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April Meeting Speaker — Felder Rushing

The Stinkin’ Rules STINK: Gardening vs. Horticulture

Famous gardener and author, Felder Rushing, shares his offbeat gardening style, addressing “slow” gardening for cheapskates, alternatives to the oppressive lawn and irreverent approaches to horticulture that are more sustainable. Believing that too many would be gardeners are intimidated by throngs of “how to” experts, Rushing is dedicated to opening the wonderful world of flora to the common man. Felder believes “We are daunted, not dumb.” His offbeat approach to gardening, humorous anecdotes, garden metaphors, zany observations and beautiful photography, Felder Rushing helps gardeners move past their garden fears and the “stinkin’ rules” of horticulture.

Rushing’s overstuffed cottage is a quirky mix of exotic and beautiful plants and folk art. It has been featured many times over in a variety of television programs and magazines, including a cover of Southern Living magazine. His unique yard features weather hardy plants, yard art, “people places”, porch rainwater harvesting system and green roof entry Arbor. The absence of turf grass is not only noticeable but a celebrate feature of Rushing’s creation. He is author or co-author of fifteen gardening books, several of which have earned him national awards. His experience as a former Extension Service urban horticulture specialist had his knowledge in high demand. He has authored thousands of gardening column in syndicated newspapers across the country. In addition, his writing has been featured in dozens of national garden magazines including Garden Design, Horticulture Landscape Architecture, Better Homes and Gardens, Fine Gardening, Organic Gardening and National Geographic. He has even had three full length articles featured in The New York Times. Currently he hosts a call-in garden program on NPR called “The Gestalt Gardener.” (Slow Gardening is a trademark of Felder Rushing)

Master Gardener Meeting Information:
Wednesday, April 6th, 2011 starting at 7 pm.
Zilker Botanical Garden
Hello Master Gardeners:
A Message From Your President

The Rites of Spring!

Spring is spouting everywhere you look. I’ve spotted the first bluebonnets, my Lady Banks’ rose that covers two oak trees is open with yellow roses as high up as my eye can see. Our oak trees have deposited their old leaves everywhere and new ones are just beginning to emerge.

I am busy planting a new herb bed and am already looking forward to gathering sweet smelling herbs. Ahhhh, the aroma of dill, parsley, thyme, fennel, etc., etc., etc.

March is over and with it our busy two weekends of A Passion for Plants -- East Austin Garden Fair and Zilker Garden Festival. Thank you to all the wonderful MG volunteers who work so hard to make sure each was a success. Both have become such a fun, yearly event with many looking forward to working at and in turn contributing so much to our community.

Next up is this month’s MG State Conference in Lake Granbury/Glen Rose, followed by our May 14th “Inside Austin Garden Tour.” I hope you will attend and/or volunteer at both great events.

It is easy to write about each of the above events, but quite another to make sure it all comes off smoothly and everything goes as planned. It is no easy task and certainly our kudos go to many, many Master Gardeners! Please know you have my “thanks” for your hours of service!!

As I walk around my own garden, I see larkspur, poppies and Queen Anne’s lace about to open their blooms. The star jasmine is busy putting on new runners and I am ready for their sweet scents to soon float over the whole garden. My delightful ‘Maggie’ and ‘Mrs. B.R. Cant’ roses are absolutely full of buds while an old garden variety with deep red blooms is already cascading over the deck. This makes me happy!

This year’s crop of both heirloom and hybrid tomatoes are putting on their first set of blooms and newly planted Roma II green beans are spouting. I have learned that by vegetable gardening in the small areas where full sun is available and the many years of working on building up the soil are paying off with better results. Attending some great soil classes has certainly added to my knowledge in these areas too.

My hope is that each of you will find peace in both working in and enjoying your own garden. In this day of unrest over many parts of the world and sadness from the devastation in Northeast Japan, it is no small thing that we can put our hands in the soil and enjoy what our labor and skill provides.

