



HILL COUNTRY

**MASTER GARDENERS**

## Of Leaf & Limb

*"Promoting education in horticulture and the environment"*

June 2021

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HCMG

June 2, 2021

Hill Country Youth  
Event Center

**In-person ONLY**

12:00 **Brown Bag Lunch**  
 1:00 **Meeting**  
 2:00 **Continuing Ed**

**Maura Bobbitt**  
*from the Cibolo  
 Center  
 for Conservation*



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

Anne Brown

Hi Everyone,

Isn't it wonderful that everything is getting back to normal, whatever that is. It was so great to see so many faces at our meeting. I'm sorry that those of you who Zoomed missed the CEU presentation. Cathy Downs is an excellent speaker and did a really good job. After the meeting, Jackie Skinner took her on a tour of the demo garden, and she was impressed. We were putting the shade cloths on the greenhouses, and I stopped to visit with her for a minute and she told me what a fantastic job everyone who worked on the garden had done. Great job demo garden crew.

As you know, our new VMS system is up and mostly running. It is a very easy system to use. All you have to do is follow the instructions Jackie C. gave you and get signed up. Posting your hours is as easy as the last one was, so go ahead and get signed up. Only 42 of you have signed up, so those 65 of you that haven't, please do so at your earliest convenience.

Next month, there won't be any Zoom meeting (or any in the foreseeable future), so please join us at the HCYEC. We are returning to having a one hour social time before the meeting. It's bring your own brown bag and visit while enjoying your lunch.

A very special thanks to Diane McMahon, Nina Wagner, and Dee Dunton for agreeing to bring back the Garden Shed to next years Blooms and Barrels. The Garden Shed was very popular year before last and it will be good to have it back.

Most of you know that I have been running the Rain Barrel program since 2007, when we began to program. I don't know the exact number but I believe we have sold about 800 barrels in that time. I used to build them myself, but I've gotten too old to be around the drills. For the last several years, Mike Muskopf has been helping me by building out the barrels. He has been joined this year by Karen Fuller, and most recently by Linda Fawcett, our new transfer who lives in Junction. We sold 30 rain barrels this year at the B&B, most of which were not built out. However, we were able to find some barrels and Mike and his team got them built out. Thanks so much. Hasn't it been nice to have some rain. I got almost 5 inches and it soaked in well. However, I mowed 5 days after rain and brought up dust! Here's hoping we get more, or we will be in for a long summer. Happy gardening to everyone. My garden is coming back nicely and I hope the same for all of you.

## TEXAS SUPERSTAR<sup>®</sup> PROMOTIONS FOR 2021

by David Rodriguez, County Extension Agent-Horticulture



### 'Black Stockings' Napier Grass

*Pennisetum* x 'Black Stockings'

'Black Stockings' has beautiful wide leaves that are a deep purple in color which reflex gracefully on a vase shaped plant that quickly stands out in a landscape. It does not flower and is resistant to leaf spot that can be seen on older varieties. It is very heat and drought tolerant and is perennial in some portions of the state. It is similar in appearance to 'Princess Caroline' napier grass but grows much taller.

**Exposure:** Full sun exposure is best for leaf color development.

**Height:** Grows from 8 to 12 feet tall depending on amount of watering and length of the growing season.

**Plant type:** Perennial to USDA Zone 9a. Can likely be perennial further north if planted in a protected

**Location:** Used as an annual in north Texas and the High Plains.

**Planting time:** Best in spring. Can be planted in summer from large containers.

**Soil type:** Almost any well drained soil.

**Suggested uses:** Can be used as a specimen plant or an accent plant in mixed borders, but best as a quick growing screen or background plant.

**Special notes:** Plants freeze to the ground, but make rapid growth in the spring to make a strong statement in the landscape. In north Texas, it can be overwintered if the temperatures are mild and it is grown in a protected location, but is not as cold hardy as 'Princess Caroline'. Very little fertilizer is needed to get this plant to perform. Nitrogen fertilizer will cause the leaves to green up and lose the striking purple foliage that is a hallmark of this great plant. Cut back foliage when browned by frost as there is little winter interest.





## Square Foot Gardening

By Pat Wolters, MG

During the pandemic isolation, I had time to learn about Square Foot Gardening (SFG). I found a book on SFG at a local resale shop. This gardening method was developed in 1976 by Mel Bartholomew, a Civil Engineer who proposed that gardening should be **efficient, easy and fun**. He decided that single row gardens were too much work, too expensive, provided too much produce at one time, wasted water and wasted space between rows. He also complained that soil gets compacted when you walk on it and single row gardens require too many soil amendments. I was also concerned about compacting soil when walking on it so I added pathways to my single row garden (below) several years ago. I also agreed with his other issues and the fact that SFG promotes organic practices. Also, Mel believed that teaching people in underserved countries how to grow their own fresh produce was a reasonable solution to help end world hunger. Since the SFG book I owned was old, so I decided to take the online SFG course on the website:

<https://squarefootgardening.org/>



The Level 1 Introductory SFG Course covers how to get started, plan, build and maintain a SFG in 6 online modules with videos. The information in this article has been taken from the SFG online course and my experience.

