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Cover Photo: ‘Use certified seed potatoes (usually available at local nurseries or feed stores).
by: Bruce Leander

Right: Denver Garden
by: Liath Appleton

February Meeting - Daphne Richards

2014 Outlook for Travis County Master Gardener Program

Our own Daphne Richards, Horticulture Agent for Travis County, will share program goals and direction for the coming year, as well as upcoming changes and good things to come--like online reporting!

Master Gardener Meeting information:
Thursday, February 5, 2014 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

February signals the start of the spring season here in Central Texas. There’s still a chance of frost, so it’s too early to plant peppers, green beans, cucumbers or squash. But if you have the space, it’s a good time to establish vegetables that love the cool weather and can tolerate frosty nights. Plan carefully, because most of these vegetables will take around 60 days to reach harvest. So if planted now, they will still be occupying valuable garden space when it’s time to plant those warm season vegetables in March. We are fortunate to have such a variety of vegetables that can be grown in our gardens, but transitioning from a cool season garden to a warm season garden takes a bit of juggling and decision making, especially when space is at a premium. Here is the vegetable gardener’s checklist for February:

- Take advantage of warm and sunny February days to clean out your beds, rake leaves and compost the spent plant material.
- Amend vegetable garden with compost and fertilizer, mixing it into the top 4-6” of soil, then rake the planting area smooth, and cover with leaves to protect the soil.
- Transplants of broccoli, cabbage, Swiss chard, Chinese cabbage, bok choy and cauliflower can be planted early this month.
- Plant carrots, turnips, radishes and beets directly in the soil where they will grow; root crops do not like to be transplanted.
- Seeds of English peas, sugar snap peas and snow peas can be planted early in the month; most grow only 24-36” tall.
- Potatoes should be planted this month. It’s best to purchase certified seed potatoes so you know you are getting potatoes that are free from disease. Cut each potato into 2-3 ounce pieces that have at least one or two eyes. Let them dry out for a couple of days before planting.
- Seed eggplant and peppers in small pots and grow under grow lights indoors; they should be transplant size by mid-March.
- If you planted tomato transplants last month, bump them up to a larger pot, and gradually expose them to the shady outdoors on warm and calm days.
- If you are a gambler, go ahead and plant a few tomato transplants, protecting them with plastic milk jugs, row cover or plastic-wrapped tomato cages if frost threatens (it usually does!).
- Continue to feed plants with a water soluble fertilizer every 2-3 weeks.
Late winter is an ideal time to grow frost tolerant crops but be sure to leave room for those warm season vegetables that will need to be planted in mid-March.

Cole crops (broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, Chinese cabbage and bok choy) can be planted from transplants this month.

To distribute tiny seeds like carrots more evenly mix with sand and shake onto soil from an empty spice jar.

Photos: Bruce Leander
How Insecticidal Soap Works
by Wizzie Brown

Insecticidal soap can be used as a contact insecticide to control small, soft-bodied insects such as aphids, leafhoppers, mealybugs, thrips, whiteflies and others. Soaps work only on contact, and have no residual activity once they are dry. This can be advantageous, categorizing insecticidal soap as a less-toxic product.

The most common insecticidal soaps are made of potassium salts of fatty acids. The fatty acids disrupt the permeability and structure of the cell membranes causing cell contents to leak from the cell, leading to insect death.

It is best to apply insecticidal soaps in the early morning or early evening when temperatures are lower and it will take longer for the product to dry. Thorough coverage is important to maintain good control. It must also be noted that insecticidal soaps may cause phytotoxicity appearing as spotting on the foliage or burned tips. Read label for any phytotoxicity statements.

It is important to know a bit about the biology of the pest before treating with insecticidal soap so that a more targeted treatment can be performed.

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
Raising Vegetables the French Way
by Carolyn Williams

Being a gardener allows one to enjoy company and conversation that, otherwise, would not necessarily happen. So it is that I have become friends with my neighbors’ mother, Sybil, who lives in Paris and grows vegetables on the weekends at her country home. Sybil visits her children and grandchildren about twice a year.

