



The Compost Bin

March 2017

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

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Cover: Edamame is a delicious and nutritious snack - try growing your own in the garden this spring.

By Bruce Leander

Right: The garden of Ver-
lia Sanchez-Ruiz.

By Lori Daul



Meeting - Colleen Dieter

Container Gardening: Tips from a Professional Landscape Designer

Colleen loves helping do-it-yourselfers figure out what to do with their yards - even more than driving out to her favorite BBQ joint in Lexington, Texas. YES!! Believe it!!

Since founding Red Wheelbarrow over a decade ago, she's helped transform hundreds of yards in Central Texas.

When she's not helping clients with their outdoor spaces, she's preparing for her gardening segment on TWC Austin News.

As a top gardening educator, she is often asked to speak to audiences about native Texas planting.

PHILOSOPHY

She believes yards are extensions of homes, financially and emotionally, and she takes to heart her role in increasing the property's value - as well as enhancing the client's peace of mind.

She believes in creating lush, sustainable green spaces; making them safer for families, neighbors, pets and wildlife.

Master Gardener Meeting information:
Wednesday, March 1, 2017, 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



A bamboo A-frame supports the vining habit of cucumbers.

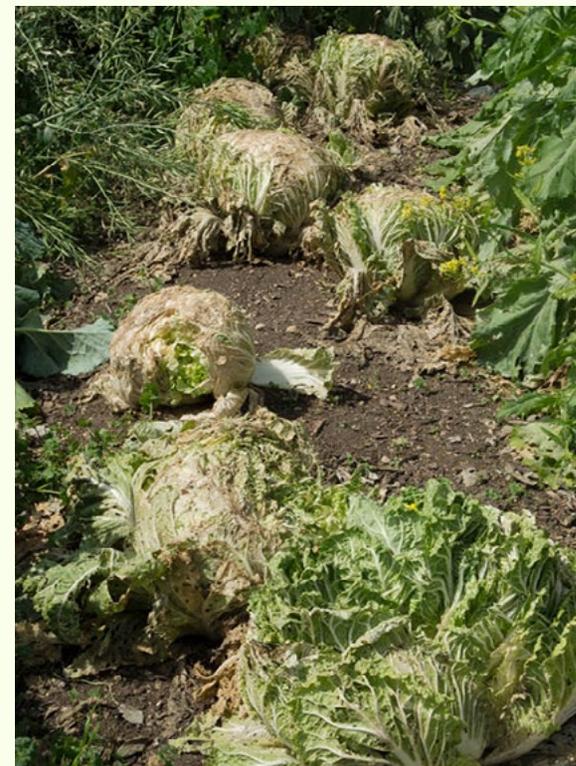
Tomatoes get planted this month – unless you gambled with February’s seductively warm weather and planted yours already (I did). Either way, March is generally considered the start of the spring season in Central Texas, as the threat of frost diminishes and gardeners begin planting with a zeal that won’t be contained. Pay attention to the forecast in case Mother Nature decides to throw us a curve ball, and be prepared to protect or replant if damaging weather ensues. Even if we don’t get another freeze this month our young and tender seedlings are vulnerable to wind, hail and heavy rains.

Here is the vegetable gardener’s checklist for March:

- Wrap tomato cages with row cover to protect young transplants from strong winds.
- Plant green beans, cucumbers, squash, eggplant, peppers and corn.
- Wait till late March or early April to plant heat-loving okra, sweet potatoes, melons and southern peas.
- If soil is dry, water well before planting.
- Warm, sunny days coupled with spring rains encourage weed seeds to sprout and quickly get out of hand. They will greedily suck up any water and nutrients you provide for your vegetables. Invest in a long-handled weeder to dispatch weed seedlings in and around the garden. Above all, don’t let them go to seed.
- Grow soybeans for edamame; varieties to try include ‘Butterbean,’ ‘Beer Friend,’ ‘Midori Giant,’ or one from Renee’s Seeds called simply

‘Edamame.’ Plant seeds in warm soil, spacing 4-6 inches apart and you’ll be harvesting plump green pods in 80-90 days.

