

THE COMPOST BIN

A publication of the Travis County Master Gardeners

AUGUST 2008

Features

page 2

A Message from the President
Thoughts of Fall

page 3

Plant Portrait
A unique Angel's Trumpet



page 5

In The Vegetable Garden
Time to think about the Fall garden!

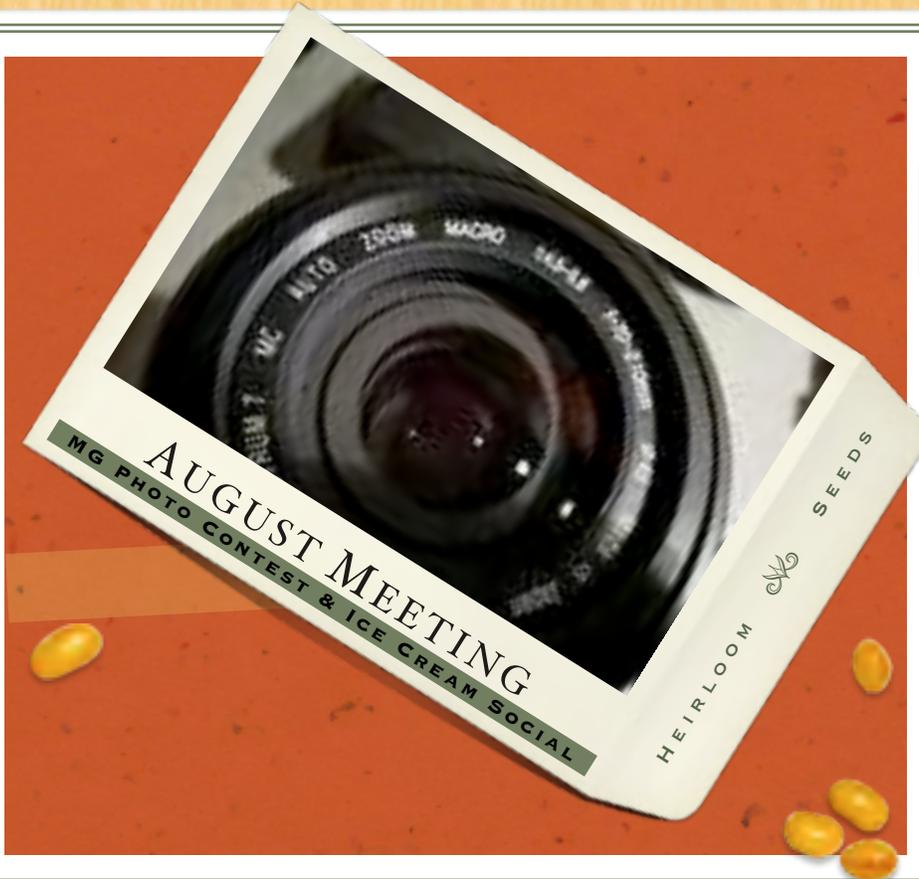


page 7

The Greenhouse Bench
Propagation & Clean-up

page 8

Over the Back Fence
DinoLand, King Corn, and Seminars



PIX & SCOOPS!

Beat the heat and join your fellow Master Gardeners for some great photo fun!

On August 6th, 2008 we will be having our first annual Travis County Master Gardener's Photo contest. That's right; you now have the chance to show your photo and gardening skills all at the same time. Enter your favorite pictures of your flower garden, vegetable garden, water garden or even your grandkids in a garden; it really doesn't matter as long as there's a garden in it.

Come join us for a mid-summer social with your fellow Master Gardeners at the Zilker Botanical Garden Clubhouse on August 6th at 7:00 PM. Bring a desert, dip or your favorite appetizer. We will provide some hot decaf, ice cream and other beverages.

Enjoy spending time with friends and make some new ones while we consume the wonderful treats, and the beautiful photos on the screen in the background.

Jerry Naiser, Vice President of Programs

The President's Message

S Greetings, everyone! If you are like me, it is just too darn hot to get excited about gardening. I go out early in the morning and then again early evening. Somehow my plants have managed to survive the hot weather and my absences this summer (thanks mostly to lots of water and my wonderful neighbors!). It's a struggle every day as you well know.

But hope springs eternal and I'm already thinking about fall garden projects and activities. There are several events on the horizon that I thought you might like to know about...especially since Master Gardeners are organizing and planning these events.

