

The Compost Bin

August 2017

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

In this issue ...

Lace Bugs

Tomato, Tomato, Tomato, Tomato

Fall Gardening in Central Texas



Inside this Issue....

- Meeting, August 2 Page 2
- In the Vegetable Garden Page 3
- Lace Bugs Page 6
- Tomato, Tomato, Tomato, Tomato Page 7
- Fall Gardening in Central Texas Page 11
- Weeds and Reads Page 13
- Daphne’s Flashback Favs Page 14
- Events Page 16
- 2017 TCMGA Board Page 17
- Credits Page 18

Cover: Plant beans later this month and you’ll reap the harvest in the milder days to come.
By Bruce Leander

Right: Ruellia, Indigo Spires, Shrimp Plant, Firebush and Knock Out Rose seem to enjoy the scorching Texas heat.
By Liath Appleton



Meeting - Valerie Bugh

Pollination is the topic; Bugh will deliver.

“The movement of pollen from stamen to stigma is a major issue for plants, and they cannot easily do it themselves. While bees are the first resource that comes to mind when pollination is mentioned, no ecosystem is simple; complexity demands multiple solutions to every problem. We will look at the various animals that interact with plants in this process, and discuss the expenditures, risks and compensations.”

Our August speaker, Val Bugh, is a local naturalist specializing in the arthropods of the Austin area, with interests in taxonomy and photography. She runs the Fauna Project at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, leads insect discovery walks, teaches entomology courses, provides insect/spider identifications, gives talks to local organizations, and has published pocket guides, “Butterflies of Central Texas” and “Spiders of Texas.”

Website: [Valerie’s Austin Bug Collection](#)

Master Gardener Meeting information:
Wednesday, August 2, 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

Whew – that was a sizzling July! Historically August is the hottest month of the year, so be prepared for more of the same. If triple digit temperatures do continue, it might be wise to postpone strenuous garden chores and focus on easy tasks that can be accomplished in the early morning or evening. Indeed, gardening by the light of a silvery moon isn't such a bad idea this time of year.

I'm always amazed at the sturdy vegetable plants that stand up to the scorching heat – okra, Malabar spinach, long beans, Southern peas. Even Swiss chard and butterbeans are hanging on; quality is understandably compromised by the unrelenting heat but when the temperature begins to cool off they will return to normal production. September generally brings daytime temperatures that 'plummet' into the 80s and, more importantly, nighttime temperatures that dip into the 60s. Something to look forward to!

Every year the National Garden Bureau highlights a popular, widely adaptable, easy-to-grow vegetable, and 2017 is the Year of Brassicas. Think about adding some nutritious brassicas to your garden this fall. This large group of vegetables includes arugula, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, Chinese cabbage, collards, kale, komatsuna, mustard, pac choi, radish, rutabaga, tatsoi and turnips. Surely there is something there to satisfy every gardener.

Here is the vegetable gardener's checklist for August:

- Start seeding broccoli, cabbage and other brassicas this month if you want to grow your own transplants. Use clean pots and fresh potting soil; plants should be big enough to set into the garden in about 5 weeks.
- Cucumbers, green beans and squash can be planted from seed later this month but be prepared to water, provide shade and nurse them through the heat.
- Tomato transplants need to be set out soon so they will have enough time to set fruit and produce before the first freeze. Look for early varieties, water them deeply, and be sure to provide overhead shade for the first couple of weeks that they are in the garden.
- Keep your peppers and eggplant growing strong with a regular supply of moisture and a dose of water-soluble fertilizer every two weeks; they love fall weather and will produce right up until frost.
- Pay attention to the ornamental plants that are blooming around town and in your own garden, especially the ones that don't seem to get much attention; keep them on your list for planting next year. A few I've noticed this summer include Mexican bird of paradise, zinnias, grasses, ornamental sweet potato and agaves. Plumbago and pentas do well in morning sun or dappled sunlight this time of year, as do herbs like mint, fennel and tansy.
- If you are storing water in any type of container that does not have a tight-fitting lid – bird baths, buckets, rain barrels - treat the water with a product containing *Bacillus thuringiensis israelensis*. These products, such as Mosquito Bits®, can be found at most garden centers.



