

May, 2017
Volume 15, Issue 5

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HCMG will meet on May 3, 2017

**Location: AgriLife
Building Classroom**

**Noon - Networking/
Open Forum**

1:00 - Meeting

2:00- Program:

**"Why Snakes Can Make
Your Garden a Better
Ecosystem."**

Jared Holmes, Biologist



**TEXAS A&M
AGRILIFE
EXTENSION**

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 or gender identity and will strive to achieve full and equal opportunity throughout Texas A&M AgriLife.



**Jackie Skinner
President**

President's Message

It's plainly obvious that my entire wardrobe budget goes to the maintenance and enhancement of my garden, including bird-baths, birdhouses, and birdfeeders which seem natural elements of any garden. But what have birds to do with gardening? Everything!

Indigenous people told tales of the Great Spirit having wandered the earth planting trees and flowers just before summer and was vexed when His leaves and petals fell to the ground in autumn. That wasn't what he'd had in mind at all, so he gave "each bright leaf a pair of wings and the power to fly." Isn't it charming to imagine cardinals originating from maple trees, goldfinches from honey locusts, grackles from deep purple irises. Of course the "LBJ's" (Little Brown Jobs) would personify my entire garden by the end of August.

Bird watching is thoroughly entertaining and educational. Birds decorate our winter landscapes with brightly colored feathers. Their nests are filled with pastel eggs and they fill the air with their songs. They offer pest control service, for free! (To a titmouse, ants ARE the picnic.) Hummingbirds pollinate those flowers my sniffing nose doesn't get around to. Woodpeckers aerate tree trunks so the trees can breathe. Finches and sparrows provide weed control by gulping down seeds. (I don't have enough of them).

The best way to attract birds is to build an expansive darkly stained deck displaying pricey patio furniture - irresistible target practice. Offering seed your local store claims is in short supply is an excellent enticement. (Birds never touch anything that is on sale.). Starting a lawn or wildflower bed from seed is synonymous to broadcasting an invitation. Mockingbirds, screech owls and Chuck's--poor-Wils enjoy perching directly outside open bedroom windows. Crows like to roost on the heads of scarecrows, and nesting wrens can spot an open garage door from two miles away. Of course, nothing works better than peaches or tomatoes glistening with ripeness under a cloudless summer sky. And if you spill birdseed on the ground it will sprout white-winged doves.

If, like me, your wardrobe is for the birds, you probably share my enthusiasm for garden birding. So let's just pause, after a couple hours of pruning, to take in the show. Oh look! That flock of Cedar Waxwings is flying off with our worries.

HCMG 2017, Calendar of Events

Attendance at events other than Master Gardener meetings is optional. We list events for those wishing to attend other educational offerings. We try to limit the listed events to those that would earn our members CEUs, but not all will be eligible. Be sure to call the sponsor and confirm event.

April 21, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, 12:10-12:50 p.m. Beth McMahon, AgriLife Horticulture Agent, will present "Organic Gardening Methods." See other tentative topics, cost and registration details on the HCMG website homepage. Gillespie County TAMU AgriLife Extension Office.

April 22, Cibolo Nature Center & Farm, 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. Second of a two-part hands-on organic gardening short course. \$30 for the course. Herff Farm. Preregistration is required using the link on the cibolo.org calendar.

April 25, NPSOT Fredericksburg, 6:30 p.m. social, followed by the meeting at 7:00 p.m. Kim Smajstrla, leader of the non-profit, "The Monarch Midwife," will present a program on three of the four main Monarch sanctuaries in the mountains of Michoacán, Mexico, where the Monarchs overwinter. Memorial Presbyterian Church. Visitors welcome.

April 27, Cibolo Nature Center, 7:00-9:00 p.m. Daneshu Clarke will present "Tonics and Tinctures," a lesson about tinctures made from native and local plants of the Texas Hill Country. Cibolo Nature Center. Tickets available at www.cibolo.org.

May 2, NPSOT Boerne, 6:30 p.m. social, followed by the meeting at 7:00 p.m. Mark Kroeze, Urban Forester, Texas A&M Forest Service, will present a program on the basics of tree pruning. Cibolo Nature Center Auditorium. Visitors welcome.