Donna Friedenreich is spearheading the DinoLand Exhibit that will reside at Zilker Botanical Garden September 6 – November 30. The 3-month long exhibit will feature 30 dinosaur models who will be featured along Zilker's new Escarpment Trail near the Hartman Prehistoric Garden.

Enjoy the dinosaurs during the week and during 2 special event weekends. First, The Hatching will be September 6-7 and The Extravaganza will be October 11-12. Both weekends will be full of fun for the entire family. And, be there for The Extinction to say good-bye to the dinosaurs on the last weekend of the show.

Go to www.zilker.org for more details and to purchase tickets for this exciting event.

Next, the Bromeliad Society of Austin will host the 34th Annual Southwest Bromeliad Guild Show "Go West!" The event will be held at Zilker Botanical Garden September 19-21. The plant sale will feature General Guild Sales and commercial booths. A banquet celebration on Saturday, September 20 will feature a rare plant silent auction. Your \$50 registration fee includes entry in the show, participation in the Guild sales, banquet, auction, garden tours and seminars.

To register, contact Steve Reynolds at Drsteve104@aol.com or 512.933.1867 (home) or 512.750.9034 (cell).

Roxane Smith and her husband, Gary, are this year's chairpersons for the Garden Conservancy's Open Days in Austin. Mark your calendars for October 4 from 9 am – 5 pm. As many of you know, the gardens on this tour have always been exquisite and this year is no exception. More details will follow as we get closer to the date. You may also go to www.gardenconservancy.org for descriptions of and a map to the seven Austin gardens. More than 300 gardens across the United States will be open to the public during this year's Open Days. Wouldn't it be fun to see them all?!

And don't forget about the Fall Plant Show and Sale hosted by The Garden Club of Austin that will be held in November. I personally encourage you to participate by placing some of your treasured plants in the competition. Plants are judged on their own merit which makes it a lot of fun. So start thinking about which plants you might place in the show! This show is an open show, open to amateur growers and is free of charge. If you wish to compete you may pick up a show schedule, one month before the show, at Zilker Botanical Garden. I'll send out a reminder, too!

Manda Rash, President



Plant Portrait - The frilled, double, purple and white Angel's Trumpet

The mystery of the double purple Angel's Trumpet is solved!

Angel's Trumpet is the common name for two closely related plants Brugmansia and Datura (shortened to Brug and Dat). Many people confuse Datura with its cousin Brugmansia. Although both are called Angel's Trumpets, there are several easy ways to tell them apart. One general way is to look at the flowers. Brugs have the flowers that face downward, while Datura's face upward. Also, Datura seed pods are rounded and often covered in spikes. Brug seed pods resemble chili peppers, okra, eggs or fat beans in shape and don't open on their own. If they are overwintered, Brugs get woody and can grow huge and form trees. Datura don't get more than 4 feet tall and stay in shrub form.



Frilled Double Purple & White Angel's Trumpet

Earlier this year, the TCMGA greenhouse started some donated seed that were from a double, purple and white, frilled angel's trumpet. Not knowing that to expect as a result, the seed germinated nicely and plants grew strong and healthy. Alas, there was one question that remained - would the plant come true from seed and produce offspring that were the same as the parent? Several months later the answer was finally given. Yes, the offspring were wonderfully frilled, double, purple and white. Glad that Datura is so prolific at a young age.



The pods were harvested when mature and then brought into the greenhouse to ripen. They were placed in a gallon pot and not bothered for several weeks. Once the pods opened and exposed the seeds, it was time to sow them. We let ours sit further (which didn't seem to hurt germination) until they were totally dry.

Germination is quite sporadic and can take several weeks if temperatures are cooler. Use bottom heat for more consistent germination. Soak seeds in water for 24 hours before sowing. Do not cover the seeds as light helps germination.

Further research on the internet has revealed that Datura are self-fertile. This explains why the double purple and white, frilled parent produced the same offspring.

Protect Datura during frosts or freezing weather in zone 8. There's a possibility of overwintering Datura outdoors in Austin if they are planted in a protected location and mulched well. Cold weather will kill them to the ground but they will often send new shoots up from the roots the next season.

Datura are poisonous if eaten.

