

# The Compost Bin

February 2017

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

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IAGT Birds, Butterflies and Zen

Grapefruit

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Cover: A good example of interplanting – once the cabbage and broccoli are harvested the beans and tomatoes will have more room to grow.  
By Bruce Leander

Right: East Austin Succulents.  
By Wendy Buck



## Meeting - Daphne Richards

**2017 Master Gardener Program Outlook** - Daphne Richards, Horticulture Agent, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Office

Master Gardener Meeting information:  
Wednesday, February 1, 2017, starting at 7 pm  
Zilker Botanical Garden

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

### CATALOGS NEEDED FOR EAGF

The proverbial holiday dust has settled, and here we are, puzzling over our amazing central Texas weather. As you think to spring, think of recycling on behalf of the East Austin Garden Fair! Attendees to this award-winning event always enjoy and appreciate the gardening books, magazines, and seed/plant catalogs donated by our awesome TCMGA members. So when you receive your new seed catalogs and magazines, don't just send the old ones to the recycling bin--recycle them with EAGF! While clearing out your bookshelves to make room for new editions, save the old for EAGF!

We will be collecting your gently used literature at the monthly meetings at Zilker starting this month. There will be other opportunities to donate to this worthy event...we'll keep you posted!

Thanks, on behalf of the hundreds of EAGF participants!

## In the Vegetable Garden

by Patty Leander



Beets planted at the edge of a row of tomatoes will be harvested soon, leaving more space for tomatoes to develop.

February is a pivotal month for gardeners as we move toward the warm season. Daylight increases about a minute per day and temperatures gradually rise. In years past we've hit the 80s in February, and we've also had snow and ice, but generally daytime temperatures hover in the 60s dropping into the 40s at night. Pretty good gardening weather if you ask me; indeed our late winter weather is the equivalent of early summer in northern states. Bless their hearts.

With the growing season upon us be sure to have a plan for your garden space. Think about what you like to eat, when it needs to be planted, AND how long it will be taking up space in the garden. There can be a lot of overlap in the garden over the next few weeks as we plant some vegetables that like cool weather while setting aside space for warm season plants to be planted next month. Sketch out a plan and note expected planting and harvest dates. Consider planting a row of carrots or beets along the edge of the row or bed where you might plant squash once the soil warms up. By the time the squash reaches the edge (probably sometime in April) the carrots or beets will be ready to harvest.

Tomatoes should be spaced 2-3 feet apart, but we are still 4-6 weeks away from tomato planting time, and another 4-6 weeks before a tomato will get big enough to fill the space between plants. Why not take advantage of that space and growing time? Mark off where you will plant tomatoes with a tomato cage and then seed some quick-growing radishes, peas or even a broccoli or cabbage transplant in the space between. This type of interplanting requires some thoughtful planning but it allows you to coax an extra harvest from otherwise unused space. Just be sure that you don't plant so much that you can't access the areas you will need for spring planting.

Here is the vegetable gardener's checklist for February:

- Pace yourself! There is a lot to do this month and next. If the cold weather has kept you indoors and inactive start working on building strength, stamina and flexibility before you start digging, bending, lifting and hauling. Listen to and be kind to your body – it's hard to garden without one.



Go gourmet in the potato patch with a planting of fingerling potatoes.

## In the Vegetable Garden

Continued...

- Get a soil test if you haven't done so in the last 3-4 years. Send a soil sample to the soil testing lab at Texas A&M (download form and instructions here: <http://soiltesting.tamu.edu/files/urbansoil.pdf>)
- Continue to fertilize garlic and other garden vegetables every 2-3 weeks with a liquid plant food or fish emulsion; water weekly in the absence of rain.
- Weed in and around the garden on a regular basis; small, immature weeds are much easier to deal with than deep-rooted monsters. Plus they make great green material for the compost.
- Plant potatoes around the middle of the month. Choose early or mid-season varieties, such as 'Kennebec', 'Yukon Gold', 'Red LaSoda' or 'Purple Viking'; most will be ready to harvest by mid-June. Fingerlings are easy to grow and delicious to eat. A few that have done well in my Central Texas Garden include 'Austrian Crescent', 'Red Thumb', 'French Fingerling' and 'Rose Finn Apple'.
- Pot up tomato transplants to larger containers if necessary; as the temperature warms gradually start introducing them to sunlight and outdoor conditions in preparation for planting next month.
- Save space by planting compact varieties. The 2017 All-America Selections winners suitable for containers or small spaces include personal sized 'Mini Love' watermelon and 'Honeybaby' butternut squash. Check Park Seed ([www.parkseed.com](http://www.parkseed.com)) or Jung Seed ([www.jungseed.com](http://www.jungseed.com)) for availability.
- Start or feed a compost pile with green weeds, kitchen waste, leaves and other organic matter that is available to you.
- Pay attention to the forecast and be prepared to protect plants and pipes if warranted.
- Start collecting leaves for use in the summer – you'll be glad you did!



