

# The Compost Bin

June 2017

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

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Fireflies

Texas Master Gardeners 2017

Weeds and Reads

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Cover: By Bruce Leander

Right: Sunflowers and  
eggplant.

By Liath Appleton



## Meeting - Cindy Klemmer

### **Cynthia D. Klemmer, Ph.D. – Environmental Conservation Program Manager, City of Austin Parks & Rec Department**

Meet the new manager for Zilker Botanical Gardens, Cindy Klemmer, and get first-hand insight into the current activities and plans for Austin's beloved gardens.

Originally from Mesquite, Texas (a suburb to the east of Dallas, and yes, a plant-based city!), Cindy had the opportunity to garden with her parents as well as all her country-dwelling grandparents. She spent many weekends and summers exploring the Piney Woods of East Texas where her dad's parents lived as well as the hot open pastures of Terrell where her mom's parents lived. "I believe that our love of nature is most often inspired through childhood experiences with family! This was critical for me and is a big part of what led me to focus on youth and school gardening in my horticultural studies."

Master Gardener Meeting information:  
Wednesday, June 7, 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



Harvest vegetables frequently to ensure continual production.

Though memories of our recent drought years still linger, May of 2017 has lived up to its historical reputation as one of the rainiest months of the year here in Central Texas. The generous rainfall and mild temperatures combined with early and eager spring planting delivered an early harvest of squash, green beans, cucumbers and at long last, tomatoes. The first to ripen in my garden last month was the ever dependable 'Juliet,' followed by 'Black Cherry,' 'Sweet Olive,' 'Black Krim' and a new hybrid beefsteak from **Johnny's** called 'Frederik.' It's hard to beat the luscious heirloom flavor of 'Black Krim,' which are reserved for slicing and savoring with a fork and knife and a sprinkling of salt. The cherry types mingle with cucumbers and onion in a recipe that has come to be known in my family as Lake House Cucumber Salad, but after a winter without fresh-from-the-garden tomatoes, every single variety is welcome in my kitchen. If the flavor is less than stellar, or if they have a little stink bug damage, they may end up in marinara sauce, tomato chutney, or one of my favorites, Cheesy Tomato Pie (see recipes below).

If you want to grow your own transplants for fall, sow those tomato seeds soon so you'll have decent size transplants by late July or early August. It takes 6-8 weeks to grow a good size tomato transplant; if you end up with more than you can use, bring them to the July meeting – MGs cannot resist a helpless tomato plant with no home.

Rosalie Russell recently inquired about the squash vine borer saga in my southwest Travis County vegetable garden. The battle continues, but I have had great success using a product called Micromesh to cover my plants until the first female blooms appear. Excluding the squash vine borer moth allows my plants to grow to the flowering stage; after I see female blooms I uncover the plants completely so that bees can get busy pollinating. The squash vine borer moth shows up about the same time as the bees, but once the female flowers are pollinated the fruit develops so fast that I manage to harvest several squash before the borer damage kills the plants.

#### Here is the vegetable gardener's checklist for June:

- Harvest vegetables frequently to ensure continual production.
- Continue to feed plants with fish emulsion or water soluble fertilizer every 1-2 weeks.
- Water and fertilize container grown plants more frequently than in-ground plants. As the temperatures rise and rain diminishes, small containers may require daily watering.
- Set aside a small block of time each week to keep up with weeds to prevent them from taking hold in vegetable beds.
- Bush varieties of green beans generally produce a concentrated set of pods over a 2-4 week period before petering out. As plants begin

## In the Vegetable Garden

to decline, pull them out and replace with heat-tolerant Southern peas, long beans, okra or sweet potatoes.

- Plant pumpkins in late June or early July to have mature pumpkins by Halloween. Small-fruited varieties can be grown vertically on a fence or trellis.
- Plant buckwheat or cowpeas as a cover crop in fallow beds.
- Make notes about planting and harvest dates and pest or disease problems – this information will help you decide what varieties earn a spot in your garden next year.
- As summer approaches remove declining plants and mulch beds to protect and conserve soil.



Micromesh protects plants from the squash vine borer moth; it is removed after female flowers form so pollinators can do their job.

## Continued...



Try to spend a little time weeding each week so weeds don't get out of control.

## In the Vegetable Garden

Continued...

### Tomato Chutney

I first tasted this delicious chutney at the Arbor Gate Tomato Contest a couple of years ago. The dish was shared by Tomball resident, Poly Cline, who credits a 1979 issue of *Gourmet Magazine* for the recipe.

