

The Compost Bin

November 2014

A Publication of the Travis County Master Gardeners
a volunteer program of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

In this issue ...

In the Vegetable Garden

Leaf Beetles

Meet the Master Gardeners

Weeds and Reads

Glorious Yellows of Autumn

Traveling Gardenista

Inside this Issue....

- Meeting, Nov 5 Page 2
- In the Vegetable Garden Page 3
- Leaf Beetles Page 5
- Meet the Master Gardeners Page 6
- Weeds and Reads: Book Guide Page 8
- The Glorious Yellows of Autumn Page 9
- The Traveling Gardenista Page 11
- Austin Area Events Page 12
- 2014 TCMGA Board Page 13
- Credits Page 14

Cover Photo: Lettuce provides colorful salads all winter long.
By Bruce Leander

Right: pumpkin patch
By Liath Appleton



Nov Meeting - Ralph Yznaga

Living Witness: Historical Trees of Texas

Local author Ralph Yznaga will share his favorite excerpts from his book that was originally published in 2012. If you have this beautiful book, you may want to bring it along to our meeting.

Publisher's synopsis:

In a beautiful tribute to the natural heritage of the Lone Star State, photographer Ralph Yznaga celebrates the strong connections between Texans and their trees. Inspired by the old Texas Forest Service book, Famous Trees of Texas, Yznaga has captured the continuing attachment we have to these magnificent reminders of our culture and history. Stunning images, stories, a detailed map, and driving directions to thirty-seven famous (and infamous) trees help us appreciate how entwined the lives of people and trees are.

Master Gardener Meeting information:
Wednesday, Nov 5, 2014, starting at 7 pm
Zilker Botanical Garden

Master Gardener meetings are open to certified Master Gardeners and trainees only.

In the Vegetable Garden

by Patty Leander



White varieties of cauliflower will turn yellow if exposed to direct sunlight. To avoid this issue gather leaves around developing heads and secure with a rubber band, clothespin or twine.

- For snow-white cauliflower, pull the leaves up around the head when it starts to form using a clothespin, rubber band or string. Exposure to sunlight will cause the head to be an off-white color - still fine for eating, just not as pretty.

Fall has arrived and winter is on the way, but there is still plenty to do in the vegetable garden. November usually brings the first frost to Central Texas, which is often followed by mild days that are perfect for cool season vegetable growth. Our goal this time of year is to help our plants make it through these cold snaps so they can keep growing strong until they are ready for harvest. Make sure your veggies are well mulched, and be prepared to cover them with row cover or other lightweight protection when the temperature is predicted to dip into the low 30s. Use bricks, heavy rocks, soil or U-shaped pins to secure the row cover so it doesn't blow off. Most of our cool season crops will do just fine in a light freeze, especially if they are well established, but when the temperature drops from 75° to 25° overnight they will need a little extra protection.

Take advantage of mild winter days to clean out dead and dying vegetable plants and prep beds for spring planting. Stockpile leaves over the next few months to use for spring and summer mulch. Leaves can also be mixed with kitchen waste and added to the compost pile over the winter. Water lightly if the pile is dry.

Here is the vegetable gardener's checklist for November:

- Harvest near-ripe tomatoes before the first freeze, and allow them to ripen indoors out of direct sun.
- Transplants and seedlings need to be watered weekly (unless it rains) for an even supply of moisture.
- Enjoy a supply of fresh salad greens by harvesting young leaves of lettuce, kale and spinach. This is when the leaves are small and tender, and have the sweetest flavor. Regular harvesting will stimulate plants to produce more leaves.



When frost threatens harvest near-ripe tomatoes and allow them to ripen indoors out of direct light.

In the Vegetable Garden

Continued...

- Be sure to disconnect hoses, wrap faucets and drain sprinklers before that first freezing night arrives.
- Unplanted vegetable beds should be covered with a layer of leaves or shredded mulch.
- Our feathered friends will appreciate a fresh source of water in the winter so keep those birdbaths filled.



Left: Keep birdbaths filled with fresh water during the colder, winter months.

Top Right: Harvest loose leaf lettuce a few leaves at a time or sever plant at ground level to harvest the entire head, depending on your needs.

Bottom Right: Stockpile leaves for future mulch and compost needs – you can never have enough!



