

The Compost Bin

September 2015

A Publication of the Travis County Master Gardeners
a volunteer program of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

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Weeds and Reads



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Cover Photo: Fall is peak pepper season.
By Bruce Leander

Right: The Lesser Goldfinch "Texas form" enjoys spent sunflowers.
By Liath Appleton



September Meeting - Sam Myers

Photography in the Garden

Learn how to take plant pictures with impact - namely composition and lighting. Sam Myers is a long time photographer and Master Gardener specializing in presentations on Beneficial Insects and Plant Photography. In 2009, he was selected as "Photographer of the Year" in the Travis County Master Gardener photo contest. We only have an hour for the presentation, so Sam will provide a condensed version of this seminar that usually runs 1.5 hours. Recommendation: study the owner's manual on your camera ahead of time (or at least glance through it to become reacquainted with its features).

Master Gardener Meeting information:
Wednesday, Sep 2, 2015, starting at 7 pm
Zilker Botanical Garden

**Master Gardener meetings are open to certified
Master Gardeners and trainees only.**

In the Vegetable Garden

by Patty Leander



Root crops include beets, carrots, turnips, radishes, parsnips and rutabaga – all can be direct-seeded later this month.

Here is the vegetable gardener's checklist for September:

- Gradually expose vegetable transplants to outdoor conditions, and move them to their final growing location in the garden the latter half of this month. Be sure to provide shade as needed during the first few weeks of establishment.
- Fertilize transplants with fish emulsion or other water-soluble fertilizer every 10-14 days, and do not let them dry out.
- Seed root crops in moist soil; thin to the proper spacing soon after they emerge.
- Plant cool season peas toward the end of the month – this includes English peas, sugar snap peas and snow peas.
- Regularly inspect cole crops for cabbage worms and cabbage loopers, and hand pick or spray with a Bt-containing insecticide. Alternatively, cover plants with row cover as soon as you set them in the garden.

Use indoor fluorescent lights to grow lettuce and spinach seedlings for transplanting to the garden next month.

It's been a dry summer but the meteorologists keep talking about the potential for a record-setting Godzilla El Niño, so planting in raised beds or slightly elevated rows might be a good idea for the fall vegetable garden. As we know all too well it's easier to add water than to remove it.

Even though our days are still hot, we should feel a slight drop in the nighttime temperatures by the end of the month. Our plants will feel it too, and they will respond with noticeable vigor. Encourage this early growth with regular fertilization and watering; plants that wilt or dry out, especially cauliflower, broccoli and Brussels sprouts, may not develop properly.



Thin carrots and other root crops to their proper spacing soon after they emerge.

In the Vegetable Garden

Continued...

- Start additional transplants of broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage and Asian greens so you'll be ready with replacements as space becomes available in October and November.
- Pick eggplant when shiny and firm. It will become seedy and spongy if allowed to get overgrown.
- Harvest winter squash when the rind is hard and cannot be pierced with your thumbnail. Cure in a warm, shady spot for two to three weeks to allow the sugars to develop, then store in a cool, dry location. Use acorn, delicata and spaghetti squash within 6-8 weeks, as these varieties do not store well.

Ratatouille with Grits

A fall harvest of eggplant, peppers, zucchini and tomatoes provide the main ingredients for this hearty ratatouille.

1/4 cup olive oil
2 onions, thinly sliced
2 cloves garlic, minced
8 ounces mushrooms, sliced
2 small eggplant, chopped
1 red or yellow bell pepper, chopped
3 zucchini or summer squash, sliced thinly
3 tomatoes, seeded and chopped
1/2 cup golden raisins
1/4 cup tomato paste
2 cups vegetable broth or water
2 bay leaves
1 tablespoon fresh thyme, chopped
1 tablespoon fresh basil, chopped
Salt and pepper to taste
Juice of one lemon

Heat oil and sauté onions, garlic and mushrooms for 3-5 minutes. Add eggplant, pepper and squash and cook 5-10 minutes. Stir in tomatoes, raisins, tomato paste and liquid; cover and simmer 10 minutes. Add remaining ingredients (except lemon) and cook 15-20 more minutes. Season to taste with salt, pepper and the juice of one lemon. Serve over hot grits, brown rice or couscous.



photos by Bruce Leander.

Yellowjackets

by Wizzie Brown

"Yellowjacket" is a term that refers to several types of wasps in the family Vespidae. They are social wasps, and are often thought of as beneficial. Problems may arise when nests are in populated areas, where the chance of being stung by the insect increases.

