

July 2020

Volume 18, Issue 7

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July 8, 2020
Brown bag lunch at 12:00
Meeting at 1:00
CEU at 2:00

The program at the exhibition hall will allow attendees to socially distance and learn from other members of HCMG. Three HCMG experts moderate the panel and the program needs YOUR participation. Please send Edna your questions in advance at platte@ktc.com or text them to 830-285-3615



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

Sunflowers end up facing the sun, but they go through a lot of dirt to find their way there. –J.R. Rim, author

I love flowers and sunflowers are one of my favorites. As I think back as far as I can remember in my childhood growing up in south Texas, sunflowers are my first memory of wild-flowers. The sunny blooms grew everywhere in the Rio

Grande Valley, along roadsides and in open fields. Many years later as my husband and I toured Italy, I was delighted to see fields of giant sunflowers turned to face the sun. Last year we planted giant sunflowers in our garden. They grew to a towering height and our bees loved them. As the flowers withered and the seeds ripened, the birds loved them too.

Sunflowers (*Helianthus annuus*), are members of the aster family. The genus name comes from the Greek words *helios* or sun and *anthos* or flower. Sunflowers can thrive in poor soil and fairly dry conditions. They have a stiff, hairy stem. Sunflowers are annuals and will often reseed themselves. They are very easy to grow. Although they require little maintenance, they may need a lot of space.

Sunflowers are composite flowers, that is what most people think of as the flower or “head” is actually many small flowers called florets. The two types of florets in a sunflower are Ray Florets and Disc Florets. Ray florets are what we think of as the petals of the sunflower. They come in a variety of colors including yellow, red, orange, bronze, near-white, and bi-color. Ray florets surround the disc florets in the center of the sunflower which mature into seeds. Disc florets usually have fertile female and male parts. Many hybrids are fully self-fertile, self-pollinating and no longer need insects for pollination. Disc florets open on the periphery first, with florets opening inward as the sunflower matures.

Interestingly, sunflowers are a mathematical wonder. They follow the Fibonacci sequence found in nature, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, 55, 89, etc. Each number in the sequence is the sum of the two previous numbers. The disc florets of the sunflower are arranged in two groups of spirals, one going to the left and one to the right. If one counts the number of florets in the left-hand spirals and the number in the right-hand spirals, you’ll find that the florets follow the Fibonacci pattern, most commonly following the 21/34, 34/55, or 55/89 pattern. Other plants such as lilies, daisies, pineapples and cauliflower also follow this pattern.



All of the previous information brings me back to the significance of the opening quote. At first glance, I thought of it as a nice quote about sunflowers. As I thought more deeply about the quote, I thought of it in relation to Hill Country Master Gardeners and the challenges of our current experience with Covid-19. Hopefully, the “dirt” of the virus difficulties will soon give way to “sunshine” as we return to our normal activities. I look forward to that time. In the meantime, please be safe!

VISITING VICTORIA EDUCATIONAL GARDENS

By Carl A. Luckenbach

Recently, I had an opportunity to escape the “stay at home” program, and visit friends who have a cabin in a remote area between Goliad and Victoria. When thinking of things to do without interacting with people, I decided to pursue a long-standing interest of exploring closed and abandoned military installations. I had heard that the Victoria Regional Airport was on the site of a former air base, so I decided to explore. The tower and many other buildings are still functional and have been repurposed. Upon passing by the former officers’ club, I came across a sign stating “Victoria Educational Gardens, A Project of the Victoria Master Gardeners Association.”

Attached are pictures I took while walking around.

There was one lone volunteer working in one of the gardens. In talking with her, at least six feet distant, she told me that she was a fairly new Master Gardener, and did not really know the history of the facility, but that she enjoyed carrying on the work of the many that have gone before her in establishing and maintaining these beautiful gardens.