Leaf Beetles

by Wizzie Brown



Leaf beetles are a common group of beetles that attack a variety of landscape and garden plants. They come in a range of colors and sizes, but are usually oval in shape. These beetles eat foliage in the adult and larval stage.

Damage may or may not be problematic in the landscape and the level of damage is based upon size of the population and characteristics of the plant the beetles are feeding upon. If it is a smaller plant, or a recently planted item, there may be more stress caused to the plant by feeding. This may lead to problems or even death. With large, healthy plants (e.g. trees), heavy populations of beetles defoliating the tree year after year can lead to stress. Usually damage is aesthetic on landscape plantings, but can cause issues if the beetles are feeding on food crops where they are in direct competition with us for the food item.

To manage leaf beetles, you can try active ingredients such as *Bacillus thuringiensis* var. *tenebrionis*, spinosad, azadirachtin, pyrethrins, pyrethroids, carbaryl, imidacloprid or acephate. Make sure to read the label to be certain the product can be used on the type of plant you are treating; some of the active ingredients may not be able to be used on food crops.

For more information or help with identification, contact Wizzie Brown, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist at 512.854.9600. Check out my blog at www.urban-ipm.blogspot.com

Meet the Master Gardeners: Jane Bramlett, Class of 1997

by Jean Love El Harim



Jane in her garden
Photo by Jean El Harim

Raised in a small town in Iowa, on the family homestead, Jane and her brother and two sisters helped keep the farm running. They grew strawberries, corn, green beans and tomatoes on their half-acre of land. They had chickens, a milk cow named Betsy, and later, a younger one Betsy Two, and a cat named Snoopy who had two litters of kittens a year. "Mom canned the beans and tomatoes, and she taught my brother how to milk the cow," she says. "I carried buckets of water for the cow." Jane played the saxophone and sewed her own clothes in high school, and developed a skill for cooking and baking --she still likes to bake cookies and banana bread.

After high school, Jane earned a diploma in nursing and joined the U.S. Air Force. She was stationed first in Arizona where she trained to be a flight nurse, and then in Germany for three years where she met and married her husband John. They lived in Michigan for three years, and when John retired from the Air Force, they came to Austin. "John grew up in east Texas," which she explains is what brought them to this part of the country. "He had visited Austin several times and liked it. Austin was a much smaller city in 1975." Their house in Northwest Austin was 6 miles outside the city limits when they first bought it. "The neighborhood had a small town feeling like a farm community," she said. "People had horses, chickens, and goats." Although the neighborhood was incorporated into the city in 1977, the neighborhood still has the peaceful atmosphere of a rural town.

Though the Edward's Plateau soil in Jane's garden is shallow and rocky, tall shrubs and trees surround the house. There's an American beautybush that doesn't know it's not a tree, growing 15 feet tall and just as wide, and a southern magnolia that is at least 30 feet tall and in full bloom. "The workers who were digging out our pool had a front-end loader, so we had them dig out a hole about two feet deep and four feet wide for the Magnolia," she says. "At first it had yellow leaves, and when I asked Ted Fischer what to do about it -- he was the county extension agent then -- he said to mulch it. So I kept putting shredded leaves in a big circle around the tree, and now it is the healthiest one in the yard." She also has a Shumard red oak and a *Ginkgo biloba* that are as tall as the magnolia.

Jane grows a wide variety of other plants and trees as well, including roses, begonias, mints, chrysanthemums, flame acanthus, *Echinacea*, lemon verbena, red columbine, fig, and kumquat. Nonetheless, her favorite plant may be garlic, because, as she says, it's "something easy." Her gardening tip is to "work in the shade and take a break."

Jane says she "doesn't seem to have much spare time," since she spends her mornings working out at the gym or walking, and the rest of the day working around her home, inside and outside, shopping, and visiting with friends. She and John travel several times a year, for example, visiting family in Houston and Iowa, going to the car show in Salado, and catching up with friends in New Orleans.

Meet the Master Gardeners

Continued...

