

The Compost Bin

Plant Exchange at the TCMGA April 5th meeting.

A Monthly Publication of the Travis County Master Gardener Association

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Reminder!! Pay parking at Zilker Botanical Garden is now in effect for all weekends until Labor Day - \$3.00 per car.

If you signed up to volunteer at the **TEXAS HILL COUNTRY WINE AND FOOD FESTIVAL APRIL 6-9 2006** please attend the TCMGA April 5th meeting to get volunteer instructions.

Coming in the June issue of the Compost Bin information on the first **STAGHORN FERN SYMPOSIUM & WORKSHOP**, June 10th 2006, Zilker Botanical Garden

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

We are really having a great year for getting out into the community. We are so busy that we have been having different events on the same day, but somehow we are able to do it all, primarily because of your dedication.

In March we had the Central Texas Regional Conference on the same day as the Sunshine Gardens Plant Sale, and several public seminars, workshops and speaking engagements, and for Zilker Garden Festival we have the sales booth, a Plant Clinic and many volunteers helping drive carts and assisting the festival organizers. In April we have been invited to events at Marbridge Farms, Hill Country Water Gardens, the Texas Food and Wine Festival, and the LCRA Earth Day events, and are helping with more public seminars on a variety of topics.

As we get out there and talk to folks, I'd like for us all to remember whom we are and why we are doing what we do. I know it is easy to think of TCMGA as an independent gardening club, especially for those who came to us from other clubs, but that is not who we are. We are a talented, civic-minded group of Extension volunteers, who, in return for a most excellent training in the Master Gardener class, are fulfilling the needs of Extension by disseminating ideas, advice, tips and encouragement to all those who find gardening here difficult at best but who also find it irresistible, just like we do. Isn't it marvelous to talk to a stranger and find you both absolutely love the same plant, or have had exactly the same experience with one, and isn't it terrific when you help someone new gain the confidence to grow the plants they most love to surround themselves with? When you are out there, encouraging and commiserating, advising and

explaining, tell them you are a member of an Extension program, and let them know they can call the phone desk for more help, and can go to the TCMGA website for a list of free public seminars and to Skip's Central Texas Horticulture website for gardening advice. Think about ways to spread the Earth Kind message, and encourage people to limit their use of chemical products, reduce their water usage, and understand their role in preserving our water quality. We have the ability, the means, and the responsibility to educate as many people as we can, and that is who we are and why we are doing what we do.

So please remember the bigger picture when you are out enjoying the greenhouse, the Botanical Garden, or your favorite Master Gardener project, because there are many ways to be an educator, even if you never give a lecture. The more Master Gardeners there are thinking about ways to educate the public, the better we will be at achieving our mission. Thanks for all your hard work!

Susan Decker
President 2006



Manda Rash selling tickets at Zilker Fest 2006... what a smile, Manda!

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

"Beautiful Begonias" Seminars Sponsored by The Austin Area Begonia Society and The Garden Club of Austin, featuring Dr. Freda Holley, one of American's foremost begonia experts, the editor of the National Begonian Magazine and a past president of the American Begonia Society.

Thursday, April 27th, at 7 pm at the Austin Area Garden Center Auditorium (monthly meeting of the Garden Club of Austin)—beginning with a reception for Dr. Holley, followed by a presentation at 7:30pm entitled "The Magic World of Begonias". This will include an overview of the different types of begonias and successful growing strategies as well as a display of begonias, a begonia sale and a plant raffle.

The Austin Area Begonia Society will honor Dr. Holley with a luncheon at Austin Area Garden Center Auditorium on Sun, April 10 at 2pm. Dr Holley will lead a question and answer session and present successful hybridization and propagation techniques. A plant exchange, sale and raffle will be included in the afternoon activities.

For more info on the program, contact valeriemorrisrn@hotmail.com or ljoseph@austin.rr.com

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Reprinted from "Down Garden Path", publication of the Austin Area Garden Council, by Shaun Jordan, Editor.