While visiting last year, I offered to show Sybil and her daughter-in-law, Michelle around my back garden. Conversations began to emerge on different gardening areas, techniques and variety of vegetables. In mid-December, Sybil arrived for the holidays, and I took the opportunity to ask questions about how she gardens in France.

Sybil works for ‘Elle’ magazine in Paris during the week. Poor soul has to live in that fabulous place, enjoying the sights and food of one of the loveliest cities in the world. No sympathy is given by me. I just nod my head and acknowledge that SOMEONE has to do the dirty work of life! Come Friday evenings, she drives to her little country home about 150 kilometers (93 miles) south from Paris. It is located in the Bourgogne district between Paris and Lyon. This area is known for its magnificent countryside, and is one of the two most important wine-producing regions in France (it is hard to convey how I just keep shaking my head at yet another hardship Sybil has to face). The food is top-notch as well. This is the region where Dijon mustard originated from, as the Romans brought over their mustard plants after they conquered this area, then known as Gaul. Two dishes come to mind, the wonderful Beef Bourguignon (think of Julia Childs), and Escargot (snails-hmmm).

To begin our gardening conversation, just know that Sybil is fairly bi-lingual, while I only speak our Texas English. Not really an even match, but we both try our best to convey what we mean to say.

The country home she purchased was old, and previous owners had raised cows in the area where she located her rectangular veggie bed. After turning under the grass, the emerging soil was rich, dense, and everything planted grew extremely well (again, my head is shaking at the very thought of rich, dense soil!!). So, for the first ten years she did not have to amend the soil at all. Now she does add some compost here and there, as she sees the need. Sybil spends each and every weekend working her garden bed, patiently coaxing out her young vegetables grown in straight rows, which are strictly rotated on a yearly basis.

When the weather starts to warm a bit, around May 10th, Sybil begins with plantings of peas, shallots, onions and garlic. There may be a little late frost still lingering, so no other vegetables are planted until summertime arrives around the 1st of June. The weather at this point is between 25 to 30 degrees Celsius, (77 – 86 degrees Fahrenheit). She notes the past two summers have been hotter over most of her area of France.

Now the main portion of her large bed is planted with crops of green beans, a different petite pea, zucchini, mid and late summer tomatoes (one being Beefheart, which is shaped as sounded, and a roma type used for making tomato sauce). She will have at least 3 rows of strawberries and raspberries. Close to the house is an old stone wall, and this area is where rhubarb is grown.

A village nearby has a farmers’ market where Sybil purchases supplement veggies, along with breads and those fabulous local wines.
Little supplemental water is needed as gentle rains fall throughout the summer. A nearby neighbor can be called upon, if indeed some watering is needed while Sybil is away during the week. Also noted is that with the gentle summer temperatures, few pest problems arise. Summer lasts only for the 3 months of June, July and August. When September arrives, it brings the start of fall. She does not produce a fall garden as it becomes too cold, too quickly.

I ask her favorite way to cook her garden vegetables. She smiled while describing how she thinly slices the tomatoes, zucchini, garlic and shallots, then covering them with fresh Parmesan cheese, and baking in the oven 1 hour at low heat. Of course, she noted, she also makes lots of her own tomato sauce. She starts by seeding and cutting up the tomatoes, shallots and garlic, then adds the wonderful local, Herbs of Provence while again, cooking slowly over low heat, stirring as needed, until she deems it ready. This is canned, and used throughout the winter months.

So ends our afternoon spent sharing our same, but oh so different, ways of growing vegetables. The only thing needed is a photo of her country home and garden……..I’m working on that part!
Inside Austin Gardens Tour 2014

You are invited to the Inside Austin Gardens tour featuring six gardens of exemplary quality and design. The tour is presented by Travis County Master Gardeners Association, in cooperation with the Travis County AgriLife Extension Service on Saturday, May 3, 2014 from 9:00 am until 4:00 pm. Tour includes gardens to explore, continuous one-on-one educational offerings, kids’ activities, and book sales. Complete tour information can be found at www.InsideAustinGardens.org

The gardens are a unique expression of the gardener’s personality and interests. Here is a glimpse of what to expect at these gardens.

