

The Compost Bin



A Monthly Publication of the Travis County Master Gardener Association

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This is not an approved TCMGA project, but you may want to get involved.

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Sustainable Food Centers (SFC) is recruiting 200 Spread the Harvest gardeners for the year of 2006. The Spread the Harvest program encourages and enables gardeners to grow food for themselves, their families and neighbors, and those who are hungry and food insecure in Travis County.

Spread the Harvest core gardeners are offered many benefits such as discounts at several local garden centers, gardening tools, seeds and information on organic gardening.

Gardeners are responsible for recording the amount of produce that they distribute. Every three months, SFC collects this information via Quarterly Surveys. Core gardeners collect their harvests in grocery bags and record the number filled each quarter, so it's simple to track the amount of harvest.

For more information or to sign up contact Emily Neiman at 236-0074 ext 5 emily@sustainablefoodcenter.org

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

As we leap into 2006 I am already impressed by the enthusiasm with which so many of you are answering the call for volunteers. There is an explosion of ideas and energy that bodes well for our efforts for the rest of the year. As more members become involved in all of our projects, I see a greater need for clarity and good timing in our communications with each other. Clear and thorough instructions help everyone make efficient use of their time without frustration, and prompt and well-timed responses to questions can avoid confusion. These things seem obvious, to be sure, but already I have found myself spending extra time re-explaining things I wrongly assumed were clear, so it isn't necessarily all that easy to do. It takes some concerted effort to communicate clearly, and it is a good thing to try harder to do it better.

Clear and well-timed communication also helps us all avoid re-inventing wheels that our members are already using to scoot down the garden path. As you get ideas, or are planning or implementing them, make sure the appropriate board member knows, so any duplication of effort can be avoided, and you could end up with eager volunteers ready to help you, forwarded to you via the board!

I will make a committed effort this year to communicate with you all as clearly as I can on all matters that affect you, and I hope that you will return the favor. I want to make sure you are or become aware of all of the benefits of our projects, all of the ways in which you can be involved, all of the information you need to have to volunteer and report your hours, and all of the people you can contact if you have questions or need help. Let's open up our lines of communication and watch ideas take shape, friendships form and challenges be met.

Susan Decker
President 2006



*Geo Growers wants to remind us that they give **wholesale prices** to Master Gardeners on their products, including soils, compost, and mulches, as well as sand and gravel. Show them your TCMGA badge when you buy.*

Geo Growers
12002-B Hwy 290
West
Austin, TX 78737
892-2722
Open daily 8-6

I will have some wholesale price lists at the February meeting to hand out.

Susan Decker

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

- AAGC happenings

The **BIG news** this month at the Austin Area Garden Council (AAGC) Meeting was **Zilker Garden Fest!** It is happening on March 25th & 26th and your help is greatly needed.

Chairpersons are still needed for the Live Music Venue and the Bottled Water Committee (purchasing and selling water). I'm sure there are MGS out there who will fit the bill. Please contact Linda Ray to volunteer, info@zilker garden.org.

Tickets! Tickets!! Tickets!!!

Tickets for Zilker Fest are now on sale. They are \$3.00 in advance and \$5.00 at the gate. Every organization in the AAGC has an allotted amount of tickets to sell. We have 360 advance tickets to sell. Please bring your money to the Feb TCMGA monthly meeting—buy tickets for yourself, your family, friends, coworkers and neighbors. Ticket sales are a very important part of Zilker Fest profits and we need to do our part to support the biggest fundraiser of the year for the Zilker Botanical Gardens.

Other news:

--The **Taniguchi Revitalization Project** is continuing. The contractor for Lauren's Trail has been selected and volunteer work is happening at the Japanese Garden.

--**Memorial brick pathway** is being jumpstarted. \$250 bricks are on sale for a short period of time for \$100.

--**New email address** for all AAGC and all of Zilker is info@zilker garden.org

Steve Reynolds

- Membership Survey soon... Soon you will be receiving a phone call from a Master Gardener to talk with you about your volunteer interests and abilities.

Judy Lawson

- Garden-to-Garden Plant Exchange at the TCMGA April meeting. Bring your garden extras to the April meeting to share, and pick up something new to grow!

Roxane Smith & Liz Caskey

- 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 [\[Top\]](#)



Photo by
Kathy
Guthrie

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

❑ Feb 1 – TCMGA Meeting

Time: 7:00 P.M.
Place: Austin Area Garden Center, Zilker
Speaker: Mr. Jack Dougherty of Bella Vista Ranch
Topic: The Process of Growing Mediterranean Plants in the Hill Country.

The Bella Vista Ranch is located in Wimberley, Texas. The Ranch was designed to reflect a traditional Italian family farm....a producing olive orchard, frantoio (olive press), vineyard, winery, "pick your own" berry patch, a Red Brangus herd and many seasonal fruit and vegetable specialties.

- ❑ **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 1 - TCMGA Monthly Meeting

- ❑ **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.

- ❑ **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 Festival,** 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)

- ❑ **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.