You know, I'm continually surprised at the confusion with the name of the Zilker Botanical Garden, even among our own members. For a garden that's been part of Austin culture for 40 years one think people would know the proper name.

Even the city makes mistakes. Recently, I had the City web site corrected and the other day I opened my utility bill and saw an insert with a photo of a rain barrel water system at "Zilker Garden." Yes, we're a part of Zilker Park, but the garden's name is **Zilker Botanical Garden**, not "Zilker Gardens" or "Zilker Botanical Gardens." Just one garden, please.

Let's all learn the proper name and educate the City, the public, the State, and the nation!

For the record, we are: Zilker Botanical Garden featuring the Austin Area Garden Center (building) and administered by the Austin Area Garden Center, Inc., doing business as the Austin Area Garden Council.

And for the record, I had to look all of those names up to make sure I was correct!

Steve Reynolds

▪ Newsletter Feedback

No feedback received this month.

CALENDAR [\[Top\]](#)



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

□ **Apr 5 – TCMGA Meeting**

Time: 7:00 P.M.

Place: Austin Area Garden Center, Zilker

Speaker: Nancy Dennis

Topic: BIO-INTENSIVE GARDENING

Bio-intensive gardening is a method developed by John Jeavons through 30+ years of research on how to grow a complete diet sustainable in the smallest possible space. The bio-intensive method is being used all over the world. It is the most complete system, and is designed for everyone to grow a complete diet for him or herself, and also grow their own fertilizers, compost, etc.

- **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

- **Apr 27 – “Beautiful Begonias” Seminar**, at 7PM at the Austin Area Garden Center. Sponsored by The Austin Area Begonia Society and The Garden Club of Austin, featuring Dr. Freda Holley.

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

- NEW** ❑ **May 11-12, Propagation Specialist Training**, Fort Worth. See TMGA "Calendar of Events" for more information. <http://www.texasmastergardeners.com/>
- ❑ **May 13 – 14, Municipal Art Guild Show & Sale**, Municipal Art Guild, Zilker Botanical Garden. 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.
- NEW** ❑ **May 13, Gardens on Tour 2006**, Presented by the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information call (512) 292-4200 or visit www.wildflower.org.
- ❑ **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=>

MEMBERSHIP [TOP]

Member Spotlight

Venkappa and Ratna Gani

After my retirement in year 2000, we lived in The Woodlands in Montgomery County, Texas. My wife Ratna came across the Master Gardener class starting February 2000 and convinced me to attend the class because I have been gardening since my elementary School days. We agreed to attend the class together. We both graduated from the Master Gardener program, and both received Distinguished Service Awards in recognition of Superior Service as a Master Gardener Volunteer for the year 2000 and 2001 from Montgomery County Agriculture Extension Service.

We moved to Austin in late 2002 and joined the Travis County Master Gardener Association. Ratna and myself are active TCMGA members and we enjoy volunteering for various projects. I have been member of Green House committee and worked with other Master Gardeners in 2005 to build the rainwater harvesting system at the Zilker Botanical Garden. I also worked with other members to add two rainwater harvesting tanks at the Travis County Master Gardener greenhouse.

I am currently president of Austin Organic Gardeners Club and a life member of The Garden Club of Austin. We have won numerous gardening awards. I have a Master of Science degree in Electrical Engineering from University of Colorado, Boulder Colorado and a Master degree in Project Management from George Washington University. Ratna has Bachelor of Arts in Economics from Karnatak University Dharwad, India



We are both active in gardeners. We learn about new plants and grow both new plants and favorites in our backyard.



Our garden is open to the public for learning organic gardening and rainwater harvesting. We also give seminars, workshops and lectures, and Ratna is busy growing and cooking with herbs.