Yellowjackets are about $\frac{1}{2}$ " long with alternating bands of yellow and black on the abdomen. They are often mistaken for honey bees or paper wasps. Honey bees are a bit smaller and have hairy bodies, while paper wasps are reddish-brown with some having yellow markings.



Cut-away of ground-dwelling yellowjacket nest showing internal layout.

Yellowjackets often build their nests in old rodent burrows, but some will make aerial nests in trees or on eaves of structures. Subterranean nests can often be found in flower beds, pastures and gardens. Aerial nests are often made in trees, under eaves, in storage sheds, garages or wall voids. These wasps construct their nest from a paper-like material using chewed wood fibers mixed with their saliva. Yellowjacket nests can be up to 6 feet in size, and are enclosed with a single entry hole. A mature nest can contain up to 20,000 adult workers.

Yellowjacket nests are abandoned each year, and soon after abandonment begin to deteriorate. Occasionally, during mild winters, nests in sheltered spots may not be abandoned. In October and November, queens and males emerge from the nest to mate. After mating, males die while the newly mated queens seek sheltered areas to overwinter. The following spring, these queens emerge to build a small paper nest and begin to lay eggs. Maximum colony size is usually reached by August or September.

If wasps are in an area that can be left undisturbed, then they can be beneficial and help manage pests in the landscape. If there is a chance of a stinging incidence, then wasps should be managed. It is best to hire a pest management professional who has safety equipment needed to treat these wasps.

For more information or help with identification, contact Wizzie Brown, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist at 512.854.9600.

Meet the Master Gardeners: Mike Proffitt, Class of 2011

by Jean Love El Harim



Mike Proffitt inside his fortress fence.
photo credit: Jean Love El Harim

Mike lives in a wilderness paradise about an hour east of Austin. At the end of October, purple-berried fronds of *Callicarpa americana* festoon the road to Mike's house, nestled in a clearing among post oak, blackjack oak, pine, juniper, and yaupon holly. The path through the woods around Mike's property is sand cushioned with a mulch of pine needles and oak leaves, and pocked with mole hills and leaf cutting ants along the way. Mike has built a "fortress fence" to protect his garden on the west side of the house. It is built on a three-foot deep concrete foundation designed to keep out the many beasties that inhabit the woods in this wildlife refuge. Inside the fence his winter garden is flourishing with cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli, chard, lettuce, arugula, Brussels sprouts, and kohlrabi. On the south and east sides of the house are beds of various mints and lemon balm. Mike uses four drying frames he made himself to dry his herbs for tea all winter. "I have made teas for decades," Mike says, "and drink them nightly." He has a 16,000 gallon rain-water collection system that stores enough water to serve all the household needs, and some of his garden water requirements. A well dug deep into the Carrizo-Wilcox aquifer provides the bulk of the garden needs, and waters the surrounding forest. "The drought has killed so many trees," Mike says, gesturing to the tall, bare scaffolds of trees in the forest, "I am watering the area around the house to save these trees."

Originally from New Braunfels, Mike has lived in upstate New York; Boulder, Colorado; Geneva, Switzerland; Buenos Aires, Argentina; and Austin, and is now settled in his forest hideaway near Smithville. Mike lived in New Braunfels

until he came to undergraduate and then graduate school at U.T. Austin. "My mother's family was very German," he says. "My mother only spoke German when she entered the first grade. My great grandfather, Christien Herry, came over from Germany in the mid 1800's and built Gruene Hall. His son (my grandfather) built many of the buildings in downtown New Braunfels. My mother, father, grandmother, and grandfather were all serious gardeners. Oma (Mike's grandmother) had a huge vegetable garden, and she grew all kinds of veggies and fruits, including kohlrabi and cabbages and 'Schalotten,'- shallots. Oma taught me much about my favorite, vegetable gardening. I love to eat and cook from my garden. Gardening is in my DNA."

Retired now, Mike has had a long and illustrious career in science. He earned a Ph.D. in Mathematics from U.T. Austin, working his way through graduate school doing laboratory research in chemical physics. After teaching mathematics at the State University of New York, he returned to U.T. Austin as a Welch Research Fellow and as a Senior Research Scientist in the Chemistry and then Physics Departments. Afterwards, he worked in Boulder, in a joint environmental institute of the University of Colorado with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in the field of stratospheric ozone depletion. "The biggest balloon base in the world is out in East Texas in Palestine," Mike explains, "and I used to put ozone instruments on these big balloons that went up to 140,000 feet into the stratosphere. My first ozone instrument was built to go up on balloons. This ozone instrument was selected to make the ozone measurements on board the

Meet the Master Gardeners

Continued...