May 3, Hill Country Master Gardeners, 12:00 p.m. general meeting, 1:00 p.m. monthly meeting. Jared Holmes, biologist at Selah, Bamberger Ranch, will present, "Why Snakes Can Make Your Garden a Better Ecosystem." Hill Country Youth Event Center. HCMGs and interns.

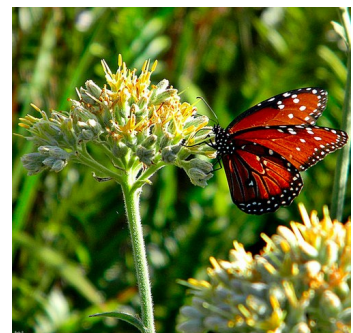
May 9, NPSOT Kerrville, Field trip to HCMG Tom Collins' ranch in Center Point. Meet at Riverside Nature Center at 9:00 a.m. to carpool. Bring water and lunch to picnic after the field trip at recently renovated Lions Club Park on the Guadalupe. Directions to Tom's ranch will be posted on RNC's website. Visitors welcome.

May 12, Cibolo Nature Center, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Kip Kiphart and Cathy Downs will host a training session for the Monarch Larval Monitoring Project. Cibolo Nature Center. Register at www.cibolo.org.

May 16, Kerr County Cactus & Succulent Society, 7:00 p.m. Program to be announced, Butt-Holdsworth Memorial Library. Always confirm date, time and location. Visitors welcome.

May 19, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, 12:10-12:50 p.m. Beth McMahon, AgriLife Horticulture Agent, will present "Bad Bugs; What You Gonna Do?" See other tentative topics, cost and registration details on the HCMG website homepage. Gillespie County TAMU AgriLife Extension Office.

May 23, NPSOT Fredericksburg, 6:30 p.m. social followed by the meeting at 7:00 p.m. Dr. Ben Hutchins, TPWD, State Invertebrate Biologist will present "Managing Private Lands for Pollinators". Memorial Presbyterian Church. Visitors welcome.



Addresses for Events Listed Above

Butt-Holdsworth Memorial Library, 505 Water Street, Kerrville

Cibolo Nature Center Auditorium, 140 City Park Road, Boerne

Gillespie County TAMU AgriLife Extension Office, 95 Frederick Road, Fredericksburg

Herff Farm, 33 Herff Road, Boerne

Hill Country Youth Event Center, 3785 Highway 27, Kerrville

Memorial Presbyterian Church, 601 North Milam Street, Fredericksburg

Riverside Nature Center, 150 Francisco Lemos Street, Kerrville

Hill Country Master Gardeners Monthly Program and Business Meeting April , 2017

The Monthly business meeting was held at the Kerr County Youth Event Center classroom.

64 members were present.

President, Jackie Skinner, called the meeting to order at 1 pm. Jerry Clark led the members with the Pledge of Allegiance. Patty Zohlen gave the invocation

Quorum was verified.

The minutes of the March meeting were approved. Anne Brown moved to accept the minutes and Kathy Guenther seconded and the motion carried.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Jackie Connelly provided the March Treasurer's Report which was approved.

OLD BUSINESS

Open CEU Classes: Roy Walston spoke about opening up our CEU classes for the public without charging for the session. He explained the difference between CEU education and educating the general public in separate classes for a fee.

Anne Brown proposed opening some of our CEU classes to the public, Debra Rosario seconded the motion and it carried. Melayne Arnold proposed that selected CEU classes be determined by the Executive Committee) as open programs; Kathy Lewis seconded the motion.

Badges: Vickie Killeen proposed to table the decision to purchase badges until after the Blooms and Barrels sale to ensure we have enough money in the budget to make the purchase. Debra Rosario seconded and the motion carried.

Update on Blooms and Barrels: All members of the Blooms and Barrels

Committee were recognized and thanked for their hard work and dedication. B & B Committee updates by section:

Dee Dunton was recognized for her achievements as project publicist.

Anne Brown: workers asked to arrive at 8:15, if members wanted to purchase plants arrival time should be 8:00. Bring watering cans for spa day and carts for B & B sale day.

NEW BUSINESS

Becky Northcutt presented a sample T-shirt for the members. A decision on the T-shirt logo will be determined by the Executive Committee and announced, with further information about prices, styles, and colors available, at the May business meeting.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Summer/Fall Public Classes Chairman: The public classes program was formerly managed by the Education Committee, but due to the increasing complexity of the job a separate committee will be established. A chairman and co-chairs will be needed for this committee.

