



The Guadalupe Gardener



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A monthly publication of the Guadalupe County Master Gardeners in cooperation with the Texas A&M AgriLIFE Extension, Guadalupe

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Our last three membership meetings have been "standing room only" with exciting speakers and lots of energy!! Ellen Laubhan promises to continue inviting experienced speakers on the popular topics which you have suggested. I apologize for the lack of seating but look forward to our "new and improved" Extension meeting room. Remodeling of the AgriLife Building is under way.

Guadalupe County Master Gardeners made significant contributions to all phases of the San Antonio Stock Show and Rodeo (page 8) again this year. Even with our substantial help, there were many vacant positions during many shifts. I don't know what Bexar County MGs would have done without us. "We" thank all of you who volunteered your time and effort. Hopefully you found the experience rewarding.

Your Board was delighted to receive Ellen's report of the membership survey results. We appreciate the number of members who responded and the thought you put into your comments. Your Board held a "Special" meeting on February 27th to consider your recommendations on improving our business meetings. I believe in trying new ideas and continuous improvement of our GCMG Association. Our March 20th business meeting will include an open discussion of this topic. I hope you will give this subject some more thought and share your ideas. So if you're not delighted with our business meeting format, this is a meeting you don't want to miss!

Bob Teweles

March 20th - 7 PM

Program- Principles of Xeriscaping. Marty Ruona, Landscaper and Master Gardener, San Antonio

6:30 pm refreshments, 7 pm program
8 pm meeting

Don't forget your name tag - and plants for the plant exchange.

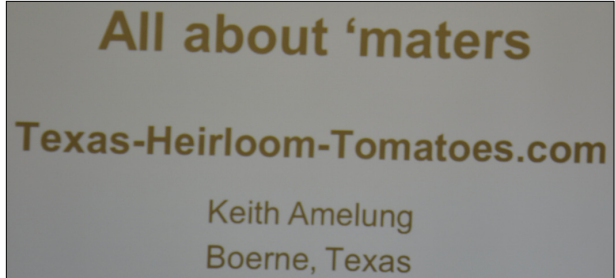
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Association News



February Meeting Program



Keith Amelung, owner of Texas-Heirloom-Tomatoes.com, presented a program on heirloom tomatoes for the February educational program for the Guadalupe County Master Gardeners. Keith has been raising tomatoes in Boerne, Texas for the last 10 years. Keith talked about his interest in tomatoes and how he got started raising heirloom tomatoes. He brought tomatoes for sale and presented the association with tomatoes for door prizes.

Getting started: He stressed the importance of a sunny location and good soil when selecting the location of your garden. He believes you need at least 6-8 hours of sun and late evening 6 hours is better than early morning 8 hours. He recommends a north/ south orientation rather than an east/ west location. He says once nighttime temperature reach the 70's the tomatoes will no longer produce.

He explained the difference between determinate - tomatoes that stay a certain size and produce tomatoes all at one time (usually the choice for commercial growers) and indeterminate - where the tomato plants grow larger and produce over a longer period of time.

Soil preparation and amendments: Keith uses compost (about 6-8% of the soil), earthworm castings and rock powders (vulcanite or lava sand) in his soil. Healthy soil has lots of earth worms in it. He does not use synthetic fertilizers. Every 2 weeks he uses a foliar spray of fish emulsion, seaweed extract and molasses using a pump sprayer.

During the Q&A he said he uses elbon rye grass in the fall for nematodes. If you can rotate your crops, he recommends every 2-3 years. He plants legumes between growing periods. He recommended several favorite varieties of heirloom tomatoes.

He briefly discussed collecting seeds, the huge impact of weather on your crop from one season to the next, and the fact that commercial growers cannot produce good tasting tomatoes for the super market, although they will be very pretty. He suggested cattle panels for cages and frames for your garden as they are inexpensive and very versatile.

For more information, or to order tomatoes, you can check out Texas-Heirloom-Tomatoes.com.

Report submitted by Sandy Foss. Photos by Marvin "T" Taylor.

FUTURE PROGRAMS

April 17: Ray Elizondo, San Antonio Daylily Society, will speak about Daylilies

May 15: John Pape and Kevin McCormick, Pape Pecan Farms of Seguin, will speak about Guadalupe County's Heritage Pecans: Steps to a Successful Harvest.

February Meeting



Clara Fischer won \$32 in the raffle. Bob Ierien won a \$10 nursery gift certificate. John Lewicki won two tickets to the Home & Garden Show that will be held at the Alamodome in San Antonio from February 21-23. Our speaker brought heirloom tomatoes to sell. He also brought six tomatoes for giveaways. Winners of those tomatoes were: Betty Hughes, Clara Fischer, Iris Seale, Jim Johnson, Bob Davis, and Don Hilbert.