Chinese long beans, also known as yard-long beans, are best harvested when they reach 12-15 inches.

In the Vegetable Garden

Continued...



Pac choy is more tolerant of warm temperatures than other brassicas.



If you like collards give 'Green Glaze' a try. This heirloom from the 1800s can take the heat better than most other varieties; these have been growing – and producing – in my garden since last October.



Triple digit temps may shut down eggplant temporarily but healthy plants will resume production in the fall.

In the Vegetable Garden

Continued...



Seeds of broccoli, cauliflower and cabbage can be started indoors under grow lights this month.



A section of bamboo fencing provides shade for these young bean plants.

Lace Bugs

by Wizzie Brown



Adult lace bugs are small, about 1/8 inch, and highly sculptured on the upper surface. The thorax and front wings are expanded and have numerous transparent cells that look like lace. Nymphs, or immatures, are wingless, smaller, and often covered in dark spines. Eggs are inserted into leaf tissue and covered with dark excrement. Lace bugs are found on the underside of leaves.

Lace bug adults and nymphs have piercing-sucking mouthparts and suck juices from plant tissue. Feeding damage causes yellowing, stippling, and bleaching of the leaves, but damage usually isn't seen until late summer. The insects' dark excrement can also be unsightly both on the plant as well as surfaces underneath the plant.

While lace bugs are typically not a problem for healthy plants, when populations are especially high, or last for a long period of time, they may cause leaf drop or a reduction in plant growth. Since healthy plants usually do not die from lace bugs, try to keep plants in top health using cultural control methods (right plant/ right place, proper watering and fertilizing, etc.). Damaged foliage will not repair, and will either need to be replaced with new growth, or pruned from the plant. Conserve beneficial organisms to help naturally

reduce pest populations.

Any pesticide treatment that you choose will need to be targeted to the underside of the leaves. Less toxic options include things like insecticidal soap, azadirachtin, or pyrethrins.

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



TX Sprouts Program

by Cindy Haynie



Without major changes, as many as 1 in 3 US adults could have diabetes by 2050. More than 29 million US adults have diabetes, and 25% of them don't know it.¹

In Texas, 66% of adults and 33% of children are overweight or obese.² However, people with prediabetes who take part in a structured lifestyle change program can cut their risk of developing type 2 diabetes by as much as 58%.³

What does this have to do with Master Gardeners?

The Travis County Agricultural Extension Service is participating in the **TX Sprouts Program**, a research study designed to test the effects of an in-school gardening, nutrition, and cooking program on health measures in high-risk populations of elementary students. The Travis County

Master Gardeners (TCMGs) are participating in the study by assisting educators in the garden classes. A secondary aim of the study is to determine how to make the school gardens sustainable. TCMGs have the opportunity to work with and serve as advisors to the schools' Garden Leadership Committees (GLC), which involves the teachers, administrators, and parents.

The study is in the third year of a five-year project. The 2017-2018 school year will be the second "wave" of schools receiving the garden classrooms, and there will be corresponding control schools (to compare results). In the 2016-2017 school year, 25 TCMGs spent a combined 700 hours in the three school gardens helping with classes.

Here are some comments from the participating Master Gardeners:

"Michele has great organization, teaching skills, and passion is obvious! Great synergy with the kids and the teachers."

"Positive experience. Children relate to Hannah very well and seem to be learning. The garden set up is good."

"Love Hannah. Rewarding, great curriculum. The UT nutrition students have been great."

"I loved the nutrition part. I consider this program a real success for my two classes."

"Very impressed with the curriculum."