Gradually expose tomato transplants to warm and sunny conditions.



Fresh green weeds and dry brown leaves provide the greens and browns needed to build a compost pile.

## In the Vegetable Garden

Continued...



Top left: A cold frame protects tender transplants from cold temperatures while exposing them to bright sunlight.

Top right: 'Honeybaby' yields 4-8 ounce butternut squash on compact plants; try growing it on a fence or trellis. (AAS winner for 2017). Courtesy of AAS

Bottom left: Expect four to six personal size fruit (7-9 oz each) per vine from 'Mini Love' watermelon. (AAS winner for 2017). Courtesy of AAS

Unless otherwise noted, photos by Patty and Bruce Leander

## Whiteflies on indoor plants

by Wizzie Brown



Whiteflies are small, soft-bodied insects with piercing-sucking mouthparts. They are creamy white, and adults have a mealy wax that coats their body and wings. Immatures, also called nymphs, are small, oval, flattened and wingless. Whitefly populations can become a problem on indoor plants due to the temperature being regulated inside structures. They like to be on the underside of leaves, often in clusters. Common species of whiteflies have a wide host range and are able to switch host plants.

Whiteflies use their straw-like mouthparts to pierce plant tissue and suck out juices. Large populations can cause foliage to turn yellow, appear to be dry or even fall off the plant. Some whiteflies cause plant distortion or foliage to turn silver in color. Others are capable of transmitting plant viruses.

Whiteflies exude honeydew, a sticky substance secreted by some plant-feeding insects. Honey dew causes foliage to become shiny in appearance and can attract a fungus called sooty mold. Some insects, such as ants, like to tend insects that create honeydew, and protect honeydew producers from predators and parasites.

To reduce the chance of

whitefly infestations, inspect all plants thoroughly for insects before bringing them indoors. If a plant is found with whiteflies, isolate it while you take care of the problem. While plants remain indoors, they should be inspected for problems weekly. Yellow sticky cards (you can either buy these or make your own with yellow cardstock and adhesive) can be used to capture whiteflies as well as help you easily locate problem areas.

Depending upon the plant that is infested with whiteflies, you may be able to vacuum the insects from the leaves. Choose a vacuum that has low-power suction to pull the insects into the vacuum but not the plant.

Make wise pesticide choices and choose pesticides to target specific pests and/or specific areas. For chemical treatment you can use insecticidal soap, azadirachtin, d-limonene, horticultural oils, botanicals, or a synthetic product. Target your treatment to the underside of the leaves to get to where the whiteflies like to hide. Multiple treatments will most likely be necessary due to eggs and pupae not being susceptible to pesticide treatments.



For more information or help with identification, contact Wizzie Brown, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist at 512.854.9600. Check out my blog at [www.urban-ipm.blogspot.com](http://www.urban-ipm.blogspot.com)

## Inside Austin Gardens Tour: Birds, Butterflies and Zen

by Carolyn Williams

*On May 6, 2017 the TCMGA will host our 9th Inside Austin Garden Tour. We will be opening five personal gardens plus Extension's Demonstration Garden for the public to tour. Our theme will be, once again, "For Gardeners – By Gardeners" in order to show the public what each gardener achieved by using native and adapted plants in their landscapes allowing for less water use, less fertilization and, less chemicals even in our areas of deer population and poor soil. We hope you will follow the stories in this and upcoming issues of the Compost Bin on each of our gardeners and get involved in whatever area best suits you. Also, we have some wonderful sponsors. Please check them out! IAGT Committee, Wendy Buck – Chair; Lori Daul, Martha King, Marian Stasney, Kirk Walden, Richard Wendrock and Carolyn Williams*

### The garden of Daphne Jeffers



This garden lies on a quiet street that reminds us all of the Austin we once knew. In this older established area, neighbors stroll by and watch in awe as Daphne creates her garden filled to the brim with blooming flowers that draw the butterflies, hummingbirds, and dragonflies. They glide and swoop down to the multitude of blooms on which to land; iris, purple coneflowers, daylilies, and larkspurs. The plants all reside in happy harmony with the bird houses and dog memorials that are scattered among the blooms.

