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May Speaker - Jack Waite

Water is always on the minds of area gardeners, and we always are looking for different ways to more efficiently use the water we have available. The May 1, TCMGA meeting will focus on a different way of gardening. Jack Waite of Aqua Dulce Farm will tell us about how he is sustainably growing organic veggies and fresh fish in Austin.

Jack Waite is the founder and President of Agua Dulce Farm and the founder & Executive Director of Urban Organics, a nonprofit focusing on sustainable agriculture. Agua Dulce combines his knowledge of Biology and Botany with 10 years of experience in management, fundraising, and finance. An avid cook, he is passionate about sustainable, healthy, and delicious food.

Master Gardener Meeting information:
Wednesday, May 1, 2013 starting at 7 pm
Zilker Botanical Garden

Master Gardener meetings are open to certified Master Gardeners and trainees.
Cool nights and mostly mild days in March and April caused a sluggish start for some of our warm season vegetables, but quick growing green beans, squash and cucumbers should be well on their way to producing that first harvest of the season later this month. Keep plants growing vigorously by spraying with water soluble fertilizer about every 2 weeks, and once production begins, harvest regularly to encourage more blooms.

Conserve water by covering soil with mulch or compost. This will help hold in moisture, and prevent weed growth which robs vegetables of much needed water. If you live within the Austin city limits, be sure to abide by Stage 2 watering guidelines. Vegetable gardens and trees are exempt from restrictions as long as you are using drip irrigation or soaker hoses which direct water to the roots where it is needed.

Potatoes are edible at any stage of development, so try digging around at the outer edges of potato plants for a few new potatoes. No need to peel them, just scrub them gently, cut in half, toss in olive oil, salt and pepper, and roast them in a hot oven until tender and slightly crisp. Yummy!

Swiss chard loves the mild spring weather, but as the heat rises, it will appreciate a little shade from the late afternoon sun. If it starts to look worn out, just cut it at the base, and it will resprout with fresh, delicious leaves.

An example of interplanting: sugar snap peas growing along the edges of the row will soon be pulled up as green beans planted in the center of the row emerge.

Swiss chard loves this mild spring weather.
Squash vine borer is a perennial pest in my backyard vegetable garden, so I grow my squash under floating row cover so the moth cannot access the young plants and lay her eggs. Once the plants begin to bloom I remove the cover to let the pollinators do their job. By that time the plants are strong and vigorous and less susceptible to damage from the squash vine borer larva.

Harvest onions when the tops begin to fall over, which usually occurs by the end of the month, or in early June. Pull up the plants and spread them out to cure in a dry, shady place for 2-3 days. After curing, cut the tops off and store the onions in a cool, dry place to use as needed.
Bark Beetles
by Wizzy Brown

Bark beetles tunnel below the bark of trees, sometimes also tunneling into the wood. Even though there are various species, most bark beetles look very similar. Adults are small, and are black to reddish-brown. The larvae are creamy white and have no legs. Southern pine beetles are active during warmer parts of the year. They are typically pests of southern pine forests. These beetles disperse during the spring to weakened, injured or stressed trees. When there are high populations, the beetles may attack healthy trees. The larvae tunnel in S-shaped patterns under bark, and this tunneling leads to girdling of the tree. Southern pine beetles cause “pitch tubes”, which are masses of resin, on the surface of the bark. Trees that have recently been attacked by southern pine beetle have needles turning reddish-brown. Surrounding trees may be saved from attack by removal and destruction of infested trees.

Ips beetles, also known as engraver beetles, are similar to southern pine beetles and they are often mistaken for one another. Ips larvae tend to tunnel in more parallel lines (in Y- or H-shaped patterns). These beetles not only attack weakened trees, but also infest cut wood. As adult ips beetles tunnel, dust collects around the base of the tree and in the crevices of bark. Tunneling by larvae causes those areas of the tree to discolor and die.

Asian ambrosia beetles attack stressed, healthy or cut wood from various trees. Females tunnel into wood to lay eggs. Infested branches usually have wilted leaves and wood dust resembling a toothpick sticking out from the branch. Cankers may form at the area that has been damaged, eventually causing girdling of the tree. Asian ambrosia beetle larvae and adults feed on an ambrosia fungus that is carried into the infested tree by the adults.