Our Speaker's Bureau is also in need of volunteers who will conduct classes and present short programs to garden clubs and other local organizations on behalf of the Hill Country Master Gardener.

Propagation Committee: Duane Robinson was announced as having accepted chairmanship. He is seeking volunteers. Duane is also organizing a plant propagation specialist training classes to be offered in October/November.

Research Desk: Interns will be trained by members on the Research Desk Committee during the last week of March and all of April. A public an-

nouncement has been placed in The Kerrville Daily Times and The Community Journal stating our Research Desk will be manned all day on Tuesday's for questions from the public. Members were encouraged to join this committee by contacting Melayne Arnold, the new Committee Chairman.

3 New Kendall County Projects were approved: HERFF Gardens, Kronsky Center (Rainbow Senior Center), and Hill Country Mission for Health. (Special thanks to our new interns for bringing our attention to these new projects).

Master Gardener Cruise: Those who will be taking the Master Gardener cruise were acknowledged.

Christmas Lunch: Linda Proffitt has reserved the Riverhills Country Club dining room December 6th (Wednesday) for our Christmas party this year.

Garden Gourmet Event: A hearty thank you for supporting the Garden Gourmet event was extended by Angela Fiedler to those who made contributions.

Today's CEU program and program for May: Chuck Janzow from the Boerne NPSOT spoke on seed collecting. Next month—Benefits of snakes in the garden's ecosystem. The snakes will be secured).

ADJOURNMENT

2:05 pm.

PROGRAM

Beginning at 2:00 p.m., Chuck Janzow.

Hours Earned: 1 hour membership networking, 1 hour Monthly meeting, 1 hour CEU

Respectfully submitted,
Lydia Jones, Secretary



"Hay Bale Gardening"

Elizabeth McMahon

When I first heard of hay bale gardening, I had strong doubts. It was difficult to imagine plants growing in hay bales. After doing a small results demonstration in Brazoria County, I know now that it isn't difficult and can produce quite healthy plants. Hay bale gardening requires some prep work. Straw bales, not hay bales, are better. But if you don't have access to straw bales, hay bales work too. Position the bale on its side, so that it's taller, rather than wider. You won't be able to move it easily later, so put it in a spot that gets at least 6-8 hours of sunlight and is easy to water. Bales need to be composted so that plants can grow in them. There are different methods, but for simplicity, I've included one that was close to what I did.

For three days water the bales, making sure they stay wet. The bales will heat up. During the next three days add about 1 cup of 21-0-0 fertilizer every day and water it in. If the water looks like it's just running off the bale, try using a slow trickle or drip hose. Apply a little more than a cup if using a lower number fertilizer. For three days after that, cut back the fertilizer to a ½ cup of 21-0-0 and water it in. On the 9th day, check the bale's temperature. You can plant when the bale cools below 100 F. This process can take up to a month. To plant in the bales, remove two pockets of hay from each bale and fill them with garden soil. If the hay is hard to pull out, the bale needs to be composted more. The first crop I decided to grow were green beans. I planted seven "Blue Lake" and seven "Mascotte" in the hay bales and the same amount in an in-ground row (as a control). Sadly, this trial was a failure. The beans were small, about half of my plants died and a terrible horde of bunnies ate my first planting. Yes, bunnies can jump up onto hay bales.

The interesting thing was that the in-ground row I planted as a standard to compare to my hay bale plants failed in the same manner. I'm not sure what went wrong, but I suspect that the failure of that first planting was due to evil bunnies and a too late planting date.

For my second round, I decided to plant broccoli. I transplanted fourteen "Packman" hybrids into the hay bales, with two plants per bale. I also planted fourteen into a row in-ground.