- 4 lbs fresh tomatoes
- 2 cup minced onion
- Zest of one lemon
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cider vinegar
- 2/3 cup currants
- 1 Tbsp mustard seed
- 1 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp cayenne
- 1/2 tsp cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp allspice

Combine all ingredients in a heavy roasting pan and place in the oven. Set the oven temperature (using convection if you have it) to 400°. After it reaches temperature, reduce to 240°. Cook, stirring occasionally, until mixture thickens, approximately 3-4 hours. Pour into clean canning jars, allow to cool, and store in the refrigerator. Mixture can also be frozen. **Yield: 3 cups**



### Lake House Cucumbers

I've been making this cucumber salad for years, and every time our friends rent a house on Lake Travis we are guaranteed an invitation, as long as I bring the cucumbers.

- 3-4 fresh cucumbers, pared, if desired
- 2 tsp kosher salt
- 1 Tbsp sugar
- 1/3 cup rice vinegar
- 1/2 tsp pepper
- 1/4 cup chopped dill
- 1/4 cup chopped parsley and/or mint
- 1 red onion, thinly sliced
- 2 cup cherry tomatoes, halved
- 2 Tbsp olive oil

Halve cucumbers lengthwise and remove seeds. Cut into thin slices and place in a colander. Sprinkle with salt and let drain 15-20 minutes. Place in large bowl and toss

## In the Vegetable Garden

Continued...

with sugar and vinegar; let sit one hour. Stir in onion, tomatoes and herbs, then drizzle with olive oil and toss gently. Refrigerate at least 2 hours before serving.

### Cheesy Tomato Pie

So yummy ...add more ham, substitute bacon, or skip the pork altogether.

- 2-3 medium tomatoes, sliced
- 1 Tbsp Dijon mustard
- 1 unbaked pie shell
- 1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese, divided
- 1 cup diced cooked ham
- 1/2 cup sliced green onions
- 1 tsp oil
- 1 egg, beaten
- 1/3 cup half and half
- 1 Tbsp chopped basil
- 1/4 tsp black pepper
- 1/2 cup shredded parmesan cheese

Salt tomatoes lightly and let drain 15-20 minutes. Pat dry and set aside.

Brush pastry shell with mustard and fill with 1/2 cup mozzarella cheese. Sauté ham and green onions in hot oil for 5-6 minutes and spoon into crust. Top with a single layer of tomatoes.

Combine egg and half and half; pour over tomatoes. Top with basil, pepper, remaining mozzarella and parmesan. Bake at 425° for 20-25 minutes. Cool slightly before serving. **Yield: 4-6 servings**



## Fireflies

by Wizzie Brown



Is it a firefly or a lightning bug? Well, that usually depends upon where you grew up, as different areas of the U.S. will call these beetles one or the other, or will sometimes use these terms interchangeably. Fireflies and lightning bugs refer to beetles in the same insect family, Lampyridae.

Larvae are nocturnal and feed on small animals, including snails. Larvae prefer moist environments, with some being subterranean or semi-aquatic. Some larvae are able to emit short glows, which are used to warn predators that they are distasteful.

Adult beetles are around ½ inch long, slender, and fairly soft-bodied. They have a shield-like structure, the pronotum, which covers their head from above. The last few abdominal segments may be modified to emit light, but not all Lampyridae are bioluminescent.

Fireflies are bioluminescent, which means they have a chemical reaction that occurs within their body causing them to light up. When fireflies combine oxygen with calcium, adenosine triphosphate (ATP) and the chemical luciferin in the presence of luciferase, a bioluminescent enzyme, light is produced. Light from a firefly does not give off heat, which is important to ensure survival of the beetle. Fireflies control

light flashing by controlling the oxygen that reacts with other chemicals needed to produce light.

Adults use flash patterns to identify those of the same species as well as determine location of the opposite sex. Female fireflies choose their mates based upon flash pattern characters; males with higher flash rates and increased flash intensity are preferred.

Adults feed on nectar, pollen and other fireflies. Many do not feed. One group of females in the genus *Photuris* will lure in males of the genus *Photinus* by mimicking the flash pattern of the female *Photinus*. When the male comes in to mate, imagine his surprise when he gets eaten instead!

No one seems to know exactly why firefly numbers seem to be decreasing. It is thought that disappearing habitat along with light pollution are playing a part in the decline. How can you help fireflies? Turn off lights at night to help reduce light pollution (you'll get the added benefit of less insects being drawn to areas where they can possibly get into your house). Create water features in your landscape to provide areas of moisture required for larvae. Target pesticide usage and make wise pesticide choices to reduce the possibility of affecting non-target organisms.