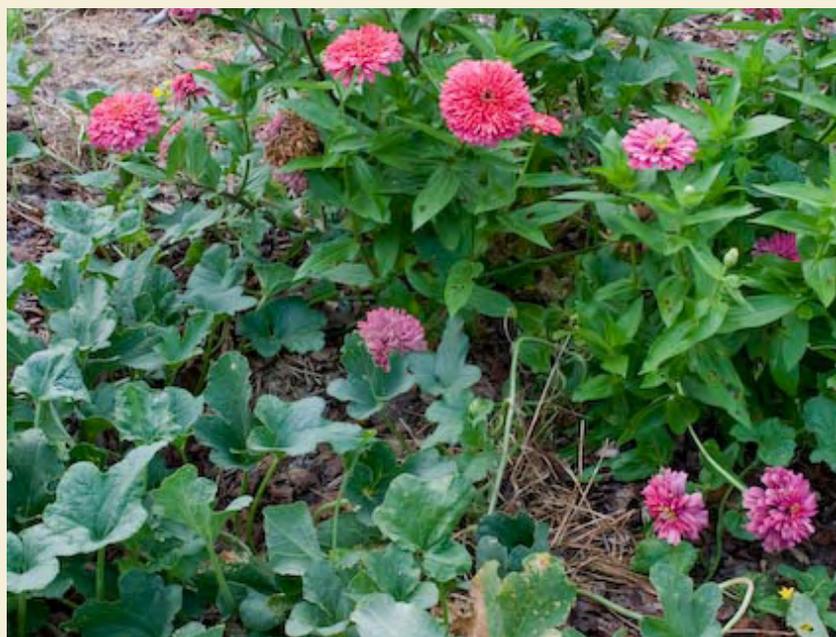
Anne Marie Van Nest



In The Vegetable Garden

I found an unexpected surprise in my garden this summer – large, dark pink, robust zinnias growing in my melon patch. I didn't plant them and don't know where they came from, but I am delighted at their presence. No doubt that the regular water they receive from the drip irrigation has contributed to their vigor. I have not given them any supplemental care but they are rewarding me with their beauty none the less.

Are your beds ready for fall planting? The heat really burns up organic matter, so it is a good idea to mix in a 2-3" layer of compost at the beginning of each new growing season. If you have done a soil test, it will tell you what fertilizer, if any, needs to be added. If you haven't done a soil test



Zinnia Surprise!

this season, a general recommendation for fertilizer in a vegetable garden is to add ½-1 cup of high nitrogen, low phosphorus fertilizer, like 15-5-10, per 25' feet of row. Most organic formulations have lower percentages of nutrients, so if you use something like 8-2-4, use double the amount.

Now (and I mean today) is a good time to plant seeds for a second season of warm weather veggies, like cucumbers and squash. Consult the handout "Vegetable Varieties for Travis County" for fast growing varieties that will produce in 50-60 days so you can enjoy a harvest before our first frost, which usually arrives in mid-November. Eggplant, peppers and tomatoes can go in as transplants now, and beans and potatoes can be planted mid-month.

Our spring-planted peppers don't produce much in the summer, but they should really take off in the fall. I have found that many of the non-bell types, like Cubanella, Gypsy, and pimento varieties perform better in the summer than the standard bell peppers. And of course, hot peppers, like habaneros, jalapeños and serranos seem to produce no matter how hot it gets. This year I planted a few seeds of a 'TAM Mild Habanero' and they have produced bountifully. They are supposed to have all the taste and aroma of a standard habanero but less heat. The mild habanero has 10,000-30,000 Scoville units and the standard habanero has 100,000-300,000 Scoville units. If I could find some willing participants, I'd love to have a taste test of this mild habanero, so if you are a pepper/heat lover and would like to participate,



please let me know! By way of comparison, a jalapeño has 2,500-8,000 Scoville units . . .

I have not had much luck with late summer plantings of corn in the past (too hot and too many bugs), but I recently met an 80 year old gardener from College Station who says he plants every year on August 1 and enjoys fresh-from-the-garden corn for Thanksgiving, so this year I will give it another try. Have you been successful growing corn in the fall? If so, I'd love to hear about it.



These late summer plantings of warm season vegetables, especially the transplants, will benefit from a little protection from the hot afternoon sun. No need to get fancy – many household items can be used for cover such as lawn chairs, umbrellas, cardboard, old window or door screens. This sun protection is only temporary until your plants get established (or the heat subsides - whichever comes first), so let your imagination run wild, be creative and have some fun in your garden!