This spring, the TX Sprouts staff and volunteers built 6 more gardens, making a total of 9. There will be lessons taught at 6 of the gardens, and GLCs at all of the schools. Three of the schools, Barbara Jordan Elementary, Oak Meadows Elementary, and Pleasant Hill Elementary, will be gardening for



TX Sprouts

Continued...

the first time without the TX Sprouts staff on-site. These schools in particular will be looking to the TCMGs for gardening expertise and advice.

Approval and funding for the study is from the National Institute of Health, and the project is being run by the University of Texas with Dr. Jaimie Davis as the Principal Investigator, partnering with Seton Hospital, UT School of Health, Sustainable Food Center, and Texas A&M Agrilife Extension.

If you are interested in more information about the TX Sprouts Program, contact Cindy Haynie, Master Gardener Coordinator at cindy.haynie@ag.tamu.edu.

References:

¹ At A Glance Diabetes; Working to Reverse the US Epidemic National Diabetes Surveillance System. 2016. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Division of Diabetes Translation.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. National Diabetes Statistics Report: Estimates of Diabetes and Its Burden in the United States. 2014. Atlanta, GA: US Department of Health and Human Services. 2014.

² Jaimie Davis, PhD. A school-based gardening obesity intervention for low-income minority children, National Institutes of Health grant application. 06/30/2014.

³ Diabetes Prevention Program, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health, National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases.



Tomato, Tomato, Tomato, Tomato

by Venkappa Gani



Smallest, $\lt; \frac{1}{4}$ in. in diameter, weighing less than 1 oz., to largest, 4 in. in diameter, weighing 1 lb.

When the tomato was first introduced, nobody was willing to touch or eat it, as it belongs to deadly nightshade family. The tomato originally came from South America a century ago. Now it has made its roots throughout the globe. Classified as a berry, it was initially a small fruit, and now it has transformed into many different sizes and colors due to breeding hybridization. Some have questioned whether to classify a tomato as a fruit or a vegetable, and although it is technically a fruit, these days it is best known as a culinary vegetable.

Born and brought up in an agriculture family, I am familiar with native plants and native berries, and the tomato is one of them. Everything was grown naturally, in the dry fields and with low annual rainfall. Farming practices have changed drastically with mechanization, the industrial revolution and information technology.

When I first became interested in growing edible vegetables, fruits and herbs, the tomato was THE thing to grow in the backyard garden. I learned that the tomato is a tropical crop grown in China, India, USA and many other countries. I began growing mainly Celebrity, Juliet, and a few others in limited space. I later expanded the gardening area, and got involved in testing large scale growing. This year, 2017, I planted various sizes and colors, including a small-size black cherry tomato, to a large size cross link variety. I prepared three rows in a 50 x 4 ft area, tilling and adding compost and soil amendment. One row was for small size tomatoes and the other two for medium and large size tomatoes. The rain showers during May helped to get everything kick-started. I used metal cages

with a pole and a 2-gallon plastic cutout to protect plants from rabbits. These plants need heavy feeding, and I used a lot of organic fertilizer, applying every two weeks, and watering by hand.

There are two kinds of tomatoes: 1) Indeterminate - perennials that prefer a temperate climate. These are commonly known as "vining" tomatoes that continue growing in length throughout the growing season, and 2) Determinate - annuals that are content to grow in any climate. These are commonly known as "bush" varieties. They grow to a fixed size and ripen all of their fruit in a short period of time.



Tall plant and large-size green fruits.

Tomato

Continued...



The indeterminate type produces throughout the growing season, resulting in higher overall production. The determinate type produces one time, in large quantity, in short growing season.

I mostly use indeterminate type cherry, as well as medium to large size tomatoes. This year I had four plants of "crosslink" with large fruits and leaves. These were very tall plants, almost 8-9 ft. tall, with fruit weighing almost 1 lb. each. The tall plants look like small trees, and the birds were very attracted to these fruits. I protected them by covering with nets.

Another variety, known as Early Girl, was introduced by the Austin Garden Club as a Club Cultivar. I have been growing this one for the last three years. This is good for dry farming and clay soil. It will send deep roots to find moisture.