I recommend anyone visiting or even passing through Victoria take time to visit the gardens. Seeing these beautiful gardens has prompted me to do some research to learn how this came about and when and who did it.



The following is what I learned:

- ◆ Work began in the spring of 2000 by three master gardeners.
- ◆ Initial groundbreaking was in May 2001 with 50 master gardeners.
- ◆ There are 37 demonstration gardens plus 13 other features within one acre.
- ◆ A 60' by 100' educational pavilion was constructed in 2008.
- ◆ Ultimately 162 master gardeners were involved and investment reached \$250,000.
- ◆ Military history is acknowledged with the Military Honor Garden alongside the Patriotic Garden.
- ◆ A koi pond was created at the location of a former swimming pool.
- ◆ The gardens showcase different kinds of plants, including, roses, daylilies, bulbs, and others.
- ◆ A special area is designated for Texas Superstars.
- ◆ The gardens are free and open to the public.

See photos of the garden on page 3

Photo Tour of the Victoria Educational Garden

Photo Credit: Carl A. Luckenbach



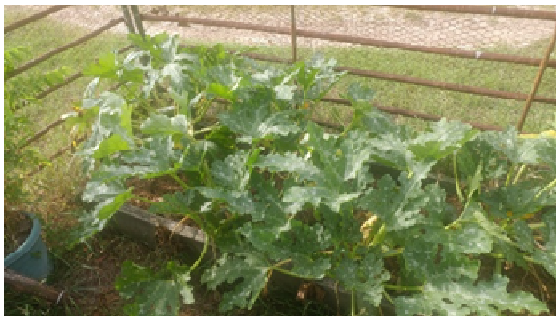


Hill Country Veggies

By Allen Mace

OK, hear we are, another month of disruptions. I hope the June meeting on Zoom went well. As you know, I'm not the most tech savvy and was unable to log on. I'm sure for those who did, it was a good meeting and nice to see friends. I have run into a few Master Gardeners when I've been out-and-about, it's been fun talking to and about what's going on in your gardens.

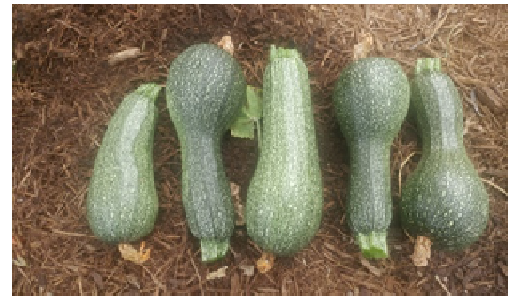
As for me, I'm mostly growing squash this year and a few tomatoes. The weather has been a factor this year, at least for me. The squash has been doing great, but my



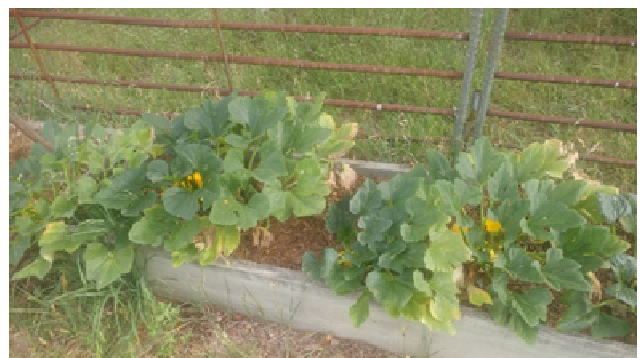
Zucchini squash bed

cucumbers developed mildew. Rather than fight the mildew, I just pulled the plants. I think the mildew was the result of cool nights and rain. I dodged the high wind and hail but did get lots of rain. The cucumbers were vining but had not started to climb the stakes yet, thus they laid on the ground wet all

