

# The Compost Bin

September 2017

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

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In the Vegetable Garden

Spider Mites

Daphne's Flashback Favs

Weeds and Reads

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Cover: 'Scarlett O'Hara' morning glory – such a show off.

By Bruce Leander

Right: Obedient Plant reminding us that fall is on its way.

By Liath Appleton



## Meeting - Ed Parken & Ken Schroeder

### Rainwater Harvesting

At our September monthly meeting two of our very own master gardeners will present the TCMGA Rainwater Harvesting project that was awarded by the Texas Master Gardener Association. Learn about this Rainwater Harvesting project and come with your questions about how to create one of your own. Ed Parken and Ken Schroeder will engage us with facts, illustrations and experience.

Master Gardener Meeting information:  
Wednesday, September 6, 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



Brighten the garden with colorful varieties of Swiss chard.

My plants seem to know that cooler weather is on the way. After weeks of struggling just to stay alive, my butterbeans have perked up and are starting to bloom. A mid-summer planting of okra is producing like crazy, morning glories are glorious and Malabar spinach, which tends to grow anywhere and everywhere, is now covered in thick, juicy, deep green leaves. I'm grateful for the encouragement they have given me, the reminder that fall is on the way and that our ultra-hot summer will soon be coming to an end.

Temperatures will cool off slightly this month, signaling the start of the fall garden season. The predicted high for September 1st is 91° – that ten degree drop from August's 101° days will feel pretty good. The importance of water cannot be understated this time of year. Newly planted seedlings are especially susceptible to drying out, and vegetable plants that are stressed early in their growth stage sometimes cannot recover; the result could be a puny head of cauliflower or a cabbage

that doesn't form a tight head. Monitor seedlings and transplants and do not let them wilt. Give them some temporary shade and water twice a day if necessary.

Here is the vegetable gardener's checklist for September:

- Remove any plants that are diseased or bug-infested rather than letting them languish in the garden – it's difficult to revive a sickly plant when heat is oppressive and water is limited.
- Plant some bush beans, summer squash or cucumbers; these quick-growing crops will germinate in less than a week (as long as they are in moist soil), and most varieties start producing in only 50-60 days. There are many varieties to choose from, both heirloom and hybrid, and I've never come across any that didn't deserve some space in my garden.
- Start additional transplants of kale, broccoli, collards, spinach, mustard and lettuce. As mature plants get harvested from the garden you'll have others ready to plug right in.
- Root crops – carrots, beets, radishes and turnips - can be planted from seed this month. Plant a small section every week or so to ensure a continuous harvest.
- Add some blooming color to the vegetable garden with plantings of alyssum, calendula, petunias, snapdragon and stock.



Take time to appreciate the diminutive blooms of 'Dwarf Grey Sugar' snow peas.

## In the Vegetable Garden

Continued...



Broadcasting seeds in blocks is an alternative to planting in single rows; here carrots, Swiss chard, lettuce and beets fill a bed.

- Brighten your fall garden or landscape with colorful varieties of Swiss chard, a plant that loves our cool weather and is rarely bothered by pests. Use it as you would spinach in any recipe.
- Mulch the garden to help conserve moisture, moderate soil temperature and limit weed growth.
- Prepare one or more compost bins to collect leaves, grass and landscape trimmings.
- Feed fall tomatoes with water soluble fertilizer every 2-3 weeks. Follow label instructions.
- Plant sugar snap, snow peas and English peas mid-month. They will start producing in about 2 months, just in time for Thanksgiving, and hopefully will keep producing right up until Christmas.
- Gradually expose vegetable transplants to outdoor conditions before moving them to the garden, especially if they have been grown in a cool, comfortable indoor environment.
- Fall vegetables are especially suited to containers. Try compact varieties of broccoli or cabbage, combinations of colorful greens or small plantings of radishes or carrots.
- Have a fresh container of Bt insecticide at the ready to fight caterpillar outbreaks on brassica plants.



