

July 2019

Volume 17, Issue 7

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HCMG will meet on  
July 3, 2019

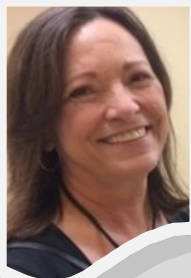
Location:  
Kerr County  
Youth Event Center

11:00 Vegetable entries  
Noon—Bring a lunch  
1:00 - Business Meeting  
2:00 - Panel Discussion



**TEXAS A&M  
AGRILIFE  
EXTENSION**

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

Rachel Garrison

*"I grow plants for many reasons: to please my eye or to please my soul, to challenge the elements or to challenge my patience, for novelty or for nostalgia, but mostly for the joy in seeing them grow. "*

— David Hobson, Author & gardening humorist

After moving to the Hill Country 3 years ago, my husband and I were anxious to improve the landscaping and start a vegetable garden in our "new to us" 12-year-old house. We brought a little "know how" with us since we had enjoyed some success in gardening in various locations. As you might have guessed, we were in for quite a challenge, the elements of the Texas Hill Country!

With the sun, rocky limestone terrain, heat, sun, little water, sun, wind, deer, and did I mention, sun, we were truly challenged. Drip irrigation, raised beds, and tall fencing remedied many of the challenges. Along with finding the right plants, we were on our way to meeting some of the challenges presented by all the local elements.

Our home has nicely lighted stone pillars on both sides of our front gate. We wanted to plant something on the roadside of the pillars that was attractive, low maintenance, and yet could tolerate the intense heat. The deer resistant Texas Sotol has been a winner for this location. We watered the plants occasionally during the first year to get them established, but since then, we have done NOTHING to them. They bloomed for the first time this year. The spikey blooms are fascinating. As I drove I10 from Boerne to Kerrville last week, the number of spikey blooms dotting the hillsides along the route amazed me.

The Texas Sotol, *Dasyliroton texanum*, is a perfect xeriscape plant for our region. It is an evergreen perennial that thrives in full sun with little water. It resembles a Yucca or an Agave, but unlike the Agave that dramatically dies after it blooms, the Texas Sotol might bloom every year if conditions are right. The Yucca has dagger like points at the leaf tip while the Texas Sotol has saw-tooth edges on the leaf margins. Those sharp teeth make it a good barrier plant to keep out unwanted humans and animals.



**Continued on page 2**

**HCMG 2019 Continuing Education Opportunities prepared by Racann Reid**

*Attendance at events other than Master Gardener meetings is optional. This list is for those wishing to attend other educational offerings; not all events are eligible to fulfill continuing education credits toward annual recertification. Be sure to call and confirm event.*

**July 3, 1:00 p.m.** business meeting, 2:00 p.m. CE program, Hill Country Master Gardeners. A panel of HCMGs will answer your questions about plants and gardening. Please submit your questions in advance to Edna Platte at [platte@kctc.com](mailto:platte@kctc.com) to allow time for panel members to do research, if necessary. Hill Country Youth Event Center. HCMGs, interns.

**July 13, 10:00-11:00 a.m.,** Gardening 101. HCMG Kim Courtwright will present a program on fruit trees and vines. Butt-Holdsworth Memorial Library. Free and open to the public.

**July 14-17,** Texas Pecan Growers Association, annual conference including educational programs, mini pecan short course and a tour. For details go to <https://tpga.org/tpga-events/>. \$160 for non-TPGA members. Embassy Suites

Frisco Hotel and Convention Center. June 22 deadline for block room rates.

**July 23, 6:30 p.m.** social, followed by the meeting at 7:00 p.m., NPSOT Fredericksburg. Znobla Wooten, Native American Seed, will do a program on seed balls. Memorial Presbyterian Church. Visitors welcome.

**July 24-26,** TAMU Agrilife Extension will present Junior Master Gardener Adult Leader Training. NOTE: This is not an Advanced Training class, and therefore, not eligible for reimbursement. Fee \$100. Go to <https://bexar-tx.tamu.edu/youth-gardens-program/> to register.

