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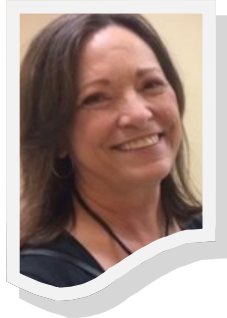
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HCMG meetings will be canceled until social distancing is no longer needed to control the spread of the Covid-19 Virus

MG are asked not to work in Demo Garden at this time



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President's Message

Rachel Garrison

"When life is not coming up roses look to the weeds and find the beauty hidden with them"

L.F.Young, author

Most of us have had lots of extra time to spend working in our gardens these last few weeks. Extra time in the garden is a delightful diversion from the stresses of life. The spring rains have boosted the greening up of our landscapes and, along with the welcomed growth and new life, comes a not so welcomed result, weeds!

My husband is the avid vegetable gardener in our family. I am drawn to ornamentals so in the vegetable garden I generally take the role of assistant, herb grower, and, sometimes, unsolicited advisor. In the spirit of adventure, each year we add something we hadn't previously grown. As we were visiting a nursery last year in our mission to purchase a few plants for my herb boxes, I spied a pretty plant among the herbs that was unfamiliar to me, Lamb's Quarters. To me, the plant was so pretty with its touches of red rimming the dark green leaves and more red coloration at the node, so we purchased it and took it home.

After we got home, I did a little research on my newly procured plant and thankfully, decided to plant it in the vegetable garden rather than my much smaller herb boxes. Lamb's Quarters can get rather large, 3-5 feet. I discovered that we had purchased a very interesting plant. Lamb's Quarters, *Chenopodium album*, is also known as wild spinach and Pigweed. A Google search produced articles regarding control information and how to get rid of Pigweed along with articles about foraging for this wild, highly nutritional, edible plant.

Lamb's Quarters is described as "one of the most common weeds in gardens" that has also been deliberately spread around the globe. It has grown for thousands of years in Europe and Asia and archaeologists have found seeds in North America that predate the cultivation of corn. This nutritious plant is closely related to quinoa and is currently consumed in the U.S., Europe, India, and South Africa. It is one of the most nutrient rich greens in vitamin and mineral content, even compared with spinach.

I've found *magenta spreem* Lamb's Quarters seeds available online. The seeds are small, about one third the size of a single quinoa seed. The plant is a branching annual that has a grooved stem. The toothed leaves can either be all green or trimmed in red. They have a waterproof coating that causes water to bead up on them.

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Hill Country Veggies

By Allen Mace

This has been a month that I'll soon not forget. I hope all my Master Gardener friends are doing well. Hopefully we'll be having meetings again soon. I would just like to give a shout out to all that showed up and purchased plants this year from the Green House, well done. I hope all those going through the Internship program will be able to pick up again and finish.



I was thinking this spring, that I would only focus on Tomatoes. Well, that did not happen. When I went out to till my beds, I found them in great shape, though I had not used them for over a year. I've always said that this years' mulch becomes next years' compost. After practicing this for several years, this year proved me right. The beds were as loose and easy to work as though I had kept them tilled all along. The soil was in good shape. I added some manure compost, some slow release fertilizer. Then worked it all in and I was ready to go. With lots of time on my hands, encouraged by "The State", I decided to go for it and put in the spring garden. Taking my life into my own hands, I made a daring trip to a nursery in Kerrville. Once there, practicing social distancing of course, I initiated my plan of



attack to get in and out as quickly as possible. As I turned the 1st corner, I came face to face with another customer. We were in violation of the social distancing space recommended by "The State". She hesitated, with a look of shock on her face. Sensing my opportunity, I held my breath, pressing myself to the side of the aisle, I was able to slip passed. I never look back I had successfully made it into the vegetable section. I quickly

made my selections of seedlings, stealthy made my way, avoiding other patrons, to the check out point. Once there, finished my transaction, with a credit card to avoid the transfer of cash, and quickly made a hasty retreat, back to the safety of my vehicle, after using hand sanitizer of course. Then headed home.

After transplanting the seedlings into 6" pots, I kept them on the porch for a few weeks to grow the roots. I like to transfer potted plants into the garden when we have rain forecasted for the next day. Rainwater is always better than well water. The garden has been planted and all is well at the Mace household. I look forward to seeing what adventures wait for me next month.



