

June 2024

Volume 22 Issue 6

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**Wednesday**  
**June 5, 2024**  
**HCYEC**

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

**SEEDS –**  
 the Fruit of the Matter

**Susan Longacre**  
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The members of Texas A&M AgriLife will provide equal opportunities in programs and activities, education, and employment to all persons regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or any other classification protected by federal, state, or local law.

**President’s Message**  
 Sheryl Landrum

**The Truth About Thistles**

During our demo garden meeting last week, Tom Collins gave a very interesting talk about thistles that was very informative, but scary to me as well. As I live off of Hwy 534, Bandara Highway, I have become very aware of the mass of thistles that I see this year compared to the amount I have seen in my past two springs here. I also noticed the early influx, and early die back, of blue bonnets this year as well; I wondered if seasonal weather changes had made a difference in how these two plants were presenting themselves and whether or not this would influence next years’ presentation of the two flowers as well. The answer to this question is yes; but while the blue bonnets are beautiful and benign, the thistles can be another story.

According to Texas A&M, there are 10 species of thistles in Texas, part of the Asteraceae or sunflower family, <https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/brazoscohort/plant/thistles/>, with the most common one being the Cirsium Texanum. Another prevalent thistle in Texas is the Cirsium Vulgare which is very predominant where I live; having accidentally kicked one this spring, I can tell you they are very nasty and can easily draw blood. These two thistles are the ones I see the most in our area; while they look pretty as they flower, there are long term repercussions in allowing them to bloom.

A thistle plant can produce up to 4,000 seeds; thistles also thrive in drier soil that does not have a lot of nutrients (does that sound like our area?) they like open fields, prairies,  
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Photo by  
 Charles W. Kane  
[www.medvetus.com](http://www.medvetus.com)



## Hill Country Veggies

By Allen Mace, MG



I was a bit late in putting my garden in this year. Lots of things going on, but I managed to put all my tomatoes into wicking pots, cucumbers and Swiss chard into my big cattle trough bed and squash into a smaller water trough that has been converted into a wicking bed. The squash bed is my focus today.



Squash plant



Squash vine moth

Every year I grow yellow summer squash. It is one of the easiest vegetables to grow. Sometimes I'll direct sow the seeds into the bed or sometimes I will pick up some seedlings and trans plant them after I've grown out the roots in the 6-inch pots. Most years I have very little problem growing summer squash, at least until it gets hot in July and August. By then, the plants are very large and need lots of water to keep them going. Every now and then a few of the plants will just wilt almost overnight. This could be the need for water or it could indicate an attack from a Squash Vine Bore. The water issue is fixable, the Squash Vine Bore is fatal. This year I am going to try a be proactive and get ahead of the Squash Vine Bores.



Eggs

You first need to be on the lookout for the Squash Vine Moth which is sometimes mistaken to be a type of wasp. Next, an inspection of the squash plants main stem. This moth tends to lay its eggs on the main stem close to the base of the plant. When the egg hatches, the nymph will bore its way into the hollow chamber of the stem and then migrate down towards the base of the plant. As it eats and grows, eventually the squash plant becomes so damaged, from within, that it will wilt and at this point this plant will not recover and will die. If you cut into the vine, you will find the Squash Vine Bore happily munching away. I have encountered these Bores in winter squash vines as well. In that case about half of the vine had died and I found the Bore at the junction of the dead vine and the part that was still alive. I cut the dead part off, along with the bore, but that plant never did recover and I eventually pulled the plant. I always wondered why Granny wrapped the bottom portion of her squash plants with foil. She would cover from the soil line up a few inches. This was to try and prevent the Squash Vine Moth from laying its eggs on the base of the plant. Sometime it worked and sometime it did not. I think these moths tend to lay their eggs close to the soil line, but not always.



Squash vine bore

A good prevention would be to keep an eye out for the Squash Vine Moth and inspect the stems for eggs. Wrapping the base of the squash plant might also work. I read an article that suggested injecting a small amount of Bt with a small syringe, 2 parts water to 1 part Bt, into the hollow section of the stem at the base of the plant would kill the Squash Vine Bore. I plan on trying this on my squash plants this season.