A Travis County Master Gardener since 1998, Jane served as the county's representative for the Texas Master Gardener Association for two years, attending meetings four times a year at Texas A&M and at the annual conference. Jane has served as a docent at Zilker Botanical Garden for many years and recalls the days when education funding was more plentiful. "Molly Ogorzaly was working at Zilker Botanical Garden," she elaborates. "With the help of the docents, Molly would load up the Plant Mobile and go to local schools to give lessons. We made seed balls with the younger children. For the 7th and 8th grade classes, she had a lesson that lasted all morning, teaching the students that each continent has its own bean and its own grain. In the Americas, it's corn and pinto beans. In Asia, it's mung beans and rice. In Africa there's millet and black-eyed peas, and in the Mediterranean, there's wheat and chick peas. Molly would divide the students into groups by continent, and they would prepare recipes specific to each area and then taste each of the foods." Jane reaches into a drawer and pulls out the packet of recipes they used for this lesson. "The students really liked the tamales," she says, "but the dolmas, couscous wrapped in grape leaves, were not a big hit." Jane now volunteers mostly at the MG greenhouse where she enjoys the company of other master gardeners and learning about what to plant when.

Weeds and Reads: A Gardener's Book Guide

by Liath Appleton

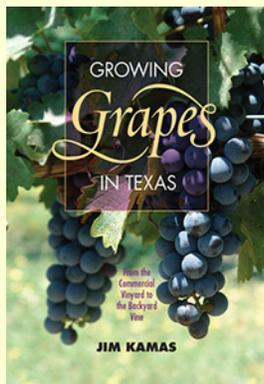
There's a lot of reading material out there, and new books are being published faster than anyone could ever possibly keep up! Hopefully these lists will help myself and others find fun and insightful new books to enjoy between the weeding and the watering.

November 2014:

Growing Grapes in Texas: From the Commercial Vineyard to the Backyard Vine - Nov 1, 2014

by Jim Kamas, Larry A. Stein (Foreword)

In this complete and approachable manual on grape growing in Texas, Jim Kamas asks the essential question all potential growers need to answer: Why do you want to plant a vineyard? [\[more\]](#)



Flora: The Art of Plant Exploration - Nov 1, 2014

by Sandra Knapp

A lavish, enchanting voyage of discovery through the history of some of our key garden plants, telling a story not only of science but also of adventure and human achievement [\[more\]](#)

Darwin's Orchids: Then and Now - Nov 5, 2014

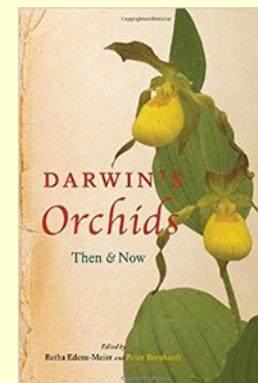
by Retha Edens-Meier (Editor), Peter Bernhardt (Editor)

For biologists, 2009 was an epochal year: the bicentennial of Charles Darwin's birth and the 150th anniversary of the publication of a book now known simply as *The Origin of Species*. But for many botanists, Darwin's true legacy starts with the 1862 publication of another volume: *On the Various Contrivances by Which British and Foreign Orchids Are Fertilised by Insects and on the Good Effects of Interbreeding, or Fertilisation of Orchids*. [\[more\]](#)

Banned: A History of Pesticides and the Science of Toxicology - Nov 25, 2014

by Frederick Rowe Davis

Rachel Carson's eloquent book *Silent Spring* stands as one of the most important books of the twentieth century and inspired important and long-lasting changes in environmental science and government policy. Frederick Rowe Davis thoughtfully sets Carson's study in the context of the twentieth century [\[more\]](#)

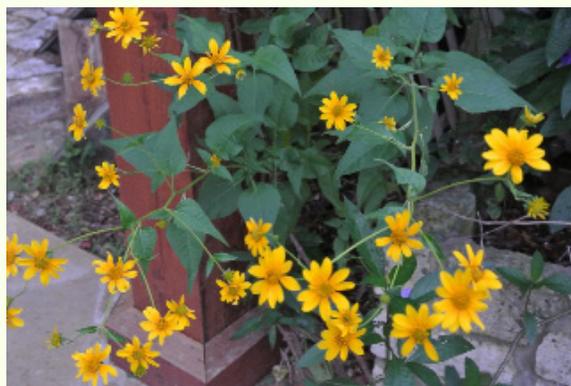


The Glorious Yellows of Autumn

by Carolyn Williams

October and November actually glow with both beautiful light and beautiful yellow flowers! As you walk or drive around the Texas Hill Country, your head will actually swivel back and forth, like watching a tennis match, just trying to absorb all that nature gives us to enjoy.