**See page 11 for Event addresses**



**President's Message  
cont'd from page 1**

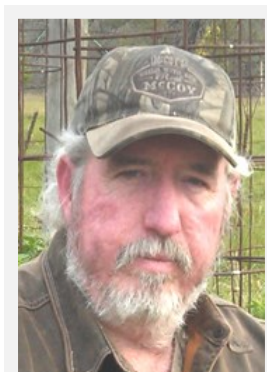
The bloom spike on the Texas Sotol can reach heights of 15 feet including 2 or more feet of bloom. I wouldn't call the flowering portion of the spike an especially attractive flower. Internet sites say the odor is unpleasant, although I can't get close enough to ours to verify that detail. Our honey bees love the blooms. I've read that hummingbirds are attracted to the

creamy white blooms, too. The blooms last several weeks. The blooming Texas Sotol would look lovely in a garden surrounded by plantings of blackfoot daisy and purple skullcap.



My research indicates the plant was used to make baskets, mats, ropes, and roofs. During severe drought conditions, it provides fodder for cattle. When dried, the stalk is a sturdy, lightweight walking stick. Interestingly, the fermented inner core is used to produce the alcoholic drink, sotol, which is said to have a flavor similar to tequila.

In summary, three cheers for the Texas Sotol!



## Hill Country Veggies

July 2019

By Allen Mace

This has been an interesting spring, moving into summer. I normally like to start planting the spring garden around the end of March through the 1st or

2nd week of April. This spring the weather was cool with low temperatures still into the upper 30's. it was the last week of April before I planted my squash. I spent a lot of time re-doing my old garden so, I didn't get the tomatoes planted until the 15th of May. This is much later than I normally like to plant. All said and done, the squash is starting to produce fruit and most all the tomatoes are growing well, some have already starting to set fruit.



Tomatoes



Tomatoes

I knew that I would have to fertilize a lot this year, with so many tomato plants. Tomatoes are heavy feeders and need lots of water. This year I'm using Miracle-Gro plant food with the hose attachment Garden Feeder to water and fertilize my plants. The Garden Feeder works well, you just fill the container with the fertilizer, attach the hose, point and spray. Miracle-Gro will absorb through the leaves as well as infiltrate

the soil to the roots. When spraying your plants, your also adding fertilizer to any other plant that may be in the spray zone, the weeds love this as well. Once the plants get bigger and filled out, the over spray doesn't seem to be as big of an issue. I wanted a way to reduce the over spray and water at the base of the plants.



Old Feeder

I bought my first Miracle-Gro Garden Feeder about 15 to 20 years ago. It's a bit different than the newest one I bought a year or two ago. Both operate the same, but the older one has a shower nozzle that can be screwed off. When I checked the screw threads, it's the same as the threads on a garden hose. This now gave me a way to convert the old unit into an inline fertilizer. I can attach a regular hose to the inflow side and a soaker hose to the outflow side and fertilize as I water. I use quick disconnects so I don't have to screw and unscrew hoses and watering attachments, it's just a convenience. I took an old hose and cut it down to about 5 ft., then put fittings on both ends. Now I have a Garden Feeder with a length of hose long enough to water at the base of the plants without having to bend over so much. This is great for the back. I seldom throw much away. Most things can be re-purposed.



Re-purposed feeder

## Got Your Goat?

Feature & Photos by Vickie Killeen

**CAUTION:** This feature may lead to endless hours of cute baby goat videos on YouTube.

Anne Brown, HCMG Oak Wilt Specialist, recently completed a Center Point home visit to check on oak tree damage with the possibility of oak wilt. A live oak "mott" in a pasture showed bark damage ... from snacking goats!

As cute as they were, nanny goats, billy goats, and kids were pawing tree limbs with their hooves trying to reach the leaves, one of their favorite snacks. Areas of stripped bark resulted in open wounds leaving the trees susceptible to the fungus-bearing beetle that is attracted to healthy tree sap. Careful examination of the area revealed no signs of oak wilt.

Anne explained the symptoms of oak wilt in live oaks to the homeowners and suggested treatment options. Her recommendations included monitoring the trees for signs of oak wilt. She also suggested preventative measures that would protect the trees from future damage, including fencing the mott to keep the goats out of the area of the trees' interconnected roots or pruning the leaf canopies up out of their reach.