Green Beans in Hay Bales



Green Beans in Hay Bales later in the year



Left

Broccoli in Hay Bales lined up

Above

Some of the broccoli crowns grown in the hay bales

Continued on page 12

Graduation



Back row from left to right: Bob Huff, Chuck Fitzsimmons, Travis Plughaupt, Christine Snider, Rachel Garrison, Judy Beauford, Patti Schlessiger, Brenda Heinsohn, Deborah Lea, Jerry Clark, Jim Wilhite, Chris Scruggs, Lloyd Kneese, Stanley Zwinggi
Kathy Leonard, Shirley Smith, Amanda Sutton, Kim Courtwright, Terrie Clark, Mimi Stidham, Terry Lashly, Nancy Pearson, Shawn Richards
Not pictured: Donna Guthrie and John Knoulton

Photo Credit: Jim Latham



From left clockwise: Robert Huff, Travis Plughaupt, Duane Robinson, James Wilhite, Rachel Garrison, Carol Hagemeyer, Terry Lashly, Patti Schlessiger, Brenda Heinsohn, Kim Courtwright, Mike Weberpal, Terri DuBusk, Tommie Airhart, Terrie & Jerald Clark, Lydia Jones, Debra Rosario, Dusty Gilliam, Becky Northcut, Carol Brinkman, Vicki Killeen,

Meet the 2017 Interns and their Mentors

Bob Huff is a retired airline and military pilot. At some point he discovered there's a lot of fun to be had down here on the ground, too. He and his wife Rose run a bed and breakfast just outside of Harper. Through his efforts to enhance the beauty of its surrounding gardens he has discovered a love and talent for horticultural endeavor; so much so that the Master Gardener training held undeniable appeal. His flair for aesthetics has already been demonstrated by his enhancement of a beautifully rock-lined pathway through the front left Demonstration Garden bed. With an eye for design, he is particularly interested in drought tolerant landscapes emphasizing Texas native and adapted plants, water conservation, and propagation. Bob looks forward to making his own contribution to community projects.



technology. In their company she continues to learn and laugh and make new friends.

Lloyd Kneese is a giant of a man who seems to be in all places at once. He has volunteered for just about everything HCMG has to offer, and he is a real workhorse

at whatever the task. If he doesn't know how to do something he applies his imagination and practical wisdom to the situation and figures it out on his own. Lloyd loves nothing better than a challenge. Gardening isn't part of his heritage. In fact, he had no background or particular interest in it until he took it up out of boredom as he and his wife Barbara travelled from jobsite to jobsite for IT&T, in an 8' X 35' travel trailer. When his assignment left him in place for as long as 4-6 months he'd set up a small vegetable garden, learning as he became more experienced. His well-tended parcel yielded fresh produce he and Barbara shared with relish. He was hooked on growing vegetables and is now eager to learn more. Through gardening he began to observe the correlations between plants and animals; their synchronicity to specific habitats. He says gardening has opened his mind to a greater appreciation of nature's order and how to apply that order to his own outdoor endeavors. Everything clicks when we work with our environment instead of against it.

Jackie Skinner is a graduate of the class of 2014. It has taken her only three years to achieve the presidency of this wonderful volunteer group. To date, her favorite accomplishment has been the design and installation (along with the rest of the Demo Garden crew) of the two beds in front of the extension office. She taught two landscape classes to the public, worked Market Days and county fair information tables, and co-chaired the Hospitality Committee. She greatly enjoys serving as a mentor and getting to know the graduating classes. She believes they are fresh and enthusiastic, and bring our organization great ideas to help us keep up with current trends and

Kathy Leonard retired from being an oil and gas lease analyst in Midland. She is currently living in Ingram while her home is being built. She has always wanted to be a Master Gardener like many of her friends. She is interested in the soil and plants that grow here as it differs from Midland. She is also interested in being an educator.



Dusty Gilliam graduated in the first Kerr County Master Gardener class. She has been President, and Vice President. Dusty is a Landscape Firewise Specialist and a Propagation Specialist and loves being a Master Gardener. She lives in Hunt where she owns 143 chickens and sells free-range eggs on the honor system.

Meet the 2017 Interns and their Mentors

Kathy Lewis has lived in the Fredericksburg area for 23 years and was finally able to take MG training in 2008, after she re-tired. She's been gardening for 40+ years, but had lots to learn when she moved to the Hill Country. HCMG has been a wonderful source of knowledge and inspiration! Kathy has made many new friends and acquaintances through HCMG – and looks forward to getting to know our new interns. She leads our HCMG volunteers at the Pioneer Museum, volunteers at the Lipe Garden, and is Speakers Bureau chairman.



