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Mike Quinn, President of the Austin Butterfly Forum, will speak about gardening for butterflies, and focus on identifying butterflies and their caterpillars.

Mike’s entryway into insects was through butterflies. He holds a Master’s degree in entomology from Texas A&M University. He also has a keen interest in beetles of Texas, and has photographed over twenty percent of Texas’ 7,500 beetle species. His photos of beetles and other insects are posted on BugGuide.net and on TexasEnto.net. Lists of Austin and Travis County butterflies also are on these sites.

Austin is home to about 170 species of butterflies, so we have over half the species living in Texas. The Austin Butterfly Forum, Inc. is a non-profit organization dedicated to butterfly conservation and to enriching people’s lives through butterflies.

Come learn which caterpillars you want to keep in your garden so you can enjoy the butterflies. If you have a butterfly or caterpillar or chrysalis you would like identified, bring it with you to the meeting.

Master Gardener Meeting information:
Wednesday, June 5, 2013 starting at 7 pm
Zilker Botanical Garden

Master Gardener meetings are open to certified Master Gardeners and trainees.
In the Vegetable Garden
by Patty Leander

June brings the long-awaited harvest of tomatoes along with squash, green beans, cucumbers, peppers, eggplant and okra. Water requirements will increase as plants grow larger and days grow hotter, so pay attention to your plant’s cues, and adjust watering times to sustain healthy growth and production. Sidedress plants every 3-4 weeks with a complete fertilizer; approximate rate for granular organic fertilizer (such as an 8-2-4 or 6-2-2 formulation) is 1/2 cup per 10 feet of row. Synthetic fertilizers, the kind we might use for lawns (like 15-5-10 formulation), are also suitable for vegetable gardens. Since these contain higher amounts of nitrogen, use only ¼ cup per 10 foot row. To sidedress vegetable plants, pull back the mulch and distribute the fertilizer along the row, several inches from the center of the plant. Scratch the fertilizer into the surface of the soil, water well and replace mulch.

Keep up with the harvest so you can enjoy your home-grown vegetables at their peak. Overgrown vegetables can taste bitter, fibrous and/or tough, and overripe vegetables left on the plant will divert energy into seed production rather than fruit production. Squash should be cut when 4-6” long, cucumbers should be picked before they start to yellow, eggplant should have a shiny skin, and okra should be picked when it is only 3-4” long.

Despite our best efforts, some plants will succumb to heat, pests and/or disease. It’s normal for bush beans to fizzle out after about 3 weeks, and for tomatoes to shut down once the nighttime temperatures surpass the mid-seventies. With water at a premium it’s sometimes best to go ahead and pull up plants that are in decline rather than spraying and fretting over ailing plants that will struggle to recover once the blistering heat of summer arrives. Once spent plants are removed, give the soil a rest, and be sure to spread a layer of mulch, such as shredded bark, rough compost, leaves or hay to protect the soil until fall planting time rolls around.

If you are a die-hard gardener who enjoys the challenge of summer vegetable cultivation, then any of the following vegetables are worthy of your effort: okra, cowpeas, sweet potatoes, hot peppers and eggplant. Though these heat and drought-tolerant plants are known for being Texas tough, they still must have a regular drink of water to thrive throughout the summer months. For those less inclined to be out in the heat, early to mid-June is an appropriate time to start tomato seeds under grow lights in order to have transplants ready for planting in July or August.

Looking for a truly drought-tolerant vegetable to grow? Try our native chile pequin! Here it grows through a crack in a stone wall where it comes back every year. The small, fiery peppers add zip to many dishes and birds, especially mockingbirds, will appreciate all your leftovers.
Many gardeners live for those thick, juicy slices of sun-drenched, fresh-from-the-garden tomatoes, but if they come on a little too fast, here are a couple of recipes for using up any surplus:

**Fried Green Tomatoes**

*This is a non-traditional take on a Southern classic from the folks at Baker Creek Heirloom Seed Company.*

6 large green tomatoes, sliced ¼” thick
Oil

**Batter**
1 pkg Mori Nu firm silken tofu
2-3 Tbsp water

Crumble tofu in blender and blend, adding water gradually until the mixture becomes creamy. Pour batter into pie plate and set aside.

**Breading**
1 cup panko bread crumbs
½ cup cornmeal
2 tbsp nutritional yeast flakes
1 tbsp onion powder
1 tbsp garlic powder
1 tbsp turmeric
½ tsp cayenne
½ tsp salt
Parsley flakes

Stir all ingredients together and transfer to a shallow pan.
Dip tomatoes in batter, then into panko mixture, patting the breading onto tomatoes so it adheres well. Heat about ¼” of oil in a cast iron skillet, and fry tomatoes on both sides until browned. Serve warm.
Roasted Whole Cherry Tomatoes

I like the deep, concentrated tomato flavor that comes from roasting, especially when slightly charred. They make a savory snack or can be used in sauces, pasta, salsa or sandwiches.