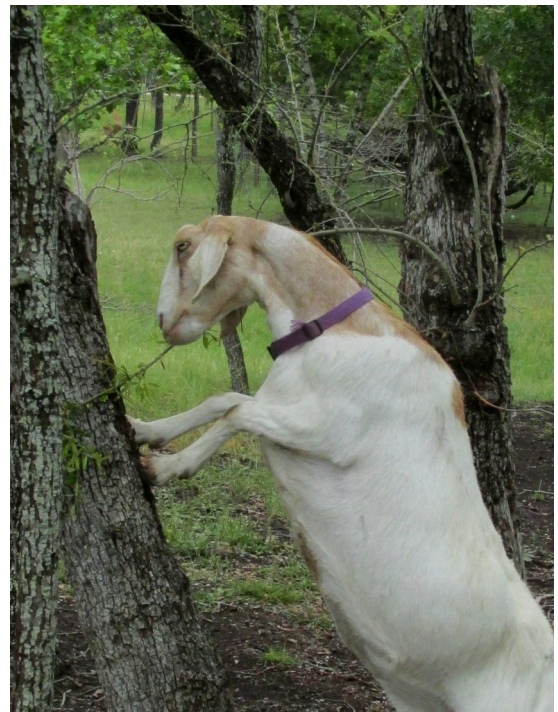
Nanny goat Wilma helps Anne check for signs of oak wilt.



Baaaaaad goats!



Limbs with bark stripped away.



Yum! Wilma demonstrates her technique of reaching succulent leaves.

## What is a Native Plant Seed Ball?

A seed ball is a marble sized ball made of clay, earth and seeds which is used to replant areas where the natural flora has been destroyed. Also, referred to as seed bombs for guerrilla gardening. Native plant seed balls have been used around the world to reseed land that has been abused by man or by Mother Nature herself.

Before the development of the native plant seed ball, reseeding some natural areas was difficult. The traditional method of broadcasting seed comes with several major drawbacks. The seed is sown on top of the soil where it may be baked dry by the sun, blown away by the wind, washed away by heavy rains, or nibbled away by birds or other small wildlife. Very little is left to germinate and grow.



Making seed balls addresses all of these problems. These clay balls protect the seed from the heat of the sun. They're heavy enough to be unaffected by the wind or heavy rains and the hard clay casing deters animal nibblers as well.

### Why Seed Balls Work

In dry areas, the shape of the ball actually gives enough shade to conserve moisture. The seeds begin to germinate and the ball breaks apart. The small pile of crumbles provides the start for the root system, but is still heavy enough to anchor the emerging seeds to the ground.

The small leaves of the new plants provide enough shade for the soil to conserve more moisture. The plants then mature and produce their own seeds and provide shelter once the second generation seeds fall to the ground. The seeding and regrowth continues until complete plant cover is achieved.

### Seed Ball Recipe

2 parts potting soil	1-2 parts seeds of your choice
5 parts pottery clay mix from your local art store	Large tub to mix ingredients
1-2 parts water	Large box to dry and store seed balls

### Directions:

Mix the soil, clay and 1 part water thoroughly. There should be no lumps. Slowly add more water until the mixture is the consistency of the toy store molding clay that comes in a can.

Add seeds. Keep kneading the dough until the seeds are well mixed in. Add more water if necessary.

Take small bits of the clay mixture and roll into ball about one inch in diameter. The balls should hold together easily. If they're crumbly, add more water.

Dry seed balls for 24-48 hours in a shady place before sowing or storing. They store best in a cardboard box. Do not use plastic bags.

**The last step in how to make flower seed balls is sowing them. Yes, you can place them carefully over the area to be planted or you can gently toss them one at a time, which is a lot more fun. Don't bury them and don't water them.**

**You've done your job, now sit back and leave the rest to Mother Nature.**

## Thank You for taking the “*Soil Your Undies Challenge*”



Knowing how much biological activity is in your soil is an important step to understanding your soil health. A simple test can help measure this.

Burying 100% cotton briefs in the ground will help to show you the activity. The higher the activity level, the less cotton will remain.