- If you have limited garden space, consider growing up instead of out. Pole beans, cucumbers and small-fruited melons and winter squash can be trained to grow on an A-frame, a trellis or other vertical structure.
- Hold off on mulching the vegetable garden until later in the month – this will give soil a chance to warm up faster, and that warmth encourages more vigorous growth.



Plants in decline can attract and harbor pests; they should be removed once they are past their prime.

In the Vegetable Garden

Continued...



Pick up a bag of compost and stroll the paths surrounding the 180 garden plots at Sunshine Gardens, 4814 Sunshine Drive.

away with the excitement of perfect days, the smell of fresh dirt and the expectation held within tiny seeds, but as everything grows so does the time required to water, weed, scout for pests, harvest, prepare and preserve. Now go forth and have a great gardening season!

- Harvest cool weather crops as they reach maturity, but remove any that are past their prime; plants in decline can harbor pests and disease.
- Fertilize onions and garlic every 3-4 weeks and water if we don't get rain.
- Check out the Sunshine Community Garden Spring Plant Sale on Saturday, March 4th from 9-2. They offer an amazing selection of tomato, eggplant and pepper varieties – herbs and ornamentals, too. Plus there will be local vendors, live music and a chance to wander through some of the most interesting vegetable gardens in town.
- Also make note of the annual San Antonio Rodeo Tomato release for 2017 (http://www.plantanswers.com/Articles/2017_Rodeo_Tomato.asp). The selection this year is 'Harris Moran 1823' (HM 1823), a disease-resistant determinate variety that produces high yields of large, red, globe-shaped tomatoes averaging just over a half pound each. The Rodeo Tomato is chosen by a team that includes AgriLife vegetable experts Dr. Larry Stein, Dr. Jerry Parsons, and horticulture agent for Bexar County, David Rodriguez. With the efforts of the Gardening Volunteers of South Texas and the Bexar County Master Gardeners, each year this team tests several tomato varieties and ultimately determines which new variety is worthy of being crowned the official tomato of the San Antonio Stock Show & Rodeo, based on standards of performance, flavor, yield and disease resistance. Past winners include Celebrity, Tycoon and BHN 968 (AKA 'Dwarf Cherry Surprise' - one of my favorites!). Transplants of the 2017 Rodeo Tomato should be available at garden centers this spring.
- Last of all (and note to self), show a little restraint. It's extremely easy to get carried



Tomatoes galore (over 100 different varieties) will be available at the Sunshine Community Garden spring plant sale on March 4th.

Crane Flies

by Wizzie Brown



Crane flies are a conundrum to most people, and are often surrounded with misinformation. I find crane flies to be the insect I use to let me know that spring is coming soon.

Crane flies can be small to large insects - topping out at about 1 inch, with long, slender legs and a V-shaped suture on the thorax. Legs tend to break off very easily, so you may often encounter these insects with less than their allotted amount of 6 legs (see image). Adults can be mistaken for giant mosquitoes and may frighten people.

Crane flies are often referred to as "mosquito hawks" which is a misnomer. The name mosquito hawk is usually used to refer to dragonflies, but sometimes it is also used to refer to a large species of mosquito that has a larval stage which feeds on other mosquito species.

Some people think that crane flies eat mosquitoes, but this is untrue. Adult crane flies feed on nectar or are non-feeding.

Crane fly larvae are found in moist soil feeding on decaying organic matter. The larvae are wormlike and legless without well-developed heads. Some species of the larvae feed on roots of turfgrass or other plants. Crane fly larvae usually do not cause enough damage to be considered a pest, but with very high populations, management may be needed.

In Texas, crane flies can become abundant in the spring. While the adults may be a nuisance when entering homes or disturbing outdoor activities, they do not cause damage and do not bite. Keep doors and windows closed and make sure screens are in good repair.

Either turn off outside lights at night or use "bug bulbs" to reduce the number of crane flies that are drawn near the home due to light sources.

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

Inside Austin Gardens Tour: Wildlife Restoration and Preservation

by Carolyn Williams

On May 6, 2017, the TCMGA will host our 9th Inside Austin Gardens 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 Dorothy Thering



Restoration: the action of returning something to a former owner or condition; the process of restoring. Sounds nice and simple, but then again, not much is nice and simple, and this gardener and her story is no exception.