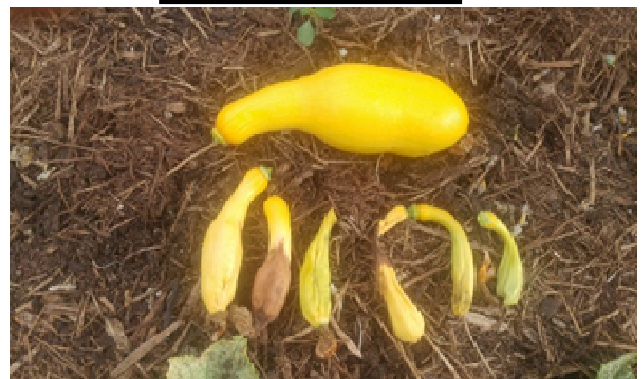
night and that is not a good thing. I'm also slowly convincing myself that I should start spacing my plants farther apart than I normally do. I've a tendency to sneak a plant or two, here and there because I hate to throw away a good plant. I know there's a reason for planting recommendations, maybe I should follow them better. It seems I tend to have more plants than space availability. One thing I notice this year with the squash was that some of the fruit is rotting before it even really begins to grow. A bit of research online said that this may be from calcium deficiency. This has never occurred to me because of my alkali soil. Then it occurred to me that I'm in raised beds thus not in native soil, light bulb flash. Maybe, just maybe, I should try adding a bit of calcium to my raised bed, trucked in soil. No matter how long you do anything, you can learn something new. It will be interesting to see how next year's squash does.



Zucchini squash



Yellow squash bed



Yellow squash with calcium deficiency?

Cool, Clear Water (Or how to attract birds using moving water)



Tom Collins

As a 10 year old kid growing up in the Texas Hill County, my sister and I would ride our horses around the area – mostly on our small family ranch or along the Scenic Loop Road. She was 15 years older than me, but still enjoyed having me as a riding partner. While riding she liked to sing some of the old western cowboy songs – “many still comes back to me” while outside working on our ranch. One that I remember well was called “Cool Water” written in 1936 by Bob Nolan. It has been recorded by many artists. A short part of the lyrics go: We won’t last long without water—Cool clear water

So, what does this have to do with gardening? As I told Pat Wolters when I asked if I might write a few articles for our group, I sometimes wander off into odd places before telling my story. **WATER** – That is a word that will get the attention of almost anybody who lives in Texas.

As Master Gardeners, water is what keeps us going or is that growing. There are many kinds of soil, too many kinds of seeds, and only one water (excluding salt water). But the water I am interested in is the kind that wildlife needs. We should all know the 5 keys to a good habitat – Water, food, shelter, space, and arrangement.

My topic this time is “using moving water to attract birds” and other small wildlife. Many years ago, my wife and I became avid birders. We have seen almost 5,000 species since beginning birding in the early 1970’s. It was early in my birding years that I learned one of the secrets to having a “Birdy Yard” – moving water. I am not talking about having to locate your home on a river or creek. You first should understand that any water placed out in a habitat will be found by birds and other critters. Some of you may have bird baths. I am not high on bird baths. In fact, I would discourage most folks from them unless you are willing to make sure the water is fresh, and the bath remains clean daily. One or two Jays in your bird bath and all the water has been splashed out. And forget a Cedar Waxwing invasion – bone dry in a few seconds. Left in the hot sun, the water can reach high temperatures and is no longer bird friendly. Left too long, mold or algae can develop.

So how do you get moving water? Lots of ways. One of the simple ways I discovered years ago was to take a gallon milk container, rinse it several times. With an ice pick poke a small hole in the bottom corner opposite the handle, then add some water to test to see if it slowly drips. If it has a fast drip or runs, then recycle this one and try again. Once you get the very-slow drip hole working, you are ready to add a small rope or cord to the handle, fill the jug and replace the stopper. Now you need a shady spot with some vegetation that will support an 8-pound container of water and one that can be viewed from your home porch or living room. Hang the container about 2 feet above the ground and place a small saucer on the ground below it. You can add a small amount of water to reduce the splash on a dry surface. Do not be surprised to find it moved and/or dirty the next morning as the local night critters will find it. You may need to remove the saucer every night, and refill the jug daily.