Photos by
Marvin "T" Taylor

GCMG Annual Awards Recognition Program



Cindy Waechter proposed the idea of awarding recognition pins for “Years of Service” and annual “Hundred Hour” pins.. The GCMG Board approved the idea and at the February meeting, Bob Teweles and Peggy Jones recognized the members with their 20, 15, 10, 5, and 3 year pins. Liz Romero received a 20 year pin. The 15 year pins went to Dale & Ann Odvody, Iris Seale, and Larry Taylor. There were 21 ten year pins presented, 36 five year pins and 24 three year pins.



Those Master Gardeners who earned and reported 100 or more volunteer hours in 2013 received a “Watering Can” pin which can be worn during 2014. Those Guadalupe Master Gardeners with over 200 hours of service in 2013 were Dale & Ann Odvody, Bob Teweles, Peggy Jones, and Dave Elder (pictured) and Cindy Waechter. In addition there were 22 other members receiving pins for over 100 hours of service in 2013. Way to go! If you were unable to pick up your pin at the February meeting,



please contact Cindy Waechter at a future meeting.



Photos by
Marvin “T”
Taylor

Earth Day 2014

Preparations are already under way for Earth Day 2014. A planning meeting was held in conjunction with the February meeting. Photo by Marvin “T” Taylor



Texas Master Gardener Association Director’s Meeting

Peggy Jones and Dave Elder attended this meeting, and Peggy gave the highlights of the meeting. Dick Coupe was elected President, and the new Director of Texas A&M AgriLife is Dr. Douglas Steele. He gave a summary on Cost Recovery. Bell County will host the 2015 conference, and the 2014 conference will be held in Midland/Odessa. If anyone would like to read the minutes, members can look at the Texas Master Gardeners web page txmg.org.



Specialist Certification

President Bob Teweles awarded **Jose Contreras** his Specialist Certificate and pin for completing the Firewise Specialist Training Program.

Green Team



First Monday of the month - 8 a.m. at the City Hall Annex on N. River St., Seguin.
For more information call Hughlene Micheli 830-379-5673 .

KWED Airs Great Gardening Programs

Our February speakers were:

February 1 - Hazel Mondin - Spring gardening and gardening tips for senior citizens

February 8 - MG Peggy Jones - Pruning Roses and other landscape plants

February 15 - MG Ryla Cunningham and MG Gene Griffin

February 22 - MG Penny Glawe - Spring gardening

And scheduled for the first Saturday in March - MG Larry Taylor - Monthly Gardening checklist for March.

Volunteers always appreciated - Please contact Bob Grafe (alaskagrafe@yahoo.com)

MGs Help Elementary School Gardening Club in Wilson County

Mrs. Casey Pietka, Floresville South Elementary School teacher, has 6 garden beds at the school and is starting up a gardening club using the Junior Master Gardener curriculum. The club is held on Monday's after school from 2:45 – 4:00 pm. Our MGs, [Jerilyn Preston](#) and [Ramonita Cardona](#), are both working on [this project at Floresville South Elementary](#).

Refreshments

1. The Refreshments were provided by Marilyn Anderson, Pat Schultze, Mary Jane Lucky, Beth Zies, Betty Hughes and a great Chocolate Cake from an anonymous member. Thank you very much for all the wonderful refreshments that you brought to the meeting.

2. Judith Johnson, Liz Romero, Marilyn Anderson, Pat Schultze, Carol Calentine, and Betty Hughes helped with the unloading of the supplies and tables for the meeting. If I overlooked someone, I apologize. We appreciate your help very much. Thank you.

Submitted By Treva Hicks, Refreshment Volunteer Coordinator

Members Share Preferences for Volunteering, Education Programs, and Overall Direction of GCMG in Recent Survey

We asked and got a great response – **thank you** to the 73% GCMG members who took a survey in January to share information on your needs and preferences about volunteering, meetings, education programs and the overall direction of the organization.

Below is a brief summary of the results of the survey, which was taken by 102 out of 140 members and interns. The summary below includes themes and trends expressed by members in the survey. The results of the entire survey, including responses to the questions and all comments, can be viewed on the GCMG website, or by clicking <http://guadalupecountymastergardeners.org/member-news/>

The GCMG Board held a special meeting February 27 to begin discussing the results of the survey and how to use the information and preferences expressed by members. The Board recommended that a survey be conducted because the last member survey was in 2006. Ellen Laubhan, VP of GCMG this year, developed the survey with President Bob Teweles, and following review by Board members; it was placed online and mailed out for non-computer using members to take.