The Garden Club of Austin have an annual vegetable and flower show in early spring, and tomato growing competition is open to all club members. The goal is to get the perfect ripe tomato with the best color. This year, Early Girl was selected. I have been successfully

growing and participating in the annual shows for awhile, and I have received first prize the last three years in a row!

Tomato growing is a big business, amounting to \$80 billion worldwide. China is on top, capturing 30%, followed by India and USA. And there is a lot of research in breeding improving taste, color, size and shelf life.

STORAGE:

- Keep unwashed at room temp out of direct sunlight.
- Do not refrigerate as this can harm flavor.
- Keep green tomatoes in a paper bag to ripen.

CONSUMPTION:

- Eat raw in salad.
- Use to make salsa, ketchup or juice.
- Tomatoes are acidic which makes them great for canning for sauces or paste. Dry in the sun.
- Tomatoes are very popular in home cooking, restaurants and fast food chains.
- Tomatoes are grown in greenhouses for an all-season supply.

I wish you luck in growing edibles for your own good health.



Fall Gardening in Central Texas

by Carolyn Williams



Yikes, it's hot!! I do believe (thankfully) I forget from summer-to-summer how truly HOT Texas can be in July and August. I also regret that we do not have a beautiful little cabin high in the Rockies that I can escape to each year. Instead of complaining, about this time of summer, I grab my gardening pruners, hat, gloves, etc. and head out to cut back all my upcoming fall bloomers. Water and sun screen are a constant companion. Once I actually get started, it slowly begins to take shape, and I find myself realizing that about the time I finish all the needed pruning, the American Beautyberries have started putting on their show. Somehow, in all the nasty, dreary heat of August, their amazing magenta-colored berries herald the upcoming fall weather with a much needed, "hang in there, it's coming" message! In order to always have a beautiful show, trim these shrubs back in February or March. They grow rather fast, so some work is usually needed to keep them to the height and width you want.

While August is definitely one of our dormant months, it leads to our wonderful autumn weather that is generally long and mild. This is what I remember when heading out to prune all the salvias, sages, roses and even some of my herbs, like Mexican Mint Marigold (a fall favorite). This past spring's higher than average rains meant my fall bloomers had grown to unusual heights, and therefore needed more trimming. Usually I prune about 1/3 back, but this year some were pruned to almost 1/2 their size. You can judge by what their normal fall height should be. Do NOT prune back so far that their average fall

growth cannot be realized before autumn appears. And yes, I know sometimes you are pruning off flower spikes! Just remember they will reappear and give a better show a little later in the cooler season. After pruning, water them well, and with their smaller size, they can better withstand the heat. About a once-weekly watering will maintain them until a bit of cooler night time temperatures arrive. Around the first part of September I throw a shovel full of compost around the root system. There are other good products that work well to stimulate growth and blooms: alfalfa meal, blood meal and seaweed, for example. These can be combined and diluted as instructed for a good boost. You may have other products you like, which is fine, but make sure they have a good nitrogen amount, and follow instructions. Then, along with cooler nights and (hopefully) some fall rain showers, our fall plants will give us a lovely, show stopping display of blues, purples, reds and mustard yellows. Remember, anytime you fertilize with either compost or products, you need to water well afterwards. Mulching also is a welcome treat this time of year, and certainly helps to maintain the moisture around your plants.

This time of year is also a good time to start seeds, like marigolds, zinnias and cosmos that make wonderful fall companions for our taller shrub bloomers. Setting in pots beside mums, they are quite striking, and look lovely grouped with pumpkins and gourds on front porches. If you already have some growing that look rather "leggy," cut back and fertilize.

Cooler weather is the perfect time to plant a fall herb bed. Several herbs, like dill and cilantro only grow in our cooler months and do well in pots. Those seeds can be started in late August as well. Don't forget that basil is a warm season herb, so late summer start cutting the leaves off and putting them in freezer trays. Top off each section with olive oil. After freezing, I pop them into freezer bags to enjoy with

Fall Gardening

my soups and Italian meals all fall and winter. Other herbs, like oregano and thyme can be added to your basil as well.