A good defense against bark beetles is to maintain healthy trees. Choose adapted tree and shrub species and make sure to plant them in good sites to avoid plant stress. Avoid damage to the trunk and roots when mowing or weed-eating. Plants should be watered and fertilized properly.

Residual pesticide sprays may help to reduce populations, but usually do not eliminate them. Look for such active ingredients as permethrin, cyfluthrin, bifenthrin or carbaryl. When spraying, make sure to thoroughly cover trunk and branch surfaces. If trees are already infested and girdled, there is no pesticide that can save the tree. The tree should be cut down and destroyed so beetles do not infest neighboring trees.

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
The Traveling Gardenista: Discovering public gardens
by Heidi Roure

_Since last fall, my husband and I have been taking a long sojourn traveling around the world and the United States. One of the sweetest pleasures has been discovering and exploring public gardens on our journey. I wanted to share with you some of the special places so that you too might appreciate a new place, or add it to your own bucket list. Warmly, Heidi Roure_

The Rainbow River, Dunnellon, Florida

Standing on top of the hill, surrounded by blooming azaleas and peering to the river through the oaks, I felt like I had walked into a fairy tale. The clear, sparkling, turquoise water was no less splendid than the Caribbean Sea. Walking on the path down to the water’s edge, sunlight sprinkled through the budding redbuds, dogwoods, azaleas, magnolias, hickory and giant oak trees. The air temperature was that of the springs, 72 degrees year around. What makes this place so interesting, besides the pure beauty, was that back in the 1930s, this land was privately owned and made into a small amusement park with glass bottom boat rides, a petting zoo, an aviary, a reptile exhibit, a horse rodeo, a lodge, and even naturally appearing waterfalls and garden paths. The amusement park is long gone, and today one feels you have this natural oasis to yourself. The waterfalls, garden paths and natural beauty remain. Parts of the park have retreated to their natural state, and volunteer gardeners are working to restore and care for the acres of specimen plants that remain hidden within the forest. This place is truly a gem.
“Garden Rant” is a blog written by four opinionated, pithy women who reside in three different states (one lives in Maryland, one lives in California and two live in New York). Because it’s a national blog, I subscribe - it seems like a mostly entertaining and efficient way to keep abreast of what’s happening in different gardening circles across the country. On April 20th, just before I left for the East Austin Garden Fair, I checked my email and had received the latest post from the “Garden Rant” blog, which turned out to be a diatribe about the use of the term “Master Gardener”. In essence the post and many of the people leaving comments were saying that the title was “pretentious”, “pompous”, and “inaccurate”. I was dismayed and disappointed that so many comments were posted about the designation without consideration of the program’s long history and/or the true purpose of a Master Gardener. As my fellow MGs know, we are first and foremost a service organization made up of trained volunteers; we exist to assist the County Extension Agent and to disseminate research and science-based horticultural information to the public. Becoming a Master Gardener does not mean we have reached the pinnacle of gardening knowledge, and have earned the equivalent of a Black Belt in gardening, rather it is a lifelong pursuit and an opportunity to learn with and from others who share a similar interest and enthusiasm.

The concept for the Master Gardener program was conceived in the state of Washington in the early 1970s as a way to recruit and train volunteers to address the horticulture needs of the urban gardener, while allowing the county agent to focus on education programs and other responsibilities. The term Master Gardener was coined by two Area Extension Agents from Washington, David Gibby and Bill Scheer, who developed the program. According to the WSU website, “An appropriate and distinguished title would be necessary. As both Gibby and Scheer had worked in Germany acquiring language proficiency and understanding of the culture, they knew that Germans bestow titles for hard-earned proficiency levels in various crafts. The top proficiency level in horticulture is denoted by “Gartenmeister,” which they anglicized as “Master Gardener.” This title would be appropriate for volunteers who had received extensive training.