Foil wrap



HCMGs Tina Pierson, Jodi Tippens, Rita Aliperto & Darla Cluster participated in **World Migratory Bird Day** at the Ridge on May 11, 2024

Bird City Texas is a community-focused certification program created to help people protect birds and their habitats where we live, work, and recreate. The criteria required to attain certification are designed to be impactful and efficient against habitat loss and other harmful factors impacting birds.

Research shows that bird-friendly habitat increases property values, helps control insects, and generates tourism dollars. Where birds thrive, people prosper. From urban centers to rural towns, each community can provide important habitat for birds, and certified communities will receive recognition and community benefits as a result of these efforts.

**Science-based bird conservation initiatives and community-centric action will:**

- \* Enhance and restore habitats
- \* Increase native plant coverage in Texas for the benefit of birds and people
- \* Reduce population-level threats
- \* Increase public awareness of the benefits and challenges of bird conservation
- \* Promote environmental stewardship in Texas cities

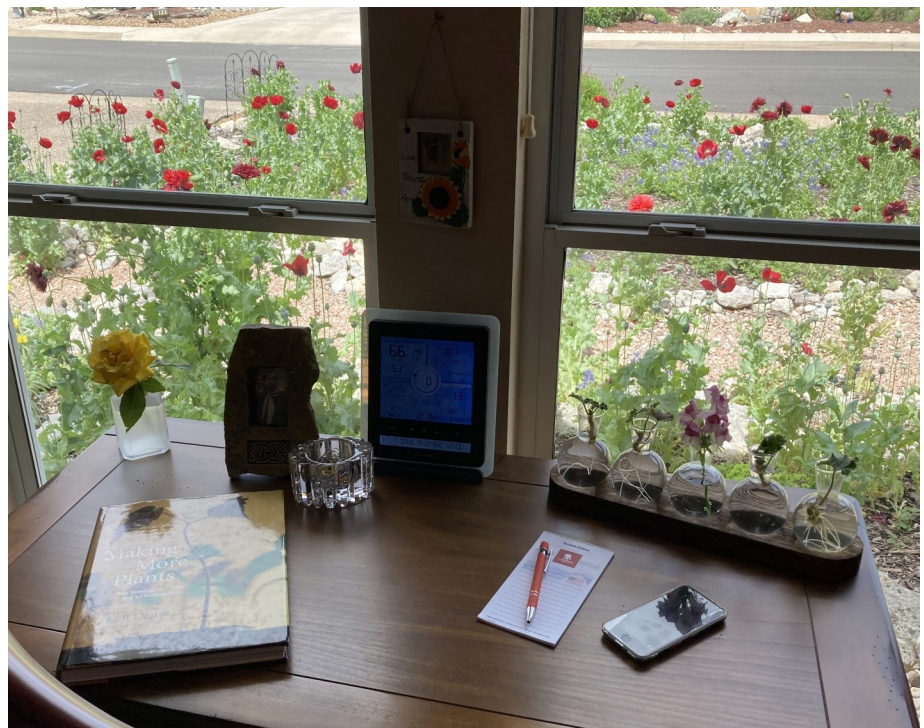
Audubon Texas and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department certified the first 4 communities in the Bird City Texas program last year: Bastrop, Dallas, Houston, and Port Aransas. Three new communities were certified in January 2021: Galveston, San Antonio, and Surfside Beach.



## Spring at My House

Welcome rain in late winter has given my front yard a spot of color. Poppies attracted neighborhood walkers for a closer look while crowding out my smaller bluebonnets. A newly planted Desert Willow is budding out in it's protective cage. Grandma's Yellow Rose and rooting geraniums seem to enjoy the view from my office.

Photo Credit: Vickie Killeen



In the February issue of the HCMG newsletter I wrote about **Harvester Ants**. I found a mound at my husband's old office, now an Airbnb. I was afraid that one of my renters had poisoned them because there was no trace of the ants. Beth McMahon, Gillespie County Horticulture agent, told me to calm down because the ants might have just gone deeper into the ground for the winter. Well she was right. I was walking behind the office and look what I found! Now I need to figure out how I can lure a horned toad to my property. Any ideas?

