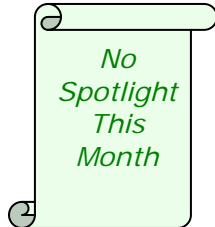


The Compost Bin

Plant Exchange at the TCMGA April meeting.

A Monthly Publication of the Travis County Master Gardener Association

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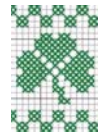
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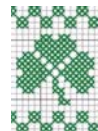
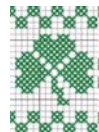
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Purchase tickets for the Zilker Garden Festival at the March 1 meeting. We have been asked by AAGC to sell 372 tickets, which is a little more than two per member. Please buy some to give or sell to folks you know who will come and buy plants. This is a very important event for AAGC and the Garden Center, and therefore is very important for us.

See Steve Reynolds and Carolyn Williams at the March meeting to sign up for Zilker Fest.



Refreshments Coordinator needed for 2006. Contact Judy Lawson.

PRESIDENT'S NOTE [\[TOP\]](#)

How many Master Gardeners does it take to change the way people garden? It took only 183 Master Gardeners in 2005 to help train 51 interns, respond to 4,013 phone inquiries, carry out 23 Speaker's Bureau engagements, keep seven demonstration gardens going, and put in 13,061.5 reported volunteer hours, not including education hours. At the current rate of \$17.55 per hour for volunteer work, we provided our county with \$229,229 worth of our time and expertise. This is a very impressive amount, although probably not quite as much as we actually did, and I am impressed that so many members are doing so much in our community and are dutifully reporting their hours.

I would love to see even more volunteering in 2006, especially in our education and public outreach areas, where we are taking a big step in having our Master Gardeners give free seminars to the public. Our Speaker's Bureau is always in need of speakers, and this is another excellent way to share your love of gardening and your special interests with others.

Answering calls at the phone desk and helping with Plant Clinics are other satisfying ways of reaching the public while learning some new things in the process. The phone desk has more reference materials than before, but it runs basically the same as always, so there is no need to be shy about spending a few hours out there answering questions, even if it has been awhile since your last visit.

Our primary goal as an Extension program is to get more gardening information to the public, so let's really make a push to do even more public outreach this year, and have fun doing it. We have the programs in place; we

just need more volunteers to make them successful.

Speaking of needing help to be successful, we really need all of our Master Gardeners to help make Zilker Garden Festival a bigger success than ever. This is the only major fundraiser for Zilker Garden Center and we also need this venue as a fundraiser for ourselves. So help get the word out about the Zilker Festival.

Please bring your checkbooks to the March 1 meeting and buy as many tickets as you can for only \$3.00 each. You can re-sell them to family, friends, neighbors, and strangers, or buy them yourself and give them away to get folks you know to come to this festival and buy our plants.

Thanks a bunch, and I'll see you out there reaching out,

Susan Decker
President 2006

READERS' NOTES [\[TOP\]](#)

▪ AAGC FEBRUARY MEETING

The Austin Area Garden Council met February 14, and the BIG ITEM on the agenda was the upcoming Zilker Garden Festival scheduled for March 25th and 26th. There will be **over 100 booths** at Zilker Fest this year.

There are two things that we, as Master Gardeners, need to do to support the Festival. The first is to buy tickets. **Advance tickets** will be available at our March Meeting for **\$3.00**. (Tickets are \$5.00 at the gate)

We have an allotment of 370 tickets to buy/sell/give away. Please buy them for yourself, your family, friends, neighbors, and coworkers. This is one of the primary ways we support the Zilker Gardens financially. Bring your checkbooks to the meeting and buy tickets! (There were 18 tickets sold at the last meeting.)

The second part of our involvement in Zilker Fest is to volunteer. Lots of golf cart drivers are needed as well as volunteers for the front gate, info/holding area, volunteer check in, kids corner, garden greeters, water concessions, gift shop helpers..... Take your pick, whatever suits your fancy! But please volunteer.

Other items of interest:

- > Capitol Sports & Entertainment is the primary sponsor of Zilker Fest this year.
- > Parking fees for the Zilker Gardens begin again on Saturday, March 11, weekends only, for \$3.00.
- > Docents are desperately needed to conduct tours of the Gardens.

- > Construction is continuing on Lauren's Trail, an accessible trail leading to the Taniguchi Gardens.
- > Anyone with knowledge about planting lilies (not daylilies) is needed to help plan and plant a 'lily bed' at Zilker as part of a memorial donation. Contact Bill Freeman for info.