One misty Sunday afternoon, my camera and I took to driving around the western part of Travis County. The pleasure of enjoying this time of year is extra special when we have experienced scattered rain showers that bring out both our native and adapted flowers in abundance.



Sunflower Goldeneye

All along Bee Cave Road, the countryside is filled with the mustard yellow of the Sunflower Goldeneye (*Viguiera dentata*) that blooms from late September through early November - depending on the weather. It is a perennial that provides nectar for bees and butterflies and is also a larval host. It is most common on our dry caliche soils, and grows from 3' - 6' in height. Its flowers are long lasting in home arrangements and just plain lovely to see throughout the countryside. I have two plants that have come up in my back garden, which I am thrilled to be enjoying!

Another wildflower is the Maximilian Sunflower (*Helianthus maximiliani*) that you can find in ditches or low places in our area. This tall sunflower commands attention with its bright yellow flower heads that are wide (around 3" across) and blooms September, October and early November. Stunning with its many flower blooms, and the fact that it rises above many of the low bloomers or grasses, it gives both color

and grace to its surrounding area.

We are blessed with two Goldenrods, both Tall Goldenrod (*Solidago altissima*) and Prairie Goldenrod (*Solidago nemoralis*). They look very similar, and both bloom at the same time of September through early November. The Prairie Goldenrod is probably more common, as it grows in our caliche soil, while Tall Goldenrod is found more in moist areas. Both are found in Travis, Hays and Blanco Counties. In my neighborhood I have found Prairie Goldenrod thriving on our dry caliche soil, waving beautifully in the fall winds. I dearly love it, both in nature, and my home. They both grow 3' - 6' tall with mustard yellow blooms and rough elongated leaves.



Maximilian Sunflower

One of my top fall blooming plants is the herb, Mexican Mint Marigold (*Tagetes lucida*), or Texas Tarragon, as it is used by cooks for its licorice-anise flavor and is a successful stand-in for French Tarragon. In October and November, it bears clusters of small golden yellow flowers that look wonderful next to all the purple blooms of salvias and sages. This herb was first found in Mexico in the sixteenth century by Spanish explorers. According to legend, it was used by Aztec chieftains to help calm their soon-to-be victims of sacrificial rituals. Good to know, just in case you find yourself in this situation.....

The Glorious Yellows of Autumn

Continued...



Mexican Mint Marigold

To most folks, fall means football, falling leaves, crisp weather and Chrysanthemums or just "mums." Interesting to note, history tells us mums date back to the 15th century. The word "chrysanthemum" comes from the Greek name "chrys" meaning golden and "anthemion" meaning flower. Native to Asia and Northeastern Europe, and meaning "sun" in Japanese culture, they were introduced into American horticulture around 1798 by Colonel John Stevens from England.

Easy to grow from either cuttings, dividing or seeds, they like well prepared, fertile soil with plenty of sunshine and moisture. They have both culinary and insecticidal uses, (the flowers are pulverized into an active component call pyrethrins, which are used to attack the nervous system of insects).

But best of all, they just plain look lovely on porches and gardens to celebrate autumn!



Zinnia

These are just the beginning of my list of beautiful, yellow fall flowers. I have either grown or enjoyed looking at the following: Copper Canyon Daisy (*Tagetes lemmonii*) and other Marigolds, *Cosmos*, Esperanza (*Tecoma stans*), Flowering Senna (*Senna corymbosa*), *Lantana*, Milkweed (*Asclepias*), Skeletonleaf Goldeneye (*Viguiera stenoloba*), *Thryallis* (*Galphimia glauca*), *Zexmenia*, and *Zinnia*.

So grow and enjoy these lovely plants and enjoy the absolutely wonderful autumn weather in the Texas Hill Country!



Milkweed

The Traveling Gardenista: Discovering local flora in botanical gardens and open spaces

by Heidi Roure

Florida Gulf-Coast Beaches

This past year, my professional career has kept me on an airplane. When I do touchdown and my work is finished, I make it a point to search out botanical gardens and other such places that showcase the local flora in the wild and in public spaces. Sometimes I thank my lucky stars that work places me directly within such a beautiful place.