It was not always so. When purchased in 1988, Daphne had bare dirt in the front, and weeds, dying trees, and a chain link fence lined with a row of tall ligustrum trees in the back. From this meager start, Daphne began her gardening journey, drawing inspiration from a drive-by cottage garden she had seen tended by an elderly lady wearing a bonnet and apron. This was the inspiration that started slowly with one bed at a time. Her own front cottage garden

now stands as a testimony to sheer hard work and a vision as to what she hoped to achieve.

Upon venturing to the back garden, the scene changes dramatically as you view her Japanese design. Using weeping yaupon, bamboo, and a dry creek bed with a beautiful coral vine dancing along a fence line, Daphne gives us her interpretation of a serene and peaceful Zen landscape. This calming private garden is used as a place to relax with family and friends, and to enjoy a darling garden filled with clever ideas!



## Inside Austin Gardens Tour: Earth-Kind® Demonstration Garden

by Richard Wendrock

The demonstration garden is divided into several areas, with every plant labeled with both its common and botanical name. A project to add a code to indicate water requirements to each plant label is ongoing. The butterfly and hummingbird habitat is one of our most popular attractions. The rose garden, next to the herb garden, is filled with more than 70 varieties of herbs. This is followed by the shade garden. All are great places to get ideas for your home garden. On the south end of the garden are the raised vegetable beds, composting bins, and the rainwater harvesting project providing avenues for education and testing. Handouts are available in the extension office lobby during normal business hours.

The garden is full of plants that will show you how your garden can be more beautiful. You will find plants that fill different needs, including drought tolerance, brilliant color, full sun loving plants, plants for shade, and plants of varying heights. There are ornamental trees, flowering shrubs, perennial flowers, Earth-Kind® roses, vines, herbs, vegetables, grasses, and groundcovers. The garden is home to many species of insects, including the approximately 95% of all insects that are beneficial.



An Earth-Kind® approach used in the garden means that chemical products are rarely used. Instead, well-adapted, disease resistant plants are grown. Plants that attract beneficial insects are planted throughout the garden to eliminate the need for chemical pesticide sprays. Regular applications of mulch, which decomposes into compost, provide the only fertilizer. An automatic drip irrigation system below the mulch allows for even watering throughout the garden with minimal loss of water to evaporation.



This is not a static garden; change is always present. We continue to introduce plants into the garden to increase water efficiency and make the garden more interesting.

The Earth-Kind® Demonstration Garden is located in front of the Travis County AgriLife Extension Service offices at 1600 B Smith Road, one block west of Hwy 183 and two blocks north of Bolm Road, near Austin-Bergstrom Airport, and just north of the Colorado River. The garden is cared for by Travis County Master Gardeners and interns providing an excellent place for you to see the Earth-Kind® approach to gardening being applied with very good results. Come see native and adapted plants being used with water-efficient design and regular maintenance. Check the calendar on our website for dates of public educational gardening demonstrations. (<http://www.tcmastergardeners.org>)

## Inside Austin Gardens Tour: Sponsor Spotlight

by Wendy Buck



*These companies have given a \$500 donation to the tour. Sponsor monies are used to subsidize other activities in which the TCMGA is involved throughout the year. The funds also go to buying plants and upkeep on the greenhouse.*

### East Austin Succulents

Some people will tell you that happiness is figuring out what you love to do, then finding a way to make money at it. In a round-about way, Eric Pedley of East Austin Succulents has done just that!