Happy Gardening!
Carolyn Williams

Garden to Garden Plant Exchange
Scheduled for the May Meeting

It’s time to get ready for the plant exchange after the May meeting. We are moving the plant exchange from April, so that we’ll have plenty of time with our speaker, Felder Rushing. So, as you clean up your gardens for the spring, save those extra plants that would make your gardening friends happy. In addition, put aside those extras seeds, garden magazines and pots that you’d like to share with other Master Gardeners.

Liz Caskey and Frankie Hart
Greetings, vegetable gardeners!

Are you as excited about the upcoming spring season as I am?? With a mild March behind us and hopefully an awesome April ahead of us, the vegetable garden is off to a great start! The major risk of frost has passed and gardeners who took a chance planting tomatoes early in the month may just be rewarded with an early tomato harvest. If you haven’t planted tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, cucumbers, squash or beans better do it soon as experience tells us that we have a fairly short window of good growing conditions in spring to get plants established in the garden before the days and nights begin their annual warm-up. That said, Easter is late this year (April 24) and we’ve experienced many a chilly Easter in the past, so be ready to protect your plants if we do have a cold snap. Okra, melons, sweet potatoes and Southern peas can be planted any time this month or next month as they actually prefer the warmer conditions that Texas has to offer. March brought little, if any, precipitation to our area, so be sure to water the soil well before planting any seeds and keep it evenly moist until germination occurs.

Consider planting bush beans in succession to extend your harvest by planting half of your seeds now and the other half in a week or two. And if you are itching to grow some vegetables or herbs but lack the space or time to prepare a full-fledged vegetable garden, how about creating an “instant” bed?

Here’s how:

1. Place a large (40 pound) bag of good quality top soil or garden soil in a sunny spot in your yard.
2. Poke holes on one side of the bag, flip it over and cut out the top.
3. Mix in a little slow-release fertilizer and water well.
4. Plant seeds directly in the soil in the bag.

Photos by Bruce Leander.
Of course you won’t be able to grow huge quantities, but each bag will accommodate approximately 12-16 bean plants, two or three herb transplants, or perhaps a pepper plant.

If you are going to plant the Three Sisters garden (see accompanying article in this issue of the Compost Bin), be sure to use seed varieties that do well here. Look for tall and sturdy corn like ‘Bloody Butcher’, ‘Texas Honey June’, ‘Stowell’s Evergreen’ or ‘Country Gentleman’, and remember that these old-fashioned varieties produce starchy ears that are best for roasting. There are many pole bean varieties to choose from including ‘Kentucky Wonder’, ‘McCaslan’, ‘Louisiana Purple Pod’, ‘Emerite’. The following heirloom squash and pumpkin varieties are vigorous vines that would give good cover beneath the corn: ‘Green Striped Cushaw’, ‘Pink Banana’ ‘Waltham Butternut’, ‘Buttercup’ and ‘Small Sugar’.

I sure don’t need a calendar, computer, HDTV or even a weatherman to tell me it’s spring. Anytime I am outdoors I can see it, hear it, feel it and smell it. Lizards are loose, snakes are slithering, birds are chirping, plants are growing and wind, of course, is blowing. I’ve already mentioned lack of precipitation, but hopefully that will be rectified soon! Even without the rain spring is a wonderful time, full of hope, anticipation, renewal and a brand new, full of surprise, never-before-experienced gardening season.
Bruce and I experienced one of these surprises the evening of March 19, as we waited for the big, full moon to rise. Bruce was poised with camera and tripod to shoot the moon as it rose just beyond a tree in the meadow at the Wildflower Center, and just as the moon came into view a huge shadow swooped across the sky and landed in the tree. As our eyes focused in the darkness we simultaneously realized it was a Great Horned Owl, who settled onto a branch and sat motionlessly while Bruce clicked away. Hope you enjoy this photo along with a few other harbingers of spring that Bruce has captured during his photographic excursions to the Wildflower Center.

Left: The Super Moon on March 19th.
Right: A Great Horned Owl enjoying the extra bright moon. Photos by Bruce Leander.
Book Reviews
by Liz Caskey and Frankie Hart

In honor of Felder Rushing, our April speaker, we decided to review a few of his many books.