Robert "Chuck" Fitzsimmons is a retired harbor pilot who recently moved to Fredericksburg. He has been gardening for about 5 years, but only about a year of that has been in the Hill Country. He has some experience with hydroponic gardening. (Maybe we could persuade him to share his knowledge!) Chuck is interested in organic gardening and home food production, as well as learning about local insects and plant diseases. He wants to help out in the local community, so we hope he gets involved in several of our Fredericksburg area projects.

Deborah Lea lives on a working ranch in Mountain Home. Debbie is a native of Fredericksburg and worked primarily in San Antonio as the lead RN for the East Central School District and then transferred to the Kerrville ISD as school nurse. She retired in December and per her Facebook page she "works at being happily retired and loving it!" She is married with three grown sons. She and her husband have started to raise sheep on their ranch. She wants to learn more about our Hill Country plants and landscapes and is especially interested in organic gardening.



Melayne Arnold grew up in southern California and moved to Texas the first time in 1985. Moving around the continental US in the Army over the next 35 years, she had the op-

portunity to garden in many different areas and climates. She has been "playing in the dirt" since she was very small. Her first experience with escargot was as a small child in the garden. Melayne's family had vegetable gardens her entire childhood and she continued her gardens indoors with house plants as an adult. A 2016 graduate of the MG program, she moved to the Hill Country in 2013 to be close to her parents. She retired from the Army in 2009 and moved several times before settling in Ingram. When she moved here, she purchased a property with significant gardening challenges, so learning about the local native plants and landscape was her major reason for becoming a Master Gardener.

Blooms and Barrels 2017 - Record-setting Attendance and Sales



Enthusiastic Master Gardeners are ready for the event!



Left to right: Patti Schlessiger, Becky Northcutt, Caroll Edwards, Mimi Stidham, Shawn Richards, Terry Lashley, Sandy Martin



Carol Brinkman,
Sandy Lewis
Anne Brown
Raeann Reid



Photo Credit:

Jim Latham
Barbara Hunter



Jim Wilhite
Becky Northcutt
?
Jackie Skinner
Elizabeth McMahon





Bernadell Larson, Liz Althaus, Patti Schlesinger, Amanda Sutton



Blooms and Barrels 2017

Photo Credit: Jim Latham



← Jane Rackley helps with plant selections

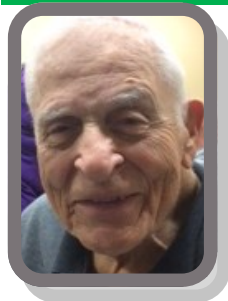
Job well done!

Left to right: Jackie Connelly, Anne Brown, Dee Dunton, Sandy Lewis

The Hospitality Committee provided amazing food for the workers

Left to right:
Loes Williams, Dyanna Orrin, Linda Profit





BUILDING AN ORNAMENTAL GARDEN

MID-PROJECT RELECTIONS (PART 2)

By Bob O'Connor

Introduction: Continuing my reflections on garden building, this month I want to pick up on biodiversity in a climate-changing world. The discussion may seem a bit afield at first but bear with me.

Some Geological History: I'm sitting here in my enclosed porch looking across the "in-progress" garden, looking beyond its perimeter wall and across Johnson Creek to the great limestone cliff behind. The trees are in full leaf now, dressed in hues from dark green to almost yellow. The cliff top, which corresponds to the end of the Lower Cretaceous Era, sports a cap of variegated green. As I gaze, I'm struck by the breathtaking beauty displayed before me. I marvel that life, having appeared on earth about 4 billion years ago at the start of the Achaean Eon, has taken over so much of our planet's veneer. Stephen Gould described life's evolutionary path as "punctuated equilibrium," with the equilibria corresponding to relatively long periods of biological stasis and the punctuations corresponding to periods of intense evolution following sudden, traumatic events. Over the next 1.5 billion turbulent years, life forms would evolve from simple cells, the archaea and bacteria, to complex cells, the eukaryotes, cells that could photosynthesize the sun's radiant energy. By some 2.5 billion years ago, the start of the Proterozoic Eon, eukaryotic life would have become sufficiently ubiquitous to cause anaerobic to oxygenic conversion of the planet's atmosphere. By a half billion years ago, the start of the Phanerozoic Eon, the severity of extinctions would have lessened sufficiently to enable the body plans of present day life to survive and multi-cell forms to explode. Again, as I look at the cliff, I know that in only 30 million years from the depositional time of its crest, a mere geological blink of the eye, most of the large marine and land animals on earth and much of the basic food chain would perish. It would be the fifth of the great biological extinctions during Phanerozoic times, probably triggered or augmented by, like most of the major earlier ones, one or more extraterrestrial bolides impacting the earth, often with coincident flood-basalt volcanism. All of the life lost in this Cretaceous-Paleogene event would, during the course of the ensuing million years or so, evolve into bio diverse systems much more like those of today.