So that is the origin of the term "Master Gardener” that has been in use for 40 years, and has come to represent a group of hard-working, informed, and tireless volunteers who value on-going training, service and commitment to the program and the community. Yet without proper context, and without consideration and respect for the two men who brought this valuable program into being over four decades ago, the Garden Rant bloggers asked their readers what name would be more appropriate for gardening volunteers of this Extension-based program. Responses included ‘garden librarians’, ‘certified amateur gardeners’ and ‘gardening assistance volunteers’. Thanks, but no thanks. Can you imagine a State, National or International Conference of the “Gardening Assistance Volunteers Association”? Somehow David Gibby and Bill Scheer had amazing foresight into choosing a meaningful title to both attract volunteers and to represent what turned out to be a long-lived and successful program. Why would we want to change that?

Undoubtedly the term has been misused over the years, but it’s hard to create a perfect system for imperfect beings. We make mistakes and we don’t know it all. The day I act like I know everything there is to know about vegetable gardening is the day somebody needs to kick me. There is always something more to learn!
The first MG program in Texas was conducted by county extension agent Tom LeRoy in Montgomery County in 1979 (To read a short history of the Texas Master Gardener Program go to http://mastergardener.tamu.edu/about/history). Tom then went on to coordinate the MG program with Bill Adams in Harris County in 1986 and it was there that I first became a Certified Master Gardener. I have learned loads from Tom and Bill over the years and am grateful for the opportunities I’ve had to pass it on. At the East Austin Garden Fair last month I was listening to Austin Neal and Soo Lee-Spaw give a talk on raised bed vegetable gardening and I wanted to shout “right-on!” as they shared sound horticultural principles about growing vegetables to an engrossed audience. It made me think of my late garden mentors George and Mary Stewart of Houston. When I visited 95 year-old Mary in hospice in 2006 I promised her I would carry the “vegetable baton” that she had handed me, and I would pass it along. And there, at the East Austin Garden Fair, I saw it being passed, not just by Austin and Soo, but by a throng of eager, passionate and well-versed Travis County Master Gardeners who are in it for the love of gardens, plants, insects, chickens, vegetables, fruits, history, heritage, nature and service to community.

As Greg Grant has said, “We aren’t really here for all that long. We can either dedicate our time to making ourselves happy, making others happy, or somewhere in between.” It seems to me that Master Gardeners have managed to achieve that balance, as the benefits that we get out of the program are just as satisfying as the effort we put into it.
Docents of Zilker Botanical Garden
by Marion Alsup

Did you know ...
... that you can have a beautiful yard even if you don’t own a lawn mower or water sprinkler?
... that Isamu Taniguchi was 70 years old when he built the 3-acre hillside Taniguchi Japanese Garden?
... that koi can live 70 years?
... that bamboo can grow to be 160’ tall and is so strong you can build a home with it, but it’s still grass?
... that dinosaurs made tracks on the shore of the Great Inland Sea 99 million years ago - right here in Zilker Botanical Garden?

... that butterflies can taste with their feet?
... that you can find lamb’s ears, hen and chicks, batface cuphea, elephant ears and monkey grass in the Children’s Garden?
... that fennel and dill are delicious to both humans and caterpillars?
... that cactus spines are modified leaves?
Docents at Zilker Botanical Garden share these fun facts and more with over 2,500 school children and adults every year. This is an important part of the stated Austin Area Garden Center mission “to promote the education of citizens, emphasizing youth, in the art of gardening”. Master Gardeners are an integral part of the docent program, and earn hours that count toward their annual volunteer commitment.

Now it’s your turn to help share our beautiful garden with the next generation! Contact Marion Alsup at (512) 480-0311 or zilkerdocents@aol.com for more information.
Water Wi$e Workshop

Saturday, May 4
10am - 2pm

Ragsdale Center - St. Edward’s University
3001 S. Congress Ave
Austin TX

“The workshop is for anyone who would benefit from information and guidance related to plant selection to conserve water, rainwater harvesting, efficient home irrigation systems, converting landscapes from lawn to ornamental plants and water quality,” said Julie Ansley, AgriLife Extension agriculture and natural resource agent for Travis County and program coordinator.