By Venkappa Gani



Venkappa and Ratna Gani taught 4-H students how to grow potatoes and tomatoes

Read [Teaching Spring Organic Gardening to 4-H Students](#) to learn about their hands-on approach.

Since they taught the class, their rain-harvesting tank is full and plants are really taking hold. They have seen 100% germination of potatoes planted two weeks ago.

Venkappa and Ratna are members of the following:

- ❑ TCMGA (Travis County Master Gardener Association)
- ❑ AOG (Austin Organic Gardeners), and
- ❑ TAGC (The Austin Garden Club)

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

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1. [Greenhouse Corner](#)
2. [Texas Hill Country Wine & Food Festival April 6 – 9 2006](#) **Updated**
3. [Phone Desk](#)

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

Thanks to all of the wonderful volunteers who contributed their time and talents to Zilker Fest 2006. I had a great time and enjoyed working with each and every one of you.

Holly
at
Zilker
Fest
2006



New TCMGA display stands built by TCMGA volunteers for Zilker Fest 2006.

Watch for the Greenhouse Technician Training Program, starting soon. 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.

See you at the greenhouse!

Holly Plotner

Texas Hill Country Wine & Food Festival April 6 – 9 2006 [\[Volunteer Opportunities\]](#)

First, I would like to thank all of you who have volunteered to help us sponsor the Texas Hill Country Wine and Food Festival, especially the event From Texas Farm to **Texas Table to be held on Friday April 7th at the Hotel San Jose 1316 S. Congress Ave.**

Judy Lawson our volunteer coordinator extraordinaire will be contacting you concerning your volunteer times for this event. The other events which some of you may have signed up for, Sunday Fair in Georgetown on April 9th and the TDS Barbecue Event, will have the festival volunteer coordinators as well as Judy and I contacting you

We are asking all of you who have volunteered for any of these three events to please attend the April 5th meeting. We will have a brief orientation meeting where you will receive your marching orders so to speak.

Also please talk up this event to your friends, family and neighbors. It is a great opportunity to have one on one time with some great farmers, ranchers, grazers as well as locally and nationally renowned chefs. And on top of it all, there will be wine sampling of estate grown and bottled wines, and the wonderful music of Trish Murphy. Fine wine, fine food & fast friends! What more could one want.

Again, thanks to one and all for your support and for getting the word out about the wonderful work the Travis County Master Gardeners do for our community.

Susan Cashin

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

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

Patty Leander



Taylor Dyer and Paula Middleton answering questions at Zilker Fest 2006

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 **Updated** 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 [\[TOP\]](#)

Teaching Spring Organic Gardening to 4-H Students

By Venkappa and Ratna Gani, Texas Master Gardeners

Travis County Master Gardeners Speakers Bureau asked us to teach spring gardening to Creedmoor 4-H students. We were asked to give a classroom type lecture but I thought a hands-on workshop would be more meaningful. I talked to the students' parents about holding class at my garden to give students the opportunity to gain hands-on planting experience and to see my garden when spring planting is underway. Parents willingly accepted my proposal, and the day/date and time was set as Saturday March 11, 2006 at 10:00 AM.

Deciding what to teach and how to teach it was the next step. My wife, Ratna, started asking me what are you going to teach to the children? I told her, I'll teach the students what I was taught about gardening during my childhood in school. Then, I realized, just before Saturday, that the last freeze date passed and the warm weather was a clear sign to start spring planting. I was already planning to plant potatoes and tomatoes so I decided to teach the children how to plant potatoes from seed potatoes and tomatoes from home raised tomato plants. Ratna who is also a master gardener approved my plan.

To get ready for workshop, I cleared the garden area and prepared the space for planting potatoes by digging a trench 12 inches deep and 12 feet long. The 4-H students of age kindergarten to high school arrived. One of my neighbors wanted to learn more about gardening so she also joined the class.

