



January 2013

The Compost Bin

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

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Cover Photo: Liath Appleton

Announcements

February meeting date change

Mark your calendars for our February meeting date on FRIDAY, February 15th instead of the usual first Wednesday meeting date. We have a special guest speaker, Peter Hatch, author (A Rich Spot of Earth: Thomas Jefferson's Revolutionary Garden at Monticello) who formerly managed and tended Monticello gardens.

Master Gardener Meeting information:
Friday, February 15, 2013 starting at 7 pm
Zilker Botanical Garden

The Compost Bin needs you!

We are always looking for 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

Announcements

Continued...

Demonstration Garden Rosalie Russell, Demonstration Garden volunteer

The Demonstration Garden is located at the front of the Travis County AgriLife Extension Office at 1600 B Smith Rd. It is an experimental garden which allows the public to see native and adapted plants, and enables Extension to test the viability of new varieties of annuals and perennials. The garden is part of the Earth Kind program, and is used to teach the public about environmentally sound gardening practices.

Master Gardeners and Interns earn volunteer hours by maintaining the garden while learning about planting, pruning, irrigation, composting, insects and the habits of many varieties of plants. Occasionally, extra plants are available to the volunteers. Extra vegetable produce is given to a food bank.

Plan your 2013 schedule now. The Demonstration Garden Workdays are the first and third Friday of each month. Workdays are also announced to the membership prior to the workday, and RSVPs are encouraged. Please bring tools, if possible, to help you perform workday tasks.

2013 Demonstration Garden Workday Schedule

Please note the starting and ending times varies with the seasons. Most of the year, work begins at 8:30 AM. During the hottest month's, work begins as early as 7:30 AM. Sessions last 2 ½ to 3 hours.

January	4 & 18
February	1 & 15
March	1 & 15
April	5 & 19
May	3 & 17
June	7 & 21
July	5 & 19
August	2 & 16
September	6 & 20
October	4 & 18
November	1 & 15
December	6 & 20

In The Vegetable Garden

by Patty Leander



Curious Master Gardeners listen as Tim shares his tips for growing fall tomato transplants

Vegetable gardening is a little bit like making lasagna; once you understand the technique and ingredients, you can experiment and adapt it to your liking. And that's exactly what Tim Miller has done. If you recall, Tim was the speaker for our September MG meeting. He is a long-time dryland farmer in Kyle, and after multiple seasons of experiments, successes and failures, he has found his gardening groove, which he enthusiastically shared with several MGs who toured his farm in October.

Located just minutes from the center of town, the five acre, Certified Organic farm features vegetables, fruit trees, nut trees, improvised rainwater collection systems and a makeshift greenhouse. And mulch. Lots of mulch. I've always considered myself a leaf thief of the highest order, but Tim's enormous piles of leaves and wood chips truly put me to shame. He has a sweet deal with local tree companies who are happy to dump their truckloads of shredded tree trimmings on his property which he uses to fill the trenches that run between, across and around the many planting beds on his farm. The mulch-filled trenches hold precious water for plant roots, they provide a habitat for beneficial insects, and as they decompose they are a source of compost for his clay soil.

Frugal and hard-working, Tim coaxes as much from his patch of earth as possible, striving for maximum output with minimal input. Much of his produce goes to members of his CSA, mostly struggling, low-income families, and his driving philosophy is to garden in a way that is affordable even to families with little disposable income. Lean, trim and weathered, you can tell by his physique that he walks the walk. He does not use a lawn mower, tractor or plow (because those conveniences would not be available to low income gardeners) and he uses plenty of reclaimed and/or restored tools around the farm. He has repurposed metal roof panels to build low, slanted structures that allow him to collect rainwater which he stores in plastic milk and juice jugs. Reduce, reuse, recycle, reclaim - and self-reliance - are words he lives by, and after following Tim around on his farm I got the feeling that "relax" is not even in his vocabulary.



One of the numerous mulch piles on Tim's property

In The Vegetable Garden

Continued...



Tim demonstrates how he works the soil with his large wheeled cultivator

Aside from his emphasis on wood chips and organic matter, below are a few other practices that Tim employs on his farm:

1. Use heirloom seed varieties as they tend to require less water than hybrids. A few faves include 'Silvery Fir Tree' tomato, 'Green Glaze' collards, 'Horned Mustard' and 'Marconi' pepper. Favorite seed sources include Seeds of Change (www.seedsofchange.com), Southern Exposure Seed Exchange (www.southernexposure.com), Territorial Seed (www.territorialseed.com) and Turtle Tree Biodynamic Seed Initiative (<http://www.turtletreeseed.org/>).
2. Allow weeds to grow in the perimeter of the garden to attract beneficials and to give grasshoppers and other pests something to munch on besides vegetables.
3. Build pillars to hold rock (see photo) as a way to corral the rocks which may be needed at a later date; it also creates a desirable habitat for lizards.
4. Plant small, rather than large, transplants because they require less water during establishment.