That's all the news from AAGC, but PLEASE buy tickets and volunteer for Zilker Fest!!

Steve Reynolds

• PUBLIC SEMINARS

We have free gardening seminars for the public and for Master Gardeners who want continuing education credits, and what we really need is a way to get the word out about these free lectures to as many people as possible. If you are a member of any other group that would allow you to forward the email notices to that group, please do so. We are especially targeting folks who don't know much about gardening, or who love gardening but don't belong to gardening groups. These are the folks we haven't got a way to contact. If you have any suggestions about how to get more advertising for our seminars, please let me or Rosalie Russell know.

Susan Decker

▪ Newsletter Feedback

No feedback received this month.

CALENDAR [\[TOP\]](#)



Bluebonnets
Photo by
Kathy Guthrie

March 2006 [\[Top\]](#)

□ Mar 1 – TCMGA Meeting

Time: 7:00 P.M.

Place: Austin Area Garden Center, Zilker

Speaker: From The Great Outdoors

Topic: How to Grow your Own Tropical Paradise

- **Mar 4 – Central Texas Master Gardener Regional Conference**, 9AM – 4PM at Texas Disposal Service game ranch. \$35.00 per participant. The registration form and conference announcement are available online at www.tcmastergardener.org as an addendum to the Dec 2005 newsletter and a link from the calendar of events page at <http://tcmastergardener.org/html/events.html#ctmga>.

- NEW** □ **Mar 4 - The Organic Gardening Club** is having a sale of organic vegetable seedlings for the spring/summer from 9AM – 2PM at Zilker Gardens.

- **Mar 4 - Sunshine Garden, annual plant sale and fundraiser**, 9am to 2pm at 4814 Sunshine Drive, just north of the intersection of Lamar and 45th Street. **Master Gardeners are needed to conduct a plant clinic.**
- **Mar 25 & 26 – Zilker Garden Fest**, Zilker Botanical Garden. Tickets are now on sale - \$3.00 in advance; \$5.00 at the door.

April 2006 [\[Top\]](#)

- **Apr 1&2 – Cactus & Succulent Show**, Austin Cactus & Succulent Society, Zilker Botanical Garden.
- **Apr 5 – Garden-to-Garden Plant Exchange** at the TCMGA monthly meeting. Bring your garden extras to the April meeting to share, and pick up something new to grow. Start planning and planting now!
- Roxane Smith & Liz Caskey*
- **Apr 9 – Iris Show & Sale**, Iris Society of Austin, Zilker Botanical Garden.
- **Apr 15 – Austin Nature Day**, Annual Garden Club of Austin Plant Auction and Sale, Zilker Botanical Garden. 7:00 pm Barry Lovelace, auctioneer.
- **Apr 22 - Heart O' Texas Orchid Society's 6th Annual New Growers Seminar, Exhibit & Plant Sale.** Seminar: 9 a.m. - 1 p.m., Orchid Exhibit and Plant Sale: 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. Please contact Geoffrey Frost at geoffreyfrost@yahoo.com to get the latest schedule, or check www.hotos.org

May 2006 [\[Top\]](#)

- ❑ **May 05 - TCMGA Monthly Meeting**

- ❑ **May 06 & 07 - 3rd annual Salado Yard and Garden Tour.**
Sponsored by the Public Arts League of Salado and the Salado Garden Club. The event will be held on Saturday, May 6, 2006 from 10 am - 4 pm and on Sunday, May 7 from 1-4 pm. The tour will feature private and public gardens featuring a variety of styles using native and annual plantings and unique garden collections. Tickets will be \$10 and good for both days. Maps will be available leading to each location with a description of each garden.

Salado is a charming village located about 40 minutes north of Austin. Please contact Margaret Williamson, Publicity Chair - Salado Yard and Garden Tour, for more information.

[\(mwsalado@earthlink.net\)](mailto:mwsalado@earthlink.net)

- ❑ **May 13 – 14, Municipal Art Guild Show & Sale**, Municipal Art Guild, Zilker Botanical Garden. 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

- ❑ **May 20 – 21, Bonsai Show & Sale**, Zilker Botanical Garden. 10 a.m. - 5 p.m

- ❑ **May 27, Daylily Show & Sale**, Austin Daylily Society, Zilker Botanical Garden. 1- 5 p.m.