A summary of the 10 questions and responses follows.

Question 1: Who responded and what that tells us:

- The survey respondents (102) represent a cross-section of active and less active meeting attendees. We heard from both members who attend frequently (45% attended 6-10 or more meetings), and an even larger percentage of those who attend less frequently (55% attended 0-5 meetings).

Overall, the survey information is valuable because we're hearing from both very active members, and those who attend fewer meetings/programs. Implementing recommendations from the survey could help increase participation of less active members.

Questions 2, 3 and 4: These 3 questions addressed members' **level of participation**, barriers to participating more, what would motivate/encourage them to participate more, and what members would like to see done differently at monthly meetings.

3 consistent themes were expressed across all sets of responses:

Life/family/personal/work commitments limiting involvement time are influencing members' level of participation more than any other single factor.

Shorter, more streamlined business meetings would motivate members to attend more often. A high percentage of members are asking that meetings be kept at/under 2 hours (53%), and to limit the meeting to less time (42%). Twelve+ persons made format change suggestions, including limiting reports and increasing the amount of interaction about important MG decisions.

Stronger education programs, with less repetition of speakers and topics, and more in-depth information would motivate members to attend more often. (See Q5 and Q6 below)

Questions 5 and 6: These questions addressed **monthly speaker's topics and presentations**, asking members whether they were relevant to members' needs as (Continued on following page)

(SURVEY Continued from prior page)

Master Gardeners, and what topics and speakers they'd like to see offered in 2014 and beyond. 72% said speakers' topics and information presented are relevant, 1% said not relevant, and 27% said "sometimes relevant." Of the 24 open-ended comments, the following themes surfaced related to improving programs:

- Provide more variety, less repetition, more in-depth/advanced information, present seasonally when the information can be applied, relate more closely to gardening, and provide some weekend field trips for those who can't attend on weekdays or at night.

This is consistent with Theme #3 above, asking for stronger education programs, less repetition of speakers and topics, and more in-depth information. A significant percentage (33%) asked for more speaker Q&A time. Only 3% want less speaker time.

Questions 7, 8, and 9: Questions addressed **volunteer projects** members consider most important, the factors members use when selecting projects in which to participate, and volunteer hours (91% of members are not having difficulty earning 12 volunteer hours). Themes include:

- **Type of Projects** considered most to least important, in order: Community Education (49%), Youth (45%), Events (41%), and Community Garden (37%). The least support was expressed for the Community Garden in both project rankings and comments. 5 persons commented the Community Garden would better serve the community as a teaching/training facility to teach others to grow food, instead of having MG members do the actual gardening.

- **Major factors in choosing projects** in which to participate include location (77%) and type of project (64%), i.e. hands-on, short/longer term, relation to our mission of education, with day of the week and time of day also somewhat important. Several mentioned the team approach, with small committed teams to lead projects, as being important in their project selection.

A theme also surfaced from those commenting in #10 (below) related to **volunteering and project selection**. Several members suggested holding open discussions about project selection to set priorities, and recommended streamlining, eliminating what's not working and expanding what is working.

Question 10: When asking members how we can ALL **improve the effectiveness of GCMG**, these themes surfaced among the 47 open-ended comments:

- The largest group of comments (9+) were **positive, supportive of leadership and the way the organization is going**. These members also said they are doing all they can at present and had no suggestions for changes at this time.
- The 2nd largest number of comments (6+) suggested **ways to promote MG more visibly to the community**, being more vocal about our services, and increasing overall awareness. Suggestions were made to form or expand alliances/liaisons/partnerships with similar organizations; have a float in the parade; publish weekly MG columns in local papers; use social media to reach persons outside the organization with information about events; and hold a media event at the Big Red Barn and/or Community Garden.
- 5+ expressed **concerns related to a lack of leaders stepping up for key positions**, possibly due to the amount of time involved in these positions. Others commented about the high volume of work a few members are doing. Others related to this topic suggested holding open discussions about project selection to set priorities, and recommended streamlining, eliminating what's not working and expanding what is working.



Construction (400 to 500 hours were spent on construction):

Pictured are GCMGs who worked Feb 3rd at SASSR construction: Dale Odvody, JR Knight, Katie McLean, Bob Teweles, Janet Magee, Cindy Martin, Polly Ruppert, and Pat Schultze. Not pictured but working were Joanne Rand and John Lewicki.

