

October, 2023

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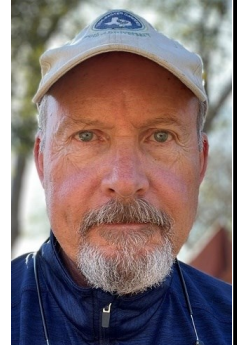
**“Please read upcoming e-minders for final details on the October 4 fieldtrip.”**

**The Fall Festival takes place on Saturday, Oct 28, 10 am to 2 pm**

**Tell your friends and neighbors.**

“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  
 Dave Kinneberg**



What’s worse: extreme or exceptional? For me, “extreme” means “as bad it gets.” However, that’s not the way NOAA categorizes droughts – exceptional is their worst case - and, unfortunately, most of us are experiencing an exceptional drought. See <https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/currentmap/statedroughtmonitor.aspx?TX>.

While this year’s drought is epic, drought is not new to Hill Country. When I moved to Kerrville, our company CEO, who grew up in this area, told me to expect long periods of little if any rain followed by short intervals of deluges. After living here for almost twenty years, I think his description was completely accurate. Hill Country is usually arid, and we must face this fact. More to the point, we, as master gardeners, must help our communities cope with the dry conditions.

Given the drought, I’ve been asked by several members if we should cancel the Fall Festival. The demonstration garden is, unquestionably, not as attractive as it can be, and some people are concerned this will reflect negatively on our horticultural abilities. But my answer is, unequivocally, “No, we need to have the Fall Festival.” Will our garden be at its peak in October? Probably not. Should it be, given that we are experiencing an exceptional drought? Absolutely not! We must show our neighbors what is possible under Stage 4 restrictions. That’s our job.

Ironically, this year’s drought presents an educational opportunity for us. Who else can show Hill Country residents how to landscape their yards with native and adapted plants (and Texas Super Stars)? Who else can explain fire-wise landscaping and demonstrate efficient drip irrigation (now installed in the demonstration garden). While some of our plants have succumbed to the intense heat, others have prospered. People need to know what survived this summer and what didn’t.

Admittedly, I sometimes get depressed when I look at my yard. Several of the plants I put in in the spring didn’t make it through the summer. My Bermuda grass is a disaster, and two red buds are dropping leaves. But then I remind myself how many plants still look healthy and that several others are merely dormant and will come back in the spring. I need to focus on my cow pen daisies, Silverado sages, mountain laurels, crepe myrtles and live oaks. Even in an exceptional drought, there is a great deal of natural beauty around us. And we need to show that to the people in our communities. See Vickie Killeen’s picture of “no flow” Guadalupe River on page 3.



## Hill Country Veggies

By Allen Mace, MG

I looked up and saw something I have not seen in a long time. I think they are called clouds, so I Googled it. Yep, I was right, they are clouds. All summer long I have seen nothing but pale blue skies above the countryside. It seems that clouds are an indication that water vapor is collecting. At some point these clouds become saturated with the water vapor and will darken. Water molecules will come together and become water droplets, then fall to the earth in the form of rain. I asked a friend of mine, who lives in southwestern Oklahoma, if he had gotten any rain over the summer. He said that he had and that his pastures were green and lush this year. I asked him to take a picture and send it to me so I can show my goats what green pastures look like.



This has been one of the worst garden seasons I have been through in a very long time. I think it was back in 2011 when I just threw my hands in the air and called it quits. That year it stopped raining in April and did not rain again until October. This year the rain stopped in June, and with the clouds back again, maybe just maybe, we will get some rain soon. Whenever I see rain clouds around me, I am happy for whom ever is getting rained on, even if it's not me.

My garden finally succumbed to the heat. Tomatoes were the only thing left. They weren't doing that well so I just let them go. I was able to collect seeds from a Cherokee purple tomato earlier in the season and will plant those seeds next spring. Because I've been watering every day or two, I was having to fertilize more often than normal. I'm sure the nutrients have leached out of my soil because of the increased watering, so next spring I will be amending my soil with more compost and some slow-release fertilizer.