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)



## Texas Master Gardeners Cruise Conference 2017

by Venkappa Gani



The Valor

Most conferences are held in the big cities at hotels or convention centers, but lately, as hotel rooms have gotten more expensive, cruise conferences are becoming popular, with competitive pricing and all-inclusive vacation package deals. Master Gardeners cruise conferences, both local and international, are being held on big cruise ships that have all the modern conveniences.

Searching for someone with a common interest to attend this conference I found technical society friend, Tom Grim, an **IEEE** senior life member, and his wife Charlotte, a Travis County Master Gardener. It was a good match, as I am a senior life member of IEEE, and my wife Ratna and I are also both TCMGA life members.

Planning took a lot of phone calls and emails, which was a bit hectic after returning from a six week trip to India, but everything came together, and we were able to include an excursion to Cozumel.

On April 27th, we drove to Galveston, parked at the Carnival Cruise Line port, and boarded the Carnival Ship, Valor. We checked into our state room and enjoyed the view overlooking the seashore. That evening we attended a welcome reception and received information for all the events on the ship,

including the conference schedule, entertainment and meals.

Day 1: A day of talks.

We enjoyed breakfast and attended conference talks including "Wine and Viticulture," by Justin Scheiner. Texas is becoming popular for growing grapes and making wines, and the state is sprouting many wineries — Austin included. After lunch we attended "A Taste of the Tropics," by Tim Hartman, which is my favorite topic, since I grow various and exotic tropical fruits in my own backyard. It was nice being able to share my experiences with the speaker.

Day 2: Ship docked in Port Cozumel, and day excursion.

The scenic underground river canoe trip we had was cancelled so we chose an **Xcaret** adventure of swimming in underground rivers.

We took a ferry to Cozumel, and then a bus to the rainforest for various activities. We were all prepared with swim gear and special shoes for walking in the water. We took a short swimming trip, which was an interesting experience in the cold water, and required frequent stops. We saw colorful parrots, horses, animals, turtles and other wildlife. We also visited the Aquarium which had different types of colorful fish and turtles. This was a very pleasant way to walk and see the beaches.



With our travel companions, the Grim family.

## Conference 2017

Continued...



Xcaret Park.

Day 3: Planned meetings in the morning, followed by a private screening.

The talk, "Symphony of the Soil," was cancelled due to technical problems, but in the afternoon we attended "Garden Inspirations from Travel," by County Extension Agent, Janet Carson. She inspired us with her extensive tours of gardens both here in the US and internationally, including a trip to Kew Gardens in London. Garden tours allow you to see different themes and techniques used throughout the world, and the beauty one can create. We enjoyed her talk so much that we are now planning our own global gardens visits.

We later watched the private screening of "The Symphony of the Soil." It was a bit long, but the subjects of climate change and GMOs in respect to soil and crops, are worth the time. Soil is the soul for gardening.

Overall, the conference was educating, and we enjoyed networking with our fellow Texas Master Gardeners. It was a great opportunity to get to know the Galveston County Master Gardeners, and we had many interesting discussions at the dinner table.

Day 4: This was our last day at sea.

We all had an educational, fun and memorable experience with family and friends, both at the conference and off-ship in Cozumel.

We arrived in Galveston in the morning, gathered our belongings, cleared Customs, and attended the Texas Master Gardeners award banquet luncheon at **Moody Gardens**. Along with our fellow Travis County Master Gardeners, it was a reunion of friends that we met on the ship.



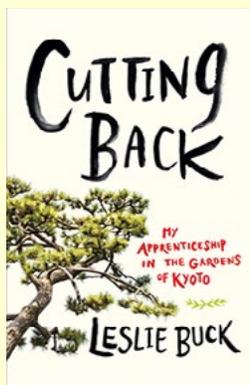
Parrots at Xcaret Park.

## Weeds and Reads

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.

## June 2017

**Cutting Back: My Apprenticeship in the Gardens of Kyoto** - May 3, 2017

by Leslie Buck

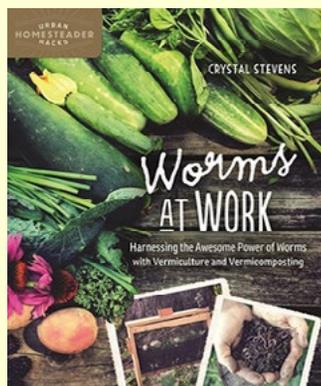
At thirty-five, Leslie Buck made an impulsive decision to put her personal life on hold to pursue her passion. Leaving behind a full life of friends, love, and professional security, she became the first American woman to learn pruning from one of the most storied landscaping companies in Kyoto. [\[more\]](#)