HCMG's First (and hopefully only) Social-Distancing Plant Sale

It couldn't have happened at a worst time in our calendar. By late February Blooms & Barrels chairman Jackie Connelly and our Greenhouse Committee members were starting to whisper & worry about a newly emerging disease coming out of China: coronavirus. As the days went by, concern increased about not only plant diseases affecting our sale but, also, about the spreading virus that might take its toll on gardeners and everyone else. By March 18 Jackie met with Janell Dahms and Fernando Gonzalez, greenhouse co-chairmen, several members of the B&B Committee, and County Agent Roy Walston and decided to cancel the upcoming April 11 sale. Future plant purchases were halted, and the group brainstormed a "Plan B" to find buyers for the 1300+ plants being cared for by HCMG volunteers.

The obvious solution turned out to be the perfect solution. Hill Country Master Gardeners bought every potted plant in the two greenhouses, pot yard and shade house! Based on the VMS sign-up slots, retired physician Fernando, Janell, & Jackie created a schedule for our members to shop that kept the shoppers & skeleton crew of sale volunteers at a safe distance, allowing only 5 shoppers per time slot. Not only did all the plants find homes, the Master Gardeners were at their absolute best in terms of practicing social distancing and adhering to the schedule to keep numbers of people in the greenhouse areas manageable. The plants were offered at a reduced price, and the sell-out resulted in gross sales of \$8108 which covered their growing expenses along with a small profit added to our operating fund.

With events cancelled throughout the Hill Country and stay-at-home the new normal, our members had time to select the perfect spots for their new additions to their gardens and spend their time doing what they love...digging in the dirt. Perhaps you'll see photos of some of them settled into their new landscapes in this newsletter!

By Vickie Killeen



At the opening of the sale greenhouse co-chairman Fernando Gonzalez greets Debbie Bass and her husband as Debbie reviews her shopping list.



While treasurer and B&B chairman, Jackie Connelly set up check-out, greenhouse co-chairman Janell Dahms and Volunteer Anne Brown are ready to help shoppers Sue Hall and Darla Cluster

HCMG's First (and hopefully only) Social-Distancing Plant Sale



During a break between shoppers, greenhouse committee volunteers Janice Walker, Janell Dahms, Anne Brown and Fernando Gonzales maintain recommended social distancing. Disposable gloves were available for workers & shoppers. Cart handles were cleaned with hand sanitizer after every use.



Wil Rolfe pays Jackie Connelly for his Mexican Bush Sage. HCMG Vice President Debbie Bacon volunteers as an additional cashier. After shopping, Wil spent some volunteer time working in the Demo Garden.



Karen Buck counts her plants while preparing to pay Debbie Bacon & Anne Brown. Imelda Horn chats with the group while taking a break from weeding. Tissues and hand sanitizer are front and center for everyone.



These lucky plants will enjoy their forever home in Karen Buck's Fredericksburg garden. A "bonus" freshly dug Mexican Bush Sage was donated by Demo Garden chairman Jackie Skinner.

Photo Credit: Vickie Killeen

HCMG's First (and hopefully only) Social-Distancing Plant Sale



Class of 2020 student Kalie Burton with her boyfriend Jeremy drove up from Leakey to buy plants and help fund HCMGs.



By the second day of the sale, the inventory was greatly reduced. Brian Strickland checks his shopping list and manages to fill two shopping carts.



Patti Schlessiger checked out the few remaining shade plants on the second day of the sale. While the last of the scheduled gardeners selected plants, the sale volunteers watched the county emergency official set up a drive through Covid 19 test site in the HCYEC Ag Barn, where we would have held our April 11 canceled sale.



While master gardeners continue to shop, Demo Garden Chairman, Jackie Skinner, spends her time working in the garden.

Photo Credit: Vickie Killeen

Meet the Students of the HCMG Class of 2020



Delores (Lola) Auger has 4 plots at the Community Garden at Comanche Trace. Her blackberries are starting to turn green, strawberries are blooming and the winter garden is about ready to harvest.

Herbs in pots are thriving and so is her Lemon Tree



Dave Kinneberg grew up in Utah and spent most of his professional career as a metallurgist in Massachusetts before moving to Kerrville in 2006 to work for James Avery. After retiring in 2019, he decided to participate in the Master Gardener program to learn about plants and as a means of contributing to the community. He has always enjoyed growing vegetables, especially pumpkins, and is now expanding his understanding of landscaping and native plants. In addition to gardening, Dave enjoys hiking and is a member of the AMC's Four Thousand Footer club. He lives in Kerrville with his wife Roberta. They have two grown daughters.