After such a dismal summer and entering September with temperatures still in triple digits, my desire for a fall garden was waning. With the temperatures cooling off some and the chance of rain, I'm beginning to give it a second thought. I drove by one of the local nurseries and I just had to pull in. Low and behold, a six pack of broccoli, a six pack of cabbage and two Swiss Chard just happened to follow me home. There is always hope.



**This photo was taken on Friday, Sept. 8, 2023 by Vickie Killeen at Kerrville's Guadalupe River Pavilion off Earl Garrett Street**





**Esperanza – This pitiful specimen is my yellow Esperanza courtesy of hungry white tail deer. For 16 years it has been 6 feet tall & blooming.**



**Gulf Muhly – Gulf Muhly looks good.**



**My 2023 Blooms & Barrels Russian Sage is thriving in the heat & drought.**

## How Does Your Garden Grow?

By Vickie Killeen, MG

This summer mine is crunchy. But, the deer don't seem to mind. Every sunset a reliable white tail crew arrives for pruning.

In the early months my pop-up irrigation watered once a week which kept certain plants tasty enough for deer families to enjoy. Then, on Aug. 24, Kerrville water restrictions put an end to pop-up irrigation & hose end sprinklers. Hand watering with a hose or bucket & drip irrigation during early morning or evening hours are our only options in Stage 4. Selecting plants to save is a hard choice. If/When the rains come again I'll decide which plants to use to fill in the new bare spots in my front garden.

I'm having more success with my container plants on my back porch. Drip irrigation runs 3 days a week during restricted hours. A hard lesson I've learned this summer is that coco fiber liners for hanging baskets and window boxes are a mistake in the Hill Country, especially when you live on a windy hilltop. Winds blowing through those containers necessitate daily hand watering. To stretch my depleting rain barrel water, I'm mixing rain water with buckets of cold running water as our shower heats. I'm hoping that diluting the softened water with rain water will reduce the amount of salt going into the containers.



**New Gold Lantana – Instead of trailing 6 feet, my New Gold Lantana stays in a tidy circle since white tail deer prune it every evening.**

## How Does Your Garden Grow?

By Vickie Killeen, MG



**Mexican Bush Sage – Mexican Bush Sage just keeps blooming.**

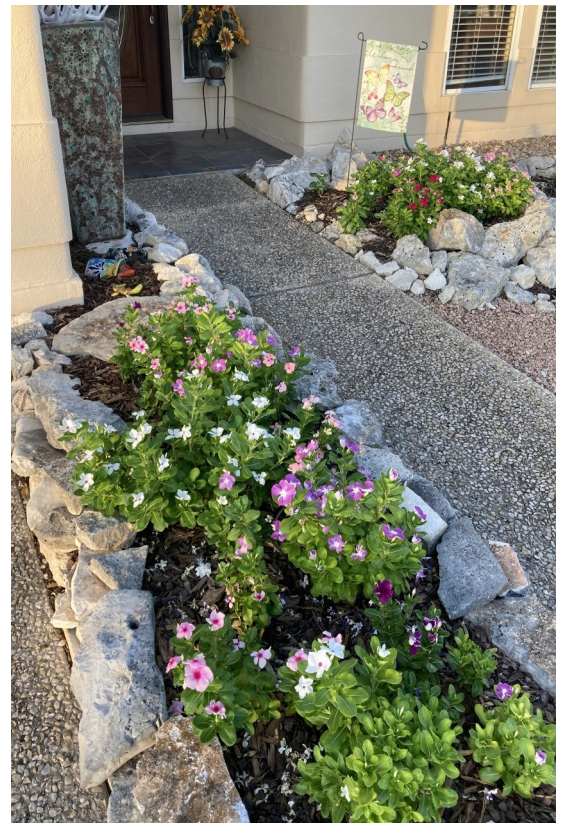


**Screened Porch Pots – My screened porch pots are doing well with drip irrigation 3 times weekly.**



**Left Mexican Feather Grass – Mexican Feather Grass in the drought & excessive heat is a mix of tan & green. A mature Russian Sage is in the background.**