That is the simple and cheapest way to bring birds in using moving water. The birds hear the drip and are drawn to it. Most of the birds coming to a drip like this will be small birds, and they do not like

How to Attract Birds using Moving Water Continued

water deeper than their leg length – shallow water is one of the keys to drawing birds in. Some better built bird baths have a lesser slope or may be flat. Baths that have a deep pool are fine for Jays and Doves, but the little guys will stick to the edge of the water.

Below is a slightly more expensive one that I tried when we first moved to the ranch and before we built the ranch house. I took a 5-gallon bucket and drilled a small hole in the side of the bucket at the bottom edge. I added a copper ¼ inch threaded connector, some flex ¼ inch piping and a ¼ inch adjustable flow valve. I built a flat cover for the bucket and set the bucket on large flat rock, then placed a copper saucer below the drip valve, added some ranch rocks, filled the bucket, adjusted the flow to a very slow drip and presto – a simple water feature that I filled 1-2 times per week.



That is about as easy as it can get before you start spending more effort and money for a water feature. To advance you will need a power source and typically a water resource. When we built our ranch house the front of the house showed lots of concrete – typical of Hill County homes. I hired a landscape person to come in and build a nice wall out in front of the house that covered the concrete. We filled the space between it and the house with soil. When I built the house, I had the contractor place junction boxes close to each outside hose bib and at each hose bib I had an additional water line run with a cut off valve below ground level. When I started on

my major water feature (we call it the Oasis), I had immediate power for my pumps and water flowing to a check valve to maintain steady water levels. The Oasis has three water pumps and two streams that slowly flow and recycle the water to the 400-gallon pond. Each stream has a waterfall. There is an additional waterfall that recirculates the pond water. It is a little too detailed to explain all the steps to build such a system, but it has been worth the effort. I have photographed over 100 species of birds plus many mammals, herps (amphibians and reptiles), and insects.

One of the habitat items I have not mentioned and maybe equally important to water is shelter. If you have a yard with no trees or shrubs, then water features become more difficult to plan and set. Birds need cover to protect them from larger predators. Our Oasis sets back inside a mix of shrubs (Elbow Bush, Texas Persimmon, American Beautyberry, Turks Cap) and high coverage in Live Oaks and Hackberry.



The Oasis is about 25 feet from our great room windows and my recliner sits next to the windows. Our front porch overlooks it as well. Although this view of the Oasis looks open, the large amount of cover to the back and above allow birds to enter and exit out the back side. I left the front exposed on purpose so we could see the wildlife from inside the house plus photography was easy since we sit higher.

Three features make this an Oasis for wildlife:

- ◆ Good cover and shelter with easy access to the water.
- ◆ Slow moving, very shallow water with small slightly deeper pools.
- ◆ Waterfalls to provide the signal that water is close by.

This little stream is about 15 feet long and is the site of 90 per cent of the photos I take. At least 3 species of birds recorded here are the first for the county. The larger rocks provide landing and drying off sites, and the stream bed is a mix of smaller gravel. The wooden arch and other old limbs provide both good landing sites and great photo opportunities.



**Left:
American
Redstart**

**Right:
Blackburnian
Warbler**

**Photo Credit:
Tom Collins**



The link below are the photos of all the birds and other animals that I have taken. Nearly every one of the photos taken were from my recliner that overlooks the Oasis.

Link to the Collins' Oasis <https://photos.app.goo.gl/L4ZfSPpfCq1GGuaQ2>

Continuing To Hüglekultur or not to Hüglekultur; That is the Question! After the May Storms!