Toss whole cherry tomatoes generously in olive oil, season with salt and pepper, and roast 4-6 hours at 300 °. Watch carefully to be sure they don’t burn and adjust temperature or time if necessary. These roasted tomatoes may be stored 1-2 weeks in the refrigerator.

a variety of cherry tomatoes ready for oven roasting

The process of roasting gives each tomato a burst of concentrated flavor

Photos: Bruce and Patty Leander
Stinging Caterpillars
by Wizzy Brown

Did you know that some caterpillars are able to inflict a painful sting? Various caterpillars have urticating hairs or spines that are connected to a poison gland. When something, such as your arm, brushes against the hairs, the hairs stick in the skin, injecting venom and sometimes causing a rash.

There are several caterpillars in central Texas that can sting, including the Io moth caterpillar, the buck moth caterpillar, the saddleback caterpillar, and the asp or puss caterpillar.

Buck moth caterpillars are brownish-black, but can also be lighter in color. These caterpillars have long, multi-branched spines in rows along the body.

Io moth caterpillars are yellowish to green with a pinkish-red line along the side of the body. These caterpillars also have clusters of yellow or green spines in rows along the body.

Buck moth caterpillar. Photo by Gerald Lenhard

Io moth caterpillar. Photo by Sturgis McKeever
**Saddleback Caterpillars**

Saddleback caterpillars have a slug-like body with two large tubercles on each end of the body. Saddleback caterpillars are green with brown ends (including the tubercles) and have a brown spot in the center of the body that is ringed with white (it looks similar to a saddle).

Asps are about an inch and a half long when fully grown, teardrop-shaped with long, silky hair. They are usually tan, but can be a variety of colors. Asp caterpillars are typically found on trees and shrubs around homes, and generally do not harm the plants.

If stung, pain will immediately be felt and blood-colored spots may form at the site of the sting. Other symptoms that may occur are nausea, headache, vomiting or even respiratory distress. Cover the sting area with tape. Remove tape repeatedly to remove spines from the skin. Applying an ice pack to the sting area may help to soothe the skin. An oral antihistamine may also be taken to relieve itching. If respiratory distress occurs, seek medical attention.

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*Saddleback caterpillar. Photo by Joe Pase*

*Asp or puss caterpillar. Photo by Lacy Hyche*
There are many dangerous-looking caterpillars that are safe to handle, but unless you are sure they do not sting, I would advise not to touch!

If the caterpillars need to be managed, try products with active ingredients such as Bacillus thuringiensis var. kurstaki, spinosad, azadirachtin or a pyrethroid.

For more information or help with identification, contact Wizzie Brown, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist at 512.854.9600.
The Compost Bin June 2013

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 travel wish list. Warmly, Heidi Roure

Queen Sirikit Botanical Garden, Chiangmai Thailand

Besides spending a day with the elephants, discovering the Queen Sirikit Botanical Garden in the mountains of Chiang Mai was one of the highlights of our three week trip in Asia. Holding an abundance of native, exotic and rare northern Asiatic plants, this garden was established by the Thai government in response to deforestation and the loss of native species. Today it serves as a center for research, and place of natural beauty for the public. Nestled in the northern mountains, one must reach it through a winding, narrow road. As you near this beautiful spot, the garden unfolds with many surprises. Entering the garden, you cross a beautiful river flowing over dark brown boulders. Once inside, you see a hillside of beauty. Gorgeous fountains and The Tropical Rainforest House, a large glass architectural structure, immediately captures your attention; as do the smaller greenhouses, each with their own specialty: the Orchid and Fern House, the Water Lily house, the Arid House, one for Bromeliad and Begonias, and one for Medicinal plants. Outside, every color rose you can imagine lines the hillside. Trails lead you through the gardens where you see breathtaking panoramic views of the mountains and the garden itself. Continue walking to the Arboretum and rest among some of the tallest native trees in Thailand as you pinch yourself to believe you are here.
**Lawn Gone! ...a Book Review**

by Frankie Hart

Popular Austin garden blogger, Pam Penick, has written a book, *Lawn Gone! Low-Maintenance, Sustainable, Attractive Alternatives for Your Yard*. The idea of no lawn, or at least reducing traditional lawns, is certainly a current topic in the Austin/Central Texas area. Yes, we’ve actually had some rainfall this spring, but we all know, and the expert opinion is, that this does not mean our 3-year drought has ended. The continued drought has caused most gardeners and homeowners to think about water conservation as never before, and this book is an excellent resource.

