



A publication of...

TRAVIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS

# THE COMPOST BIN

January 2007



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## Speaker for January: Keith Brown

Keith Brown - "Arboriculture 101: Everything you always wanted to know about Central Texas Trees but were Afraid to Ask". Tree myths, specifics about which trees work in our area and which ones don't and why. Q&A session to follow.

### Bio:

Owner of Austin Tree Experts  
Board Certified Master Arborist (only one in central Texas)  
ISA Certified Arborist  
Member of American Society of Consulting Arborists  
Texas Forestry Certified Oak Wilt Specialist

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## Message From the President...

Happy New Year, everyone! I think everyone enjoyed themselves at the holiday party. It was good to get together with those of you who could make it, and share some fun and great food. And many thanks to the volunteers who planned and set up the event—**Carol Croft, Judy Lawson, and Hope Dyson**, along with everyone else who helped out. We all need to give them a special thanks when we see them at the January meeting. It was a splendid time.

Special Awards were given to some members for their exceptional volunteer efforts in 2006:

The Peggy Stewart Award: **Holly Plotner** for her work in the greenhouse  
The Golden Gloves Award: **Bill Garza** for fixing the irrigation system at the Demonstration Garden

Awards of Special Merit went to:

**Jackie Johnson** for her great ideas, including the free East Austin Garden Event  
**Debra Mischel** for managing the Speaker's Bureau  
**Steve Reynolds** for organizing the Inside Austin Gardens tour  
**Manda Rash** for managing the Class and helping organize the tour  
**Rosalie Russell** for managing the Public Seminar Series

Awards were given to the eight homeowners who put their gardens on our tour this year:

**Ila Falvey**  
**Clay Speer**  
**Bob Beyer**  
**Loretta Fischer**  
**Sue Nazar**  
**Patty Leander**  
**Jack Campbell**  
**Laura Joseph**

Thanks to all of these award winners for all of their hard work and efforts on our behalf this year.

And hats off to you all for your continuing commitment to our Extension program and all the work you do—we couldn't make any progress without you all there to do all the little tasks as well.

Initial plans are under way for a free East Austin Garden Event that we will be helping with in March, so when you are putting Zilker Garden Festival on your planner, please also plan on helping out with this free educational event. The date is not set yet, but we are looking at mid-March. March is going to be a very busy month for us, but it is the best month for us to get our word out, so if you can only volunteer a few times this new year, do it in March, please! We'll need the full force out there.

We've got a solid schedule of public seminars planned for 2007, and Rosalie Russell will need some help setting up, manning the plant clinic booths, and especially telling all your family, friends, neighbors, minor acquaintances, and complete strangers to come to our seminars. You can forward Rosalie's email notices to everyone you know.

Please come to the January meeting and kick off a great new year of learning about and teaching gardening. And please introduce yourselves to our new board members—don't forget to pay your dues for the year to Cindy and Marty Berdan! Let's make 2007 a year for which we can all be proud.

Susan Decker  
President

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### Plant Portrait: Brassica Oleracea Varieties (Ornamental Cabbage & Kale)

Ornamental cabbage and kale are technically biennials that are used as a cool season annual. The coarse leaves of ornamental cabbage form large, frilled rosettes of purple, pink, green, cream, red or white that look like giant peonies. Originally from the coasts of North Africa and Europe, kales and cabbage were probably the first of this family to be cultivated, but as an edible plant only.

Both ornamental cabbage and kale love the colder weather and can tolerate temperatures well below freezing as long as the drop in temperature is gradual. In fact, light or moderate frosts intensify (or even initiate) the brilliant foliage color. Beware if ornamental cabbage is grown too early in the fall when temperatures are too warm, they may end up as



a leggy, mostly blue-green plant without any fancy colorations. While cabbage and kale do have plant antifreeze in their veins, cover plants before any freezing rain starts to protect them from damage due to extended ice accumulation.