By Meg Scot– Johnson

May 10th Hüglekultur was percolating along with some mulch sliding off the mound, some plants growing and the tomatoes with blooms (photo on right)

As with any garden, the saga continues. This was unexpected - two hail storms, 70 mph winds, and rain - twice in twenty hours May 27 and 28. I was too sad to take a photo then. The plants were shredded.

After days of cleaning up storm damage and hoping that roots were healthy so leaves would bud again, I turned my attention to my Hüglekultur that looked like a large brown “heffalump” (photo below)



Assessing the situation I could see that the mound was shorter yet still a mound. Most of the mulch was down the sides of the mound. Two tomato plants were holding on even though leaves were shredded.

Small zinnias were persistent. The other plants were not there nor not well.

So I decided to go beyond the “use what you have” guideline and headed for the plant nursery. I added garden soil to flatten the top and planted larger plants to make up for loss of time to grow. I re-mulched the top with the mulch that slid down the sides.

As of today, June 14, the two surviving tomato plants look healthier; however, they have not risked flowering as of now. Onward!



Getting Back to the Garden!

Following the closing of the Covid 19 testing site at the Hill Country Youth Event Center in late May, eager Master Gardeners were able to get some much-needed gardening done in our Demonstration Garden. Spreading out in the garden were Chairman Jackie Skinner, Sue Hall, Darla Cluster, Dee Dunton, Bee Evans, Marge Muniz, Kim Rhoades, and Vickie Killeen. A few productive hours resulted in weeding, planting, grooming and labeling.



1. Bee Evans, Jackie Skinner, Marge Muniz, Kim Rhoades and Dee Dunton gather for a few minutes of instruction from Demo Garden chairman Jackie.
2. Sue Hall and Darla Cluster stayed busy in the Extension Office's perennial bed.
3. Marge Muniz clears pesky weeds in the perennial section.
4. Bee Evans, who will be managing the herb garden area, and Jackie Skinner plan where new plants will be added.

Photo Credit: Vickie Killeen

**HCMG Monthly Business Meeting
June 10, 2020
Online Zoom Meeting**

Call to Order

Approval of March 4, 2020 minutes—Membership directed to VMS for minutes

The meeting began with Mark Schultz greeting members as they joined and answering questions for members unfamiliar with the Zoom platform. Rachel Garrison then welcomed the membership to the first Zoom meeting and reported that June 10 is National Friendship day and the corresponding week is National Gardening Week.

Rachel then explained that the HCMG operates under the authority of the local extension service which operates under the authority of the state office and that Angela Fielder is acting as a coordinator, sharing the rules with us as she receives them. She has met with Angela by phone several times to discuss new operating procedures. The office now closes at 4:00PM to allow time for the required sanitizing of the office every afternoon. No more than 10 individuals are allowed inside at a time. Any time an individual comes inside, the office must be sanitized. Rachel emphasized the importance of minimizing trips into the office. Restroom facilities should be considered off limits to volunteers working in the greenhouses or demo garden except under extreme circumstances. Rachel explained questions could be asked through the zoom chat function. Questions not answered today can be directed to Rachel or any member of the executive committee. Rachel also mentioned that today's meeting earns 1 hour of volunteer time and training sessions on June 9 and June 10 qualify for volunteer time as well.

Executive Committee Reports

Treasurer's Report-Jackie Connelly presented the financial report. There were no questions or comments. Jackie directed the membership to the VMS for the full report. Jackie reported

\$45,133.65 in the scholarship fund and there are already a couple of applications to review. In the general fund we have \$29,217.06.

B&B Sale-Jackie Connelly reported that the sale was successful but due to the pandemic and cancellation of the sale to the public, not as successful as past years. The public sale was cancelled and all plants were purchased by HCMG members. Starting in January HCMG purchased 1310 plants. Direct expenses included plants, soil, banners, hoses, new wagon. Indirect costs include electricity for 2 greenhouses. Income was \$8,733.00 comprised of \$625.00 for geraniums and \$8,108.00 for the 1,310 purchased plants, with expenses of \$4,644.02 yielding a profit of \$4,088.98. No rain barrels

were sold but Anne Brown and Mike Muskopf have replenished the rain barrel supply and sales are now coming in. Jackie also reported 536 volunteer hours were logged with the sale. Rachel thanked Jackie and the B&B team for averting disaster and making the sale a success.