Access more information on gardening events at:

<http://www.klru.org/ctg/events/index.asp>

<http://www.herbalgram.org/default.asp?c=calendar>

<http://calendar.gardenweb.com/display/nph-ind.cgi?scrug=16677&m=all&p=TX&k=&t=>



Dragon Fly
Photo by
Kathy Guthrie

MEMBERSHIP [\[TOP\]](#)

Member Spotlight

No spotlight this month.

VOLUNTEER CORNER [\[Top\]](#)

Volunteer Opportunities [\[Top\]](#)

1. [Greenhouse Corner](#)
2. [Drive Golf Carts at Zilker Garden Festival](#)
- NEW** 3. [Texas Hill Country Wine & Food Festival](#)
4. [Phone Desk](#)

Greenhouse Corner [\[Volunteer Opportunities\]](#)

The greenhouse is full of plants for Zilkerfest, including hundreds of tomato seedlings. This is TCMGA's largest fundraiser of the year. There will be many volunteer opportunities to staff our booth and help prepare the plants during March workday. The first March workday is Sunday; March 5th, 10:00 – 1:00. Watch your email for further announcements.

Want to learn more about greenhouse practices? Sign up for our new greenhouse technician training. It is available to both interns and certified master gardeners. Training will include all aspects of greenhouse operations including propagation, record keeping, irrigation, repotting, soils, pest identification and control, greenhouse systems and equipment, and general maintenance and operations. There will be no time constraints on completing the training. On Sunday March 5th we are having an orientation meeting to explain the program and answer questions. The ½ hour orientation will begin at 1:00 PM, immediately after the work day.

Recently left at the greenhouse:

- **Red** plastic rain poncho
- **Lilac** 'Texas Bluebonnets' T-shirt
- **Navy** blue sweatshirt
- **Blue** and black REI jacket

Come to a workday to claim them!

See you at the greenhouse!

Don Telge & Holly Plotner

Drive Golf Carts at Zilker Garden Festival [\[Volunteer Opportunities\]](#)

Spring is just beginning and everyone is gearing up for the 49th annual Zilker Garden Festival, March 25 - 26.

I will be present at the TCMGA monthly meeting with the "ever ready" sign up list to drive the golf carts on either festival day. A few volunteers will also be needed on Friday (24th) to prepare for the event. If you are unable to attend the meeting and want to drive a cart, please send email to willscaro@austin.rr.com

Other volunteer opportunities are also available such as working in the TCMGA booth selling plants and garden guides, stamping attendees at the front gate, and staffing the water concession and customer plant holding areas.

This is a wonderful opportunity to earn many volunteer hours, buy plants, see friends, buy plants, enjoy helping Zilker Gardens and, oh yes, buy MORE plants! Mark your calendars!

Carolyn Williams

Texas Hill Country Wine & Food Festival [[Volunteer Opportunities](#)]

The Texas Hill Country Wine and Food Festival, in cooperation with the Travis County Master Gardener Association and the Sustainable Food Center will be championing the superb natural farm products and wines and handcrafted specialty foods at the festival this April. This year's theme is Texas Tables – Celebrating the Roots and Influences of Texas Wine and Food. One of the premier events designed to bring home this theme to our attendees is the event –*From Texas Farm to Texas Table* to be held Friday April 7, 2006 12 noon – 2 pm in the parking lot of the San Jose Hotel – 1316 South Congress Ave. Austin, Texas.

The goal of this event is to highlight the importance and high quality of locally grown produce and other farm products and their role in maintaining the sustainability of our local food sources as well as the major health contribution these producers are providing to our region through their use of sustainable agricultural technology, i.e. water & land conservation, organic and integrated pest control management. The event is to be a representative experience of what Texas has to offer in these regards.

The Master Gardeners are an extremely important vehicle in getting out the message of making sound horticultural decisions that contribute to the long-term health of our communities in Texas. The attendees to this event as well as the main event *Sunday Fair* to be held on Sunday April 9, 2006 at San Gabriel Park in Georgetown, Texas will range from serious foodies, oenophiles, and gardeners to visitors to our region to newcomers to our fair state.

Master Gardeners will be prominent presence at both the *From Texas Farm to Texas Table* and the *Sunday Fair* events. The Texas Hill Country Wine and Food Festival is providing an information booths for our organization at each event. We will be able to promote our organization and highlight the work we perform in our community. We will be able to sell our Garden Guides and reach a wide audience. We want for people to see Master Gardeners in their shirts and pins everywhere.