**Right Vinca – I'm still amazed that white tail deer don't eat vinca! Hand watering every other day keeps it blooming.**



## Prepping for 2024 Plant Propagation Class

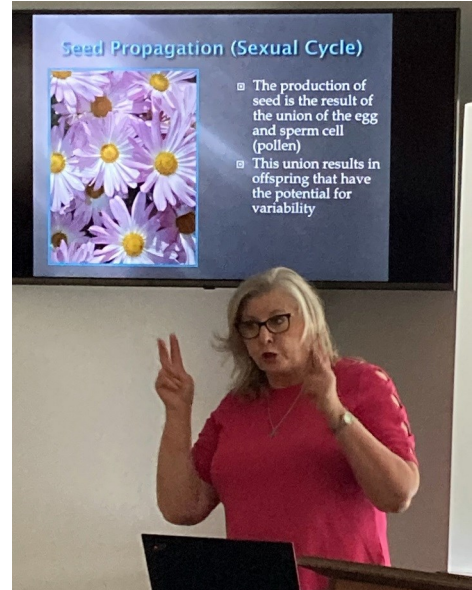
By Vickie Killeen, MG

Education Committee Chairman Donna Bellis (right) offered a workshop for HCMG who are interested in helping Propagation Specialist Debbie Lea with the labor-intensive class featured in next year's Texas Master Gardener training series. After a review of her presentation, the volunteers brainstormed with Debbie to suggest ways they could help with supplies, materials and plant samples. Experienced volunteers welcomed newcomers who will assist at the full day of instruction. The propagation class is always a favorite among students who are enrolled in the Texas A&M Master Gardener training series.



**Right**  
 Propagation Specialist  
 Debbie Lea briefs  
 volunteers on the  
 contents of her  
 program

**Left**  
 Volunteers provide  
 suggestions to help  
 Debbie prepare for  
 next year's class.



### Seed Propagation (Sexual Cycle)



- ▣ The production of seed is the result of the union of the egg and sperm cell (pollen)
- ▣ This union results in offspring that have the potential for variability

## What's This??? By Vickie Killeen, MG



Working the research desk, intern Suzy Floyd puzzles over the name of a mystery plant brought by Patty Zohlen. Patty found it under the canopy of her oak tree, and Suzy confirmed that it is a Central Texas native known as Prairie Tea (*Croton monanthogynus*). This drought tolerant annual likes rocky, limestone soil and grows to about 2 ft. tall. Small white blooms from spring through fall attract butterflies. Prairie Tea is part of the large & diverse Euphorbia (spurge) family according to Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. The Center's website advises that Prairie Tea seeds are an

important food for doves & quail. A mild tea can be brewed by steeping the leaves, thus the common name. Right: The LBJ Wildflower Center photo is included to show what it looks like when it isn't dried out.





## ***Yes, Potting Soil Is Flammable!***

***By Pam Umstead, MG***

Thanks to a Facebook post, I was inspired to explore this possibility. A picture of a burned deck accompanied it. Wow, I thought, who knew? I checked with our Firewise Specialist Anne Brown, and it wasn't in her teaching material either. (It is now!)

First, I checked my bag of Miracle Grow Potting Soil – there is no warning of fire danger on the bag. But the list of ingredients includes processed forest products (peat, coir, and/or compost) and sphagnum moss. Yes, I do know those products will burn.

More googling revealed a series of news stories from around the country, covering fires that started in potting soil, many of which spread and caused serious damage to homes and property...a deck, a house, an apartment building, a barn! These were verified by local fire departments which aided in putting the fires out.

Potting soil can spontaneously combust. More often, though, the soil is dried out and receives a spark from an item like a cigarette butt. Several tests recorded a single spark that begins to smolder, and over time the temperature rises; or, a breeze comes along, and you have a full-fledged fire in that pot...which can then spread to other materials. A spark in a dry flower pot can smolder for hours before actually starting a fire. Learn more here: <https://youtu.be/JWuJtej4G0?si=WKW0QjDu7D-OokQU>.