Standing Committee Reports

Education-Donna Bellis reported the results of the 2020 HCMG class. Sixteen students finished the class and passed the exam. One student completed the class and needs to complete the exam. Four students have chosen to repeat the class in 2021. Donna praised the students for finding and creating extracurricular means for replacing the classroom instruction. Donna Bellis reported that all students passed with 95 or above with two perfect hundreds. Four students expressed to Donna a willingness to retake the class next year to **take advantage of in person presentations**. Donna reminded the membership that all classes can be audited at any time and mentioned the landscaping class as a particularly good class to attend. Donna mentioned that there will be an upcoming **meeting** to evaluate the course and review the test with the students. She also mentioned Debbie Bass is currently reviewing the test questions. Donna thanked the education committee and the facilitators for their hard work under unprecedented circumstances and announced their next meeting will be June 25, 2020 at 1PM online through Zoom. Rachel thanked Donna for her hard work and success in spite of difficulties due to the pandemic, and problems with last minute, newly revised book deliveries.

Opportunity Garden-Donna Bellis reported that the Garden is currently on hiatus. The staff is no longer meeting clients due to the pandemic restrictions. Current activity centers on soil improvement and planting cover crops. The garden is slated to open this month, but it will be too hot for the clients to work outside. As part of the Fall garden readiness activity, Imelda **Home** is requesting volunteer assistance to revive the compost bins and assistance in planting more cover crops.

Green House-Rachel Garrison praised Janelle Dahms and Fernando Gonzalez for their tireless work preparing for the B&B sale. Rachel also noted significant improvements in the area around greenhouses. Volunteers are needed for weeding and MGs can adopt a month and work at their convenience. Rachel directed interested members to contact Janelle or Fernando for more information.

Junior Master Gardener-Rachel Garrison announced that Kim Courtwright has requested some help with weeding and fence painting at the 4H Garden. Interested members should contact Kim for details.

Logo wear-Debbie Bacon reported that all logo wear is in. She will be at the office on June 17 from 10:30-11:30 on the front porch for pickups of logo wear and remaining books.

Research Desk is reopening Jun 16 for two three hour sessions every Tuesday and Thursday through June 30. Training will take place in two sessions. The first session will be for two interns plus one Research Desk Trainer. The second session will include one or two trainees and one mentor. The three hour sessions run from 9:00-12:00 and 1:00-4:00 due to the new closing time of 4:00. No MGs other than scheduled trainees and trainers will be allowed inside on training Tuesdays and Thursdays. Rachel prefers that no MG staffs the Research desk to allow interns to earn more hours. Jackie suggested that all questions be answered by interns. Interns are required to perform 50 hours for certification so they are the first priority. The interns lost a significant volunteer opportunity due to the cancellation of the B&B sale.

Rachel pointed out that Mark and his team are revamping the research desk project and the retrieval methods for old data and have revised the inquiry form. Jan Grimes reported she had helped a neighbor with a gardening question and asked if the new form could be uploaded to VMS. Jackie said yes.

In House Programs-Edna Plat announced her plans for the July meeting business meeting. She reminded members of the well received 2019 July meeting which consisted of a panel of three master gardeners fielding questions from attendees. Membership submitted questions and the moderators then discussed the answers.

Unfinished Business

Storage Shed-Rachel Garrison explained that the storage shed replacement is still in the works but was delayed by the Pandemic and the results of the B&B sale.

