and bloom again.



### I delivered twins

While baby sitting a neighbor's African Violet over the holidays, I was successful using Prorogation Specialist Sandy Lewis's techniques. Here's my payment for taking care of Mama Plant.



### For the birds

My Yaupon berries are ready for the taking.