Climate Change and the Sixth Biological Extinction: Shifting to human time scales and focusing mainly on the past 200 years, it has become abundantly clear that humans have impacted earth's environment on a scale and at a rate every bit as large as many of the extinctions cited above. With our population growth (now over 7 billion souls) and with our fossil fuel-driven industries, agriculture, transportation and urbanization, we have pushed global mean temperatures up almost 20 C since the 1800's with the near certain prospect of increasing them an additional 20-40 C more before the year 2100. We have been destroying our biodiversity through destruction of natural habitats, through ocean acidification, through introduction of invasive species to local ecosystems, through pollution, etc. at an alarming rate. In all of this, earth's surface temperatures are nearing levels not seen in millions of years.

Bottom Line for Gardeners: I recently read an enormously persuasive book, "Bringing Nature Home" by a professional entomologist, Douglas Tallamy. In it he clarifies the fundamental difference between "native" and "adaptive" plants. Natives are an integral part of their regional food web and have been evolving within it over hundreds of thousands of years, whereas the "adaptives", having been introduced to the same web generally within less than a few hundred years, cannot become fully contributing members of it or strengthen its biodiversity. The bottom line for us in all of this is, if we wish to reverse this alarming rate of biodiversity loss, this extinction, we need seriously to consider reducing our use of adaptives in lieu of natives, and think about how else we might mitigate our impact on the planet.



Hill Country Veggies

May 2017

By Allen Mace

This spring I needed to amend the soil in my raised beds. Last year I grew lots of tomatoes and they are heavy feeders. Normally I just make a trip to the goat shed, but this year I wanted to



change things up a bit and bought a bag of soil conditioner. The first thing I needed to do was a bit of repair work to the raised bed itself. Some of the screws had pulled out over the winter. I had to use a bar clamp to pull the corners back together again, then a few 3 1/2 inch deck screws and I was back in business. Next I pulled out the weeds and grass that was starting to grow in the beds.

Clamp



I have this cultivator tool that works well in these small beds. It has some claw shaped tines on the

end that twist weeds out and mixes the soil up.

Last year's mulch becomes this year's compost after a good mixing. Next I added the

soil conditioner then used the small cultivator to mix it all in. After this was mixed in, I added some potting soil that I had bought a few weeks ago when I was re-potting a few fruit trees that I'll be planting later on this year. I realized after working the cultivator a few times, this was a good cardio workout. It sure does get the heart pumping.

Now comes the fun part, transplanting those tomatoes that I had re-planted into the 6 inch pots a few weeks ago. The roots are really developed and the plants were in great shape. I like to snip off a few of the lower branches and trim off any suckers that are starting to grow. I plant these tomatoes as deep as possible in order to bury part of the stem. Tomatoes will root wherever the stem makes contact with the soil. Burying part of the stem, will trigger the tomato plant to push out more roots thus giving it the ability to draw in more water and nutrients. This in turn will create a healthier plant that should produce more fruit.



Cultivator Tool

Once the plants are all in, I like to put a cage around them in order to help support the plants as they grow throughout the season. I also will leave a shallow well around a new plant in order to funnel water to the base of the plant as it starts to grow in its new spot. The last thing I do is give these transplant a good drink of water. I'll mark my calendar and start fertilizing them in about two weeks. I'll wait a month or two before I add any



Mixing

mulch to the beds. This gives the soil time to settle as well as let the sun heat up the soil. I think this helps the roots and the plant get established. When it starts to get hot, later in

the season, then I'll add the mulch to help keep the root zone cooler and to help the soil hold moisture. For now all is well and it's time to just sit back and enjoy the evening.