Location for July meeting- Rachel reported that the July meeting will be held Wednesday, July 8 rather than the usual first Wednesday of the month due to scheduling issues with HCYEC. The meeting will take place in the Event Center Room with plenty of space for social distancing. Due to pandemic restrictions, there will be a brownbag lunch rather than a potluck. Lunch begins at 12:00, followed by the meeting at 1:00, and Edna Plat's panel discussion at 2:00. During the meeting the Interns will be honored and Rachel hopes to present a gift card to Ray Walston. There will be some early voting in another part of the building which should be avoided. Meeting will be casual and fun. Information will come out on e-minder

Jackie reminded members to STAY OUT of the extension office except for training. Supplies have been moved and are

accessible without going inside. Every time a visitor goes inside the office must be sanitized. Anne Brown announced that the Research Desk Committee will sanitize twice a day on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Tom Collins requested a Zoom option for the July meeting, as an option for individuals unable to attend.

Mike Muskopf asked if masks will be required. Rachel said she is waiting for an answer to that question. Imelda Horne offered to assist setting up chairs but Rachel answered that Jake and the team at HCYEC would handle that.

**New Business
Announcements**

July Meeting-July 8,2020-brown bag lunch at 12:00, meeting at 1:00 and CEU at 2:00

Adjournment

Submitted by
Donna Nutt,
HCMG Secretary

Where to Find Native Plants

Our local N.I.C.E. nurseries have happily agreed to stock up on our Plant of the Season in order to have it available to the public. These independent nurseries carry only the best plants for our area, as well as high-quality soil amendments and gardening supplies.

Look for the "N.I.C.E. Plant of the Season" sign stake at these nurseries and growers in Kerrville, Fredericksburg, and Medina:

Natives of Texas, 4256 Medina Highway, Kerrville, 830-896-2169

Plant Haus 2, 604 Jefferson Street, Kerrville, 830-792-4444

The Gardens at The Ridge, 13439 S. Ranch Road 783 (Harper Rd.), Kerrville, 830-896-0430

Friendly Natives, 1107 N. Llano Street, Fredericksburg, 830-997-6288

Medina Garden Nursery, 13417 TX. Highway 16, Medina, 830-589-2771



Lindheimer muhly grass



Lindheimer muhly is an outstanding ornamental grass with feathery seed plumes and blue-green foliage.

OR

The narrow blue-green leaves and feathery, swaying seed heads of Lindheimer muhly soften our landscapes and provide interest when many other plants are dormant

By Cindy Anderson

Native Plant Society of Texas

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 PLANT NATIVES?

Paula Stone, 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.

LINDHEIMER MUHLY

This summer season (which begins on Saturday, June 20), the Kerrville and Fredericksburg NPSOT chapters are featuring the Lindheimer muhly grass (*Muhlenbergia lindheimeri*) at five local nurseries as their N.I.C.E. Plant of the Season.

Lindheimer muhly (often called just “Muhly grass” or “Big muhly” – is a native ornamental clumping grass, very popular in Central Texas landscapes. Its upright form makes it a good choice for a variety of landscape design

uses, as either a background plant or as a centerpiece. Its narrow blue-green leaves and feathery, swaying heads make a very striking form, softening our landscapes and providing interest when many other plants are dormant.

More and more, both residential and commercial landscapes are including native grasses. Why? Because they are not browsed by white-tail deer and, once established, require little water and no fertilizer. Also, their deep roots provide excellent erosion control. They can be utilized as screens, or planted in a row to set off a particular area or a property line. The plumes of flowers are also impressive in fresh or dried cut-flower arrangements.

Growing 3- to 5-feet tall and wide, Lindheimer muhly produces flower stalks that extend an additional foot above the foliage. It adapts to soils with a wide range of pH and textures, but does need reasonable drainage. It performs best in full sun, but will tolerate light shade. Once established, it has outstanding drought tolerance that makes it an excellent native substitute for Pampas grass or Chinese/Japanese silvergrass – foreign plants which grow aggressively, disperse seeds freely, crowd out native plants, and create fire hazards. One additional advantage: this big grass won't cut you to shreds like Pampas grass will – its leaves are much softer.