Grasses are a wonderful addition to fall gardens. With their tassels and/or fall color, their swaying blades add such lovely interest to any garden area. If you have none in your garden, think about adding a few like Gulf Muhly, Mexican Feather grass, Big Muhly, Pine Muhly, and Pink Flamingo. We have an amazing array of grasses that do extra well in our area.

So, between lovely bloomers like Autumn Sage, Mexican Bush Sage, Indigo Spires Salvia, Copper Canyon Daisy, Asters, Amistad Salvia, herbs like Mexican Mint Marigold, annuals like cosmos, marigolds and zinnias, and grasses that we have in abundance, your garden can be spectacular!

Happy Fall Gardening!

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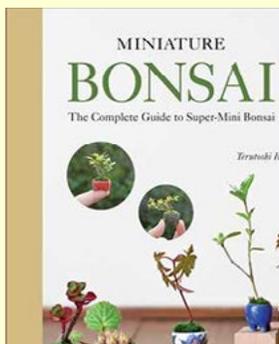
Marigolds, Blue Mist Flowers and Mexican Mint Marigold.

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.

August 2017



Miniature Bonsai: The Complete Guide to Super-Mini Bonsai - August 1st 2017

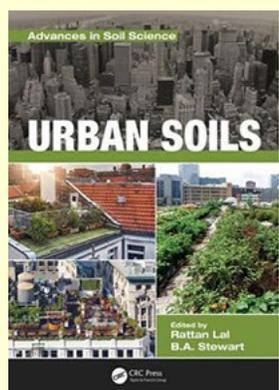
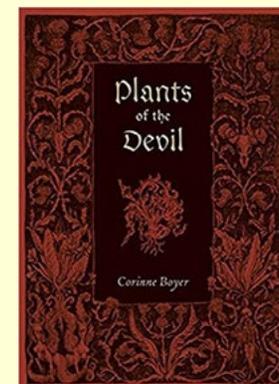
by Terutoshi Iwai

Miniature Bonsai reveals the Japanese art of super-mini bonsai gardening. As rewarding as full-scale bonsai cultivation is, mini bonsai is affordable, easy to learn and kind to your busy schedule. [more] <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/34083607-miniature-bonsai>

Plants of the Devil - August 1st 2017

by Corinne Boyer

Plants of the Devil examines the history and magic of herbs associated with Satan and his minions, delving into the folklore of ancient Europe and the British Isles. [more] <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/32928065-plants-of-the-devil>



Urban Soils - August 11, 2017

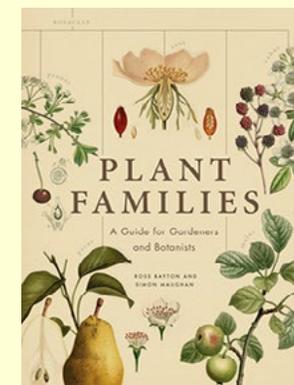
by R Lal, B A Stewart (Contributor)

Urban soil comprises geological material drastically disturbed by anthropogenic activities. Urban soils play a role in the production of food, aesthetics of residential areas, and pollutant dynamics. [more]

Plant Families: A Guide for Gardeners and Botanists - August 22, 2017

by Ross Bayton, Simon Maughan

Most of us lump plants together in one big family, and when pressed can only explain their grouping by what they're not—not an animal, not a mineral, and so just a plant. In reality, there are hundreds of different plant families, each grouped logically by a unique family history and genealogy. [more] <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/34524363-plant-families>



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=NFUaWIRGdo4> (CTG 2014)

Reinvigorating stagnant compost piles

If you have a compost pile, you may get busy with other activities and neglect it. Like me, you might only turn it once a season, when this garden chore finally makes its way back to the top of your garden maintenance to-do list. And if this description fits you, you've noticed that your compost pile stops moving when it isn't turned.