The first two sections of the book cover ideas and how-tos. There are many beautiful color photos which further help in visualizing ideas discussed in the book. I found the pictures and descriptions of actual lawn-replacement projects very interesting, and the book included several different options for easy care and reducing maintenance, or at least shrinking lawn size. There are many suggestions of various lawn alternatives, including ornamental grasses, groundcovers, hardscaping, and even a chapter on artificial turf.

An idea I particularly liked is the use of sedges for a shady yard where traditional grass struggles. Many types of sedge actually do better in the shade, and can withstand light foot traffic. Lily turf (*Liriope*) is another suggested alternative for those shady areas.

How about reducing lawn size? A smaller lawn will result in reduced water use and less maintenance. Again, Penick suggests ways to accomplish this, and there are photos to illustrate these ideas.

The how-to section explains the different methods of grass removal – digging it up, solarizing, sheet mulch, vinegar spray, as well as the use of chemicals. Each topic lists the pros and cons and how-tos. This section also covers how to design and install a hardscape, as well as bed preparation and planting.

Part 3 gives ideas on how to deal with homeowners associations, city codes, and the neighbors. If you live in a conservative neighborhood, the suggestion is that you make gradual changes. Ripping out the entire front lawn all at once is probably not a good idea in some neighborhoods. You can convert only the least visible areas, and that is a start. If you do have lawn-less areas that are visible, keep those well groomed. This section also includes a chapter on fire resistant landscaping; another important topic for our area. Finally, there are Regional Plant Recommendations by regional gardening experts. Eleven horticultural regions of the US are covered here. Each plant is listed by common name, with the botanical name and description also included. Color photos of each plant are included as well.

I recommend *Lawn Gone!* as a valuable resource for anyone who wants to be rid of (or at least reduce) their lawn, but isn’t sure where to start. Even if you have started the process of lawn removal, you’ll find this book a valuable guide for future projects.
Austin Area Garden Events

Austin Pond Society Pond Tour

Saturday and Sunday, June 8-9

North ponds are on Saturday, and South/Central ponds on Sunday. The shifts are 8:30 am - 1:00 pm and 12:30 to 5:00 pm. There’s also a night shift Saturday night, 7:30 to 10:30 pm.

This year is the 19th annual tour, featuring 21 ponds. There will be a wide assortment of large and small ponds, both pro-built and DIY. Tickets $20, or in advance for $5

More info at www.austinpondsociety.org

Green Thumb Series: What’s Eating My Plants

Thursday, June 13
10am-12pm

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

Yikes! What is eating my plant? Wizzie Brown, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service entomologist, will teach you detective skills needed for correctly identifying insects. Knowing exactly who are the “good bugs” and the “bad bugs” is important because the majority of insects are not “bad”!

Armed with knowledge of insect mouthparts and biology, you can figure out what may be causing damage to plants even when there is not an insect in sight. Think about what kind of mouth part could have done the damage? Are there holes in the plant? Are the holes small or are entire leaves eaten? Does the plant have yellowing and curling on the foliage? Knowing the types of damage insects can cause to plants can help reveal what pest you are dealing with and help to make management decision. Identification of common insects will also be covered along with integrated pest management practices to help reduce pesticide use. Integrated pest management programs start with non-chemical approaches first and while chemicals are included in the program, they are a last resort strategy.

This class is part of The Green Thumb series. Must register at: https://agriliferegister.tamu.edu or by phone 979-845-2604. 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.
**Composting and Soil Health**

**Saturday, June 15**

9:30am - 3:40pm

Austin Community College  
South Campus, Rm 1130  
1820 Stassney Lane, Austin TX

Learn about compost positive impact on soil health with an incredible program packed with information and how-to topics. This is everything you need to know to treat your garden by embracing composting. Topics include an overview of composting, equipment needed for success, an overview of the Ground to Ground program in Austin, vermicomposting, compost tea, and Austin Resource Recovery.

$35 registration fee includes box lunch, water, and snacks. Attendees must register at [https://agriliferegister.tamu.edu](https://agriliferegister.tamu.edu) or by phone at (979)845-2604. This event is presented by the Travis County Master Gardeners, a volunteer arm of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service in Travis County. [www.tcmastergardeners.org](http://www.tcmastergardeners.org). For information, call (512)854-9600. It is not sponsored by Austin Community College.
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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 Wizzie Brown — Texas AgriLife Extension

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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

“Across the summer stream
With such joy
My sandals in my hand.” — Yosa Buson