Again, I will be at the March 1 TCMGA meeting with sign-up sheets for those who wish to join great group of volunteers who signed up at the last meeting. Volunteering for these events will not only allow you to enjoy these events but also be a part of this great regional effort. We hope to have this be a long-term partnership and build this venue to shine a spotlight on our incredible service organization. More information will be forthcoming at the next meeting and in the next couple of weeks. If you can attend the meeting please email me at scashin@austin.rr.com if you wish to get on the volunteer list for one or both of the events as well as if you have any questions.

Established in 1986, the Texas Hill Country Wine & Food Festival is the oldest and largest wine and food festival in the Lone Star State and is distinctively defined by its connection to Texas culture, tradition, flavors and hospitality. What a wonderful way for us to spread the seeds of sound horticulture advice across our region. For more information on these events as well as other events that you might have interest in attending as a ticket holder, please go to the festival website at www.texaswineandfood.com. This will take you to the festival website. There is something for everyone. Please pass this website address to all your

neighbors, family and co-workers. This is a great community event. We have taken it back and bringing a whole new fresh yet friendly face. We are pairing fun with superb educational information.

So come join us. Also remember that all Master Gardeners who volunteer for either or both events will receive a complimentary food and wine pairing class conducted by Certified Sommeliers, International Sommelier Guild - Susan Cashin and Jeanie Escalona. Time and place will be announced nearer to the festival date and the class will take place after the festival is over.

See you at the meeting this coming Wednesday March 1.

With warmest regards and thanks to those who have already joined the party!

Susan Cashin

Phone Desk [\[Volunteer Opportunities\]](#)

The March phone schedule will be posted at the Extension Office by Feb 28th, so if you want to work during March and did not get on the schedule by then, please call the office directly to see what shifts might still be available. The receptionist has the phone schedule posted at her desk and she will be more than happy to sign you up (after all, her job is much easier when she can transfer incoming calls to a real live Master Gardener!).

I am currently working on the April schedule, so please contact me by phone or e-mail to sign up. I will bring the April schedule to the meeting on March 1st if you would like to sign up that far in advance. Thank you!!

Patty Leander

Continuing Education for Master Gardeners [\[Top\]](#)

Learning can be easy and fun! Each month continuing education opportunities will be posted on www.tcmastergardener.org Take advantage of some of these opportunities during the year to fulfill your fifteen hours of educational requirements for re-certification. You are not limited to these opportunities so follow your personal gardening interests and attend talks, seminars, workshops, etc. of you're choosing.

- ❑ You may count attending TCMG monthly meetings toward an hour of continuing education (CE) credit.
- ❑ You may audit for free any part of the TCMG training class and earn CE hours.
- ❑ Every four hours worked at the extension phone desk earns one hour of CE credit.
- ❑ Participation in a plant clinic earns one hour of CE for every two hours of work.
- ❑ Attending sessions at Master Gardener Conventions also counts.

FEATURES [\[TOP\]](#)

Landscaping for Wildlife

By Rebecca Matthews

If you love watching wildlife and your idea of lawn care does not involve having the greenest grass in the neighborhood or growing show roses then creating a wildlife habitat will make you as happy as a gopher in soft dirt. Gardening for wildlife creates landscapes that are beautiful and practical which save labor, money and resources.

With urban sprawl in Austin at an all time high, native habitats are being destroyed at an alarming rate. Habitat loss and the use of invasive non-native plants are the greatest threats to native wildlife. Creating a habitat in your yard could be the only way to provide for some of our native wildlife that are hovering on the edge of existence. As Master Gardeners we can make a significant difference simply by restoring habitats in our own yards and by what we recommend to others. Since it's so hot here the hens lay hard-boiled eggs encouraging the use of native plants will reduce water use and even in August you will have color in the garden.

Creating a wildlife habitat is fairly easy though it requires a bit more work than permanently retiring the lawn mower. It may take a little more thought and effort at the beginning, but the results are well worth it. As with any landscape, it is best to start with a plan, deciding where to put features like trees, shrubs or fountains, is the first step. Walkways, driveways, decks and patios all still have a place and serve very important functions and can enhance property aesthetics.

Once your plan is in place it's time to plant to attract the wildlife. Choose native plants for your area. They

require less soil preparation and less care (or no care) after the first year. Use a wide variety of plants to attract a wide variety of wildlife. You don't have to implement your entire landscape plan all at once. Do one bed at a time. Each year you can reduce your lawn area by expanding the existing beds or incorporating a new one. Quick as a hiccup, your mowing and watering chores will decrease and your yard will be transformed into a wildlife habitat.