Pat Wolters



Rae Raiford created  
**Wicking Pots**  
 for the  
**Kerr 4H**  
 Live, Learn & Grow Garden



1. Place perforated tubing in bottom of pot
2. Cover with grow cloth (geotextile fabric)
3. Drill four holes into sides of pot 4 inches from bottom



5. Initially water from top. Roots will gravitate towards the water in the bottom of the pot and you will only water through the PVC pipe



4. Add PVC pipe down to the bottom. You will water through the PVC (place screen over PVC top to prevent mosquitoes from getting into the pot)



On April 25 & 26 second grade students from Center Point, Hunt, Ingram and Medina Elementaries visited RNC. One stop on their adventure was at the decomposer station where Master Gardeners Debbie Castillo and Linda Lockhart along with Joan Connor, Master Gardener Intern, added to their knowledge of earthworms and worm bins.



## Brian Strickland, First HCMG Member to become Retired MG



By Jackie Connelly

Brian Strickland was our first member to take advantage of the newly adopted status of RETIRED Texas Master Gardener.

Brian first started his master gardener career in Virginia in 2001. After several years, he moved to Tarrant County Texas Master Gardeners where he served several

years. In October of 2017, he relocated to Kerrville and transferred his membership here. Brian served on the Demonstration Garden Committee and was on our Speaker's Bureau talking about his 20+ years of experience with roses. He is an avid gardener who practices vermiculture at his home where he raises several types of roses along with tomatoes. While his home garden is impressive, his "pride and joy" is the garden at the St. Michael and All Angels Church in Kerrville which he personally designed, installed, and now maintains. Being on Retired status relieves you of the need to recertify each year. On Retired Status you will not need to, or be able to, volunteer. You will not need to attain CEU hours although you certainly may continue your education. Finally, you will not need to pay dues or sign the Volunteer Agreement annually.

When you are on Retired Status, you may participate in HCMG meetings and activities (lunches, training sessions, CEU's, etc.) but you can NOT volunteer on HCMG approved projects (for example Demo Garden, Blooms and Barrells, Pot Parties, Greenhouse, etc.).



**Many, many thanks to Rick Landrum for the beautiful pergolas that he assembled and installed today at our Mercy Gate special!!**

Photo Credit: Rita Aliperto

**President's message continued from page 1**

and areas of land that are not well maintained. The problem is that this prolific plant can literally take over pasture lands and reduce the availability of foraging for cattle, sheep, and horses causing economic damage to ranchers, <https://foragefax.tamu.edu/2021/11/26/weed-of-the-week-thistles/> and problems for other land/homeowners as well (remember they hurt!). So, how do we get rid of them?

Tom recommended that if we are fighting thistles, we need heavy leather gloves, a good thistle removal tool, a bucket, and some kerosene. They need to be dug out with the tap root attached and, preferably, before flowering when they are in the rosette stage. If the thistle is flowering, Tom informed us that we must cut off the head of the flower, put it in a bucket, and pour kerosene over them to ensure killing the seeds (deadheading a thistle does not kill its ability to spread viable seeds and we don't want them in our landfills or spread elsewhere). Also, according to <https://www.wikihow.com/Get-Rid-of-Thistles>, clean your tools thoroughly as even one seed, or part of a thistle, left on a tool can potentially lead to spreading thistles elsewhere.

While the thistle is not totally evil, its seeds are important to birds, pollinators, etc., I think that after realizing how much havoc and pain they can do, I will stick with my blue bonnets.