If your garden space is at a premium you must plan your late summer and fall plantings carefully. Our cool season veggies are usually planted in September and October, when late season plantings of squash and beans, tomatoes and peppers are still producing and taking up valuable space. Most local nurseries will carry transplants of cool season crops, but if you like to grow your own seedlings it's best to start them now. Lettuce, spinach and most cole crops, like broccoli, cauliflower, collards, mustard and kale, are easy to grow under grow lights. Peas and root crops, like turnips, beets and carrots, are best seeded directly in the ground in late September or October, after the soil has (hopefully!) cooled slightly.

Here's to a bountiful harvest,
Patty Leander



The Greenhouse Bench

Not everyone was out of town for the 4th of July weekend, a lively group of Master Gardeners and MG Interns spent Saturday morning in the TCMGA greenhouse.

With a long list of things to propagate (including redleaf hibiscus, Iresine and coleus cuttings), cleanup (weeding under benches) and potting (long overdue cuttings from the mist bench), the group mixed-it-up and got a lot accomplished. Thanks to all who contributed!

Holly Plotner and Cheryl Donovan (intern) braved the heat and spent a recent July Monday morning tackling the big job of cleaning up the container plants growing outside the greenhouse. After a lot of weeding, they pruned the large mother plants at the door and divided and repotted most of our Bulbines from the outdoor area. The Bulbines were being tested outside to see just how drought tolerant they really are. After being divided and repotted, the Bulbines were then moved inside for some additional watering so they can put on some new growth. Thanks, Holly and Cheryl, for your work.

Anne Van Nest, Marian Stasney and Molly Clark



Over The Back Fence

DINOLAND EXHIBIT AT ZILKER BOTANICAL GARDEN

September 6th- November 30th

Ninety-nine million years ago, an ornithomimid dinosaur made tracks on the muddy shore of the Sea of Tethys, which were discovered in ZBG in what is now the Hartman Prehistoric Garden.

The exciting news is that 30 dinosaurs are returning to Zilker in September - or rather, 30 lifelike dinosaur models are coming for an exhibit along the new Escarpment Trail! You can read more about this exhibit at <http://www.zilker garden.org/about/events/dinoland/index.html>

Docent Training:

Public lectures: Dr. Louis Jacobs of SMU: Lone Star Dinosaurs, July 31st, 6:00 - 8:30 pm, Zilker Botanical Garden

Dr. Pam Owen of Texas Memorial Museum: Dinosaurs: Not just any Old Reptile! August 14th, 6:00 - 8:30 pm, Zilker Botanical Garden

Both lectures are kid-friendly, so bring kids & grandkids if you'd like! Lectures will be in the Garden Center beginning at 6:30 pm. Come at 6:00 for pre-lecture activities! (Kids 10 yrs. and older will enjoy the lectures, but the pre-lecture activities are also appropriate for younger kids.) Overflow parking will be available if needed across Stratford behind ZBG. The back gate will be open if necessary.



Plant training in the Hartman Prehistoric Garden: August 2nd, 9:00 - 11:30 am

Interpretive training at Austin Nature and Science Center: August 5th, 6:00 - 8:30 pm

School Program exhibit training:

September 9, 11, 12th, 9:30 am to 12:30 pm or September 10, 12, 15th, 9:30 am to 12:30 pm

There will be many roles for docents with the Dinoland Exhibit, and it is not necessary to attend all of the training sessions! We still need you to volunteer!

Other volunteer opportunities include Garden Greeters, Ticket Takers & Festival Assistants. More information to come!

Contact Information: Marion Alsup 480-0311, zilkerdocents@aol.com or malsup@aol.com

More information about the public lectures:

Dr. Louis Jacobs of SMU: Lone Star Dinosaurs July 31st, 6:00 - 8:30 pm, Zilker Botanical Garden

Texas is a land rich in fossils. Dinosaur bones of many kinds are found, but their footprints are especially common. This talk will present the story of Texas dinosaurs from the earliest finds to the latest discoveries. But we will look at more than just dinosaurs. We will also see the flying reptiles

and swimming lizards, and even turtles, that lived during the Cretaceous Period, before the asteroid struck 66 million years ago. Many fossils are found by kids. You could be the next one to make a great discovery!