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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=>



Mission Cactus

MEMBERSHIP [\[TOP\]](#)

Member Spotlight

Congratulations Master Gardeners!!!

On January 21, 2006 **Patty Leander's** organization techniques and **Roxanne Smith's** valuable insight into organizing her beautiful garden were featured in the Life Style section of the Austin American Statesman.



The **Garden Guide for Austin & Vicinity, Third Edition**, won a Best of 2005 Award by the Austin Chronicle in the category of media, picked by the critics, as follows:

"Transplanting Handbook for Austin Transplants
Travis County Master Gardener Association's Garden Guide for Austin and Vicinity, Third Edition
For many in Central Texas, "back home" means someplace where it rained so much even rolling stones gathered moss. If Austin's your adopted hometown – or you simply need a primer for our region's best photosynthetic bets – get the just-sprouted third edition of the TCMGA Garden Guide, with monthly planting schedules custom-tailored to our region's finicky climate, proven variety lists, and frankly an overabundance of other resources for the inquisitive local gardener. If it's roses in February and your tomatoes peak by June, you know you're in Austin – now just watch out for that first frost Nov. 28."

The Garden Guide has now sold nearly 11,000 copies since the first edition in 2000, according to Dolores Leeper, Sales Coordinator (and editor) of the Garden Guide. What a great reward for everyone's hard work with the guide!

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

Green Living Home Show

Travis County Master Gardeners supported Skip Richter at the Green Living Home Show, January 20-22.



Skip brought his microscope and a monitor, his computer and a projector, and we were able to project both power point presentations and images from the microscope.

Master Gardeners were on hand to help with diagnosis of "walk-in" plant problems, and Master Gardener Specialists spoke on Propagation Techniques, Fire Wise, Oak Wilt, and Entomology.



A total of 6 Master Gardeners Specialists, 17 Master Gardeners, and 8 Master Gardeners Interns participated.

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

1. [Greenhouse Corner](#)
2. [Drive Golf Carts at Zilker Garden Festival](#)
3. [Doug's House](#)
4. [Phone Desk](#)

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

Don Telge has joined Holly Plotner as co-manager of the greenhouse. The management of the greenhouse is too time consuming for one person, so Holly will manage the hands-on greenhouse operations and Don will handle the business operations. We are excited about our team effort to managing the greenhouse, and all of the new ideas on our agenda that will be of interest to all.

Since we are beginning a new year, we thought it would be appropriate to re-state the purpose of the greenhouse. The purpose of the greenhouse is to:

- Supply Zilker Botanical Gardens with plants,
- Supply community and educational projects with plants, and
- Grow and sell plants for Zilkerfest to provide income for the greenhouse operations.

Our main objective for 2006 is centered on education projects for the young and old, which will be implemented throughout the year.

The first stage of the automatic watering system is installed and working. There are six tables that have sprinkle irrigation that is required for watering 4" pots. By the turn of a valve the tables can be changed to provide drip water irrigation for one-gallon pots. We now have the capability to water 32 different zones using a controller. The controller turns the water on and off at a designated area (known as a zone) and for a preset time. Regulated watering programs can greatly improve the growth rate of plants and reduce any plant stress caused by irregular watering.

Currently, we are growing plants for Zilkerfest, which occurs in late March.

The propagation team is conducting propagation classes in connection with the greenhouse workdays. Notice of the workdays will be announced by e-mail through the Yahoo groups. We will need lots of volunteers in the coming days to get ready for Zilkerfest or to volunteer during the festival.

Several expensive pieces of greenhouse equipment are missing, so we have put a lock on the greenhouse. We're sorry we had to take this step, but we are working to get a system allowing Master Gardeners easy entry.

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

Doug's House Project Update

[\[Volunteer Opportunities\]](#)

One of our MG projects that started last September is our Grounds/Landscaping Project at Doug's House. Doug's House is operated by Project Transitions, a 501(C)3 organization which provides hospice care and supportive housing program for individuals and families living with HIV/AIDS in central Texas.



The beginning...

In the fall, we did a complete landscaping installation following Austin landscape architect Bud Twilley's design. Learning about integrating native plants with tropical plants and creating a calming and peaceful atmosphere to be enjoyed by the clients and their families were important aspects of the project.

It's very rewarding to know that our work has created a peaceful retreat for the residents and their families in an especially difficult time.



The volunteers...

This month, we will be having one of our quarterly maintenance workdays -- working at the gardens, cleaning up and preparing for spring. There will also be an educational component to the work session.



The garden at Doug's House – Created by volunteers.

I will have a sign up sheet at the Feb meeting or you can email me at drsteve104@aol.com to be added to the workday list.

Steve Reynolds

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

The February phone schedule will be posted at the Extension Office by Jan 30th, so if you want to work during February 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 March schedule, so please contact me by phone or e-mail to sign up for a shift in March. I will bring the March schedule to the meeting on February 1st 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 [\[Top\]](#)

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. if 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 [\[TOP\]](#)

Metro Maples, Fort Worth

By Liz Caskey

Who doesn't love the beautiful Japanese maple? But wait, I didn't think they grew well here in Texas. Metro Maples in Dallas will change your mind.