In the Hill Country, we're subjected to unusually high temperatures and surrounded by acres of flammable dry grass and dead plants, so the danger of a pot fire spreading is high. Keep in mind this danger is present INSIDE your home too, if you grow houseplants.

### **Here are some safety tips:**

- ◆ Use clay or ceramic pots instead of plastic ones, to help contain a fire. (One commercial law firm recommends its investment property owners require only clay, not plastic, pots in their leases!)
- ◆ Keep the soil moist, even if there's no plant present.
- ◆ Remove dead foliage from potted plants.
- ◆ Don't use a potted plant as an ashtray! And remind your guests to comply as well.
- ◆ Beware of other items like sparklers, grills, fire pits, and candles that can send sparks into a nearby pot.
- ◆ Store extra potting soil in a fire-resistant container like a metal trash can with a tight lid.
- ◆ Container gardening is a creative and decorative addition to your home and landscape. Just be firewise!



Lowrey's Legacy Cenizo.



By Cindy Anderson  
Native Plant Society of Texas  
Hill Country Master Gardener

**Even in our drought, the cenizos around town have been blooming profusely this month ... with NO water.**

## *The hills are alive ... with the blooms of Cenizo*

“Garden Style San Antonio,” an excellent weekly e-newsletter from SAWS (San Antonio Water System), said recently what we already know: “Summer, you have officially overstayed your welcome!” With scorching 100-plus-degree days lingering past the usual dog days of summer, I find myself appreciating even the slightest drop in temperature. Somehow, even 97 degrees in the shade feels better now.

Our landscapes are still simmering under the Texas sun, but the mighty Texas Sage is still abloom all over town! Perhaps in the next few weeks, we can start doing some things to help dial down our yards' temperatures for next summer. And SAWS says that one of the best ways to do that is to shade our yards with trees and shrubs.

After experiencing record cold, record heat, and record drought over the past few years, I am firmly committed to planting nothing but Texas natives from now on. While even a few of my natives have succumbed to the recent extremes, many more non-natives in my yard bit the dust.

Equally important, any future plants must be low water use and very drought-tolerant. Be aware that there are many great native plants that flourish alongside riverbeds or streams, or do very well in rainier parts of Texas. Those are not the ones to plant here, as we must be increasingly frugal with the water we take from our beautiful Guadalupe River. Even a drought-tolerant selection must become established before putting it to the test of a dry summer – and so if this exceptional drought continues next year, you will need to provide a bit of supplemental water for any new trees or shrubs you plant, to protect your investment.

### **CENIZO (*Leucophyllum frutescens*)**

You may know this plant as Cenizo, Purple Sage, Texas Sage, Texas Barometer Bush, or Texas Silverleaf. Whatever you choose to call it, this plant is the NICE Plant of the Season for the Kerrville and Fredericksburg NPSOT chapters for fall. The acronym NICE stands for “Natives Improve and Conserve Environments.”

***Continued on page 9***



**Cenizo continued from page 8**

Cenizo is a compact perennial evergreen shrub, most often growing 2 to 5 feet tall. But it occasionally reaches 10 feet in height and 4 to 6 feet in width. Its leaves are silvery-gray to greenish, soft to the touch, up to 1-1/4 inches long but mostly 1 inch or less. Its native range includes our Edwards Plateau, west through the Trans-Pecos to the Rio Grande Plain, and south to Nuevo Leon in Mexico. Profuse purple or violet flowers (rarely pink or white) burst into bloom for a few days at a time, depending on rainfall, from late spring to fall, attracting hummingbirds and butterflies. It sometimes flowers after a few summer showers, or in periods of high humidity, which is why one of its common names is Barometer Bush. This plant has three fabulous traits for our area: it uses very little water, it loves poor dry soil, and it is extremely deer-resistant. It may be planted in full sun, where it blooms best, or in part shade, in which case it will grow more open and even leggy in too much shade. It is actually one of the easiest plants to grow here, so long as it has good drainage. It can be susceptible to cotton root rot only if the soil does not have good drainage and remains moist. Cenizos should not be fertilized or over-watered. They are drought- and heat-tolerant, but during very cold winters, they may lose a few leaves.

