

The Compost Bin

A Monthly Publication of the Travis County Master Gardener Association

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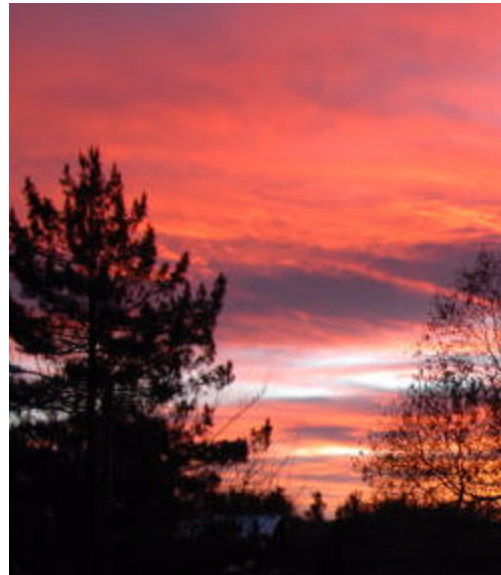
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Features

Coming again in February 2006 issue. No feature articles this month due to the holiday season.



The sun sets for 2005. Cheers to a New Year...

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

Every time I sit down and talk to a Master Gardener, I am always amazed by how much knowledge you have, both individually and collectively. This knowledge is not just about gardening, but all manner of talents. Every one of you has a unique background suited to some aspect of our mission. I learn from you, welcome your insights, and enjoy the variety of perspectives you share with me.

My job as president is to provide vision, to communicate and thereby to facilitate, to motivate, and to appreciate. I am eager to do all of these, and to join with all of you in continuing to provide a significant service to our community.

As Master Gardeners we are always learning, and it is our responsibility to teach others what we know. We can and will make a difference in our community by encouraging the public to be aware of the issues of water quality and water conservation, by showing them how to create wonderful gardens with fewer chemicals, and by helping them make choices that will produce gardens that are healthier and neighborhoods that are more enjoyable for everyone. It is not just about gardening, it is about taking pride in our county and being stewards of our environment.

We are a group of dedicated, community-minded individuals who are in a unique position of having Extension's wealth of expertise and published information to disseminate, the Austin Area Garden Center to use as a meeting place, as a teaching forum, and as a source of inspiration, and a county filled with people eager to learn everything we have to teach them. Few other gardening groups have the same ability to reach out to the public as we have as part of

Extension. If we pool our talents and continue to make our focus education, we can accomplish many things we can be proud of, and have fun doing them.

Many of you have told me you would like to have more opportunities to volunteer from home in the evenings and on weekends, and to aid the association by doing less physically arduous tasks. Many of you have excellent ideas that have never been put forward, but that could make our organization better.

In 2006 I would like to have more of you involved in our projects and events, and see us expand our public education programs. I would like to match more of you up with volunteer opportunities that fit your interests, talents, and schedules. To that end I will be conducting a survey to find out how we can most effectively use your talents to further our goals, whether they be gardening talents or expertise in computers, editing, organizing, research, public speaking, or any of the many other tasks that need to be done.

I want you all to know that I value your input, and appreciate the time you give to the organization. I am very much looking forward to another year of volunteering alongside you.

Susan Decker, President 2006

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

- If you haven't paid your TCMGA Membership dues for 2006, bring a check to the January monthly meeting. Dues are \$12.00 and you can pay Rebecca Matthews, the 2006 Membership Director.
- If your address, phone number or email address has changed and you want the change to appear in the 2006 handbook, please give updated information to Rebecca Matthews (rmatthews@velaw.com) no later than 31 January 2006.
- Notes of AAGC happenings:
 - Steve Reynolds is our new club representative for 2006. I have enjoyed very much being the AAGC representative for nearly two years and now it is time to welcome Steve as our new club representative.
 - The Holiday Bazaar brought in over \$6,000.00.
 - The Master Gardeners turned in \$529.00 and about half of that amount came from pre-sale of the Cool Collars.
 - Laura Joseph is doing an outstanding job as president of AAGC as she is so capable of thinking "outside the box."

- Members of the AAGC board sent a proposal to Capitol Sports and Entertainment for ZilkerFest sponsorship and they accepted and committed \$10,000.00 plus up to \$4,500.00 for t-shirts. Over \$9,000.00 has already been deposited for ZilkerFest booth rentals for 2006. So be willing to purchase a couple of tickets for neighbors or friends as Steve begins to sell the 372 tickets that we have been asked to presell.
- Thanks to all the Master Gardeners that work so willingly to keep Zilker a beautiful place for all to enjoy.