Although it is a little out of the way and a small challenge to get there (who would guess that it would be across the street from the Fort Worth dump?), it's worth the drive. But don't go in the middle of the winter like I did, when the trees are all bare. Try spring or fall to enjoy the beautiful maple leaves and the display garden featuring over 30 Japanese maples.

I expected to see a few choices of a few varieties, but as I drove up I could tell that they knew about growing maples in Texas. Keith Johansson has owned and operated Metro Maples since 1994 and currently has over 18,000 plants in stock. The nursery is primarily a wholesale grower of Japanese Maples from 1 to 25 gallon sizes, but sells retail on Saturdays. In addition, they sell other varieties of maples and azaleas.

With virtually no experience with Japanese maples, I was thrilled when Mr. Johansson and his assistant agreed to help me pick out the perfect one. I was looking for a small tree that I could keep in a pot.

© 2003 The Maple Society



They suggested a new cultivar, "Orange Dream," which will grow up to 12 feet tall, with brilliant orange and yellow leaves in the

spring, then turning a light yellowish, green in the summer.

Before you go to Metro Maples, be sure to check out their web site www.metromaples.com. Detailed information regarding growing conditions is available, along with suggestions for maples that will do well in Texas, such as Shin Deshojo, Beni Kawa, Viridis/Waterfall, Crimson Queen and others. It also includes a warning that the trees don't like wet feet, but do like morning sun and will do fine as an understory tree with high, dappled shade.

Metro Maples, 4890 S. Dick Price Road, Fort Worth, 817-797-3419. Map and directions are on the web. Just be sure to take Business 287 (not just 287.)

Where is the rain? Answer: in Seattle

BY Jane Bramlett, MG, Fire Wise
Landscape Specialist

Dry, crisp grass, shrubs and trees plus very dry air plus strong winds equals **Red Flag** fire danger. A burn ban has been in effect in central Texas for at least two months.

Winter is the dormant season for most plants and trees so their moisture requirements are less, but the extremely long drought will dry out entire plants.

Zone 1 is the 30 to 50 foot space around your home called 'Survivable Space' or 'Defensible Space' by the Texas Forest Service. It is most crucial to keep this area well watered, pruned, and mowed and, debris composted or collected and disposed of, especially in a dry season.

Notice how big one fire truck is! Zone 1 area needs to be cleared and wide enough so emergency vehicles and personnel would be able to access the area to defend your home in case of fire, i.e., to help you and your home survive a fire or wildfire.

Perhaps you have seen people on TV describe how rapidly a spark from their lawnmower or BBQ grill spread through the dry grass and shrubs. A wet, green, viable plant or tree has a lot more water content than dead wood, fallen leaves, and other debris. The moisture can slow and retard ignition.

All plants are virtually combustible and are potential fuel for fire. So, with this added incentive, water well, prune dead foliage and limbs, and clean up yard debris. Remember that mulch like wood chips and leaves are fuel to a fire so keep them moist.

Some plants or trees are more fire-retardant than others. Some species have a capacity to retard fire and not burn in a wildfire! Some plants or trees are very volatile, such as, the Yaupon holly and cedar. It is recommended that volatile plants and trees be isolated and be spaced well away from a home, or if already in place, be kept well-pruned (trees limbed up at least 6-10 feet), well-watered, and clear of debris.

Firebreaks

It may be timely to add more hardscape. Hardscape is non-plant material and is also fire proof. A rock yard you may see in Sun City, AZ is fire proof, but there are other more pleasing alternatives. A path around a home using decomposed granite, gravel, flagstone, brick, or a combination would serve as a firebreak from grass fires. Also, raised beds edged with stone, brick, concrete or metal serve as firebreaks. Some recommended mulch for beds next to the house are decomposed granite, pea gravel, or lava rock to reduce the vulnerability of your home to grass fires. Sidewalks, driveways, streets, ponds and pools are all firebreaks also. What an excuse to put in a pond or pool! Happy and Safe Gardening.

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

From "Trowel & Error" by Sharon Lovejoy: Before filling with soil, line the sides of thin plastic and metal containers with bubble wrap to insulate from the heat.

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

Sorry...Nothing new this month.

CLASSIFIEDS [\[TOP\]](#)

Sorry...No classifieds received.

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

AAGC Representative:

Steve Reynolds

State Council Representative

Susan Jung

PAST PRESIDENTS (Non-voting):

Tommie Clayton

Susan Cashin

Peggy Stewart

Bill Boytim

Don Freeman

Will Walker

Ex Officio member of the Board (Non-voting) Horticulture Extension Agent Travis County:

Skip Richter
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r-richter@tamu.edu

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

Produced by the 2006 Publications Committee

Photographs courtesy Kathy Guthrie, Judy Lawson, Steve Reynolds, and 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.