August-September 1987 NASA/NOAA U2 aircraft campaign that ultimately determined that man was the cause of the ozone hole. That was the most exciting science that I have ever done. During that mission I flew aboard the NASA DC8 aircraft into the ozone hole. The green-light aurora completely surrounded the plane during much of the night-time portion of the flight!" After almost 20 years of ozone field work, he moved to Geneva to work for the United Nations in the World Meteorological Organization as their representative for global ozone depletion and for the Global Atmosphere Watch atmospheric measurements program in 66 countries.

After retiring from the U.N., Mike lived in Buenos Aires for five years, and then returned to Austin where he founded his own company, Proffitt Instruments, a corporation for atmospheric ozone measurement instrumentation. "I have lived a lot of beautiful places," Mike says, "but I have to say, the people here make the difference. And I never knew there was an area in central Texas like this, with this mixture of trees."

In his forest home, in addition to gardening, Mike enjoys woodworking, running, studying, spiritual philosophy, and cooking. "I especially like to barbecue," Mike says. "I only use wood. When I lived in Austin, I used mesquite. When I lived in Argentina, I used another hardwood, called quebracho. In Switzerland, I used grapevines and apple wood. The post oak here is excellent for barbecuing. I'll cook some corn on the cob or fish or steak. And I have a smoker. I have smoked chicken and brisket. That's my favorite. It's a slow process, so I can lay back and enjoy this little paradise."

Mikes main gardening interests are growing what he eats and landscaping, and his biggest gardening challenge has been building his fortress fence against the many animals that live in the wildlife preserve where he lives.

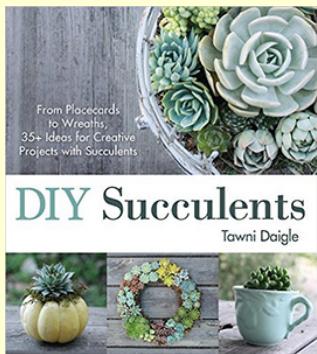
Mike became a Master Gardener in 2012 and is a member of the Greenhouse committee. He particularly enjoys working in the greenhouse. "I do a lot of the plumbing and maintenance that they need at the greenhouse," he says, "and I think Pat's so nice. I really like her." Mike says that what he likes most about the Master Gardener Program is "the people. I love the Texas gardeners!"

Weeds and Reads: A Gardener's Book Guide

by Liath Appleton

There's a lot of reading material out there, and new books are being published faster than anyone could ever possibly keep up! Hopefully these lists will help myself and others find fun and insightful new books to enjoy between the weeding and the watering.

September 2015:



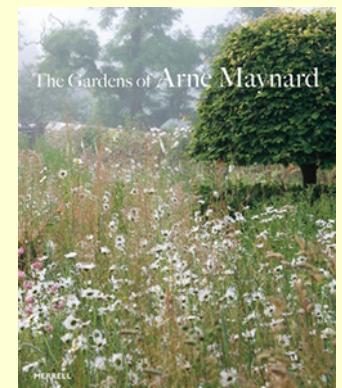
DIY Succulents: From Placecards to Wreaths, 35+ Ideas for Creative Projects with Succulents - September 4, 2015
by Tawni Daigle

Go beyond the garden to create succulent projects that take center stage in any space. DIY Succulents shows you how to use beautiful and resilient plants like echeveria, sedum, and graptopetalum to craft nature-inspired home decor like rustic tabletop centerpieces and breathtaking wall art. [\[more\]](#)



The Gardens of Arne Maynard - September 29, 2015
by Arne Maynard, Rosie Atkins (Foreword)

This is the first book on the work of one of today's most celebrated and sought-after garden designers. Arne Maynard is known for his award-winning gardens at the Royal Horticultural Society's Chelsea Flower Show (2000, 2012) and for his beautiful and sympathetic gardens for private houses across the world. [\[more\]](#)



Backyard Farming: Homesteading: The Complete Guide to Self-Sufficiency - September 29, 2015
by Kim Pezza

your all-in-one guide to successfully turning your rural property, suburban home, or urban dwelling into a productive food oasis. Covering every topic from finding and developing the perfect property, as well as which produce and livestock combinations are easiest to start with, Homesteading takes the anxiety and guesswork out of enjoying the backyard farming revolution. [\[more\]](#)

Abiotic Stresses in Crop Plants - September 30, 2015
by Usha Chakraborty and Bishwanath N. Chakraborty (editors)

