



November 2013

The Compost Bin

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

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Cover Photo: Mix and match lettuce in a variety of colors and textures for healthy salads all winter long.

by: Bruce Leander

Right: Halloween in the garden.

by: Liath Appleton



November Speaker - Robin Howard Moore

Holiday Plants and Florals

Robin Howard Moore grew up in Austin, and worked weekends at her family's garden center, Howard Nursery, at Koenig Lane and Avenue F. After graduating from UT in 1974, she worked full time at the nursery. Her duties included managing the greenhouse, buying plants, gifts and pots, writing ads, and taking care of customers.

When the family decided to close the doors in 2006, Robin began substitute teaching with AISD, started Robin's Garden Designs, and became a Travis County Master Gardener. In 2012, she became an elementary school clerk, and still enjoys garden coaching and garden design.

She and her husband Ken have 3 great grown sons, one wonderful daughter in law, and a nice big yard in Central West Austin.

Among her garden faves are Chinese Evergreen Aglornemas, Angelwing begonias, shade tolerant perennials, terrariums,

and dark blue glazed pots. Other hobbies are Jazzercise, walking near water, and enjoying good music. She hopes to restart violin or cello lessons soon.

Robin and Ken are looking forward to sharing their yard on the Inside Austin Gardens Tour on May 3, 2014.

Bring your questions about how to care for those holiday plants that you want to look great a bit longer. It's a great way to kick-off our Holiday season.

**Master Gardener Meeting information:
Wednesday, November 6, 2013 starting at 7 pm
Zilker Botanical Garden**

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

In the Vegetable Garden

by Patty Leander

Got rain? It sounds like everyone in Travis County got rain last month, and some got more than others. During the major rain event on October 12 my Oak Hill backyard got doused with over 10", and much of the soil – and seeds - from my carefully prepared seedbeds ended up in my neighbor's yard and beyond. Luckily, broccoli and other cole crops that had been transplanted in September had strong enough roots to stay put. The folks at The Natural Gardener nursery described the flood damage well when they posted on their facebook page that many of their plants and furnishings were "hydraulically relocated". Water is a powerful force, but Texans are tough and resilient, and we know that we can handle such adversity. We've either faced it before, or we've learned from past generations who demonstrated their fortitude under much harsher conditions. So as gardeners we give thanks for the rain, and take advantage of all that moisture in the soil. Here is the vegetable gardener's checklist for November:



Mix and match lettuce in a variety of colors and textures for healthy salads all winter long.



Spinach is an ideal winter crop – easy to grow, tastes good and likes the cold weather.

- Remove spent plants, such as tomatoes, beans or cucumbers, as they can harbor disease and insects that can plague your garden next year.
- Continue to monitor and inspect plants for caterpillars as well as harlequin bug eggs and adults, and destroy them before they have a chance to multiply.
- Plant lettuce, spinach, arugula, Swiss chard and other cool season greens.
- Feed plants with a water soluble fertilizer every 2-3 weeks.
- Monitor weather forecasts for freeze warnings, and protect tender vegetables by covering with row cover, a sheet or even a box. Secure the edges to trap radiant heat.
- Be sure beds are well-mulched. A 3-4" layer of leaves, dried grass, compost or straw will help reduce weeds, conserve water and moderate soil temperatures.

In the Vegetable Garden

Continued...



Supplement your own garden produce with delicious vegetables from local Central Texas farmers.

Some gardeners like to take some time off as we enter the winter season, and there's nothing wrong with that. Be sure to protect your valuable soil, and put it to bed with a nice layer of mulch as you give your soil and yourself a rest. Our local farmers will appreciate the extra business during your downtime!



Centipedes

by Wizzie Brown

Centipedes are members of the subphylum Myriapoda, which means "many legs". They have a single pair of antennae on their head, and a long, worm-like body. There is one pair of legs per body segment. The first pair of legs are modified to function as claws, and are used to capture prey. These claws are sometimes called fangs, since they are connected to poison glands that can inject venom to subdue captured prey.



Most centipedes found in Texas are relatively small, the red headed centipede, *Scolopendra heros*, can reach over nine inches when full grown. The bite of larger species of centipedes may cause discomfort and pain.

Centipedes can live from one to six years. They prefer moist, protected habitats, such as under stones, rotted logs, leaves or bark. Winter is spent as an adult, and eggs are laid during warm months. Eggs are usually laid in soil, and covered by a sticky substance.

Centipedes are predaceous, with many species feeding on other arthropods, such as insects. Their modified pair of legs, or claws, is directly under the head, allowing prey to be injected with venom.

Most centipedes can only bite with their poison claws, located directly under the head, resulting in a bee-like sting; however, *Scolopendra* can harm a person with the sharp claws of its many walking legs. Each walking leg is tipped with a sharp claw capable of making tiny cuts in human skin. A poison produced from the attachment point of each leg may be dropped into the wounds, resulting in an inflamed and irritated condition. The best rule of thumb is to never handle centipedes.

Tips to prevent centipedes from moving into homes:

- move objects providing harborage such as compost piles, firewood and stones away from the structure
- Create a band of gravel, or similar material, between the foundation of the home and any landscape beds that touch the structure.
- Occasionally turn the mulch near structures to allow it to dry out
- Seal cracks or pipe penetrations
- Repair weather stripping as needed
- Properly ventilate crawl spaces, or areas under the home, to allow for air flow through the area
- Use perimeter sprays around a building's foundation

For more information or help with identification, contact Wizzie Brown, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist at 512.854.9600.

Austin Area Garden Events

How to Prune Landscape Trees

Thursday, November 14, 2013

10am-12pm

Travis County AgriLife Extension Office
1600 B Smith Rd.
Austin TX

All trees need to be pruned at times in their lifespan. Pruning, done properly, can improve a tree's structural strength, maintain its health, enhance its beauty and protect property around it. Pruning done incorrectly or carelessly, however, can ruin a tree permanently. Learn about tree selection, pruning correctly for different types of trees, and the right season for pruning. Participants' questions will be welcomed.

Register at: <https://agriliferegister.tamu.edu>
or call 979-845-2604. \$10 fee, \$15 late registration.

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The Compost Bin Submissions

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



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512-854-9600

"I saw the lovely arch
Of rainbow span the sky
The gold sun burning
As the rain swept by" - Elizabeth Coatsworth, *November*