Rita Aliperto and her husband, Drew, moved to Kerrville in December 2018 from Montana. She was introduced to gardening when she was a little girl by her mother and has been playing in the dirt ever since.

She loves growing vegetables & flowers and have learned soooo much from the HCMG classes. She looks forward to the ongoing learning and the new friendships to be made with this group.

Purple Coneflower: is it a N.I.C.E. flower or an herb?



By **Cindy Anderson**
HCMG & 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?

Debbie Windham, president of the Kerrville chapter of NPSOT, loves to share the reasons to grow natives. “Native plants,” says Debbie, “have the admirable qualities of low maintenance, iron-tough constitution, and beauty. Many attract bees and butterflies to our gardens, or supply us with flavorings for cooking, tea, or medicinal purposes. Most are pest- and disease- resistant. Some reseed themselves, finding their own nooks and crannies where they can best survive, giving us the delight and surprise of finding new seedlings popping up alongside a desirable companion plant, or in a gravel walkway, easy to dig up and pass along to friends.”

PURPLE CONEFLOWER

This spring season (which begins on Friday, March 20), the Kerrville and Fredericksburg NPSOT chapters are featuring the Purple Coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*) at five local nurseries as their N.I.C.E. Plant of the Season.

Purple coneflower is a very popular perennial (meaning that it dies back in the winter but comes back to life each spring), with tall, rough and slightly hairy stems and spectacular long-lasting pinkish-purple drooping flowers, called rays. Rough, pointed leaves are scattered up and down the stem, becoming smaller toward the top. Flowers occur singly atop the stems and have domed, spiny centers. Bloom time goes from spring all the way through fall.

Echinacea is a long-lived perennial, loved for its old-fashioned beauty and upright persistence in a manicured flower garden or in a wild prairie garden, where it may actually become aggressive (not a problem in this gardener’s mind!) It grows in sun to part shade, and in moderately dry, well-drained soil.

The popular local TV show “Central Texas Gardener” (centraltexasgardener.org) says that Echinacea is very drought tolerant and should be watered sparingly, in only the hottest, driest of times, once it is well established. They also say to cluster it in groups of 3 to 5 for the most impact. If it seeds out and overcrowds an area, it can be easily moved in early spring. It grows from one to three feet in height. Seeds are produced in the cone, much like that of a sunflower.

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When in bloom, this beauty will attract insects, butterflies, and hummingbirds – then in the fall and winter, songbirds, particularly Goldfinches, are drawn to its seed. The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin (wildflower.org) says it is also of special value to our native bees. The flowers are long-lasting and attract lots of pollinators to their nectar and pollen, but are somewhat unattractive once they fade. You may be tempted to dead-head, but try to resist that urge since the seed heads are such a great winter food source for small birds. Sadly, this plant is NOT deer resistant, so it belongs in a protected flower garden.

NEW CULTIVARS ARE NOT EXACTLY NATIVE

There are several new cultivars on the market, in new, lovely colors. A cultivar is defined as “a variety of a plant developed from a natural species and maintained under cultivation.” These “new or improved” varieties may grow well in the same planting environment as the native, but may not have the genetic flexibility of the native plant. The process of developing cultivars may alter the plant’s ability to survive its native environmental conditions, for example, or stimulate profuse growth which becomes invasive. Some are treated with systemic insecticides that linger in the plants after planting, endangering the pollinators. Many cultivars are sterile, depriving wildlife of winter seed sources. The Native Plant Society of Texas focuses on and recommends the plants as they were found by early settlers to our state, in order to conserve the natural diversity that has allowed them to survive.

SO, IS ECHINACEA A FLOWER OR AN HERB? Actually, it is both. The USDA Plant Database lists Echinacea as an herb. The Native Plant Society of Texas website, (npsot.org), says it was one of the most important medicinal plants used by Native Americans to treat a variety of ailments. It was used as a pain reliever, anti-inflammatory, a treatment for toothaches, coughs, colds, and sore throats; even to soothe gastrointestinal troubles in man and horses. It was also used as an antidote for various forms of poisonings, including snake bite, and portions of this plant were used to dress wounds and treat infections. Early pioneers, as they traveled west across the plains, were quick to pick up on the healing properties of this species, probably from contact with Native Americans.