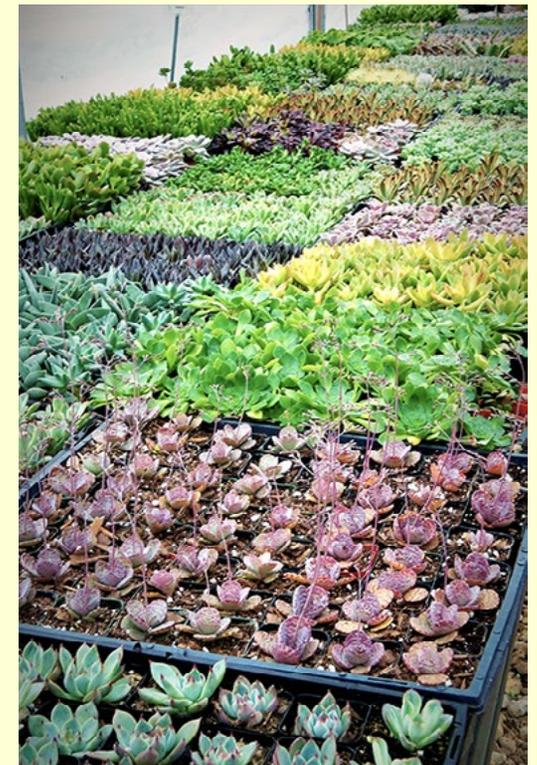
Several years ago, Eric attended a show of the Austin Cactus and Succulent Society, and he won a handful of plants in their raffle. Many gardeners know that succulents reproduce prolifically, and often without any assistance, and when that began to happen, Eric started selling his expanding succulent collection at farmer's markets in Austin as well as out of his own backyard. One thing led to another and he met someone at one of those backyard sales that offered to rent Eric a greenhouse. Then he met John, who owns half of the property on Tillery Street where the nursery is located. John offered to share the property with Eric, and 8 years ago, East Austin Succulents was born.

Boasting the widest variety of any succulent nursery in Texas, at EAS one can get lost in the rows and rows of potted prickly plants. There are tiny pots with the cutest cacti, fancy flowers adorning others, large pots with pointy leaf pricklers, and towering tubes of thorns! You really do have to watch your step here, as any wrong move could leave you stuck in an extremity. Eric grafts

many of his plants to create more hardy, pest and disease-free specimens. His latest project at the nursery is adding another greenhouse for his growing number of plants.

With several of the coolest Austinites available to assist you in your search for the perfect succulent or cactus, a visit to this pecan tree shaded, outdoor space that is open 7 days a week is a must for the betterment of your garden! Offering more than just retail sales, the staff is ready to create a custom arrangement using your own container or one of the dozens you'll find here for sale. They also offer custom arrangements for events and other special occasions.

With their constantly changing inventory, don't wait to become a regular at East Austin Succulents! Go!



## Sponsor Spotlight

Continued...



801 Tillery Street  
Austin TX 78702  
512-947-6531

[eastaustinsucculents.com](http://eastaustinsucculents.com)

### **Tour Sponsors for 2017 Inside Austin Gardens Tour:**

Real Green Pest Control and Lawn Care

Vivero Growers Nursery

East Austin Succulents

Thrash Law Firm

Wild Birds Unlimited

Austin Area Garden Council

Please patronize our sponsor's businesses!

# Grapefruit

by Venkappa Gani



Clusters like in grapes.

Grapefruit is subtropical, semisweet fruit which is a cross between a pomelo and a sweet orange. Initially this hybrid fruit did not have an official name, and it was called "forbidden fruit." Grapefruit gets its name from its growth form with resembles clusters of grapes. There are various colors of grapefruits including red, white and pink. The red-colored type is sweet, but others are sour and not as good for marketing.

## Texas Grapefruit

The accidental discovery of red grapefruit on a pink grapefruit tree gave rise to the Texas grapefruit industry. There are several grapefruit varieties marketed under 'Ruby.' The 'Ruby Red' grapefruit was the first grapefruit to be granted a US patent.

There are many varieties of grapefruits, and these are grown in different places suitable to their climate. Grapefruits are grown in Florida, California and Texas. Rio Grande valley is popular in growing various citrus fruits in Texas.

For our own project we decided to test the feasibility of growing citrus in the Central Texas subtropical climate, and selected the Texas Red grapefruit variety.

Citrus trees require good soil with drainage, and require regular composting with sufficient water. These are perennial plants, but you may need protection from winter cold. Grapefruit can be propagated by seed, but take long time to produce fruit.