One of Tim's rainwater collection systems made from repurposed corrugated metal roofing supported by a simple wooden base.



It may be impossible to rid a Central Texas landscape of all of its rocks, but a wire pillar is an ingenious way to get them out of your vegetable beds, and corral them for future use or removal.

With a new year upon us, why not consider incorporating some of Tim's methods (or create techniques that are uniquely yours) as we all look for ways to conserve resources and reduce inputs into our own landscapes.

January is a good time to plan for the upcoming spring season by growing your own transplants of warm season vegetables including tomatoes, peppers and eggplant. It takes 6-8 weeks to grow a decent size transplant which means you should sow seed mid-January for transplanting in March. In the meantime, and if garden space allows, plant more cool season crops. Transplants of broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, Swiss chard, lettuce and spinach will start showing up at local nurseries this month along with onion transplants and asparagus crowns. Root crops should be seeded directly in the ground as they do not handle the transplanting process well. Plants grow slowly in cool temperatures, but as the days lengthen and the weather warms be sure to keep them watered and fertilized to maintain vigorous, healthy growth. And be sure to keep yourself hydrated and well-fed (with plenty of vegetables, of course!) for a healthy 2013!

Wood-boring Beetles of Trees

by Wizzy Brown

There are numerous beetles that can be found on or in trees, but this article focuses on two groups: round-headed borers and flat-headed borers. Borers can be damaging to trees that are newly planted or weakened and stressed by conditions such as drought, frost damage or mechanical damage.

Round-headed borer larvae are creamy white with round heads and no legs. Adults are often called long-horned beetles because of their long antennae that can extend past the tip of their abdomen (Figure 1). Eggs are laid in wounds, in crevices or under bark on trees that are stressed or in poor health. Larvae bore under bark into the heartwood of the tree. They may leave a round opening where sawdust-like material, called frass, and sap may exude.

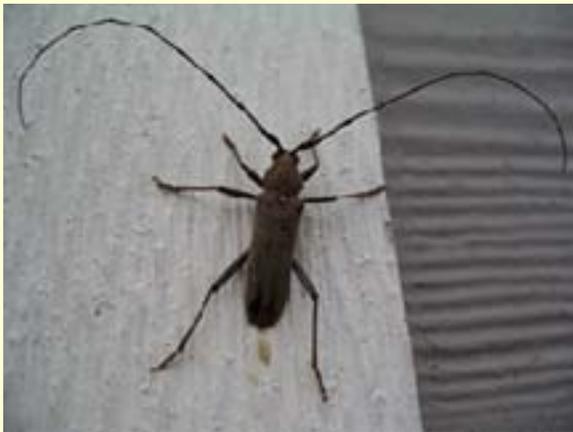


Figure 1. Adult round-headed wood borer; also known as a long-horned beetle.

Flat-headed borer larvae are creamy white, legless and have a flattened head area. Adults are bullet-shaped, often with metallic colors on the body. Eggs are laid around cracks or wounds of stressed trees, but some species will attack healthy trees. Larvae bore into the cambium under the bark, and then move into the heartwood.

I have seen an increase in wood boring beetles this year, most likely due to drought conditions weakening and killing trees around the area. To avoid wood borers, keep trees in good health. Try to plant native or adapted trees that perform well in Central Texas. Properly water and fertilize trees throughout the year; water is especially important during drought conditions. Avoid wounding above ground parts of the tree with lawn mowing equipment and other items.

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

Austin Area Garden Events

Afternoon at the Garden; "Water World"

**Sunday, Jan 6
12pm - 4pm**

Zilker Botanical Garden
2220 Barton Springs Rd.
Austin, TX, 78746

(next to the Garden Center building)
Visit the water plant exploration table and make a lotus. Walk the Taniguchi Japanese Garden paths to discover the world hidden in ponds. Zilker Botanical Garden's Afternoon at the Garden on alternating Sundays.

Admission to the Garden is \$2/adult and \$1/child or senior. The program is free.

The Wonderful World of Seeds

**Thursday, Jan 17
9am - 1pm**

Travis County AgriLife Extension Office

1600 B Smith Rd.
Austin TX 78721

Let Master Gardener propagation specialists teach you how to start, grow and save flower, herb and vegetable seeds. You'll learn from presentation, examples and hands-on participation in the class room and in the demonstration garden, along with handouts and additional resource lists.

Seminar fee is \$20 and you must register at <https://agriliferegister.tamu.edu> with keyword: Seeds phone 979-845-2604.

Tree Talk Winter Walk

**Saturday, Jan 26
9am - 5pm**

Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center
4801 La Crosse Ave.
Austin, Texas 78739

Celebrate Texas trees in the arboretum. Kids can tree climb with professional arborists. Experts will tell you how to identify, select, plant and prune trees. Margie Crisp signs her book, River of Contrasts: The Texas Colorado in The Store. Free admission.

For details, go to <http://www.wildflower.org/ttw/>

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Visit the websites: www.tcmastergardeners.org and
<http://travis-tx.tamu.edu>