**LOWREY'S LEGACY CENIZO (*Leucophyllum langmaniae*)**

In 2012, a new cenizo was named after Lynn Lowrey, a legendary Texas horticulturist who collected this and other native plants along roadsides, and shunned publicity during his lifetime. Various cenizo sages had been on the market for some time before Lowrey discovered what he recognized as a unique species growing on a rise by a roadside, near a bridge. The story goes that Lowrey had to stand on the passenger seat of his automobile and reach up to collect samples while traffic was passing. After extensive field trials, Texas A&M named Lowrey's Legacy Cenizo a "Texas Superstar." To be designated a Superstar, a plant must not just be beautiful but also perform well for consumers and growers throughout Texas. Superstars must also be easy to propagate, which should ensure the plants are not only widely available throughout Texas but also are reasonably priced. Lowrey's Legacy Cenizo meets all those requirements. It grows to only 4-5 feet tall and wide, it has brighter, sage-green foliage than the more common varieties, and its blooms are more lavender than purple. It was selected for its profuse and frequent flower displays. Compared to most cenizos, it is not as dependent on changes in humidity for flowering and can bloom more often during the summer. This one requires full sun, tolerates most well-drained soils, and should not be over-watered. It works well in xeriscape plantings or mixed borders or makes a great container plant on sunny patios or decks.

**WHERE TO FIND IT** 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, Medina, and Comfort:

**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**

**The Garden Haus, 109 Farm to Market Rd. 473, Comfort, 830-995-5610**

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

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

## Hill Country Master Gardeners Monthly Meeting September 6, 2023 HCYEC

**Call to Order** (Please Silence Your Cell Phones)

**Pledge of Allegiance** – was recited by the group.

**Invocation** – Rachel Garrison led the invocation with a passage from the Book of James about Elijah praying for rain.

**Welcome/Opening Remarks** – Dave Kinneberg welcomed everyone commenting on the hot, dry summer. He asked if there were any visitors that should be welcomed.

**Verification of Quorum** – Rita Aliperto verified that a quorum had been met. Approval of Minutes from August 2, 2023 Meeting – Rae Raiford moved that the minutes be approved. The motion was seconded by Brian Strickland.

**Treasurer's Report** – Rachel Garrison explained the report for last month. She also reported that since Anne was able to find rain barrels, the disbursements will be reflected next month.

**Business Items** New Members! Newly certified Master Gardeners Eva Euler, Jeannie Osborne, Jeanne Sutton, and Julie Thieriot with their respective mentors were recognized with certificates and name badges. Congratulations!

**Director's Meeting** – Dave Kinneberg, along with some other members attended the meeting via ZOOM. The 2025 International Master Gardeners Conference will be hosted in Texas. The state conference is coming up. The dues will be increasing by \$3. The new background screening process was discussed. More information to follow.

**October Meeting/Field Trip** – Dave talked about the meeting/field trip in Patti Schlessiger's absence. We will meet at HCY-EC parking lot, carpool to Medina River Oaks Park for a 10:15am meeting. A box lunch will be provided for \$12 with two choices of sandwiches. After the meeting/lunch, we will drive to the Medina Nursery for a tour, then to Natives of Texas for another tour. Approximate volunteer hours will be 1 hour for meeting, 1 for lunch, and possibly an hour each for the tours. Exact volunteer times to be determined. Sign-up clipboards were sent around the room.

### Standing Committee Reports

**Education** – Donna Bellis reported there are

currently 9 people confirmed for 2024 class. Everyone should spread the word to family and friends and recruit. There will be a small meet-and-greet on October 17th & 19th with the new students. She asked for members to bring snacks. More information to follow.

**Public Relations** – Tex Lang said it was his pleasure to introduce himself as the new Chair of Public Relations. He is expanding the scope of the position and is building a team to help. He said the mission is to help through education, deliver programs to mass media outlets. He is hoping to connect with the 150,000 people who make up Hill Country. He created a Facebook page and would like everyone to 'like' and 'follow' the page title Hill Country Master Gardeners. Tex indicated he would like help with copywriting, editing, photography and creating/editing videos. He'll happily train anyone interested. Please contact Tex if interested.