During construction food, snacks, cold bottled water, coffee, hot water for tea with tea bags were available and lunch was provided. The workers really enjoy the spread Betty Hughes and her team of volunteers put on. No one went away hungry for lack of food.

To start Andy Perez and I built fence, and mulch is in place in and around the building since Bob Teweles, Andy, and I did a whole lot of shoveling and raking. Monday and Tuesday, February 3rd & 4th, are plant planting days. Ten GCMGs showed up to help haul in and place vegetable plants which arrived late. We will also need to complete the construction of the Master Gardner booth. Tomorrow, ornamental plants and fruit trees will be delivered, moved into the barn and placed where they belong. All of the plants delivered today and tomorrow will be buried in their pots in the mulch in the barn.

One more day of construction. I think there were four of us from GCMG, but we were moving so fast the whole day was a blur. There were unexpected problems to solve at every turn, but eventually everything came together. Tomorrow, we fine tune everything we have done for the last two weeks. And then the construction team goes home and the SASSR begins Thursday, February 6th, at noon.

For all those who participated in the construction phase, thank you. Most days GCMG folks built or help build the majority of the facility. For those of you who are laughing your fool heads off about those of us who did participate, you missed a really good time and a learning experience - and many really good free lunches.

SASSR Begins:

A very important reason that we participate at the rodeo is to educate youth - the future of tomorrow. Volunteers manned the MG Booth, served as greeters, and as youth activities and school tours escorts. This year the Buckaroo Farms greeter was a new position. It is very similar to the "greeters" in that you will have a chair/stool to sit on. It will offer a bit of flexibility though in that you can easily leave the position for a few minutes to walk around. Free parking was provided and there was a shuttle from the parking to the building on a 1/2 hour basis. Admittance to the grounds was free, snacks and bottled water free also. Class 25 spent around 60 hours at the rodeo and there were still desperate calls for help coming out as late as February 20th.

At the MG Booth the rodeo tomato, Valley Cat, was for sale. It is reported to be a VFN heat tolerant early producer of 20 - 30 pounds of fruit. Besides the Valley Cats, Tycoon tomatoes in one gallon containers, cherry tomatoes in four inch pots, a variety of herbs, artichokes, strawberry hanging baskets, Gerber Daisy Pots, and other stuff were for sale.

Tear Down

Tear-down started February 24, at 8:00 a.m. and lasted 2 1/2 to 3 days Those of you who think things moved fast during construction, we blur during tear down. Workers come when they can, leave when they need to. Reservations are not required. We accept all the free help we can get.

All information was excerpted from frequent e-mails from Dale Odvody. Photo from Bob Teweles.

Orchids - Part I

by Dave Elder

So someone gave you an orchid as a gift. Congratulations! You are now one of the thousands of people who love houseplants and are trying out an orchid to see if you can do it. You can, trust me. If I can keep orchids, so can you.



Most likely you have a Phalaenopsis, or as orchid people call them "Phils". This family of orchids is one of 24 families that have been classified and cataloged. The type of orchid you have is a hybrid (or an orchid that's natural characteristic has been modified by man). Other main types of orchids that you may find in orchid outlets are: Cymbidium, Oncidium, Cattleya, or Dendrobiums.

Since there are more orchid nurseries in Texas than any other state, you have the opportunity to have access to many types and colors of orchids. The Phalaenopsis (or Phil) is listed as a Texas All-Star by Texas A & M due to their ease of growing, maintenance and durability.

Buying Orchids

Now you have your first orchid and you want more. So you go out looking for a companion orchid for your first one. Here are a few things I look for when I am shopping for orchids.

Are there any small brown spots on the petals? (One of the signs of old age of the blooms.)

Do any of the leaves seem to be rolling over on their side or are shriveled? (This is a sign of improper watering and has caused some stress. These leaves will not revert back to their original position.)

Are the leaves shiny or dull? (Dull leaves indicate that the plant has not received enough light.)

OK, you have found a plant that passes all of the tests. Now while you are at the plant store, you need to buy some orchid plant food and some orchid planting mix (shredded bark). I will be talking about these items later.



Taking your Orchids Home

You are home with your new orchid - now what? Lay down some newspaper to keep your area clean. Pull your orchid out of the pot and check to see the condition of the roots and potting mix. All of the roots should be white with green tips. If you have any roots that are brown and shriveled, cut them off with scissors that you have dipped in alcohol. The potting mix should be a combination of pieces of bark, some sphagnum moss, and fine pieces of old wood shavings. Repot the plant back into its original container.



TO BE CONTINUED