I decided to build a 4"x8" square garden on my back patio to supplement my single row garden. I made it 2 foot high so I could sit while taking care of the plants. Because my SFG

was 2 feet high I decided to put cardboard, twigs, leaves, etc in the first foot (the Lasagna method) and add the Mel's mix to the top foot. Mel's Mix is somewhat pricey. It cost me about \$200.00 to fill my 4x8 garden but remember that this mix is good for 10 years and you do not have to fertilize or do soil testing. The \$200.00 initial cost would average \$20.00 a year and I spend far more on soil amendments in my single row garden.

### Mel's Mix consists of

**1/3 compost +  
1/3 peat moss +  
1/3 course vermiculite.**

Volume of Mel's Mix needed for my  
4'x8'x12" is 32 Cubic Feet



Continued on page 4

## Square Foot Gardening Continued

Raised bed gardens have become very popular but not all raised beds are a SFG.

**To be a SFG you must use Mel's Mix in place of soil and have a grid (the garden is divided into 1 foot squares)**



### The 8 Steps of Building Your SFG

**1. Plan Your Garden:** Create a map of your garden. A plan like this will be used for your SFG.



**Tip:** put plants that will grow the tallest on the North side of the box and plants that require more attention, such as bush beans, near the borders of the box. I put squash on the border so it can grow over the box.

#### How many vegetables per square?

**1 per square:** Tomato, cabbage, okra, broccoli, pepper, basil, tomatillo

**2 per square:** Cucumber

**4 per square:** Kale, Swiss chard, parsley, potato, marigold

**9 per square:** Beets, spinach, onion, bush bean

**16 per square:** carrots, radish, bunching onion

**The garden plan is always important but especially with the SFG since you are continually replanting squares throughout the growing season.**

**2. Lay Out Your Garden:** 6-8 hours of sun each day

**3. Build Boxes and Grids:** untreated cedar is best. Grids are lattice slats or plastic lathe material. I used cinder blocks with a rock cap for my garden and cane for my grid.

**4. Build Box Accessories:** Trellises get the most use of space

**5. Create Mel's Mix:** I put all the material on a tarp and rolled it around to mix. It's very light.

**6. Plant:** If planting more than one square of a plant, don't plant them together—spread out.

**7. Maintain:** Hand water at the base of plants. Overhead watering is wasteful and causes disease. Hand pick pests or cut away infected plant parts with scissors. Clean up dead debris around plants.

**8. Harvest:** You have the possibility in Texas to be harvesting almost year round, especially if you use season extenders like grow cloth.

*Continued on page 5*



## Square Foot Garden cont'd

### The 10 Basic Principles of SFG:

1. **Plant Densely**-don't waste space
2. **Grow up** –use trellises for vining plants
3. **Mel's Mix**—not garden soil
4. **Garden close to your home** –you will pay more attention to what's close at hand
5. **Grow Shallow**—6 inches of growing medium is all most crops need (I used 12")
6. **Fertilizer is not needed**—just add a trowel of fresh compost when you replant a square (save \$ by making your own compost)
7. **Keep aisles between boxes narrow**-about 3 feet between each SFG. In the picture on the right you can see that I didn't allow enough room between my pollinator garden and the SFG
8. **Be stingy with seeds** –instead of planting lots of seeds and thinning, use the spacing on the garden plan on page 4
9. **Plant in Squares** - the grids are used to plant efficiently and rotating in new crops when the first crop has produced-many different types of plants intermingled in a single box-don't forget flowers!
10. **Rotate Crops** - the yield from a single 4x4 Garden will surprise you. Many squares can be planted twice in a gardening season.

My SFG on the patio. I used cane for my grid since I couldn't find Cedar slats.



### Why Hand Watering Your SFG is Beneficial

- ◆ Conserves Water
- ◆ Keeps you up close to your plants
- ◆ Mel's Mix prevents over watering



### Maintaining your SFG



- Tools needed: pencil, a trowel, scissors and a bucket with a cup
- Hot dry climates can use mulch to help retain water (chopped straw, dried grass, dried leaves)
- Mulch only when plants are well established







### **The LaQuinta Real Ranch**

A 100 year old Homestead on **Lower Turtle Creek Road** includes many restored barns, new chicken coop and well maintained vegetable and herb garden. Notice the yard art used to trellis cucumbers, and re-purposed stock tank for green beans. None of this could grow without the deer proof fencing.

Photo Credit: Pat Wolters







## Bee Day at the Garden

**Saturday, May 22, 2021  
10 a.m.-2:00 p.m.**



The celebration, held primarily in the Zachry Foundation Culinary Garden, will be abuzz with activities and learning opportunities; featuring honey culinary demos, observation beehives, kids activities, adult educational workshops, tours, cash bar with honey themed drinks prepared by Jason Dady Catering, and more.