Start collecting leaves for compost and mulch...you can never have enough!

## In the Vegetable Garden

Continued...



Provide shade for new transplants until they get established.



'Purple Haze', 'Solar Yellow' and 'Atomic Red' carrots yield a colorful surprise at harvest time.

## Spider Mites

by Wizzie Brown



It's hot. It's dry. It's time to look for spider mites! You'll need to head into the garden for this task as these pests are small and often found on the underside of leaves. Feeding can cause leaves to discolor, causing a speckled appearance. With severe infestations, leaves discolor to a silver or bronze color which may result in the leaves dropping from the plant. While mites feed on the underside of leaves, damage is more apparent on the tops.

Spider mites are arachnids, closely related to spiders and ticks, and are able to produce silk. They often cover leaves with webbing, especially in large populations. Webbing helps protect the mites and their eggs from natural enemies and harsh environmental conditions, and may sometimes protect them from pesticides.

Spider mites lay their eggs along the leaf vein during the growing season. Eggs are round and large in size when compared to adult mites. Some species of spider mites peak during warmer months of the year while others become more active in the cooler months of the year. The mites are able to develop more quickly when temperatures are warmer, with some spider mites going from egg to adult in less than 1 week. Spider mites thrive in dry conditions while their natural enemies require more humid conditions. Dry conditions allow spider mite populations to grow with little predation or parasitism that would help to

keep the population at an acceptable level.

There are many predatory arthropods that feed on spider mites. Some of these include predatory mites, spider mite destroyers (a type of ladybug), minute pirate bugs, big-eyed bugs, and predatory thrips. Proper watering of plants may help to reduce spider mite outbreaks as it can reduce stress brought on by drought. Using strong jets of water to hose plants can also help to dislodge spider mites. Miticides or acaricides can be used to manage spider mite outbreaks. Look for active ingredients such as horticultural oils (watch temperature when you use oils), insecticidal soaps, abamectin, bifenthrin, dimethoate or acephate.

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)

## 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=pgyYj-UEGLI> (CTG 2013)

### What's wrong with my Mandevilla plant?

Viewer Marie's plant is in a large pot, getting sun until about 2 in the afternoon. The leaves are yellowing and have some splotches, and some leaves are falling off. Well, Marie, there are definitely a few issues here that we can help with. First, the amount of sunlight. Mandevilla are tropical species, and although they do need more sunlight than many tropicals, they still can't take the searing intensity of our sun here in Central Texas, and more importantly, they struggle in the moisture-sucking heat that comes with it. We have our Mandevilla in very bright shade in our demonstration garden, and they perform very well. Leaves grown in shade tend to be darker green, so give your plant a good shearing, to remove the yellowing leaves and struggling growth, after you've moved it to a shadier spot. Then watch for the new growth, which should be slightly darker. Some of the leaf damage here is sunburn, but most appears to be photooxidation. When sunlight is very intense, it can burn sensitive leaves, causing brown spots, or sunburn. But before the leaf completely burns, you may notice yellowing leaves, which is a sign that the heat of the sun has denatured the chlorophyll. And since chlorophyll is a green pigment, less chlorophyll means less green. The smaller brown splotches here are likely secondary issues, possibly fungal, which move in once the plant is stressed and vulnerable. So Marie, move those containers to where they won't get direct sun any later than mid-morning, and shear the plant to about 6 inches to force it to produce new, healthier growth. You'll see improvement in no time.