**Having high microbial activity is good for your soil.**



1. Jeanne Hoverson with undies!! Or rather what's left!!
2. Pam Umstead can't believe the results, but she is very happy to have proof of the microbial activity in her soil.
3. Pat Wolters by her garden with what's left of the white undies
4. Linda Kaiser with the undies before planting. There was nothing left to dig up after 2 months in her garden.



## Does My Texas Red Oak Have Oak Wilt?

During a recent home visit, HCMG Oak Wilt Specialist Anne Brown was shown a beautiful Texas red oak that the homeowners feared might be infected with oak wilt. The landowners knew about fungal mats and thought they had some.



This photo shows lichen on the tree's bark that they had mistaken for fungal mats which are a sure sign of oak wilt in Texas red oaks. Lichen, which is a combination of fungal and algae organisms, isn't harmful to the tree but many people find it unsightly. Anne explained how to recognize fungal mats and assured the homeowners that their tree was healthy.

A second concern of the homeowners was the leafless branches in the lowest portion of the tree's canopy. The healthy, dense leaf canopy at the top of the sprawling tree doesn't allow enough sunlight to reach the lowest branches to produce leaves. Anne recommended that the bare branches be pruned off from July through January (when the beetles that spread oak wilt are less active) and all cuts painted immediately.

For more information on oak tree pruning guidelines see:

<https://texasoakwilt.org/category/uncategorized/>



**PHOTO CREDITS: Vickie Killeen**

## Special Opportunity Center Garden

Donna Bellis pictured below working at the garden. Other HCMG volunteers include Lydia Jones, Pat Wolters and Intern, Shannon Barker. Master Gardeners meet at the garden on Wednesdays at 8:45 and work with the clients of the Special Opportunity Center (anywhere from 10-15 clients participate on any Wednesday). We are teaching the fundamentals of growing an organic garden. The clients usually cook lunch on Thursdays and the garden has been able to provide lots of green beans this year.

They are also growing flowers, giant zinnias and sunflowers, and are considering selling their arrangements (right) at the Farmer's Market. In addition to the vegetable garden, they also have a pollinator garden and a red harvester ant nest.

**Photo Credit: Pat Wolters**





**Burgers in the Park  
at the  
Glory Community Garden  
on  
June 15, 2019**

**Photo Credit: Pam Umstead**



## HCMG Monthly Business Meeting

June 5, 2019

Call to Order -Rachel Garrison called the meeting to order.  
Pledge of Allegiance-The pledge was led by Melayne Arnold.  
Invocation-Rachel led us in prayer.

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

Approval of May 1, 2019 Minutes-Approved as read.

### Executive Committee Reports

- Treasurer's Report – Bernadell Larson-Approved as read.

### Standing Committee Reports

- Demo Garden – Jackie Skinner reports the demo garden is looking good. Twelve members worked this morning, prior to our business meeting. Kerrville Irrigation will check the irrigation issues. The storage shed is still being researched to store garden tools, some greenhouse supplies and office files. A fence is being proposed and the expense has yet to be approved by the executive committee.
- Green House-Janell Dahms, Fernando Gonzalez and committee have worked very hard to improve the appearance of the greenhouse yard. Fernando reports potting benches will be installed. He also stated the plumbing will be reworked.
- Horticultural Inquiry/Research Desk –Melayne Arnold said she appreciates the interns getting their orientation done quickly.
- Unfinished Business Tree Care Advanced Training Class, June 12-14-Has been cancelled due to lack of enough applicants. The Tree Books are for sell to membership at \$15.00.

### New Business

- July 3rd Business meeting, vegetable competition-Thirty members raised their hands that they would attend the July meeting, which constitutes a quorum. Nine or so members raised their hands they are going to enter vegetables in the contest. All vegetables need to be in the small classroom at HCYEC by 11:00 a.m. There will be a networking lunch prior to our 1:00 p.m. meeting. Community vegetables can be displayed, but not entered in the contest. A panel discussion will be held in place of the CEU program.
- Propagation Committee-Debbie Bass asked the membership to start baby succulents to share at our January meeting.
- Home Visits-Anne Brown asked for volunteers to sign up if they would be interested in going on



Debbie

- home visit with her.
- Soil Your Undies-Back in March, Connie Townsend and Pat Wolters told us about a soil test that involved burying a pair of white cotton underwear in your garden to measure the biological activity of your soil. The organisms in the soil like cotton underwear. In just two months, cotton underwear buried in healthy soil will be completely eaten, leaving behind little but the waist-band. Pam Umstead was the only member who brought undies to show to the membership. They had disintegrated tremendously.