So, how do you get that fabulous potential pile of gardener's black gold moving again? The answer is to add a bit of nitrogen when you turn it. Just a small amount will wake up those dormant, hungry microbes and get them moving again, heating up your pile and getting it to the finish line. Grass clippings are a great source of nitrogen, and although adding those will feed your microbes, they also add to the volume of the pile, which you're trying to decrease. If you built your pile according to the recommended size of three feet tall and wide, adding more volume after you've first built it slows down the process. If you're patient that's still a fine solution. But if you're looking to have some home-produced compost for your garden beds, adding a smaller volume source of nitrogen is better. Organic fertilizers that are relatively high in nitrogen work great, as does manure. But another great source is coffee grounds. Many local coffee shops are giving their coffee grounds away to anyone who will take them...absolutely free!

Giant coneflower (*Rudbeckia maxima*), also known as Giant Blackeyed Susan

Viewer David sent us a fabulous photo from his garden of these stunning plants. This native wildflower is not as often seen as the more common bluebonnets and Indian blankets. It's also different in that it's a perennial. Plant in full sun, and give it a little extra water to keep it extra happy and ensure healthy blooms. Giant coneflower produces its striking yellow bloom stalks in late spring, and flowers all summer, making it a vital source of pollen for our native bee population. Shear back to the ground in late summer, and be sure to water during the winter, if we aren't getting rain. Giant coneflower prefers well-drained soil and will not survive extreme drought for long periods, so plant in an area where you can easily supplement irrigation with a bucket of harvested water from your kitchen faucet or shower.

Flashback Favs

Continued...

THINGS TO DO IN AUGUST:

FERTILIZE: Fertilize fruiting vegetables after first fruit set for higher productivity. Feed chrysanthemums every 2-3 weeks until buds appear, then weekly until buds show color. Fertilize roses for fall bloom. Feed berries and fruit showing poor color/vigor.

WATER: Water all planted areas deeply but infrequently during dry periods. Outdoor container plants need daily watering. Keep azaleas and fruit trees watered well, because spring blooms are developing.

SOIL: Discard faded annuals and refurbish soil as needed. Prepare loose, well-drained beds for fall bulb planting. Clean up established garden beds. Turn compost pile.

LAWN CARE: Mow every 5-7 days and leave the clippings on the lawn. Set mower higher in shady areas to promote denser turf. Avoid weed killers whenever temperatures are above 85°. Note: Avoid using weed killers containing atrazine, as this chemical leaches into our groundwater.

DISEASES / PESTS TO LOOK FOR: Watch for cutworms on new tomato transplants; protect with paper collars around base, above and below ground. Watch for grub worms, chinch bugs and fire ants in lawns. Check for borers in peaches, plums and other trees. Look for aphids and powdery mildew on crape myrtles.

PRUNE: Prune roses back by 1/3. Deadhead spent blooms and seed pods from crape myrtles for continued blooms. Trim photinias for red fall color. Remove dead and damaged wood from shrubs and trees. Pinch chrysanthemums for the last time.



Central Texas
Gardener

Austin Area Events

Wise Rainwater Control for Central Texas

Saturday, August 5, 2017

10 am - 12 pm

Zilker Botanical Garden
2220 Barton Springs Rd
Austin, TX

Rain gardens, Rainwater Collection, Dry Creeks and Wetlands
Drought one month, floods the next. Yes, you must be gardening in Central Texas! Can a homeowner control excess run-off from spilling into streets, storm drains and prized succulent gardens? What are some questions that may need to be considered before deciding to invest in any or all of the common options for water control? Join seasoned Travis County Master Gardeners Marian Stasney and Pat Mokry for a discussion on the practical aspects of taming excess rainwater, including functionality, location, construction and maintenance.

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

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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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"What dreadful hot weather we have!
It keeps me in a continual state of inelegance." - Jane Austen