There are many sources available offering information on what plants are native to your area and the wildlife they attract. Some great sources are: The Wildflower Center at <http://www.wildflower2.org/index.html>; the City of Austin's Grow Green program at <http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/growgreen/plantguide/searchplant.cfm>; and the Native Plant Society at http://bellnetweb.brc.tamus.edu/res_guid/native.htm.

Food, water, cover, places to raise young and sustainable gardening practices are the five essential elements required to create a wildlife habitat:

1. Food

Grow native vegetation — like locally native trees, shrubs and other plants that produce acorns, berries and other seeds — to supply food for wildlife. You can supplement the food sources by the use of feeders but they should not be the only food source. Examples of food sources for birds are Carolina Buckthorn, American Beautyberry, Chili Pequin, Evergreen Sumac and Agarita. Food sources for hummingbirds include Turks Cap, Cherry Sage, Mountain Sage and Red Yucca. Examples of nectar sources for butterflies include: Blue Mistflower, Purple Coneflower, Big Red Sage, Cedar Sage and Texas Lantana. If you

want to attract butterflies it is important to use host plants for caterpillars as well as nectar providing plants in your habitat. Examples of host plants include: Mexican Plum, Parsley, Dill, Passionvine, Zexmenia and Butterfly Weed. Insects are the primary food source for birds, toads, lizards and other insects. This is the strongest reason not to use pesticides in your landscape.

2. Water

Provide a constant, reliable source of water with a birdbath, pond or shallow dish. Most wildlife not only need water for drinking but also for bathing. Even if you did nothing else but set up a birdbath you will start attracting birds and insects to your yard. When we only get an average of 32" of rain a year and it all falls in one day, water is imperative to our wildlife. It's so dry here, ducks don't know how to swim. On average Austin has over 300 days of sunshine and 100 of those days the temperature is over 90 degrees.

3. Cover

Create cover for wildlife with densely branched shrubs, hollow logs, rock piles, brush piles, stonewalls, evergreens, meadow grasses and deep water. This will protect wildlife against the elements and predators and provide a place for insects to forage thus providing birds a nice place for lunch.

4. Places to Raise Young

Offer wildlife safe places for courtship and nurturing young. Mature trees can provide den sites for squirrels and nesting places for birds. If you have a dead tree that is not in danger of falling on your Lexus or the kids leave it standing to provide nesting sites. Don't be so anxious to trim all the dead branches off your trees. Keep your cats inside. Cats are responsible

for thousands of bird and other small animal deaths each year.

5. Sustainable Gardening Practices

The way you garden or manage your landscape impacts wildlife in your yard and the environment. Planting natives, reducing chemicals and building healthy soil are just some of the things you can do to help wildlife and conserve natural resources. Many plants get aphids but please do NOT use any insecticides. A strong stream of water will knock many of the aphids off the plants. At the beginning of last summer my Blue Mistflower was literally covered with aphids and I was not sure it was going to make it but a few days later it was covered with ladybugs. A perfect example of nature at work.

After your yard is landscaped the next step could be to certify it with the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) as a Wildlife Habitat. A few of the reasons to certify your yard with the NWF is the sense of accomplishment for doing something good for wildlife and the environment. Also, you will receive a certificate from the NWF recognizing your yard as an official Backyard Wildlife Habitat site. Your habitat will be assigned its own unique number, and it will be entered into the National Registry of Backyard Wildlife Habitat sites. You can also purchase a sign stating that your yard is a certified Backyard Wildlife Habitat. NWF spends 84% of donations directly on conservation and educational programs and only 16% goes to supporting services. I would be happy to come help you with any habitat questions or you can go to NWF's website and fill out the application online at www.nwf.org.

TRY IT! [\[TOP\]](#)

Sorry...nothing to try this month.

TAKE A LOOK... [\[TOP\]](#)

Sorry...Nothing new this month.

CLASSIFIEDS [\[TOP\]](#)

Sorry...No classifieds received.

**2006 TCMGA EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE** [\[TOP\]](#)

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Don Freeman

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THANKS FOR READING THE COMPOST BIN [\[TOP\]](#)

Produced by the 2006 Publications Committee

Photographs courtesy Kathy Guthrie

Submit articles, FEEDBACK, photographs, tips, etc.
by the 20th of the month preceding publication.

Send submissions to

Toni Dzubay at

tdzubay@Austin.rr.com.