Betty Dunn, AAGC Rep. 2005

- There is still time to register for the on-line organic gardening course offered by Cornell University Extension. Master Gardeners receive a 20% discount if 4 or more sign up, so if you are interested please let me know and I will give you more information. The course begins on January 16th. It is a 16-week course and the cost is \$250. I have decided to register for this course. Check it out at www.cce.cornell.edu/hortdl.

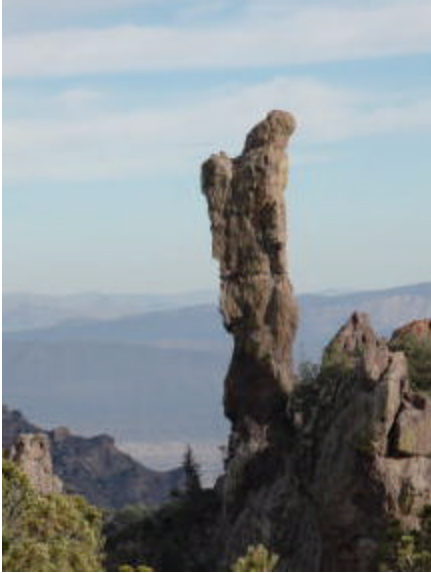
Patty Leander 301-0923

- Timber Press, publisher of books about plants and gardens, is offering TCMGA a **bulk purchase discount**. Contact Mark Berthiaume by email, ausmark@ev1.net, for more information.

▪ **Newsletter Feedback**

No feedback received this month.

CALENDAR [\[TOP\]](#)



Give
2005
"the
boot"!

*(Boot
Canyon,
Big
Bend
National
Park)*

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

❑ January 5 – TCMGA Meeting

Time: 7:00 P.M.
Place: Austin Area Garden
Center, Zilker
Speaker: Skip
Topic: Unknown

❑ Jan 14 - TCMGA Board retreat at Zilker.

❑ **Jan 28 – "Attracting Wildlife to Your Yard,"** 9AM – noon at Zilker Botanical Garden. Sponsored by the City of Austin Green program and the National Wildlife Federation. Learn how having a water garden and planting right plants will attract birds, butterflies and other beneficial animals to your yard. Learn how your backyard can be a Certified Backyard Habitat by providing water, shelter, and food for wildlife. Cost per person is \$10.00. Pre-registration and payment is required by January 26, 2006. Call 974-2550 to register.

❑ **Date To be Determined – Basic Landscape Design Services.**

Becky Waak is organizing a group of volunteers who are landscape design professionals as well as trained non-professionals who are interested in providing basic landscape design services to community groups.

This service will be limited to schools, libraries, or community groups who serve the public. Skip has indicated that we could develop or use existing "basic" designs that could be adapted for the particular site. The most important part of the service would be the education about such things as the appropriate use of native and adaptive plants, water conservation, soil preparation, etc.

Please contact Becky Waak for more information.

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

❑ **Feb 01 - TCMGA Monthly Meeting**

❑ **Feb 26 – Green Garden Festival.** 12:00 – 5:00 at Zilker Botanical Garden. Information on a wide variety of topics will be available: organic gardening, pest control, pruning demos, rainwater harvesting, watershed protection, compost demos, and more...

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

- ❑ **Mar 01 - TCMGA Monthly Meeting**

- ❑ **Mar 04 – Central Texas master Gardeners 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.

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

- ❑ **Apr 05 - TCMGA Monthly Meeting**

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)

MEMBERSHIP [\[TOP\]](#)

Member Spotlight

No member highlighted this month.

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

Reminder... Please report your volunteer and education hours.

Becky Waak, TCMGA President 2005, compiled a report of volunteer hours as of 30 November 2005. The report was taken from the TCMGA Volunteer & CEU Hours Data Base maintained by Renee Trepagnier, TCMGA Membership Director 2005. The following counts summarize her report. As of 30 Nov 2005, approximately 41% of the members reported less than 25 volunteer hours for the entire year, so please report your hours as soon as possible.

Master Gardener Volunteer Hours

January through November 2005

- > 4 members each volunteered 300 or more hours
- > 7 members each volunteered between 200 and 299 hours
- > 15 members each volunteered between 100 and 199 hours
- > 22 members each volunteered between 50 and 99 hours
- > 42 members each volunteered between 25 and 49 hours
- > 31 members each volunteered between 12 and 24 hours
- > 39 members each volunteered up to 11 hours

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

1. [Greenhouse Corner](#)
2. [Phone Desk Mentors](#)
3. [Phone Desk](#)

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

Our propagation tables are full of cuttings and seedlings in preparation for Zilkerfest, but the biggest project at the greenhouse is irrigation. Don Telge is heading up the team to install new sprinklers, misters and drip systems governed by electronic controllers. Through many hours of research and several years of experimentation with different systems, Don has designed fabulous new irrigation for the entire greenhouse. This system will provide the consistent watering that plants love and reduce the burden on the human watering staff.