Caged

Hay Bale continued from page 4

This trial had some interesting results. The broccoli crowns from the hay bales rated higher in quality than those grown in the ground. The harvest time was more spread out with the broccoli in the hay bales, compared to the in-ground row, in which all the broccoli was ready during the same two weeks. On average the broccoli crowns from both locations weighed about the same.

For my final trial, I tried “Blue Lake” green beans again. But this time, I planted earlier and my hay bales were fenced with chicken wire. What a difference it made! My total crop weight from the hay bales was 8.2 lbs., compared to 9 lbs. from the in-ground row.

I haven’t tried hay bale gardening here in the Hill Country yet. There are a couple of things you need to know before you eagerly jump in. The first is watering. When I did this experiment in Brazoria County, I was fortunate to only need to water several times. Brazoria County gets a crazy amount of rain compared to the Hill Country. You may find that you will need to water these bales often, and it may be often enough that it will be a nuisance. When you water, instead of spraying down the bales every time, it may be easier to use a soaker hose instead.

Also, beware of fire ants. They like to nest in hay bales, as do mice. You can easily treat fire ant problems with a spinosad insect bait if growing vegetables.

Hay selection is important. There is a reason why straw bales are preferred, and this is because they potentially have less weed seed. Also, if using “Coastal” or “Jiggs” type hay, the grass might still be alive, and it might start a weed problem too.

Lastly, find out if the hay fields from which your bales came from were treated with herbicide or not. If the hay field had been sprayed with picloram, clopyralid and aminopyralid, your vegetables may end up stunted with twisted leaves.



Comparison of lingering herbicide—the potential effects of herbicide treated hay is demonstrated on the plant on the left



The broccoli from the hay bales was on the left, the broccoli on the right was from the in-ground row

Despite these potential issues, I was pleased with my hay bale garden, and wouldn’t mind trying it again here in the Hill Country.

If you have any questions about hay bale gardening, feel free to contact me at

Elizabeth.mcmahon@agnet.tamu.edu or your local county extension agent for more information.

**Hill Country Master
Gardeners 2017**

**Executive
Committee**

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President

Wil Rolfe
Vice President

Lydia Jones
Secretary

Jackie Connelly
Treasurer

Debra Rosario
Ex-officio Advisor

Roy Walston
C.E.A. Advisor

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

Newsletter & Website

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Or **New email**

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SUMMARY REPORT FOR HUNT SCHOOL DISCOVERY GARDEN

*By Connie Townsend,
MG Coordinator for the Hunt School Discovery Garden Project*

Some of the big recognitions the Hunt Garden Club received for the Hunt School Discovery Garden was winning 1st place at the District, State, and National Garden Club levels for our community compost effort. This effort will certainly continue this coming year.

Since the Discovery Garden has been in existence for such a long time, over the years we have "ironed out" the major areas of concern. Since this is the case, the changes we make each year are things we think will be beneficial but are not major changes to the program. One of the things we changed this fall is to have a "garden lady" specifically for each student. This was done in order to have an even closer inter-generational relationship between the student and his/her tutor. It seems to have worked well. We are still divided into teams, so if the student's mentor must be absent, others on the team are alerted, and they make sure any activity the student is doing is covered.

Another new practice is to interface with the teachers even more to determine what the students are learning in their 4th and 5th grade science classes for the week so we can make a greater attempt to correlate what we are doing in the garden to their lessons.

We revived the "worm farm" this fall. One of our members and her husband have a big interest in vermiculture and willingly set it all up again. The club member also presented lessons to the students about this culture and has worked with them in the worm farm itself to give them hands-on experience.

We also found the recent book *Learn, Grow, Eat, and Go*, Agrilife Bookstore, to be very useful and workable. Several lesson suggestions from this book have been used with the students.

We have a planning meeting in August for the fall semester and one again in February to plan for the spring. At the present time, I am unaware of any major changes planned for 2017. This school garden project was begun by the Hunt Garden Club from which we have more than enough volunteers to work with the students. We therefore invite any other Master Gardeners from areas outside the Hunt Garden Club to come and visit our project and to pick our brains if one should be considering starting a school garden in another area. However, we really cannot use more volunteers from MG to work on a regular basis with the students.

**I don't remember buying these two potted plants.
Should I transplant them into my garden?**

PHOTO CREDIT: Vicki Killeen