<https://www.sabot.org/events/bee-day-at-the-garden/>

*Bee Day Workshops Must register to attend, space is limited.*

**Register for all five Workshops** (\$20 for all 5)

**Medicinal Honey** 10 – 10:45 a.m.

**Native Pollinators and the Native Plants they Love** 11 – 11:45 a.m.

**Tools of the Trade** 1 – 1:45 p.m.

**Seasonality of Beekeeping** 2 – 2:45 p.m.

**Introduction to Beekeeping with Q&A** 3 – 3:45 p.m.

**Check out the Guided Tour & Walk**

*Must register to attend, space is limited. Go to website for information*

**SAN ANTONIO BOTANICAL GARDEN**

555 FUNSTON PLACE, SAN ANTONIO, TX

**HCMG Monthly meeting  
May 7, 2021  
In person and Zoom  
Social Distancing and Masks Required**

**Call to Order  
Pledge of Allegiance  
Invocation – Patty Zohlen  
Verification of Quorum – Donna Nutt  
Approval of April, 2021 minutes as  
published in the newsletter**

**Executive Committee Reports  
Treasurer’s Report – Jackie Connelly–**  
Jackie reported balances of \$44,890.77 in Guadalupe Bank. This includes \$1600.00 of rain barrels sold at B&B and she reported a balance of \$30,272.41 in Security State Bank.

**B&B Financial Results – Jackie Connelly –**  
Jackie reported B&B sales of \$16,462.25 and expense of \$5294.07 for a net profit of \$11,168.18.

**Committee Reports**

**B&B Sale– Janell Dahms**  
–Janell requested a round of applause for all the volunteers who made the 2021 B&B a record breaking sellout. She announced that Anne Brown came closest to guessing the sales closing time. Anne guessed 11:02 AM and the last plant was paid for at 10:48 AM.



**Greenhouse – Fernando Gonzalez–**  
Fernando thanked everyone for their hard work making it a successful plant sale. The electricity has been turned off and the greenhouses shut down. He asked anyone who could help to stop by the greenhouses after the meeting and help put on the shade cloths.

**Demo Garden – Jackie Skinner–**Jackie solicited help finding a replacement for the dying Retama tree, damaged by the February mega storm. She also offered



several free milk crates, some Indian Grass, lettuce, and Aloe plugs to the membership. She shared the happy surprise of finding two knockout roses in a box and offered them to the group as well.

**Unfinished Business  
VMS – Jackie Connelly**

Jackie reported that the new VMS System is up, developed by Mr. RJ Jacob who is providing on going assistance with members and continuing to work on the unfinished pages on the site. She said hours posted through March transferred over successfully to the new site, but anything earned since April 1 needs to be entered now. For the benefit of members who have not yet logged in, Jackie solicited a volunteer to sign up for access during the meeting. Barbara Banks volunteered and signed up with Jackie’s help and Patty Zohlen’s assistance and the entire process was projected onto a big screen for the membership to follow step by step. Jackie recommended watching the tutorials and said they are amazing. Questions can be emailed to Jackie or Patty.



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**New Business**

**Social Hour Before Meeting –Anne Brown** - Membership voted to have social hour with brown bag lunch in June and no Zoom for the meeting.

**Garden Shed- Anne Brown** -Anne mentioned that we did not have a garden shed at the B&B Sales this year and said it had been well received by the shoppers in prior years. Diane McMahon volunteered to chair the garden shed in 2022, Nina Wagner said she would help and several other MGs volunteered too.

**Rain Barrel Program – Anne Brown** - Anne mentioned that we have not had an increase in the price of the rain barrels since we started selling them. The cost of the barrels and components have increased thru the years. Melayne Arnold moved to increase the cost of the rain barrel from \$50 to \$60 to the public and from \$25 to \$35 to MGs. Motioned was seconded, and approved by membership.

**Announcements**



Beth McMahon announced she needs volunteers to help install a turf demo garden at the New Fredericksburg Extension Office. She mentioned the new address is 38 Business Court in Fredericksburg. The planting takes place Friday at 8:30 AM



Jackie Skinner introduced a new transfer member, Joan Leach, and welcomed her to the group.

Frank Dunlap announced that he and Jackie Skinner have been asked to design a landscape at Five Points similar to what was done at River Hill or the design outside the UGRA office.

**Adjournment**

Next meeting June 2, 2021, at the EXPO Hall **without Zoom**

Submitted by  
Donna Nutt, Secretary



**Hill Country Master Gardeners 2021 Executive Committee**

Anne Brown  
*President*

Patti Schlessiger  
*Vice President*

*Secretary*  
Donna Nutt

Jackie Connelly  
*Treasurer*

Rachel Garrison  
*Ex-officio Advisor*

*C.E.A. Advisor*  
Angela Fiedler

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

**Newsletter & Website**

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**Master Gardeners assist Gillespie County Agent with Planting Turf**

Raeann Reid and Barbara Banks, both Hill Country Master Gardeners, assisted Gillespie County Horticulture Agent, Beth McMahon, with the Earthkind Turf Results demonstration on May 7, 2021. They worked really hard, raking, pulling weeds from the plots and pressing in the grass seeds at the new Gillespie County Extension Office in Fredericksburg.



Photo Credit: Beth McMahon