Described by a garden blogger as “cheap and tacky”, these plants thrive in full sun with well-drained soil, but keep them evenly moist and plant them when cooler temperatures arrive. Warm weather in the spring may cause these plants to “bolt” and produce tall upright bouquets of small, yellow flowers. Some gardeners like this added floral attraction in the spring garden.



What’s the difference between ornamental cabbage and ornamental kale? Cabbage (like the edible crop) is rounded and forms a low rosette instead of a head. The ruffled inner leaves often turn a glorious white, pink or purple color when triggered by cool weather. Kale is upright growing without forming a rosette and is often not frilly. Kale is usually white

or red and described as crinkle-edged, feather-leaved and round-leaved. Some of the new ornamental kale varieties from Japan are appropriately called leaf peonies.

Grow ornamental cabbage or kale with pansies, bulbs, snapdragons, dusty miller, dianthus, shorter ornamental grasses, or bluebonnets. The complementary colors (pinks, blues and purples) are wonderful to combine. Use them grouped in the flower bed, vegetable garden or add them to larger containers. When purchasing ornamental cabbage or kale, look for the largest plants thus avoiding pot bound stunting. Pot-bound plants will not get much larger after planting, so buy the biggest plants (1 gallon size) you can find. Ornamental cabbage that have a short rosette stem are best. Those that have started to grow upright when planted won’t perform as well.

Propagating ornamental kale and cabbage from seed is relatively easy. Start seeds about 10 weeks before the first light frost and do not cover the seeds. This plant needs light to germinate. Grow the seedlings in fiber pots to reduce transplant shock.

Can you eat ornamental cabbage? Yes, they do belong to the same botanical group as broccoli, edible kale, collard greens, cabbage and cauliflower (although they are in different subgroups). Ornamental cabbage and ornamental kale may be a bit tough or strong tasting though. They have been bred primarily to be showier than their edible cousins. The leaves can be eaten raw or blanched, steamed, or stir fried. The cabbage family has been shown to have many great health benefits. Ornamental cabbage and kale make great garnishes for the dinner table too.

These cabbage family members are mostly free from pests, especially if grown during the cooler weather. But like their relatives, cabbage worms, slugs, snails and aphids may be a problem during warmer temperatures.

## Ornamental Cabbage Varieties:

Color-Up, white, red or pink with wavy round leaves.

Osaka (Dynasty series), white, red or pink, semi-fringed leaves with lighter veins.

Pigeon, white or red on compact plants, rounded smooth leaves.

Rose Bouquet, deep pink with purplish foliage, wavy leaf margins.

Tokyo, red, white or pink with smooth, waxy-edged leaves, smaller size.

## Ornamental Kale Varieties:

Chidori, white or red with mounded shape

Coral Prince, creamy white, tall.

Coral Queen, purple with magenta center.

Feather, white or red with less feathery leaves.

Flamingo Plumes, purplish-magenta with an open center.

Frizzy, white or red, late to color up. Curly leaves.

Kamone, white or red, curly, dark green foliage.

Nagoya (Emperor), white or red with heavily crinkled leaves.

Peacock, white or red with deeply serrated feathery leaves

Red Bor, tall with deep purple, ruffled leaves.

Snow Prince, cream with lavender blush.

Sparrow, white or red, mounding, curly slow grower.

Winterbor, olive-green extra curly foliage.

Anne Marie Van Nest

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## In the Vegetable Garden...

Have you started your tomato seeds yet? If you are growing them yourself from seed it is not too early to get them started right now. Some folks I know even start them in mid to late December. I have had pretty good success getting my seeds to germinate under grow lights on a shelf in my bathroom. I also place my tray of seedlings on top of a heating pad for



plants (available through many seed catalogs) which helps them germinate a little faster. Remember to keep the soil moist and once the seedlings are up keep them as close to the light source as possible.