Lindheimer muhly was named in honor of Ferdinand Lindheimer, the “Father of Texas Botany.” Many other plants native to the Texas Hill Country also bear the name “Lindheimer” or “Lindheimer’s.” Most of these plants were first collected by Lindheimer, who settled on the banks of the Comal River in New Braunfels in 1845. His charming home, now known as The Lindheimer House, is currently owned and run as a museum by the New Braunfels Conservation Society, and is a delightful place to visit when touring the area.

Its genus name, *Muhlenbergia*, comes from an earlier German settler. Gotthilf Hunrich Ernst Muhlenberg lived from 1753 to 1815. He was born into a prominent Pennsylvania family, and his father and brothers were influential patriots during the Revolutionary War. Because of his family's involvement in the Revolution, Muhlenberg was on the British hit list.

While he was hiding out in a rural area away from Philadelphia during the Revolution, Muhlenberg became interested in botany. Through his extensive collections, Muhlenberg made major contributions to botany, and many plants have been named in his honor. For example, among our local flora are several species of muhly grass (*Muhlenbergia*) and Chinquapin oak (*Quercus muhlenbergii*). Two other popular muhly grasses for landscaping are Gulf muhly (*Muhlenbergia capillaries*), a smaller bunchgrass with a pink glow to its flower plumes, and Bamboo muhly (*Muhlenbergiadumosa*), with fern-like leaves and a fluffy, lacy texture.

Because this drought-tolerant species has been shown to perform outstandingly across a wide spectrum of climates and soils, making it well suited across Texas and beyond – it was recently awarded the status of a Texas Superstar. Texas A&M AgriLife created the Texas Superstar plants program to help Texans select the best plants for quality and reliability. To be designated a Texas Superstar, a plant must not only be beautiful, but perform well for consumers and growers throughout the state. Texas Superstars must be easy to propagate, which should ensure the plants are not only widely available but also reasonably priced.

A very low-maintenance plant, Lindheimer muhly, while getting established, can be watered during the spring and summer, then left completely alone in the fall. Fertilizer can be skipped altogether – muhly grass is tolerant of low-nutrient conditions because it is a native plant. Other yearly maintenance is optional – some people leave them alone, and some cut them back in late winter or early spring. Garden Style San Antonio (a division of San Antonio Water Systems, also known as SAWS) puts out an excellent and free weekly e-newsletter with wonderful landscape design and conservation tips. They say that Lindheimer muhly can be cropped or “crew-cut” early in the spring to clear out spent brown leaves, but that can make it very slow to recover. A far less obtrusive method of tidying it up is to just break off the dead leaves by hand and comb through it with a sturdy rake.

See page 10 for nurseries stocking native plants

**Hill Country Master
Gardeners 2020
Executive
Committee**

Rachel Garrison
President

Debra Bacon
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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

Submissions to
Newsletter.editor.hcmg
@gmail.com



My A&M maroon poppies reseeded prolifically from last year's 3 plants. They are now competing with my day lilies in their original bed and have dispersed over my granite walkways. Can I save seeds for anyone?
Photo Credit: Vickie Killeen



Mike Muskopf and Anne Brown built out barrels in an attempt to make them available for our orders. They have received orders from 10 people during this time of social distancing.



**Antelope Horn
Milkweed**

(Asclepias asperula) is a low, sprawling Southwestern native that thrives in warm, arid zones. It feeds Monarch, Soldier and Queen Butterfly caterpillars and adults, but many other butterflies and pollinators enjoy its nectar-filled flowers, too.

This herbaceous perennial, hardy in zones 5-9, appears early in the spring to provide food for early-migration Monarchs. Because of its long taproot, this milkweed is drought-tolerant and non-aggressive.

Photo Credit: Pam Umstead