The journey begins 13 years ago (2004) when Dorothy, with her husband and son, bought 23 acres of heaven in the western portion of Travis County at the beginning of the Texas Hill Country. Here they built their home and started the process of restoring the acreage back from the invasion of cedars and years of neglect.

Here is where Dorothy's carefully laid out plans took a nasty turn and breast cancer came thundering into her life! Her home and land became her therapy; her haven against the disease battling her body. She simply gardened for body and soul.

Dorothy won her battle, and went forward with the plans and goals that had been put aside. A garden plot was cleared of rocks, and more rocks. Raised beds were built with truckloads of good gardening soil, and compost was brought in to create their vegetable area. Nearby, four bee hives were put in place for both honey and pollination.

Grapevines now wind their way through the metal fencing, and peach trees stand ready to deliver their delicious summer fruit. A delightful greenhouse, built using recycled windows, greets the day for Dorothy to plant seeds, winter any tender plant, or to just sit, relax, and read. The garden, barn and greenhouse each have rainwater cisterns totaling approximately 4,000 gallons.

While deer, fox, quail, various species of birds, and miniature horses share this haven of peaceful bliss with Dorothy and her husband, the true blessing is found each day with the joy of watching the land come alive with Texas native wildflowers and life's bounty!



Photos by Lori Daul

Inside Austin Gardens Tour: Sun and Shade

by Carolyn Williams

The garden of Velia Sanchez-Ruiz



South Austin conjures up images of SoCo, Alamo Drafthouse, the Broken Spoke, Armadillo World Headquarters (if you are over a certain age), rambling streets through older neighborhoods, and hidden driveways teasing one's interest with eclectic Austin homes and gardens.

Velia's home sits on one of those streets where neighbors drive by and wave as she tends to her front garden filled to the brim with blooming plants, especially daylilies....lots of daylilies. She is well-known for possessing a "green thumb." She is well-respected for being an avid grower of daylilies.

After retiring in 2000 from teaching school, Velia set out to change a front lawn from total Bermuda grass to a garden full of plants that provided her with abundant blooms and nurtured her soul. She wished to have total joy and happiness merely from working in her garden and discovering the wonders of nature.

The back garden receives mostly shade, and Velia experimented with plants until she found the right ones that thrived in this condition. Here she grows umbrella plants, gingers, Mock Orange, Star Jasmine, Anacacho Orchid trees and others.

From her start in the early 1990's when she bought Japanese Boxwood, Crepe Myrtles, and Mountain Laurels from a Kmart closeout sale, to the present where she has become a gardener deluxe, she has strived to learn every aspect of gardening available.

She gardens for the love the garden gives back to her.



Photos by Lori Daul

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.

Wild Birds Unlimited



Wild Birds Unlimited, located at 3535 Bee Caves Road, (next door to Barton Springs Nursery) has been locally owned by Rick & Kelle Stults for the past 12 years.

Their overall business mission is to bring people and nature together by their strong belief in the conservation of birds, wildlife and their habitats. Their focus is to fulfill this mission by providing the public with the highest quality products, done with integrity and passion.

Feeding birds makes a difference! Over 100 North American bird species supplement their natural diets with bird seed, suet, fruit and nectar obtained from feeders. Birds with access to backyard feeders benefit greatly from their ability to spend less time foraging for food and more time engaging in activities that enhance their health and safety. Feeders allow breeding birds to spend more time selecting better nesting sites and constructing higher quality nests. Research studies have shown that birds with access to bird feeders will often lay their eggs earlier than those without feeders. This is significant because earlier broods typically have better

rates of survival and fledging success than later broods. Feeders also make birds less vulnerable to predators by allowing birds to spend more time focussing on the dangers and threats from predators.

Wild Birds Unlimited seed is regionally formulated for Central Texas using the highest quality products that are always fresh and clean. No fillers, such as grains and Milo, are allowed. They are 100% seeds birds will eat! They carry a "no mess" blend that eliminates shells accumulating on the ground.