**The Gardening in Miniature Prop Shop: Fill Your Tiny Living World with 35 DIY Projects from Adirondack Chairs to Zombies** - May 17, 2017

by Janit Calvo

The next big thing for the crafters and gardeners already captivated by gardening small. Organized by fun themes—including gardens around the world, holidays, and fantasy gardens— it's a fun-filled, step-by-step guide to creating one-of-a-kind gardens and the

accessories that make them shine. [\[more\]](#)

**Worms at Work: Harnessing the Awesome Power of Worms with Vermiculture and Vermicomposting** - June 13, 2017

by Crystal Stevens

People want to know where their food comes from, who grows it and how it is grown. Interest in permaculture, backyard composting, and gardening in general, is growing. So how does the budding gardener ensure that his soil is healthy and nutrient-rich enough to support all the produce he intends to grow? [\[more\]](#)

**Taking Root: The Nature Writing of William and Adam Summer of Pomaria** - June 27, 2017

by Jr James Everett Kibler (Editor), Wendell Berry (Foreword)

William Summer founded the renowned Pomaria Nursery, which thrived from the 1840s to the 1870s in central South Carolina and became the center of a bustling town that today bears its name. The nursery grew into one of the most important American nurseries of the antebellum period, offering wide varieties of fruit trees and ornamentals to gardeners throughout the South. [\[more\]](#)



## 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=vf0l\\_LAsF0o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vf0l_LAsF0o) (CTG 2013)

### Why do cucumber and squash flowers fall off the plant before fruit is produced?

I love this question, since it involves so much of the easy science behind the life cycles of flowering plants. Some plants have very little trouble with pollination, while others struggle. Plants in the Cucurbitacea, the squash family, can have a challenging time with pollination, especially with our native bee population in decline. As you know, squash, cucumbers, and other pepos, as they are often called by vegetable gardeners, have a long, full fruit with lots of seeds. Well, in order for that fruit to develop at all, and then to expand and elongate, pollination must occur. If there's no pollination, the plant has no reason to make a fruit. A fruit without offspring would be a serious waste of resources, and Cucurbits simply don't waste their time. If a little bit of pollination occurs, then a few seeds will develop and the fruit will expand, but will be very small. It's all part of nature and the conservation of precious resources for survival. Unfortunately, lack of pollination in squash and cucumbers is very common, but the good news is, the problem is easily solved: you can pollinate the flowers yourself. Many gardeners tell me that they simply use their forefinger to grab a little pollen from one flower and use it to pollinate the next. Fancier folks might use a paint brush to do the same job, especially if they're doing controlled cross-hybridization between species and want to ensure against contamination. You can also simply remove one flower and use it to pollinate the others. Plants in the squash family have two types of flowers: male and female. The female flowers produce the fruit, which you can see as a tiny swollen area behind the tubular flower. Male flowers contain the pollen, so be sure to remove a male flower to use as your pollen source, then simply press the pollen down into the center of the female flower,

onto the stigma, which is the elongated part of the flower, in the center. Make sure that you get plenty of pollen on that stigma. All of the seeds in the flower need to be pollinated, or the fruit will be small and underdeveloped.

### Duranta, also known as Brazilian sky flower

This rapidly growing shrub can get 10 to 15 feet tall and over 5 feet wide. It's listed as hardy to only zone 9, so here in Central Texas, it dies to the ground in winter in most gardens. But in our demonstration garden at the Extension office, Duranta is evergreen, hardly even skipping a bit in the coldest of winters. We have it planted against a wall, with full sun exposure all day, so the heat that builds up during the day is radiated during the night, keeping the microclimate much warmer there than in other areas of the garden. If Duranta dies to the ground in winter in your garden, simply prune it back to about 3 inches from the ground and it will reemerge from the roots in spring. There are several cultivars of Duranta, but my favorite is the purple-flowering one. It flowers from early spring all the way through fall and doesn't bat an eyelash at heat or the lack of rainfall. We also have a white flowering cultivar in our garden, and it's also very pretty, and

## Flashback Favs

Continued...

forms more pretty yellow, ball-like fruits than other cultivars. If you want to attract native birds to your landscape, they'll love the fruit of the white-flowering cultivar. Duranta will perform best in full sun, but can take light shade.

### THINGS TO DO IN JUNE

**FERTILIZE:** Fertilize annuals with 1 cup of balanced fertilizer per 100 sq.ft. Rich compost, manure tea and fish emulsion are some organic options. Yellowing leaves near the tip of plant shoots indicate a lack of iron. Check soil pH and treat with an iron supplement, if needed. Feed roses and young fruit trees with a nitrogen fertilizer. Feed established annuals and perennials with a high nitrogen/low phosphorus fertilizer such as 15-5-10, 8-2-4 or 9 - 1 - 1.