Lori Daul’s Garden
3231 Oak Alley 78745
Informal Discussions All Day – Principles of Landscape Design
If a free-spirited modern artist had a fling with an introverted cottage gardener, the resulting love child garden might look a lot like Lori’s garden, which excels in using tough, easy-care plants to achieve a lush and exuberant mix of textures and colors, tamed by the sculptural solidity of cactus, agave, and yucca. The planting style says “England”, but the plants say “Central Texas”, and sitting in one of the many comfy seating areas nestled throughout the garden, and listening to the sounds of wind chimes and a gentle fountain, it’s easy to forget that you’re in the middle of a southwest Austin subdivision.

In 2006, when she bought the house, it was adrift in a sea of thirsty St. Augustine, which gave Lori, a garden designer transplanted from Wisconsin, the perfect blank canvas on which to test and kill a staggering number of then-unfamiliar plants. While on her quest to discover which plants would not only live, but also achieve maximum impact with a minimum of effort, she tackled a number of necessary and never ending DIY projects (including a fountain and vast quantities of hardscaping), and discovered it was the kind of workout that meant she could avoid the gym.

Lori’s design goals were driven primarily by function. She is an introvert who craves privacy and who also wants to be surrounded by nature -- even though she’s living on a small city lot. Her design solution was the “flower moat” in the front yard, which presents a friendly street face that doubles as a screen to shield the front porch and a small patio from view.

After observing rainfall patterns, she installed and contoured planting beds and a back patio to encourage rainfall absorption. The plantings favor natives and well-adapted plants, with plenty of herbs, edibles, and fruit trees thrown in to benefit the local wild, and not-so-wild life.
Dugie & David Graham’s Garden
1817 Canonero Drive 78746
Informal Discussions All Day – Vegetable Gardening in a Small Space
We purchased our Austin home in 1996. Two years later, a work transfer took us away from Austin - until 2008; a 10 years absence. Finally settled back in Austin, we could get to work transforming our builder’s yard into the garden of our dreams - not an easy task for “transplanted gardeners”.
For a Christmas gift my husband and adult children rebuilt my vegetable garden, thank you Santa! The garden below our landscaped yard is a raised-bed system employing square-foot gardening techniques, and fenced to keep the rabbits and deer from munching the vegetables. I grew up in a gardening family and just love to clip herbs to add to my gourmet dishes. It’s such a pleasure to delight in the flavor of a ripe tomato or sugar snap pea fresh from the vegetable garden, to pick a luscious peach, to make lemonade from our Meyers lemons, or to enjoy a cup of morning coffee surrounded by glorious nature! Our yard is a Wildlife Certified Habitat, and pleases us with a great frog chorus on summer nights from our pond. We hope you will enjoy visiting our garden during your tour.

Austin Neal’s Garden
1106 Northwester Ave. 78702
Informal Discussions All Day – Keeping Austin Weird
East Austin conjures up a gardening history rich with early Swedish immigrants settling and creating “Govalle”. A Swedish phrase meaning “good grazing”. Because of the rich plain of blackland soil, the area was primarily used for growing cotton.
Next, the Black and Mexican cultures came with their centuries old gardening steeped in vibrant colors and fabulous herbs that infused their cooking skills and created dishes we all devour.
Following those cultures, many East Austin gardens draw inspiration from this cornucopia of past gardeners, and Austin Neal is proud to be one. His eastside garden is inspired by the quirkiness of Austin. With a nod to the past, his passion for growing herbs is always prevalent.
There are numerous recycled materials in this organic, mostly native garden. The senses and the elements collide to create a place respectful of nature, the neighborhood and the earth. The garden is surrounded by a patchwork fence of raw steel and recycled picket fences custom designed by the owner. Bi-fold windows throughout the garden are trellised with hacienda creeper and passion vine. The windows open for access to the views of the greenbelt, or close for party privacy.

Three ponds (a fish trough, stepping pond, and circular pond) are integrated into the deck and boardwalk, while visitors savor the view onto the 89 acre Boggy Creek Greenbelt. Enjoy the CapMetro Red Line whispering by for the daily commute.