I started the workshop by showing the videotape of my garden, which was broadcast on KLRU PBS TV on the Central Texas Gardener (CTG) program in 2004 and 2005. This video illustrates the first step in starting a garden - preparing the soil by amending the soil with organic materials such as compost and adding topsoil.

Then I explained the parts of the seed potato, which had already sprouted, and demonstrated how to cut the potato with 2-3 sprouting nodes and dip the potato pieces with wetting sulfur to stopping rotting. Finally, the students and I went into the garden where I demonstrated planting the potatoes in the trench I prepared earlier.



Venkappa Gani planting a potato in the prepared trench.

Students toured the garden and asked several questions about the plants - they were curious! I explained how and when to plant and when to harvest. I also described the characteristics of all the plants, fruit trees, roses and herbs in my garden.

Ratna plucked leaves from herbs and asked the students to smell and taste the herbs, and I dug a long white radish (Daikon) to show the students how deep its roots grow.



Ratna teaching students about the Daikon radish.

Students and parents expressed that they enjoyed coming to my garden to learn about gardening. They expressed the following comments:

Jennifer Dittmar wrote " You have a marvelous garden. It was very unique and I loved exploring the various plants and trees. Thank you for sharing this experience with us."

Jocelyn Martnez, "This was fun! I loved some of vegetables I tasted except for the safflower, too oily. If you had carrots, I would have eaten all of them! Thanks for the fun! I really enjoyed it!!

Contact: Anne Tiedt, APR (512) 784-3805 atiedt@austin.rr.com

Gardens on Tour 2006

Presented by the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

On Saturday, May 13, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Gardens on Tour 2006 Presented by the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center will offer participants an exclusive look at outstanding local gardens that include native plants in their designs.

This self-guided, Mother's Day weekend tour will introduce gardening enthusiasts to five private gardens, plus the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center.

Rain or shine, visitors will enjoy a "behind the gate" look at some of Austin's most notable and inspired

garden designs. Docents, landscape designers, and gardeners will be on site at each home to answer questions and provide information about each garden.

Tour wristbands are available starting April 7 at the Wildflower Center and starting April 8 at select area retailers, including:

- Barton Springs Nursery
3601 Bee Caves Rd
- Big Red Sun
1102 East Cesar Chavez
- Northwest Hills
3801 N. Capital of Texas Hwy
- Pots and Plants
5902 Bee Caves Rd
- Shoal Creek Nursery
2710 Hancock Dr
- The Natural Gardener
8648 Old Bee Caves Rd
- Wild Ideas: The Store
4801 La Crosse Ave

Individual garden tickets may be purchased on-site at each home the day of the event. The wristband that allows entry into all gardens is \$25, and a ticket for each individual garden is \$6. Children under 5 will be admitted free of charge.

The proceeds from this event will allow the Wildflower Center to offer a broader range of public programming for youth and families.

For more information call (512) 292-4200 or visit www.wildflower.org.

Gardens on Tour 2006 is sponsored by KXAN, KUT, Texas Highways, and Majic 95.5.

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

Try landscaping with tall ornamental grasses. Weekly tips from editors of Garden Gate Magazine
<http://www.gardengatemagazine.com/>

Due to their size, these grasses can really stop your visitors in their tracks. They can provide your beds with a focal point that can be seen from anywhere in the garden, maybe even from anywhere in your neighbor's garden.

Hedges — Ornamental grasses can provide a privacy screen in summer, fall and winter. In larger gardens, enormous pampas and giant reed grass work great. Even in smaller gardens, plants like miscanthus and feather reed grass make lovely 6-ft. hedges.

Specimen plants — Because of the drama they create with sheer size, tall grasses like ravenna are perfect specimen plants. For the most impact, give them plenty of room and use lower-growing companions to contrast with their form

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

Jacqueline Johnson

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:

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

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Photographs courtesy Robert Wall and Venkappa Gani

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

Send submissions to
Toni Dzubay at
tdzubay@Austin.rr.com.