January is also the time to get those onions planted. I have found the most success by planting pencil size transplants in mid-January. These are sold in bundles (usually 50 for \$1.00 or so - a great bargain!) and can be found at most nurseries and farm/feed stores. Just plant them about an inch deep and keep them watered throughout the winter and they will start to form bulbs as



our days get warmer and longer. The tops fall over when they are ready to harvest, which is usually in May. I usually plant the yellow, sweet 1015Y and a red variety called Southern Belle (just 'cause I like the name), but you can find other recommendations via the link to our vegetable variety guide.

And finally, if you have planted strawberries and see that they are starting to bloom it would be best to pick those blooms right off. I know that is a hard thing to ask of you, but we want to put lots of root growth on our plants right now and if they are allowed to bloom, all that energy goes into the production of fruit - and the odds are that this immature fruit will probably get zapped in the next freeze before it even begins to blush. Best to keep those plants growing below the ground so that they will be strong enough to support lots of berry growth once the weather warms up. I can hardly wait!

Here's to a bountiful harvest,  
Patty Leander

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## News & Notes

### **Greenhouse Corner:**

Heartiest thanks and appreciation are extended to **Holly Plotner** and **Don Telge**, 2006 Greenhouse Managers for their dedication and commitment to the Travis County Master Gardener greenhouse this year. Both have generously contributed numerous hours and expertise to expanding the greenhouse mechanical systems and initiating an extensive greenhouse technician training program. Kudos are also extended for the production of quality plants for the Zilker Garden Festival and TCMGA Inside Austin Gardens tour (as well as many more destinations). Thanks for a job well done!

Anne Van Nest

### **Phone Desk Kudos:**

Many thanks to **John Papich**, **David Lutz** and **Susan Decker** for volunteering to do phone desk orientations for our new group of Master Gardener Interns. This is a great way to get them off on the right foot. Thanks also to **Bob and Virginia Tagtow** for kicking off a new year at the phone desk by volunteering to work the first shift of the year - January 2nd at 8:00 am!!

Patty Leander

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**IMGC Registration is Officially Open!  
Come Celebrate Gardening in the Natural State  
May 2-5, 2007!**



Arkansas is proud to present the agenda, registration forms, pre and post conference information, speaker bios and garden tour information. Please go to: <http://mg2007.uaex.edu/>  
Click on: *Registration Information* and you will see all the information you need to register.

In an effort to reduce expenses and put as much of our efforts into presenting a first class event, we are doing registration via email and the web instead of printing programs. You may choose to register on line using a credit card, or print out your registration form and mail it in with a check.

Note: Early registration runs until December 31, 2006 and the final registration deadline is April 1, 2007.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.  
We look forward to seeing you all in next May! We are going to have a Janet B. Carson  
Extension Horticulture Specialist  
[jcarson@uaex.edu](mailto:jcarson@uaex.edu)

Little Rock  
great time!!



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## MG Education Events

Getting Ready for Spring!  
Saturday, January 27  
10:00 AM-12:30 PM  
Zilker Botanical Garden  
2220 Barton Springs Road.

The Seasonal Seminar Series kicks off with the basics of getting ready for spring. This free seminar is presented by Travis County Extension Service and Travis County Master Gardeners, David Lutz, Patty Leander and Carolyn Williams.

Learn how to successfully prepare beds for landscaping and vegetables. Discover how you can make compost.

It is time to plan the vegetable garden. Gain knowledge about when to plant and varieties that excel in Central Texas. Plus there will be many, many tips to insure your success.

Love roses? Learn about rose pruning and care. Hear suggested rose varieties that need little care and perform well.