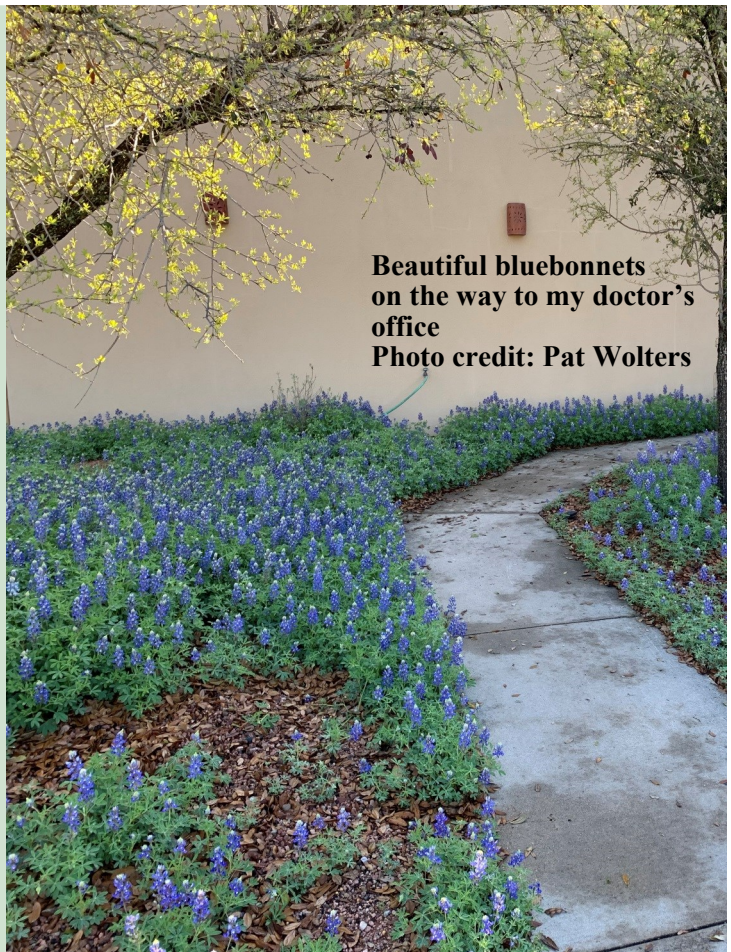
**Susan Longacre**

In basic terms, Susan is a rock reader - that is, her geologic specialty is reading and understanding the geologic history that is 'frozen' in sedimentary rocks.

After getting BS and PhD degrees at The University of Texas at Austin, Susan and her family lived and worked in Houston. Though now retired from Chevron, half of Susan's career was with Getty Oil Company; the other, with Texaco. For all companies, she was a research specialist in carbonate rocks.

In addition to being an avid quilter, Susan volunteers in the Meadow at Riverside Nature Center and is the Lead Seed in Riverside's Gleaners Group (which is why she is here today!). She is a graduate of the 2005 Class of Texas Master Naturalists.

If during 2023 you visited the fossil display at Riverside Nature Center, you saw Susan's latest work, where she was the paleontologist / curator for that extensive display of "Life Through Geologic Time."



**Beautiful bluebonnets on the way to my doctor's office**  
 Photo credit: Pat Wolters

**Hill Country Master Gardeners  
HCYEC  
May 1, 2024**

Called to Order at 1:00 pm.

Welcome/Opening Remarks – Sheryl Landrum welcomed the group. She happily reported the B&B a great success.

Pledge of Allegiance was recited by the group.

Invocation – Patty Zohlen delivered the invocation.

Verification of Quorum – Marge Muniz verified a quorum had been met.

Approve Minutes from March 6, 2024 Meeting. Kay Nelson moved to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Rae Raiford. Motion carried by acclamation.

Treasurer's Report – Jackie Connelly presented the Treasurer's Report. She noted we had Rain Barrel sales of \$2,020, which go into the Scholarship Fund. No monies have been dispersed from this account. The Scholarship Fund balance was \$41,717.27 at the end of April. The General account activity was presented. There were no further questions regarding the report.

**BUSINESS ITEMS**

Retirement Status – Sheryl Landrum presented Brian Strickland with a Master Gardeners Retirement certification. Brian stated that he had been a Master Gardener for over 20 years, through multiple states. Sheryl then explained the requirements for the retirement status of 1) currently being in good standing; 2) a MG for 10 years or more; and 3) a Hill Country Master Gardener for 5 or more years.

**STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS**

B&B – Co-chairman, Jackie Connelly, thanked

all the subcommittee chairmen, their helpers and everyone who shared their time to help make our major fund raiser a success. She recapped that work on the B&B started on December 13th, with the initial plants. We had 76 different varieties, totaling 1,760 plants. There were 709 Plant Sale hours and 306 Greenhouse hours logged through VMS. We received 425 visitors to the sale.

She gave the recap of the sale which netted \$11,140.29. This year's B&B revenue was comparable to prior B&Bs.