“At the event, kids can learn about area aquifers, rainwater simulation and water conservation at home and school during the program,” she said. “It’s a great opportunity for the whole family to learn more about being ‘water wise’ while having fun together.”

Details at http://centraltexashorticulture.blogspot.com/

Cost is $25 for adults and $15 for youth ages 8-12, including lunch, which provides a vegetarian option.

Please Register at https://agriliferegister.tamu.edu or by phone 979-845-2604. Keyword Search: water.

How to Build a Home Drip Irrigation System

Thursday, May 9
10am-12pm

Travis County AgriLife Extension Office
1600 B Smith Rd.
Austin TX

Can you conserve water and still keep your plants happy? Yes! Drip irrigation slowly distributes water and reduces evaporation and run-off, allowing your soil to absorb the maximum amount of water. Learn about the different types of drip irrigation systems and spray heads which are available to determine the system which will best solve your irrigation needs. Gain firsthand knowledge of how to plan and assemble a drip irrigation system. This will include a discussion on layout, parts, tools and specifics on assembly.

This class is part of the Green Thumb series.

Registration required at https://agriliferegister.tamu.edu or by phone 979-845-2604. Keyword Search: Green Thumb.

One class is $15, with price discounts for signing up for 3 or more classes at the same time. Class is limited to 40 people. It is presented by the Travis County Master Gardeners, a volunteer arm of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service in Travis County. Visit the Central Texas Horticulture website: http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/travis/index.html
Austin Area Garden Events

Backyard Basics

Saturday, May 11
9am - 1pm

Travis County AgriLife Extension Office
1600 B Smith Rd.
Austin TX

Backyard Basics is a free, family-friendly, gardening topic open house event! Hands on kids’ activities are available the entire time. Stroll the garden and ask questions. Experts available for one-on-one discussion on composting, vegetable gardening, wicking beds, installing drip irrigation, raising chickens, identifying good/bad bugs and permaculture. Plus learn about good practices, white fly tomato trial bed, and common mistakes. In-depth talks offered every hour starting at 9:30:

Summer Vegetable Gardening includes basics of vegetable gardening, vegetables which can be planted now and thrive in the heat and how to protect other vegetables from summer’s heat.

Preserving Your Summer Harvest covers the basics of canning, freezing, dehydrating and fermentation of vegetables and how to bring the vegetables back to life.

Backyard Chickens is an introduction to what is required to progress from baby chicks to egg producing hens. Shelter, food, breeds will be a part of talk.
# TRAVIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION

## 2013 EXECUTIVE BOARD

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## Past Presidents (Non-voting):

- Bill Baldwin
- Bill Boytim
- Susan Cashin
- Tommie Clayton
- Susan Decker
- Don Freeman
- Manda Rash
- Peggy Stewart
- Becky Waak
- Will Walker
- Carolyn Williams

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

- Texas AgriLife Extension Travis County Horticulture Agent
- Daphne Richards
- 1600-B Smith Road, Austin, Texas 78721
- 512-854-9600  drichards@ag.tamu.edu
This issue of the Compost Bin has been published thanks to the contributions of the following Travis County Master Gardeners and Wizzie Brown — Texas AgriLife Extension

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- Wizzy Brown
- Patty Leander
- Heidi Roure

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- Liath Appleton

**Webmaster:**
- Paula Middleton

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**The Compost Bin Submissions**

We are always looking for Master Gardeners who are interested in writing for our monthly newsletter, and we would love to see your articles, photographs, book reviews and gardening ideas.

**General Guidelines**
- Please first email the editor to discuss potential article ideas.
- Email contributions as attachments (preferably in Word with a .doc or .rtf suffix).
- Please send images as separate attachments (preferably .jpg suffix). Don’t forget to include photographer acknowledgments and captions.

Send your submissions, announcements, questions and suggestions to: editor.compostbin@gmail.com

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www.tcmastergardeners.org
http://travis-tx.tamu.edu
512-854-9600

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“What a strange thing!
to be alive
beneath cherry blossoms.” — Kobayashi Issa, Poems