### Shoestring Acacia, *Acacia stenophylla*

This strikingly, unique tree is widely used in the desert southwest, not only for its beautiful form and weeping habit, but also because it thrives in extreme heat with very little water once established. As with the majority of southwestern species, this tree will not take kindly to poorly drained soils, so if you have heavy clay, you might want to choose another species. Shoestring Acacia grows 20 to 40 feet tall and will have a canopy about 15 feet wide. From a distance, it resembles a willow tree, with very long, shoestring-like leaves. I could go off on an excited botanical tangent here, about how the "leaves" are actually modified structures called phyllodes, but I'll spare you that plant-nerd ramble for the moment. Shoestring Acacia is a relatively fast-growing tree, with all of the potential issues that come with it. It has a rather thin trunk and long, thin branches, leaving it more susceptible to breakage and wind damage. This tree is evergreen, and is best used as an accent, to enhance the beauty of your landscape: with its diffuse leaves and billowy habit, it provides very little shade. Shoestring Acacia has a similar, powder-puff flower to other Acacias, but you may hardly notice them amongst the graceful foliage. Although this tree can be virtually ignored once established, when you do water it, be sure to do so deeply and thoroughly, but not too

## Flashback Favs

Continued...

much or too often, or it might develop root-rot.

### THINGS TO DO IN SEPTEMBER

**FERTILIZE:** Feed chrysanthemums every 2-3 weeks until buds appear, then weekly until buds show color. Fertilize roses, gardenias and magnolias.

**WATER:** Water trees and shrubs deeply and slowly.

**DIVIDE:** Transplant after dividing: Amaryllises, Callas, Cannas, Daylilies, Irises, Liriope, Wood Ferns.

**SOIL:** Test soil every three years to help plan fertilizer applications. Start a compost pile with fall leaves and yard debris; shred with lawnmower. Replenish mulch in beds.

**LAWN CARE:** Watch for brown patch in St. Augustine turf as temperatures cool. Lawns with a history of the disease should be sprayed in late month and again in three weeks with Terraclor or Daconil. Early morning is the best time to water lawns. Mow every 5-7 days, leaving the clippings on the lawn.

**DISEASES / PESTS TO LOOK FOR:** Watch roses for blackspot and mildew. Fall webworms are easiest to control when treated early with *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt).

**PRUNE:** Remove dead and damaged wood from shrubs and trees. Lightly prune pyracanthas so berries will show.



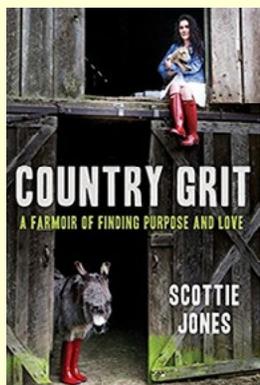
Central Texas  
Gardener

## 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.

### September 2017

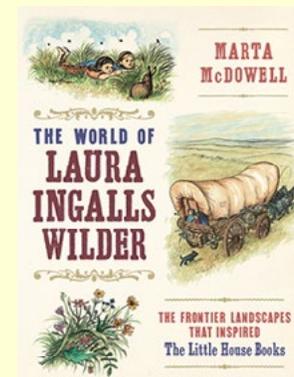


**Country Grit: A Farmoir of Finding Purpose and Love** - September 5, 2017  
by Scottie Jones

Scottie Jones lived a typical suburban, professional life in Pheonix until her husband, Greg, got into a near-fatal car accident. While recovering, he became convinced that they needed a change and a simpler way of life, one more connected with nature and with each other. [\[more\]](#)

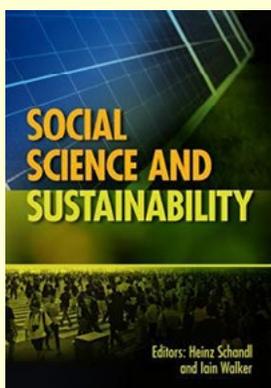
**The World of Laura Ingalls Wilder: The Frontier Landscapes that Inspired the Little House Books** - September 20, 2017  
by Marta McDowell

2017 is the 150th anniversary of Laura Ingalls Wilder's birthday. Her beloved Little House series tells a classic coming-of-age story based on Wilder's own family life and is a reflection of the pioneer spirit of the time. They are also deeply rooted in the natural world. The plants, animals, and landscapes are so integral to the stories, they are practically their own characters. [\[more\]](#)