Rick & Kelle also sell nesting boxes from bees, to bats, to butterflies. They love to "help people enjoy their hobby of backyard birding, along with other wildlife, at any level you wish." If you are trying to accomplish a specific goal or have any questions, they will help you solve issues and educate you along the way.

Wild Birds Unlimited will have spring bird food on sale the entire month of March.



Photos by Carolyn Williams

Sponsor Spotlight

Continued...



3535 Bee Caves Road
Austin, TX 78746
(512) 328-9453

<https://austinsouth.wbu.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

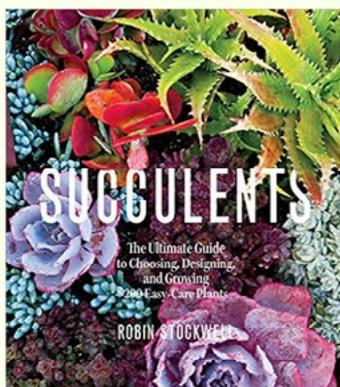
Please patronize our sponsor's businesses!

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.

March 2017



Succulents: The Ultimate Guide to Choosing, Designing, and Growing 200 Easy Care Plants - January 31, 2017

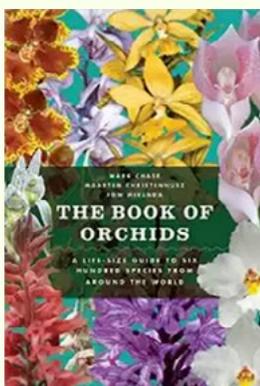
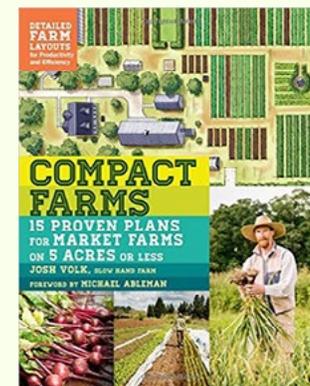
by Robin Stockwell

Inspiring, practical and richly photographed, this comprehensive guide offers creative ideas and DIY projects using beautiful low-maintenance, water-wise plants Succulents are the ultimate easy-care plant: versatile, effortless to grow both indoors and outdoors, and drought tolerant. [\[more\]](#)

Compact Farms: 15 Proven Plans for Market Farms on 5 Acres or Less; Includes Detailed Farm Layouts for Productivity and Efficiency - February 7, 2017

by Josh Volk

Small is beautiful, and these 15 real farm plans show that small-scale farmers can have big-time success. Compact Farms is an illustrated guide for anyone dreaming of starting, expanding, or perfecting a profitable farming enterprise on five acres or less. [\[more\]](#)



The Book of Orchids: A Life-Size Guide to Six Hundred Species from around the World - March 13, 2017

by Cressida Bell

One in every seven flowering plants on earth is an orchid. Yet orchids retain an air of exotic mystery—and they remain remarkably misunderstood and underappreciated. The orchid family contains an astonishing array of colors, forms, and smells that captivate growers from all walks of life across the globe. [\[more\]](#)

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=VryrJ2BT-eE> (CTG 2014)

Hedging cenizo plants

Also known as Texas sages, these plants may tolerate being hedged for a few years, but they ultimately do not perform well when pruned in opposition to their natural growth habit. So if you need a shrubby hedge, choose another plant, like maybe southern wax myrtle. Like many native species, cenizos prefer to be left alone, or only pruned occasionally to remove twiggy, dead stems. You might notice your cenizos struggling and getting leggy, and you may be tempted to hedge them, but this usually means that they've been planted in an area incompatible with their need for bright sun and well-drained soil. Since cenizos don't produce new growth in their interior, hedging them removes most of the viable buds, setting up for a situation of sparse new growth on the outside, and non-existent growth on the inside. This eventually creates a plant that looks very strange, with very few leaves, even fewer flowers, and lots of airy space. Although you may not recognize exactly why, this just isn't a nice look. Aesthetically, plants that have a lot of leaves, closely spaced on their stems, are simply more pleasing to the eye. When lots of stem space occurs between each set of leaves, plants look twiggy and ugly. So be aware of your particular Texas sage's ultimate height and width, and give it the amount of space that it needs to be really happy without the need for pruning. These plants will fill in, making them great for a living wall, just resist the urge to give them a boxy, hedge-like shape.