Granite, limestone, Texas black river rock and raw steel create borders of interest with numerous native trees including pecan, Texas persimmon, Texas redbud, Mexican sycamore, Mexican buckeye, Anacacho orchid tree, Texas ash, and Texas sabal palm. The herb garden is kept fresh and vibrant with olla slowly seeping into the root zone; growing perennial and annual herbs along with vegetables and tasty edibles.

Come and savor the essence of true early Austin!

Ken and Robin Howard Moore’s Garden
3305 Big Bend Drive 78731
Informal Discussions All Day – How to Create a Perennial Border

From early childhood until the nursery closed, Robin Howard Moore worked in her family’s business, Howard’s Nursery, on Koenig Lane. For years the nursery was a “go to” plant haven to many Austinites. Here, Robin’s love of unusual plants, and her quest for perennials that would adapt to our Austin’s soil was nurtured.

In 1978, Robin and her husband Ken purchased this home. Robin started working to make their personal garden one which is charming and whimsical.

While the front yard has beautiful oak, cherry laurel and Smoke trees, they have worked to decrease the square footage of St. Augustine grass. This was achieved by creating berms where deer-resistance plants reside.

In the ever changing back garden, visitors are greeted by a riot of colorful, shade tolerant perennials. Here, curved paths improve access, while adding interest with plants and garden art. The compost area is screened by evergreen conifers to remind them of the Pacific Northwest, one of their favorite areas. The side garden is where Robin experiments with various plants.
Robin enjoys searching for shade tolerant perennials that will grow in our alkaline clay soil. She enjoys trying sun-loving plants in shady situations to see if she can persuade them to thrive. She also feels that some design rules can be broken.

This Certified Wildlife Habitat garden has been featured on Central Texas Gardener and in a web-based commercial for G.E.

**Jerry Naiser’s Garden**

7103 Montana Norte 78731

Informal Discussions All Day – Simple or Complex Drip Irrigation Systems

Water is the issue.....the future we now face with limited water resources, is how to manage, conserve and utilize this precious commodity. The garden of Jerry Naiser addresses and answers many of our water conservation concerns.

Jerry’s north central Austin garden has an incredible drip irrigation system that he designed and installed to create 32 separate computer-controlled zones. These zones are set up to pull current weather data from the Internet, and adjust watering accordingly. No overwatering occurs. This is water efficiency! This is water management!

This garden has widely varied moisture needs including trees, roses, vegetables, tropical plants and ferns found throughout his garden. It also includes a unique water-channeling feature that captures rainfall and uses run off as the primary source of water for the entire system.

Delight all your senses as you enjoy the owner’s vertical hanging herb garden that sits above the vegetable bed. Walk through the back area that is designed to party with swimming pool and covered bar/patio area. Seek out the isolated, quiet, tree shaded patio surrounded by shade loving plants. This whole delightful flora designed area is under the careful watch of a life-sized longhorn. Enjoy his creative garden work that is evident at each and every turn.

Give yourself the treat of meeting this innovative garden owner, and listen to his broad knowledge regarding water solutions, drip irrigation systems and rain water collection. We know you will leave armed with the needed knowledge to start your own water improvements!
Travis County AgriLife Extension’s Demo Garden
1600 B Smith Road 78721
Informal Discussions All Day – Live or Die – Garden Trials, Your Native and Adapted Plants, What AgriLife Can Do For You
Gardening Books for Sale
Kids’ Activities all day
The Travis County AgriLife Extension garden is based on Earth-Kind® landscaping principles, and is ADA compliant. Be still for a few minutes, and discover the wildlife flourishing in this Certified Wildlife Habitat. Skinks dash to capture insects. Birds gobble up insects and berries, and raise their young in the trees and shrubs. Butterflies find nectar, and caterpillars munch on vines and plants. The birds and other animals come to the small pond to drink.

Earth-Kind® landscaping uses research-proven techniques to provide maximum garden and landscape enjoyment, while preserving and protecting the environment. The best organic and traditional gardening and landscaping principles are combined to create an effective and environmentally responsible garden which encourages water conservation, reduced fertilizer and pesticide use, energy conservation, and reduction of waste in landfills. Located in the Colorado River basin, the garden is blessed with deep loamy clay soil. When originally planted in March 2003, 3-4” of compost was tilled into the soil. Mulch slowly breaks down and continually feeds the beds. Soil was purchased for the raised vegetable beds. Fertilizer is only used in the vegetable beds and roses. Hiding under the mulch is a drip irrigation system. The brown tubing has pressure-regulated emitters every 18”. The system slowly dribbles water on the soil, so all is absorbed and none runs off. The irrigation control box regulates the time and duration of watering in compliance with current water restrictions.