Modern medicine continues to see the potential benefits associated with this plant species. Studies have shown purple coneflower to be an immune system booster, and Echinacea continues to be a very popular herbal remedy today. Dried leaves and flowers of Echinacea are used to make herbal tea, and an extract is also available in tablet or liquid form in pharmacies and health food stores.

Look for the “N.I.C.E. Plant of the Season” sign stake at these nurseries and growers:

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

– From the Native Plant Society of Texas, Kerrville Chapter and Fredericksburg Chapter:

The Kerrville Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas hosts monthly programs at the Riverside Nature Center, 150 Francisco Lemos St., Kerrville, September through May. See npsot.org/kerrville for details.

The Fredericksburg Chapter of NPSOT meets monthly at Presbyterian Memorial Church, 601 North Milam Ave., Fredericksburg. See npsot.org/fredericksburg for details.

Cindy Anderson is a member of the Native Plant Society of Texas (Kerrville Chapter) and the Hill Country Master Gardeners. An enthusiastic (though often frustrated) gardener, she has learned first-hand the value of native plants, and gladly shares reviews of her favorites in this quarterly seasonal column.



Pioneer Museum Garden in Fredericksburg

Clockwise: Raeann Reid, Paula Stone, Joyce Studer, & Kathy Lewis in Pioneer Museum Pollinator Garden; Paula Stone, Joyce Studer & Raeann Reid confer in the shade of the arbor at the Pioneer Museum; Desert Willow, Fall Asters, Anacacho Orchid tree, Mystic Spires sage, & New Gold Lantana draw pollinators to the Pioneer Museum's Pollinator Garden; and Butterflies flock to the Gregg's Blue Mist plantings at the Pioneer Museum.

Photo Credit: Kathy Lewis



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The coating is more evident on young leaves and is described as “crystal-like concentrations of wax” and is fine to eat without attempting to remove it.

Since Lamb’s Quarters is also known as wild spinach, you might guess that it can be consumed in many ways similar to the way one would eat spinach. The young, more tender green can be eaten raw, steamed, or sautéed. Older, less tender leaves should be stripped from the stem and are more enjoyable cooked. A dish that we especially enjoyed was Lamb’s Quarters Gratin. The recipe would also be delicious if made with spinach. You’ll find the recipe in this newsletter.

Lamb’s Quarters Gratin

- 1½ lbs. lamb’s quarters
- 1 bunch scallions, chopped (1½ cups)
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- Salt 7 freshly ground black pepper
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1 cup milk, plus additional, if necessary
- ¼ teaspoon nutmeg (preferably freshly grated)
- 1 teaspoon finely grated lemon zest

For Topping:

- 1 cup coarse fresh breadcrumbs or cracker crumbs
- ½ cup packaged pre-grated mozzarella
- ¼ cup finely grated Parmesan
- 4 teaspoons olive oil

Make Filling:

Preheat the oven to 350° F with the rack in the middle. Butter a 2-quart shallow baking dish

Bring 1-inch salted water to a boil in a large saucepan. Meanwhile, wash lamb's-quarters in a large bowl of cold water and drain well. Trim any coarse, woody stems at bottom (young lamb's-quarter stems cook up tender and delicious).

Add lamb's-quarters to pot and cook over medium heat, covered, until leaves are wilted and stems are tender, 2 to 3 minutes. Drain the greens in a large sieve or colander and rinse well under cold running water. Drain again, pressing out excess liquid with the back of a large spoon. Coarsely chop greens and transfer to a bowl. Dry saucepan and reserve.

Cook scallions in olive oil with ¼ teaspoon salt in reserved saucepan over medium heat, stirring, until softened, 3 to 4 minutes. Combine scallion mixture with greens in bowl. Reserve saucepan again.

Melt butter in reserved saucepan over medium-low heat and stir in flour. Cook, stirring, 2 minutes, then whisk in milk and bring to a boil, whisking. Reduce heat and simmer sauce, whisking, 2 minutes (it will be thick). Remove from heat and whisk in nutmeg, zest, and salt and pepper to taste.

Mix sauce into greens mixture. If the mixture is too thick, thin with a little additional milk; season with salt and pepper. Spread out mixture in baking dish.



Sprinkle topping evenly over greens mixture and bake in oven until crumbs are golden and mixture is bubbling, about 30 minutes.