Citrus test plants in my backyard have survived through hard winter freez. This year, good rains and warmer climate during early spring and fall gave way to a bumper harvest of all of our citrus trees, including the Meyer lemons I wrote about last month. The picture 1 and 2 shows different clusters like in grapes but bigger size fruits with small clusters. The picture 3 shows the cluster of four big ripe grapefruits. Picture 4 shows cut view of Red Ruby fruit, very sweet I am eating this fruit regularly and drinking the juice.

Fruit size 4-6 inch in diameter oblate spheroid shape. My backyard tree is almost 10 ft tall



Clusters like in grapes.

## Grapefruit

Continued...

and 8ft wide, branches laden with heavy fruits touching the ground.

Grapefruit is fat free, sodium free, cholesterol free, contains dietary fiber, is high in vitamin C and A, and contains lycopene.

Grapefruit is good for breakfast as juice or in slices. It can also be used in cakes, salads, etc.

Grapefruit juice can interact with numerous drugs, with potentially harmful effects, so be careful when taking medicine. Grapefruit can also block the absorption of certain drugs in the intestines.

I am really enjoying having citrus evergreen perennial trees, along with my other fruit trees like apple, pear and persimmon, that create an all season food forest in my backyard

Don't forget to include fruit trees in your own ornamental gardens.

For more information on growing your own Texas Ruby Red Grapefruit, go to <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/citrus/grapefruit.htm>



Cut view of Ruby Red grapefruit and a cluster of four big, ripe grapefruit.

## Flashback Favs

by Daphne Richards

As a contributor to [Central Texas Gardener](#) (CTG), I love to answer your questions and share knowledge on new and tried and true plants for our area. Here are some Flashback Favs!



Daphne and Augie. Daphne Richards is the county extension agent for horticulture at the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service office for Travis County

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VhAOXoEemco> (CTG 2013)

### **When to prune ornamental grasses like bamboo muhly, inland sea oats, and fountain grass?**

Now is the perfect time for this task. Like many temperate zone plants, most ornamental grasses go dormant in the winter and re-emerge in the spring, and the best time to prune them is sometime during dormancy. If your ornamental grasses go dormant early and you can't stand the look of the messy brown leaves, prune them as early as late fall or early winter. But if your ornamental grasses have attractive seed heads or some other nice quality while they're dormant, you can leave them alone until as late as the end of February. Here in Central Texas, we warm up pretty early, and you'll want to get any pruning done before new growth begins to emerge. The smaller the plant, the easier it will be to prune, and you'll need to cut straight across, leaving most grasses at a height no more than 6 inches from the ground. If the plant is small, it won't be too hard to do this with a pair of pruning shears while holding the grass with one hand. But as the plant gets larger, you may need to use a larger pruning tool, such as a pair of hedge trimmers, or even an electric trimmer, which will allow you to use both hands to cut in a flat plane, parallel to the ground. If the grass is very large and thick, you may want to tie the leaves into one or several small bundles, using masking tape or garden twine, to keep it in place while you prune.

### **Mexican orchid tree, *Bauhinia mexicana***

A great choice for attracting butterflies and hummingbirds to your garden. Mexican orchid tree is rather small for a tree, getting only 4 to 8 feet tall and spreading to as much as 6 feet wide. With this growth habit, Mexican orchid TREE is really more of a SHRUB, and it looks beautiful when allowed to grow like a shrub, with fuller foliage and more flowers. So be sure to give it plenty of space to spread out. This plant can be a little frost-tender, so place it in a protected spot near your home, in a southern exposure perhaps, where the walls of your house might radiate a few extra degrees of warmth during the winter. But even though Mexican orchid tree likes to be a little warmer when it's cold out, it doesn't easily tolerate the intense heat of our full summer sun, so choose a spot that's protected from the harsh afternoon rays, or one that gets bright, filtered light all day. And if you're a real butterfly fan, be sure to plant this tree close to a window or porch, where you can sit and enjoy the fluttering all summer long. Bauhinia is covered with large and showy, but at the same time very delicate, pink or white flowers, from summer through early fall. Mexican orchid tree is normally deciduous, but may freeze to the ground in harsh winters. If it does freeze, simply cut back the dead trunks when you begin to notice new growth in the spring, probably be sometime in March. And an important quality for many of us, Mexican orchid tree is listed to be deer resistant.