Anne



Pam

### Announcements

- Advanced Training Award Presentations-Because these trainings were conducted before the name change to TMG Advanced Trained – they will be called TMG Specialists. Those present to receive their certificates were: Sandy Lewis, Debbie Bass, TMG Propagation Specialists, Pat Wolters, TMG Vegetable Specialist, and Kim Courtright., TMG Junior Master Gardener Specialist. Congratulations!
- Jr. Master Gardener-Kim Courtright explained the program and asked for volunteers to assist her.
- New project – The Coming King Foundation, Kerrville-Chris Seifert spoke about the project and what would be expected of volunteers. She passed around a sign-up sheet if members were interested in volunteering.



Chris

### Adjournment

Respectfully Submitted:  
Patti Schlessiger, Secretary

Next meeting – July 3, 2019 at Hill Country Youth Events Center  
June CEU Program - Stephen Zoeller, "Invasive, Exotic, or Introduced Native?"  
July CEU Program – Panel Discussion

Photo Credit: Mark Shultz



Patti

**Hill Country Master Gardeners 201p 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

*Continuing Education Editor*  
Raeann Reid

*Webmaster*  
Stan Zwinggi

**Submissions to**

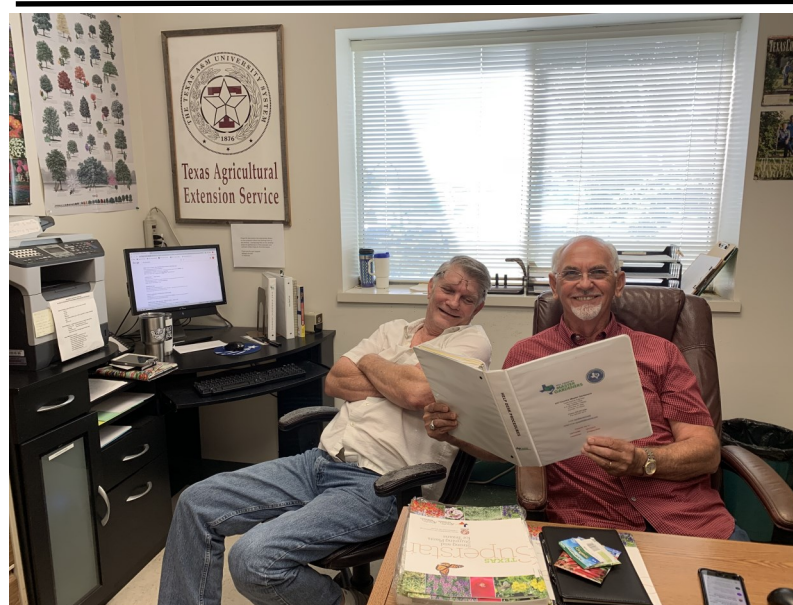
Newsletter.editor.hcmg@gmail.com

**Master Gardeners attend Advanced Training**



From left: Pat Wolters, Vegetable Specialist, Kim Courtright, Junior Master Gardener Specialist, Sandy Lewis, Propagation Specialist and Debbie Bass, Propagation Specialist.

Photo Credit: Mark Shultz



**Research Desk Duty**

Mark Shultz and Ray Tiemann responding to inquiries at the Research Desk

Photo Credit: Pat Wolters

**Events continued from page 2**

Hunt Garden Club. Summer hiatus.  
NPSOT Boerne. No public program  
NPSOT Kerrville. Summer hiatus.  
Rose Garden Club of Medina. Summer hiatus.

**Addresses for Events**

Butt-Holdsworth Memorial Library, 505 Water Street, KRVL

Embassy Suites, 7600 John Q Hammons Dr, Frisco, TX 75034  
Hill Country Youth Event Center, 3785 Highway 27, KRVL  
Memorial Presbyterian Church, 601 North Milam St, FBG  
Bexar County TAMU AgriLife Extension Office, 3355 Cherry Ridge St, #212, San Antonio