The garden was designed and is maintained by the volunteer efforts of the Travis County Master Gardeners. It serves as a test area for plants that may be added to the native and adapted plants list, and as a demonstration tool for the citizens of Travis County. Vegetables harvested are donated to the Capital Area Food Bank.

Access to this garden is free. Restrooms are located inside the building.

Tour tickets available at each garden and online at www.InsideAustinGardens.org. Gardens accept cash, check, and credit cards. $15 for all gardens, $5 per garden. Demo Garden is free. Children 16 and under are free.
**Tour Sponsors**
- Emerald Gardens
- The Great Outdoors
- Real Green Pest Control & Lawn Care

**Garden Sponsors**
- MarysGardenPatch.com
- Callahan’s General Store
- Brite Ideas Hydroponics & Organics
- HEB

**Root Sponsors**
- Barton Springs Nursery
- Roger E. Coyner, CPA PLLC
- Icanmakeitbetter.com
- Red Barn Garden Center

**In-Kind Donors**
- Whole Foods
- Habitat For Humanity RE-Store
## Austin Area Events

### Composting for the Home Garden

- **Thursday, Feb 6**
- **10:00 am – noon**
- Travis County East Service Center
  6011 Blue Bluff Rd, Austin TX

For the first class in our series on Dealing with Drought Conditions, join us for a presentation on the value of compost in building and maintaining healthy soils. Whether you want to get ready for a fabulous spring garden, or just improve the health of your lawn and landscape, compost is an easy and inexpensive amendment, safe to use and beneficial for the environment. Cathy Wood, Master Gardener and compost specialist, will teach how to build an effective compost pile, and how to use its contents as an aid to increase water retention in soils of all types.

Part of the Texas AgriLife Extension Water Conservation Series
Register at [https://agriliferegister.tamu.edu/TravisCounty](https://agriliferegister.tamu.edu/TravisCounty) or by phone 979-845-2604
[Click Here for Directions to Blue Bluff](#)

### Rose Selection and Care

- **Saturday, Feb 8**
- **10am - Noon**
- Zilker Botanical Gardens
  2220 Barton Springs Rd
  Austin TX

Master Gardeners Carolyn Williams and Holly Plotner will discuss rose selection and care to encourage better bloom production. They will cover the different types of roses and their features, as well as handy tools and their proper care.

This class is presented by the Texas AgriLife Extension Service in Travis County.
Austin Area Events

**Austin Rose Society Workshop**

Saturday, Feb 15  
9am - 2pm

Zilker Botanical Gardens  
2220 Barton Springs Rd  
Austin TX

This Rose Workshop features rose propagation, pruning demonstration, rose soil, rose related insects, rose garden tour, and selecting roses. $25 registration fee includes lunch and beverages.

View flyer for registration details.  
Austin Rose Society [www.austinrosesociety.org](http://www.austinrosesociety.org)

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**Austin Herb Society Seminar**

**All About Herbs 2014: Ready, Set, Grow Your Own Herbs!**

Saturday, Feb 22  
10am - Noon

Zilker Botanical Gardens  
2220 Barton Springs Rd  
Austin TX

Cost is $15 for non-members and $10 for Austin Herb Society members.  
Details at [www.austinherbsociety.org](http://www.austinherbsociety.org)
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<td>Susan Jung</td>
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<td>Past Presidents (Non-voting)</td>
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<td>Texas AgriLife Extension Travis County Horticulture Agent: Daphne Richards</td>
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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 A&M AgriLife Extension

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Patty Leander
Carolyn Williams

**Editor and Layout:**
Liath Appleton

**Webmaster:**
Liath Appleton

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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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"Winter came down to our home one night
Quietly pirouetting in on silvery-toed slippers of snow,
And we, we were children once again.” - Bill Morgan, Jr.