Texas columbine, also known as Hinckley's columbine, *Aquilegia chrysantha* 'Hinckleyana'

With all of the mature trees in our older Central Texas neighborhoods, I'm often asked for recommendations on flowering plants that can take the shade. And while this plant still needs at least some bright light to form its beautiful yellow flowers, it can usually get enough sun in the late winter/early spring, in that short window while the live oaks are leafless, to make a good spring showing. The 'Texas Gold' cultivar performs just as well as Hinckley's, and has been designated a Texas Superstar, meaning that it has been extensively tested by our AgriLife Extension specialists, and shown to be especially Texas-tough. Although there other columbine cultivars available, 'Texas Gold' and Hinckley's are the most hardy, and the most tolerant of our harsh summer heat. As with most plants that need shade, columbine also needs a little extra water, especially during the hottest, driest months of the year. Amending the planting area with a good amount of compost will help these plants grow and establish quickly, but be aware, unlike many other shade-loving plants, columbine cannot tolerate heavy clay soils, and may rot, especially if overwatered in unamended soil. Planting in a raised bed would be best in this situation... Columbine should be available in one-gallon containers, or 4-inch pots. But don't be fooled by their deceptively small container size. Since columbines fill in nicely to about two feet wide, give each plant plenty of space, and for show-stopping beauty, plant them in a large,

Flashback Favs

Continued...

sweeping mass of three or five, perhaps along borders and walkways.

THINGS TO DO THIS MONTH:

FERTILIZE: Begin monthly feedings of hibiscus after pruning. Start a rose feeding schedule. Fertilize established fruit and nut trees with 1 lb. 15-5-10 per inch of trunk diameter. Berry bushes should receive 1/3 cup per square yard of planting area.

DISEASES / PESTS TO LOOK FOR: Watch for aphids on new growth, spider mites on older leaves and cut worms on young transplants. Spray peach and plum trees for curculio weevils when 3/4 of the petals have fallen (repeat three times at two-week intervals).

PRUNE: Prune hibiscus, also spring flowering shrubs and trees after they bloom. Prune and train vines. Shape spring-blooming shrubs with light pruning after bloom. Allow bulb foliage to yellow and die before removing.



Austin Area Events

Sunshine Community Gardens Annual Spring Plant Sale

Saturday, March 4, 2017

Sunshine Community Gardens
4814 Sunshine Dr
Austin, TX

Austin's most loved, local heirloom vegetable transplants grown by Gabriel Valley Farms in Georgetown Texas and herbs grown by Sunshine Community Gardens (SCG) make 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.

Details at <http://sunshinecommunitygardens.org/>
Admission is free

2017 Zilker Garden Festival

March 25-26, 2017

Saturday, 10:00 am - 7:00 pm

Sunday, 10:00 am - 5:00 pm

Zilker Botanical Garden
2220 Barton Springs Rd
Austin, TX

Celebrate the 60th Annual Zilker Garden Festival at Zilker Botanical Garden – a one-stop, garden shopping destination when spring arrives in Austin and Central Texas. A family-friendly event, the garden festival offers something for everyone.

- Shopping with vendors selling a variety of plants and garden-themed arts & crafts, ceramic pottery, custom jewelry, hand-made artistic clothing, herbal products, garden hats, and so much more!
- Visit the Flower Show in the Garden Center to see judged floral designs and horticulture
- Head to Kids' Corner so kids can build birdhouses, make butterfly wings, enjoy face painting, and making nature rubbings.
- Relax in the Oakgrove and enjoy Live Music, Food Vendors, and the Craft Beer Garden.

\$10 Adults (age 13+), \$4 Children (age 4-12), Under age 4 Free,
Parking \$5 - Half-price admission on Sunday for all bicyclists!
Details at <http://www.zilker garden.org/ZGF/>

TRAVIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION

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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 Daphne Richards 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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www.tcmastergardeners.org
<http://travis-tx.tamu.edu>
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"Give me the splendid silent sun
with all his beams full-dazzling." - Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*