**WATER:** Water all planted areas deeply but infrequently during dry periods. Water outdoor potted plants daily.

**LAWN CARE:** Mow every 5-7 days, leaving the clippings on the lawn. Raise mower setting to reduce stress to turf in summer. Water during the cool of early morning. Avoid weed killers now that temperatures are above 85 degrees.

**DISEASES/PESTS TO LOOK FOR:** Watch for chinch bugs in the sunny areas of your lawn, especially near streets and driveways. Webworms and other caterpillars can be treated with *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) . For scale insects, mealy bugs and spidermites, use summer oil or horticultural oil.

**PRUNE:** Remove spent flowers from daisies, daylilies, cannas and other summer flowers. Remove fruiting canes from blackberries after harvest. Tip prune new canes at 4' to promote branching. Prune dead and damaged wood from trees and shrubs as needed. Cut geraniums back and place in light shade. Do not prune oak trees at this time since the beetle that carries oak wilt is active now and may be attracted to any cuts you make.

### OTHER THINGS TO DO

Prepare fall garden beds. Remove old winter vegetables and strawberry plants from beds. Replenish mulch.



Central Texas  
Gardener

## Announcements

by Sally Dickson

Travis County Master Gardeners brought home three awards out of five entries at this year's Texas Master Gardeners Conference, April 27 - May 1, 2017:

- 1st place Education Program for East Austin Garden Fair, which was written by Karin Borinoco.
- 3rd place Outstanding Individual Master Gardener, Mikala McFerren, written by JaNet Booher.
- 3rd place Project for Rainwater Harvesting, written by Rosalie Russell.

Two other entries scored well, "Outstanding Master Gardener Association, TCMGA," written by Sue Colbath, and "Written Education, *Garden Guide for Austin and Vicinity*, 5th Edition," written by Sally Dickson.

What a great team we had this year! The writers carried the ball, but another twenty-five MGs helped by contributing pictures, editing, and adding extra information! Special thanks go to Lisa Anhaier for VMS statistics and for a collection of pictures; and to Daphne Richards for editing with a precise eye and for encouraging our efforts.

We are all a great team!



Photo by Venkappa Gani.

## Austin Area Events

**Backyard Bliss**  
**Austin Pond Society's Pond and Garden Tour**  
 Saturday and Sunday, June 3-4, 2017

Austin, TX

Make a weekend dedicated to pond touring. The north ponds are on Saturday June 3 from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm, the night pond from 8:00 pm to 11:00 pm in Cedar Park and the south ponds on Sunday from 9:00 pm to 5:00 pm. A wonderful tour is planned, 20 amazing ponds. Many have never been on the tour before.

Wear sunscreen, drink plenty of water and take your time to explore these gardens. Be inspired to create your own Backyard Bliss.

Tickets \$20 advanced purchase. For details go to [www.austinpondsociety.org](http://www.austinpondsociety.org)

**Garden Club of Austin**  
**60th Annual Plant Show & Sale**  
 Saturday and Sunday, June 3-4, 2017

Zilker Botanical Garden  
 2220 Barton Springs Rd  
 Austin, TX

Plant Sale: Held outside the Zilker auditorium on the Green, open on Saturday from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM and on Sunday from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM

Plant/Flower Show: Saturday Noon to 5:00 PM and Sunday, 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM

The show is located in the Zilker Garden Center Auditorium, open to all gardeners, you do not need to be a club member, rules and regulations are posted to our TGCOA website.

[www.thegardenclubofaustin.org](http://www.thegardenclubofaustin.org)

**Wild in the City: Living with Austin's Urban Wildlife**

Saturday, June 10, 2017  
 10 am - 12 pm

Zilker Botanical Garden  
 2220 Barton Springs Rd  
 Austin, TX

Got critters? Meredith O'Reilly will lead a discussion of common wildlife species seen in Austin's urban landscape and offer practical tips for humans to co-exist with wildlife while protecting home and garden. Meredith is the gardening specialist for 4-H CAPITAL and a Texas Master Naturalist.

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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Sue King, Vice-President for Education  
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Sally Dickson, Austin Area Garden Council  
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Bill Boytim  
Don Freeman  
Will Walker

#### **Ex Officio Member of the Board (Non-voting):**

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Travis County  
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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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Daphne Richards  
Toi Powell

**Editor and Layout:**

Liath Appleton

**Assistant Editor:**

Martha King

**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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512-854-9600

"Ah, summer, what power you have to make us suffer and like it."  
-Russell Baker