For more information call 512-854-9600 and ask for the Master Gardeners desk. <http://www.tcmastergardener.org/html/events.html>



Vegetable Gardening 101  
Saturday, February 24  
10:00-11:30 AM  
Sunset Valley City Hall  
3205 Jones Rd.  
Sunset Valley, TX 78745

Juicy ripe tomatoes, crisp sweet corn, mouthwatering peas...straight from your own garden. Learn how to plan and maintain a spring vegetable garden in this free seminar. Patty Leander, member of the Travis County Master Gardener's Association, will share her extensive gardening knowledge which will include varieties that perform well in Central Texas and recommended planting times. Her seminar is loaded with the basics plus helpful ideas. She will answer your questions. Inexperienced and experienced gardeners are welcome. Additional free parking is available across the street in the Tony Burger Center. Seminar is sponsored by Travis County Extension Service. For more information call 512-854-9600 and ask for the Master Gardeners desk. <http://www.tcmastergardener.org/html/events.html>

Contact: Rosalie Russell 804-2257  
[gisathccs@aol.com](mailto:gisathccs@aol.com)  
VP Education, TCMGA

Great Gardening Ideas!  
Saturday, March 10  
10:00 AM – 12:30 PM  
Zilker Botanical Garden  
2220 Barton Springs Road, Austin

The Seasonal Seminar Series continues with "Great Gardening Ideas!" Skip Richter, Travis County Extension Service Horticulturist and Travis County Master Gardeners team together for a fun, fact filled free seminar.

Topics include: 10 Great Low Budget Gardening Ideas, Show Stopping Perennial and Annual Flowers, Gardening in a Grow Box, Cut and Sow...Plant Propagation. Information and examples for making your own tomato cages will be available.

The Plant Clinic will be open during the entire seminar. Bring samples (wrapped in newspaper or in a plastic bag) of your diseased or bug eaten plants to the Plant Clinic. Get expert guidance on possible solutions to restoring the plant's health.

For more information call 512-854-9600 and ask for the Master Gardeners desk. <http://www.tcmastergardener.org/html/events.html>



Showy, Low Maintenance Perennial and Annual Flowers

Saturday, March 24

10:00 AM – 11:30 AM

North Rural (Travis Ct.) Community Center

15822 Foothill Farms Loop, Build D

Pflugerville

“Showy, low maintenance Perennial and Annual Flowers” continues the 2007 Seasonal Seminar Series. The seminar is lead by Jackie Johnson and Betty Dunn, Travis County Master Gardeners.

You can grow flowers that will look beautiful and take the extreme weather Central Texas endures. Learn varieties that love the sun, or succeed in shade, or prefer dry soil. Gain knowledge about tough natives and adapted plants that need less care. Hear about showy annuals that contribute color to your garden and fill in voids. Discover that foliage may contribute as much interest in the garden as flowers! Come to this fun and educational event.

For more information call 512-854-9600 and ask for the Master Gardeners desk. <http://www.tcmastergardener.org/html/events.html>

The Right Plant in the Right Spot

Wednesday, April 18

7:00 PM – 9:00 PM

Zilker Botanical Garden

2220 Barton Springs Road, Austin

“The Right Plant in the Right Spot” continues The Seasonal Seminar Series with the Travis County Extension Service Entomologist, Wizzie Brown, and Travis County Master Gardeners Carolyn Williams, Sue Nazar, Susan Decker, Kathryn King and Wayne King. The free seminar concentrates on helping you be successful select plants that work in your situation.

Do you have garden spots with full sun? Learn about plants that adore Central Texas intense sunshine and heat.

The deer keep eating almost every thing you plant? Discover plants that deer have little interest in including in their diet!

Struggling with your lawn? Consider gathering more information about grasses to understand if your grass variety is correct for your situation. Learn which grasses grow best in sun or shade and with limited water.

IPM (Integrated Pest Management)...how to win the bug battle! We all have insects that chew or suck the life out of plants. Understand methods to combat the problems starting with the least expensive and most ecologically friendly.

The Plant Clinic will be open during the entire seminar. Bring samples (wrapped in newspaper or in a plastic bag) of your diseased or insect eaten plants to the Plant Clinic. Get expert guidance on possible solutions to restoring the plant's health.

For more information call 512-854-9600 and ask for the Master Gardeners desk. <http://www.tcmastergardener.org/html/events.html>



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## AAGC News:

The Austin Area Garden Council met in November and December, so I have two months of AAGC news to report. There are lots of things going on!