## Flashback Favs

Continued...

### **THINGS TO DO THIS MONTH:**

**FERTILIZE:** Feed winter bloomers such as alyssum, dianthus and especially pansies. Fertilize maidenhair fern with bone meal.

**WATER:** Water everything well before a freeze, but avoid overwatering.

**TRANSPLANT:** Plant bare root and container grown roses, shrubs, trees, groundcovers and vines. Move hardy seedlings outdoors. Divide and transplant perennial herbs and summer and fall blooming perennial flowers. Donate extras to a plant sale.

**PREPARE SOIL:** Add compost and/or fertilizer. Till deeply. Send in soil samples (forms available at <http://soiltesting.tamu.edu/>). Check winter mulch and replenish if needed. Stockpile leaves for mulch and composting throughout spring and summer.

**LAWN CARE:** If lawn has a history of brown patch problems, treat with a labeled fungicide late in the month. Repeat treatment in three to four weeks, if needed.

**DISEASES/PESTS TO LOOK FOR:** Apply pre-emergent weed killer to lawn. Spray fruit trees with dormant oil just prior to bud break. Call the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service office in Travis County at 512-854-9600 for fruit and nut tree spray schedules.



## Announcements



### Sunshine Community Gardens

#### **30,000 Certified Organic Tomato, Hot & Sweet Bell Pepper Plants along with Eggplants and Herbs go on sale March 4, 2017.**

*Austin, Texas* - Austin's most loved, local heirloom vegetable transplants grown by Gabriel Valley Farms in Georgetown, Texas and herbs grown by Sunshine Community Gardens (SCG) makes their debut March 4, 2017. Over 120 proven and tested Tomato varieties by local gardeners along with over 85 Wicked Hot and Sweet Bell Pepper varieties, 15 different types of Eggplants and thousands of herbs ready for spring planting can be purchased starting at 9 AM at 4814 Sunshine Dr. Austin, TX 78756.

This annual non-profit spring garden sale enables Sunshine Community Gardens to teach best organic practices to Schools, clubs and organizations and to donate some fresh vegetables for a local food pantry. "Come join with Gardeners of all ages at Austin's green oasis in the middle of the city. Buy locally grown transplants, support local Merchants, including Gabriel Valley certified organic growers. Sunshine Community Gardens started in 1979 is the largest and oldest Community garden in the Austin area", said Jeff Monks, President of SCG.

For a Fun-Filled day, come early. Learn organic gardening practices. Talk with Vendors. Listen to Live Music. Walk the 180 gardens. Kids love to visit the Chicken Coop. In addition you can purchase compost for your plants too!

The first bite of a delicious and juicy home grown organic tomato will make you beg for more. Improve your health with regular gardening exercise. Save big money by growing your own organic vegetables. A complete list of plants on sale and varieties to grow for the Austin area go to <http://sunshinecommunitygardens.org/>

Here are lists of the varieties of tomatoes and peppers that will be for sale:

[Tomatoes](#)

[Peppers](#)

[Eggplants/Tomatillos](#)

## Austin Area Events

### **All About Roses**

Saturday, February 4, 2017

Zilker Botanical Garden  
2220 Barton Springs Rd  
Austin, TX

Incorporate user friendly roses into your new or existing garden plans! Travis County Master Gardener Cher Coleman has 30 years' experience in the use of roses in a landscape. She will teach you methods for proper selection of rose varieties, site prep and maintenance like pruning, pest control and fertilization. This session is excellent for newbies and experienced gardeners and questions are encouraged.

Seminar is free and open to the public. No RSVP is required.

Zilker park entrance fee is \$2 per adult, \$1 per child (ages 3-12) or seniors (age 62 & over), \$3 for non-Austin Residents. Cash or check accepted.

**TRAVIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION**  
**2017 EXECUTIVE BOARD**

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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](mailto:editor.compostbin@gmail.com)



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[www.tcmastergardeners.org](http://www.tcmastergardeners.org)  
<http://travis-tx.tamu.edu>  
512-854-9600

"Probably more pests can be controlled in an armchair in front of a February fire with a garden notebook and a seed catalog that can ever be knocked out in hand-to-hand combat in the garden." - Neely Turner