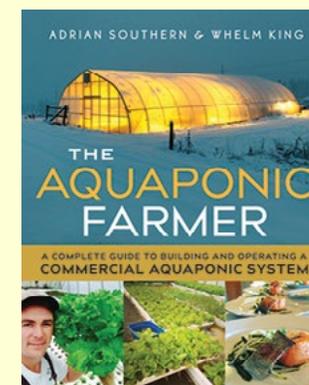
**Social Science and Sustainability** - September 30, 2017  
by Heinz Schandl (Editor), Iain Walker (Editor)

Sustainability policies shape the ways that society and the economy interact with the environment, natural resources, and ecosystems, and they address issues such as water, energy, food security, and climate change. These policies are complex and, at times, obscured by contestation, uncertainty, and sometimes ignorance. [\[more\]](#)



**The Aquaponic Farmer: A Complete Guide to Building and Operating a Commercial Aquaponic System** - October 10, 2017  
by Adrian Southern, Whelm King

The Aquaponic Farmer is the only complete practical guide to understanding, constructing, and operating a family-farm scale commercial cold-water aquaponic system for raising trout and vegetables. [\[more\]](#)



## Announcements



Williamson County Master Gardeners Association Presents

# Landscaping Texas Style

**Space is limited  
Register today!**

A day-long seminar featuring experts in their fields discussing research based and EarthKind® landscape techniques that provide beautiful central Texas landscapes while preserving and protecting the environment.



**October 14, 2017 8:00 am - 4:00 pm \$50/Person\***

**Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Bldg.  
3151 SE Inner Loop, Georgetown, TX**



- **Principles of EarthKind® Landscapes**  
*Val Black, Master Gardener*
- **Irrigating the Landscape**  
*Jessica Woods, City of Round Rock Water Conservation Coordinator*
- **Selecting and Caring for Trees**  
*Heather Brewer, City of Georgetown Urban Forester*
- **Selecting and Maintaining Turf Grasses**  
*Andrea Fonseca, Williamson County Extension Agent, Horticulture*
- **Plants for Williamson County**  
*Colleen Dieter, Central Texas gardening educator, Red Wheelbarrow Design*
- **Insects in the Landscape**  
*Wizzie Brown, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Specialist*

\* Registration form is available online at [www.txmg.org/williamson/](http://www.txmg.org/williamson/) Payment by check or money order and can be made in person or by mail.  
ATTN: Master Gardeners  
Williamson County Extension Office 3151 SE Inner Loop Ste. A  
Georgetown, TX 78628  
**Registration closes September 29, 2017.**  
**Questions? Call 512-943-3300.**

## Austin Area Events

### **Austin Cactus & Succulent Society Fall Show & Sale**

Saturday & Sunday, September 2-3, 2017  
10 am - 5 pm

Zilker Botanical Garden  
2220 Barton Springs Rd  
Austin, TX

- Plant show with specimen cacti and succulent plants from around the world
- Plant sales with vendors from Texas, New Mexico, and Oklahoma
- Handcrafted pottery
- Daily silent auction and hourly plant raffles
- Expert advice and free literature available.

Details at <http://austincss.com>

FREE admission with paid admission to Zilker Botanical Garden.

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.

### **Bulbs for the Austin Area**

Saturday, September 9, 2017  
10 am - 12 pm

Zilker Botanical Garden  
2220 Barton Springs Rd  
Austin, TX

Are you tired of planting bulbs that bloom once and you never see them again? Learn some of the reasons bulbs struggle in our climate and soil while others naturalize into generous clumps that you can share with your friends. Travis County Master Gardener Betty Dunn will discuss some reliable and newer varieties that grow well in our area.

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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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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**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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"By all these lovely tokens  
September days are here,  
With summer's best of weather  
And autumn's best of cheer." - Helen Hunt Jackson