One of the most exciting things to report is the proposed Dinosaur Project. Guy Darrough's Lost World Dinosaur Exhibit has been offered to Zilker Botanical Garden for a September to November, 2008, local exhibit. The challenges we face presenting the exhibit are facility improvement, visitor experience and public support (both financial and otherwise). The City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department has agreed to fund improvements to the Escarpment Trail and other improvements to ZBG at a cost of approximately \$83,000. These improvements would allow us to host the exhibit as well as building new restrooms and concession areas in the park. The Escarpment Trail would begin at the Butterfly area and extend behind Hartmann Prehistoric Garden and then return to the area west of the parking lot, making a big circle. School tours would be scheduled during the week. These tours would be facilitated by a full time Education Director and would create interpretive/educational programming for the students that would provide personal interaction based by science-based content. Dino-weekends would be scheduled for the public as well as a gala for sponsors. The AAGC had placed a \$15,000 deposit on the exhibit to reserve our spot in the fall of 2008.

This exhibit has been all over the United States, was in San Antonio in the last 2 years and will be there again this fall. The next steps going forward will be to find funding for the exhibit. I feel this is a very exciting project, we are in the initial planning stages, and we will need all the club members' support and volunteer time to help make it a success. If you have any questions, please contact me.

The Holiday Bazaar was held November 18, 2006. MG's sold Christmas cacti, rosemary trees and Norfolk Pines. Special thanks go to **Manda Rash**, **Holly Plotner**, and **Molly Clark** for their help in decorating the plants for sale. A big special thank you goes to **Jackie Johnson** for designing and decorating our MG tree in the Green Room. It was decorated with photos of Grow Green Plants and included bells made of tiny terra cotta pots. Hope you had a chance to see it!

The President of AAGC, Laura Joseph has issued a call for all member clubs to submit a list of 3 improvement ideas for ZBG. This is not 'gripe' session, this is for ideas or improvements that you feel need to be made to the gardens. Please submit your ideas/suggestions to me by email and I will report back on our top 3 ideas and submit them to the Council.

AAGC is fortunate to Jessica Forkner as our Vice President for Publications. She is in charge of the Down the Garden Path newsletter. We can help her by submitting articles about past and future events that we have. The next issue will be out before Zilker Fest on March 30 and April 1.

Speaking of Zilker Fest, tickets will be available to all our members beginning at the January Meeting. Every member is expected to buy or sell at least 2 tickets. Please see Manda for tickets at the meeting. Also volunteers will be needed to work at the Festival, both for AAGC and the MGs.



Its Tulip planting time! Don Freeman and Danny Turner will supervise the now annual planting of the tulips in our demonstration bed at the front of ZBG on January 13, beginning at 9:00am. Please contact Don for more information.

I think that is it for 2006. This wraps up my last report for the Austin Area Garden Council as the MG Representative. Next year, I will be serving as the Vice President for Special Projects for AAGC. Manda Rash is our new AAGC representative and begins that role next week at the January meeting.

Steven Reynolds

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### Closing the Garden Gate...

2006 is gone and a new year is upon us! I am not big on making New Years' resolutions, but I am big on making new plans and setting goals. I hope every Travis County Master Gardener will pick one of our projects and volunteer for it throughout the year. We have so many choices—Demonstration gardens at the County Agent's office, our own greenhouse, Junior MG program, Phone Desk, Zilker Botanical Garden, Compost Bin, Garden Guides, Zilker Fest, the list goes on.....Besides for our own personal enrichment, we owe two hours a month volunteer time to our MG association. Let's everyone get out and do it this year!

It has been a very rewarding experience for me to serve as Editor of the Compost Bin for the last six months or so. Thanks to everyone who helped by writing articles and contributing information. Rebecca Matthews will step in now and take over this job. Thanks again to everyone for your help!

In closing,

"The soil, in return for her service, keeps the tree tied to her; the sky asks nothing and leaves it free." — Rabindranath Tagor

Steven Reynolds

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TCMGA 2007 Executive Committee:

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