Dr. Jacobs received his Ph.D. in geology from the University of Arizona in 1977. Before joining the SMU faculty, he served as head of the Division of Paleontology at the National Museum of Kenya. He has conducted extensive field research in Pakistan, Mexico, Kenya, Cameroon, Malawi, Yemen, Israel, Mozambique, Angola, Portugal, Mongolia, and Antarctica, as well as Texas, Alaska, and other parts of the United States.

Dr. Jacobs' book Lone Star Dinosaurs was recognized by joint resolution of the Texas Legislature and Quest for the African Dinosaurs received the Dinosaur Society's Edwin H. Colbert Award. In all, he has authored more than 125 publications and has had 6 fossils named after him.

Dr. Pam Owen of Texas Memorial Museum: Dinosaurs: Not just any Old Reptile! August 14th, 6:00 - 8:30 pm, Zilker Botanical Garden

What makes a dinosaur a dinosaur? Are birds dinosaurs? Come learn what makes dinosaurs so special and their place in the reptile family tree. We will explore the anatomy, lifestyles and evolutionary relationships of dinosaurs and some of the other fascinating creatures that lived in Texas during the Mesozoic Era.

Dr. Owen is a native Californian who has been, from an early age, interested in natural history. Her formal education includes a B.A. and M.S. in Biology from California State University, Long Beach (CSULB). In May 2000, Dr. Owen was awarded a Ph.D. in Geological Sciences from The University of Texas at Austin.

Throughout her career, Dr. Owen has been sharing her knowledge of vertebrate anatomy and evolution. She has taught laboratory sections in biology, geology, and paleontology during her studies at CSULB and at UT Austin. Today, Dr. Owen is a participant in docent training and several education programs at the Texas Memorial Museum (TMM), notably Evolution, Professional Development, Museum Express, Identification Day, and Family Fossil Fun Day. She is also the manager and staff supervisor for the TMM Paleo Lab.

Marion Alsup



MOVIE REVIEW: KING CORN

King Corn (2007) 90mins. Available from Netflix.com



A documentary that follows two earnest young men (Ian Cheney and Curt Ellis) on their quest to understand the lifecycle of industrial corn, from seed through harvest. Readers of Michael Pollen's *Omnivore's Dilemma* (2005) will find illustrations of many of the themes and points made by Pollen in print, and Pollen is interviewed at several points in the film. The story follows Cheney and Ellis as they move to America's Corn Belt for a year to plant an acre of the nation's most-grown and most-subsidized grain in an attempt to track their crop into the U.S. food supply. What they discover, (and are successfully able to film) about genetically modified seeds, and herbicide resistant strains of corn show how farmers, in their quest for ever greater yields, are at the mercy of the handful of companies that sell these corn seeds to the farmers each year.

Points are often made with a humorous undertone removing much of the potential preachiness endemic to this topic. Most of the corn grown in the midwest is not for 'corn on the cob' or canned corn, but used to feed and fatten animals for meat on CAFOs (Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations) and to make high fructose corn syrup. Cheney and Ellis talk to the farmers and cattle processors about the way the system has changed in the last 30 years and how extensive government subsidies have in a positive sense allowed for production of the cheapest meat and food in history. The cost of this cheap food, when measured by our fast-food lifestyle and the extensive use of antibiotics to keep cattle healthy should give any omnivore pause. Rating: Two hoofs up!

Will Hyland



FREE SEMINAR: USING WATER WISELY

Saturday, September 6, 10 AM - Noon
West Rural Community Center, 8656 Hwy. 71 W., Building A

Rain, free but at times a scarce commodity! This free seminar concentrates on capturing rainwater and landscaping with plants requiring little water.



Confine rainwater and save it for your own use! Gain the knowledge necessary to build a rainwater harvesting system. All the basics are covered to build a non potable water harvesting system.

Not ready for a full blown rainwater harvesting system? Think small. A demonstration will show how to make a simple, inexpensive rain barrel collection system.

Lower your water usage by utilizing native and adapted landscape plants that look great and need a minimal amount of water to thrive. This method of gardening is called xeriscaping. If desired, a green, lush looking landscape can be achieved.

Bring samples of diseased, bug eaten, sick plants to the Plant Clinic. Experts will diagnose the problem and offer possible remedies.

This free seminar is presented by the Travis County Master Gardeners Association, a volunteer arm of the Texas A&M and Travis County AgriLife Extension Service. Seminar is free. No reservations taken. For more information call 512-854-9600 and ask for the Master Gardeners desk. <http://www.tcmastergardeners.org>



FREE SEMINAR: VEGETABLES FOR COOLER TIMES

Wednesday, September 17, 7-9 PM
Zilker Botanical Garden, 2220 Barton Springs Rd.