This book is based to a great extent on the biochemical and molecular mechanisms of tolerance of commonly encountered abiotic stresses in nature. This book will deal with increasing temperature, water, salinity, and heavy metals and ozone, and how these abiotic stresses can be managed by microbes through their alleviation mechanisms. Water stress includes both drought and flooding. [\[more\]](#)

Austin Area Events

Austin Cactus & Succulent Society Fall Show & Sale

Saturday & Sunday, September 5 & 6, 2015
10am - 5pm

Zilker Botanical Gardens
2220 Barton Springs Road
Austin, TX

Plant show with specimen cacti and succulent plants from around the world. Plant sales with vendors from Texas, New Mexico, and Oklahoma. Purchase handcrafted pottery. Participate in the daily silent auction and hourly plant raffles.

Details at <http://austincss.com>Show-&-Sale>

FREE admission with paid admission to Zilker Botanical Garden (\$2 adults, \$1 children & seniors, \$3 for non-Austin Residents)

Backyard Basics – Natural Pest Control

Thursday September 10, 2015
10am - noon

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service
1600-B Smith Road
Austin, TX

Come learn how to tell pests from other insects found in your backyard. We will focus on integrated pest management (IPM) to avoid many problem pests you may experience. Learn a combination of practices to prevent or avoid pest problems rather than treating them once they occur. Stabilize your landscape so that conditions are more favorable for plants than for pests.

Wizzie Brown serves as Program Specialist – IPM in the Austin metroplex encompassing Travis County and surrounding counties. Visit her blog at <http://urban-ipm.blogspot.com/>

Cost: \$10 thru 8/31, \$15 starting 09/01 and onsite, NO cash accepted – checks and credit cards only.

Register: <https://agriliferegister.tamu.edu/TravisCounty>

Register by Phone: 979-845-2604

Contact: Sue Carrasco, 512-854-9610 or sacarrasco@ag.tamu.edu

Space is limited so register on-line early to reserve your seat!
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service – Backyard Basics series.

Austin Area Events

Monarch Appreciation Day

Saturday September 12, 2015
10am - 4pm

Zilker Botanical Gardens
2220 Barton Springs Road
Austin, TX

Each fall, hundreds of millions of Monarch butterflies migrate from the United States and Canada to overwintering areas in Mexico and California....The Monarch migration is truly one of the world's greatest natural wonders, yet it is threatened by habitat loss in North America..." Monarch Waystations, Monarch Watch
www.MonarchWatch.org

Head to Zilker Botanical Garden for a family-friendly, educational, and fun-filled event to celebrate Monarch Butterflies and other pollinators. Enjoy a Pollinator Plant Sale from 10am- 2pm, benefiting Monarch Watch and the [Xerces Society](#).

- Learn about Texas Native Bees, Monarch Waystations, and Butterfly Gardening by attending talks in the Garden Center auditorium, from 11am – 2pm
- Take the kids to the Oak Grove (near the Butterfly Garden) to meet and greet caterpillars and butterflies, see a display bee hive and build a Bee house, make Wildflower Seed Balls and Butterfly Wings, create a Butterfly Mural, and get their faces painted!
- Check out the Silent Auction (in front of Garden Center entrance to the gift shop)
- See Monarch tagging and release in the Doug Blachly Butterfly Trail & Garden.
- Visit Information tables in the Oak Grove to learn about gardening for butterflies, bees, and wildlife.

For presentation schedule and complete details, go to
<http://www.zilkergarden.org/about/events/MonarchDay/index.html>

Admission, cash or check, is:
\$1 for children (ages 3-12)
\$2 for adults, Austin resident (ages 13-61)
\$3 for adults, non-resident (ages 13-61)
\$1 for seniors (age 62 & over)

TRAVIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION 2015 EXECUTIVE BOARD

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This issue of the Compost Bin has been published thanks to the contributions of the following Travis County Master Gardeners and Wizzie Brown — Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

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The Compost Bin Submissions

We are always looking for Travis County Master Gardeners who are interested in writing for our monthly newsletter, and we would love to see your articles, photographs, book reviews and gardening ideas.

General Guidelines

- Please first email the editor to discuss potential article ideas.
- Email contributions as attachments (preferably in Word with a .doc or .rtf suffix).
- Please send images as separate attachments (preferably .jpg suffix). Don't forget to include photographer acknowledgments and captions.

Send your submissions, announcements, questions and suggestions to: editor.compostbin@gmail.com



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"For summer there, bear in mind, is a loitering gossip, that only begins to talk of leaving when September rises to go."

- George Washington Cable