For years now, my husband and I have been visiting that glorious stretch of sand on 30A known as the Beaches of South Walton County. We know it well. This year, work took me to a brand new place further east and south; to a quiet stretch of beach and wild scape in St. Pete Beach, Florida. Sharing the sea breezes of the gulf coast and mild temperatures, this place mirrored 30A with a touch on the wild side. Walking barefoot on a soft, cool sandy path through the sand dunes, to the white-sand beach the texture of flour, my attention is drawn to the natural beauty within the dunes.

I first notice the beach sunflower, with its happy face of yellow petals and bright brown center. Neighboring these flowering bushels one can see the contrast of the gentle leaves of muhley grass and firm leaves of the saw palmetto, a low-growing ground-cover palm that is prolific within the wild Florida forests near the salty air gulf-coast beaches. Another special coastal dune plant is the sea grape, whose big leaves shield the other plants from the wind and salt spray, and fills in the patches between other dune plants. All seem to coexist celebrating their uniqueness. There is one more surprise. At sunset, the sea oats take center stage. One of the tallest varieties of the dune plants, reaching up to 5 feet tall, the sea oats show their brilliance as the last rays of sun highlight their silhouette.



Austin Area Events

Backyard Basics: Backyard Chickens

Thursday, Nov 6, 2014

10am - 12pm

Travis County AgriLife Extension

1600 Smith Road

Austin, TX

For our final course on Backyard Basics, Master Gardener and blogger Ally Stresing will share her love of backyard chickens in this informative talk on the care and maintenance of the home flock. From constructing a predator-proof coop, to choosing proper feed, to handling boredom and the pecking order, Ally will guide you through the ins and outs of caring for happy, healthy hens.

Part of the Texas AgriLife Extension Backyard Basics Series.
Register at <https://agriliferegister.tamu.edu/TravisCounty> or by
phone 979-845-2604

TRAVIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION

2014 EXECUTIVE BOARD

Joe Posern, President

Jackie Johnson, Immediate Past President

Denise Harrelson, Vice-President for Programs

Mikala McFerren, Vice-President for Education

Rosalie Russell, Volunteer Coordinator for Projects

Liath Appleton, Volunteer Co-Coordinator for Trainees

Tamara Montana, Volunteer Co-Coordinator for Trainees

Austin Neal, Secretary

Tina Landers, Treasurer

Toi Powell, Membership Director

Pat Mokry, Greenhouse Manager

Mary Ann Neely, Austin Area Garden Council Representative

Margarine Beaman, State Council Representative

Susan Jung, State Council Representative

Past Presidents (Non-voting):

Bill Baldwin

Bill Boytim

Susan Cashin

Tommie Clayton

Susan Decker

Don Freeman

Manda Rash

Peggy Stewart

Becky Waak

Will Walker

Carolyn Williams

Ex Officio Member of the Board (Non-voting):

Texas AgriLife Extension Travis County
Horticulture Agent: Daphne Richards
1600-B Smith Road, Austin, Texas 78721
512-854-9600 drichards@ag.tamu.edu

This issue of the Compost Bin has been published thanks to the contributions of the following Travis County Master Gardeners and Wizzie Brown — Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

Photographers:
Bruce Leander

Editor and Layout:
Liath Appleton

Contributing Writers:
Liath Appleton
Wizzie Brown
Patty Leander
Jean Love El Harim
Heidi Roure
Carolyn Williams

Assistant Editor:
Martha King

The Compost Bin Submissions

We are always looking for Travis County Master Gardeners who are interested in writing for our monthly newsletter, and we would love to see your articles, photographs, book reviews and gardening ideas.

General Guidelines

- Please first email the editor to discuss potential article ideas.
- Email contributions as attachments (preferably in Word with a .doc or .rtf suffix).
- Please send images as separate attachments (preferably .jpg suffix). Don't forget to include photographer acknowledgments and captions.

Send your submissions, announcements, questions and suggestions to: editor.compostbin@gmail.com



© 2014 Travis County Master Gardeners Association
www.tcmastergardeners.org
<http://travis-tx.tamu.edu>
512-854-9600

"Thy bounty shines in autumn unconfined
And spreads a common feast for all that live."

- James Thomson