We watched an awesome B&B video created by Dave and Rachel Garrison.

The video from the 2023 is out on the website. Due to music copyrights, we would need to modify the 2024 video for the website.

Education – Donna Bellis stated they will be having a meeting on May 2 at 1:30 to start preparing for the 2025 class. She noted for the class of 2024, the Garden Tour notes are in the Educational box in the office. They will begin taking applications in August for the new class.

Demonstration Garden – Bee Evans announced there will be a Demo Garden meeting on Monday, May 6th, at 2 pm in the Extension Classroom. She encouraged anyone to come and attend the meeting. Signage, plant markers and raised beds will be some of the items discussed.

Greenhouse – Kay Nelson also thanked everyone who assisted with the Greenhouse activities this year which are vital for a successful B&B. The B&B plant sales generate the operating funds to support our HCMG programs. She announced she and Lisa Cantini will continue chairing the Greenhouse, along with Becca Taylor. They will be meeting this month and make recommendations for the next B&B.

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**Minutes continued from page 8**

Membership – Barbara Castillo had nothing to report.

Research Desk & Rain Barrels – Anne Brown brought out the Lost and Found box for dispositioning. The Research Desk training attendance has been great and will be complete by tomorrow, May 2nd. The schedule is now available for interns to sign-up for the Research Desk through VMS. Another 50 barrels will be arriving soon and will need to be built-out. Currently there are only 5 barrels available.

LogoWear – Melayne Arnold stated she will be placing another order soon. Orders and monies need to be given to her today or in her box at the extension office by Friday, May 2nd. If you want the logo embroidered on your own shirt, the cost is \$10. Be sure to pin the item with your name. The next order will be made in October, where the newly certified members from the class of 2024 will be allowed to order. She announced that Jeannie Osborne is our new logowear vendor. They are open for suggestions of items that can be offered.

Other Announcements – Help needed:

B&B –Jackie Connelly and Dave Kinneberg are co-chairs for 2024, need someone to take over for 2025.

Press – Still need a chair.

Tamara Ruby reminded everyone of the pots and yard items for the taking.

Several questions were asked regarding the numerous thistles and availability of winecup seedlings.

Rae Raiford noted that the Junior Master Gardeners are working on a lasagna garden and asked for any ideas/suggestions.

Sheryl noted the Cow Pokes and Land Folks event, Friday, May 3, 2024 8am-4:30pm, here at the Youth Center. 3 CEU's available. Check the flyer on your eMinder. Cost is \$35 for early registration.

Sheryl noted that Mike Morris is working to put together a program to address rain conservation and xeriscaping in mid-June and is looking for volunteers.

Adjournment – The meeting adjourned at 1:51 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Marge Muniz  
Secretary

Next Meeting: June 5, 2024 at 1:00 pm in the HCYEC



Work continues at the **Special Opportunity Garden.**

Pictured left to right: Tamara Ruby, Rae Raiford, Mary Ann Wood, MG Intern, and Donna Bellis.

Photo Credit: Pat Wolters

**Hill Country Master Gardeners 2024 Executive Committee**

Sheryl Landrum  
*President*

Rae Raiford  
*Vice President*

Marge Muniz  
*Secretary*

Jackie Connelly  
*Treasurer*

Dave Kinneberg  
*Ex-officio Advisor*

*C.E.A. Advisor*  
Mike Morris

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

**Newsletter**

*Newsletter Editor*  
Pat Wolters

*Associate Newsletter Editor*  
Patti Schlessiger

*Photographer*  
Vickie Killeen

**Submissions to**

**Pat Wolters, Editor**

Patwolters2865  
@hotmail.com

**Gardening 101 Program  
Butt-Holdsworth Library  
May 11, 2024**

Submitted by Patty Zohlen, MG



Donna Bellis, MG presented at the library on Saturday. Donna's topic was Summer Vegetables. She explained the need to select vegetables that will thrive in the heat and how to best cultivate them.

She showed the audience examples of various vegetables she had grown, some of which were new to them. Donna also gave several handouts on growing specific summer vegetables and identified resources for additional information.



Tamara Ruby assists Donna Bellis in demonstrating how to appropriately place a sun shade over plants to provide the cooling effect needed.