**Demonstration Garden (DG)** – Dave Kinneberg welcomed Bee Evans as his co-chair on the committee. He said Jackie Skinner left us in good shape, but the watering restrictions are not helping. The DG committee will host a Fall Festival on Saturday, October 28th from 10am to 2pm. Tex will advertise the event. Kay Nelson is organizing. Jodi Tippens' son has completed the border wall and has consequently become an Eagle Scout.

**In-House Programs** – Dave Kinneberg said he has been the chair for 3 years now. Anyone who has ideas for future continuing education topics should contact Dave.

**Research Desk & Rain Barrels** – Anne Brown has located a new source for barrels. She has purchased 50 and will try to purchase 50 more. Orders of 50 or more come with free delivery from Stonewall. Look for eMinders, VMS sign-ups for building the new rain barrels. Anne also thanked those who helped get ready for the Emergency Preparedness Expo on September 30th. Even though many of the interns have completed their hours and are now certified, we still need volunteers to work the Research Desk, even if it's an hour or two.

### Other Announcements

**Nominating Committee** – Rita Aliperto announced that the Nominating Committee consisting of herself, Donna Bellis and Barbara Castillo have recruited a wonderful slate of nominees to fill the officer positions for 2024.

*Continued on page 11*

## Newly Certified Hill Country Master Gardeners



Clockwise from top left: Dave Kinneberg, Julia Thieriot, Mentor Sheridan Stringer, Mentor Melayne Arnold, Dave Kinneberg, Jeanne Sutton, Jeannie Osborne, Dave Kinneberg, Eva Euler, Mentor Patty Zohlen



**Nominations for 2024 Executive Group:** Treasurer – Jackie Connelly; Secretary – Marge Muniz; Vice President – Rae Raiford; and President – Sheryl Landrum. Other nominations from the floor will be accepted and voted on at the November general meeting.

Chris Seifert and Patty Zohlen are looking to step down as the 'Decomposer' experts at upcoming events for 2nd graders. They will gladly train anyone interested. Rae Raiford is looking for rotisserie chicken containers (like the HEB ones) she can use to teach Girl Scouts how to grow plants. Pam Umstead brought a book about the commercial flower industry for anyone who would like it. Cindy Anderson – reported that Trina from Plant Haus 2 had a stroke. Thank you to Suzy Floyd, Susan Thomas, and Ray Tiemann for bringing plants and seeds for door prizes and giveaways!

**Adjournment** Respectfully submitted, Rita Aliperto, Secretary

Next Meeting: October 4, 2023 Medina – See details in upcoming e-Minders!!

**Hill Country Master Gardeners 2023 Executive Committee**

Dave Kinneberg  
*President*

Rae Raiford  
*Vice President*

Rita Aliperto  
*Secretary*

Rachel Garrison  
*Treasurer*

Anne Brown  
*Ex-officio Advisor*

*C.E.A. Advisor*

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

**Newsletter**

*Newsletter Editor*  
 Pat Wolters

*Associate Newsletter Editor*  
 Patti Schlessiger

Special thanks to  
 Judy Beauford for proofreading

*Photographer*  
 Vickie Killeen

**Submissions to**

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Learning when and how to grow ingredients



Hands-on chopping & blending under Connie's supervision.

**How To Grow & Prepare Your Own Salsa**

By Vickie Killeen, MG



Yes, salsa is great music, and it's a fun dance. But, HCMG's Advanced-Trained Vegetable Specialist Connie Townsend wants local gardeners to know it's also a delicious snack that we can grow and whip up ourselves.

As part of Kerrville's Butt-Holdsworth Library's "Gardening 101" series, Connie explained how and when to plant and harvest the ingredients. Then she led her students in preparing fresh salsa to sample. After an informative program and flavorful samplings, Connie had them dancing in the aisles!



HCMG Jeannie Osborne & Jeanne Sutton enjoy samples.