The January workday is Saturday, January 7, 9-5. We will continue propagation and repotting efforts for Zilkerfest, perform routine maintenance, and show off the progress on the new irrigation systems. Come join us!

The greenhouse has volunteer opportunities on an ongoing basis for watering staff and workday supervisors. We will train you! Talk to Don Telge or myself if you are interested.

See you at the greenhouse.

Holly Plotner

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

Congratulations are in order for the most recent class of Master Gardener graduates who finished the class on November 15th. These students are now considered interns as they work on completing their 50 hours of volunteer time, 25 of which need to be at the phone desk. All students are having an orientation with Susan Decker before they sign up on the phone schedule, and we have promised each student that we will then pair them with an experienced Master Gardener for their first time answering phones. That is where you come in! If you are willing to serve as a phone mentor, please let me know. This will not require anything out of the ordinary. You simply do your job answering and researching calls at the phone desk, allowing the students to observe until they are ready to take their first phone call. Then you will be there for support as they go through the steps of locating the right publication, documenting the call, preparing an envelope for mailing, etc. All of this they have learned at their orientation, but they might need a little guidance the first few times they go through the process. It is our hope that Master Gardener interns will then be better prepared to deal with calls when they end up at the phone desk alone. It will also help to maintain consistency on the way we all handle phone calls and deal with the public. Since the phone desk is relatively slow during December and January, these new interns will not start working phones until February, so I will send e-mail in January asking for mentors. Please consider serving in this important role as we help prepare these interns for Master Gardener certification. Remember that answering phones at the Extension office is a great way to learn and keep up with all the latest information, AND

it counts towards the yearly requirement of 24 volunteer hours and 15 continuing education hours. Because we are constantly researching questions and learning new information as we handle incoming calls, every 4 hours at the phone desk = 1 hour of continuing education. So this is a great way to contribute to the Master Gardener Association, earning volunteer hours and continuing education hours at the same time!!

Thanks in advance for your consideration!

Patty Leander
301-0923

Phone Desk [[Volunteer Opportunities](#)]

The January phone schedule will be posted at the Extension Office by Dec 30th, so if you want to work during January 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 February schedule, so please contact me by phone or e-mail to sign up for a shift in February. I will bring the February schedule to the meeting on January 5th if you would like to sign up that far in advance. Thank you!!

Patty Leander
leander@austin.rr.com
301-0923

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

- Reminder...The TCMGA board approved continuing education credits for the Speaker's Bureau volunteer. Get 1 CEU for every 4 hours of volunteer hours reported. Note: Volunteer time reported should include all time spent preparing for the talk plus giving the talk.

FEATURES [\[TOP\]](#)

Coming in the February 2006 issue.

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



Try growing snake gourds and painting them like poisonous snakes. You'll end up with a unique garden decoration and you'll be able to identify the poisonous snakes you painted.

The snake gourd in the image is approx. 4 feet long.

The Snake Gourd is a long narrow gourd that is either tapered from top to bottom or has the same width from top to bottom. They range in length from 18 to 48 inches, and can be either curved or straight.

Seeds can be sown directly outdoors once the soil has warmed. For best results, provide a deep, rich, well-drained soil in full sun. Dry fully in a cool, dry environment before painting. These gourds can be used plain, or varnished, or stained, or painted with acrylic paints.

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

Sorry...Nothing to review

CLASSIFIEDS [\[TOP\]](#)

Sorry...No classifieds received for this issue.

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

President:

Susan Decker

Immediate Past President:

Becky Waak

VP Programs:

Dave Tovar

VP Education:

Rosalie Russell

**VP Volunteer Coordinator for
Certified Master Gardener:**

Judy Lawson

**VP Volunteer Coordinator for
Master Gardeners in Training:**

Manda Rash

Secretary:

Cheryl Harrison

Treasurer:

Lindy McGinnis

Publications Director:

Jennifer Brown

Membership Director:

Rebecca Matthews

Greenhouse Manager:

Don Telge

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Steve Robinson

State Council Representative

Susan Jung

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

Produced by the 2005 Publications Committee

Photographs courtesy Robert Wall

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

Send submissions to

Toni Dzubay at

tdzubay@Austin.rr.com.