The free seasonal seminar, Vegetables for Cooler Times, covers multiple topics pertinent to fall gardening activities. The Travis County Master Gardeners Association, a volunteer arm of the Travis County AgriLife Extension Service, presents the fact filled, educational experience.



In spite of the heat, it is time to be in the vegetable garden. "Fall Vegetable Gardening" by Patty Leander will include the basics of vegetable gardening with the emphasis on plants and varieties that flourish in the fall and winter months

Leaves, leaves everywhere! Don't rake, bag and send it to the landfill. Learn how to convert leaves and other material into plant food. It is called compost. Plants adore it. Learn how to make this magic act happen.

Thought only Yankees could grow rhubarb? Wrong! With a little thinking outside the box, you can grow rhubarb, and strawberries too, right in your own backyard, Learn how these two favorites can be successfully in Central Texas.

A Plant Clinic will be held during the entire seminar. Bring your diseased/bug eaten plant, roots and all, in a plastic bag. Gain knowledge from expert Master Gardeners on action you can take to remedy the situation.

Seminar is free. No reservations taken. For more information call 512-854-9600 and ask for the Master Gardeners desk. Or check web site <http://www.tcmastergardeners.org>



FREE SEMINAR: PLANT PHOTOGRAPHY

Wednesday, October 22, 7-9 PM
Zilker Botanical Garden, 2220 Barton Springs Rd.

Plant Photography class will be taught by Sam Myers, a photo expert. The class will concentrate on developing the ability to take photos with impact. There will be an overview of cameras, film and digital. Discussion will include how lighting, focal length and aperture interact in composing photographs. Guidelines of composition will be covered along with "posing" plants.

Prerequisite: study the owner's manual on your camera. Not necessary to bring a camera but may be helpful.

The class is sponsored by the Travis County Master Gardener Association in partnership with the AgriLife Extension, Travis County. For more information call 512-854-9600 and ask for the Master Gardener's desk. <http://www.tcmastergardeners.org>



FREE SEMINAR: PREPARING FOR WINTER AND SPRING

Saturday, November 15, 10 AM - Noon
Sunset Valley City Hall, 3206 Jones Rd., Sunset Valley, TX 78745



"Preparing for Winter and Spring" is the theme of this free seminar. Learn how to put the equivalent of a winter coat on plants. Discover bulbs that thrive in Central Texas and will bloom in the winter and/or spring.

Gain an overview of what needs to be done to prepare your landscaping for the stresses of winter. "Preparing for Winter" will give you confidence and the knowledge necessary for plant survival during the few winter months.

Bulb expert Danny Fowler, owner of Texas Tulips, will present many bulb varieties which excel in Central Texas. Learn about native and adapted bulbs. Bulbs will be available for purchase.

Educate yourself on the necessary planting steps to increase bulbs success. Learn when to fertilize, mulch, and divide for more productive, healthier plants.

The seminar is sponsored by The Travis County Master Gardeners, the volunteer arm of Travis County AgriLife Extension Service. For more information call 512-854-9600 and ask for the Master Gardener's desk. <http://www.tcmastergardeners.org>

Closing The Garden Gate

I went on the pond tour last weekend (after volunteering at the Habitat table <http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/parks/wildlifehabitat.htm>) and was so awestruck at one garden in particular. The people that lived there were so artistic and had used their talents all through their yard. Their walkway had mosaic fish on it and they had several water features. I kept wondering where do people find the time. Obviously, they don't watch as much television as I do. I went home with a new found energy to get those creative juices flowing and fill my yard with whimsy and character. And just as soon as this movie ends I'm going to do just that!

Rebecca Matthews

Garden Trivia

Every plant in Tomorrowland at Disneyland in Anaheim, California, is edible.

In Closing

It's never too late to be what you might have been. unknown

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 Skip Richter
 1600-B Smith Road
 Austin, Texas 78721
 854-9600 854-9611
 r-richter@tamu.edu

The Compost Bin Team

Editor - Rebecca Matthews
Layout and Design - Cheryl Harrison
Contributing Editor - Anne Van Nest
Contributing Editor - Patty Leander
Webmaster - Paula Middleton