**Tough Plants for Southern Gardens: Low Care, No Care, Tried and True Winners**

In typical Felder Rushing style, this book combines humor and practical plant knowledge—not always something you find in a gardening book. Felder says more of us should “garden with gusto” and he helps us do this by sharing his knowledge of plants proven to grow without “artificial life support.” He gained this knowledge from being raised by a family of gardeners—a great-grandmother horticulturist, grandmothers, and his parents. He’s combined this with his years of experience working in garden centers, a master’s degree in horticulture, 2+ decades working at a University Extension Service, and long-time host of a call-in gardening radio program. He says he’s learned a lot from the experiences of hard-working, but fun-loving gardeners.

Chapters include: Annuals That Endure, Unbeatable Bulbs, Grasses with Gumption, Perennials That Prevail, Porch Plants, Steadfast Shrubs, Stout-hearted Trees, and Vines with Vigor.

My favorite plant listing: Bottle Tree, Silica transparencii ‘Gaudi’—full sun to dense shade.

The book includes “Best for Beginners” and “Kinda Tricky” lists at the beginning of each chapter. This is a great quick reference guide. Color photos of each plant listed are included as well as helpful planting information and site selection. The chapter on annuals also includes lists of plants for various categories—shade or semi-shade, hot dry spots, etc.

If you’ve heard Felder speak before or read one of his books, you may know of his simple test to see if you, too, are a garden nerd. I am and I always enjoy anything written by Felder Rushing, but even non-garden nerds can learn a lot from his knowledge and gardening experience.


**dig, plant, grow: A Kid’s Guide to Gardening**

I bought this book to help teach my niece about gardening. Although it is for children, it is written in such clear language that it would also be perfect for any beginning gardener. Topics include safety in the garden, “some things sting,” plant parts, such as “roots” & “stems” & words gardeners use, such as “bulbs” & “compost.” Almost any page can be turned into a complete lesson.

The book includes lots of kid-friendly projects, such as “milk jug bird feeder,” “coffee can birdhouse,” “grass creatures” (grass seed and potting soil, mixed into a pantyhose, then shaped into a worm) and many more.

Felder also provides over 75 easy plants for kids to grow, many of which are suited for our area. Each plant includes growing instructions and often a brief history of the plant. For instance, did you know that pentas came from Egypt?

The last section is a teaching guide for teachers and parents, including resource organizations such as Junior Master Gardeners, which can provide help. The book gave me a lot of ideas to get my young niece into the garden.

**Scarecrows: Making Harvest Figures and Other Yard Folks**

Perfect for autumn decorating, this precious book also teaches how to protect the garden at any-time of the year. Felder discusses the history of scarecrows, dating back to the late 1600's when they were used to protect the growing fields. The history continues into the mid-1800, when they were used as yard decorations, much as they are today.

A large part of the book is a “how to” for building scarecrows, starting with a basic wooden “T” as a support. Felder then recommends that the perfect stuffing could be straw, leaves, shredded paper or even styrofoam peanuts, old socks or plastic bags. The book recommends various faces, using materials as simple as a paper plate and ranging from fabric to plastic bottles.

The scarecrows are described in great detail with pictures and illustrations to make it an easy project. My favorites include “Bicycle Built for Two,” (two scarecrows on a bike) “Cartwheel,” (a scarecrow doing a cartwheel,) and the scarecrow family in the pumpkin patch. Some of the most interesting figures, called wrapped scarecrows are made by wrapping hay around simple forms. Instructions for a dancer, a runner and a creature are among others which are illustrated using this technique.

Felder’s scarecrows book shows a lot of creative ways to make scarecrows from simple to complex. I’m sure you’ll find one that will make you smile.


**Passalong Plants**, co-written with Steve Bender

It is hard to believe that one of Felder’s most popular books is approaching its 20th anniversary. Passalong Plants is also one of my favorite garden books. I can’t wait to read (and re-read) stories about the gardeners who share their favorite plants. It was perhaps the inspiration for our own TCMGA plant exchange.

Passalong plants include plants that are handed from gardener to gardener and are often scare in the commercial marketplace. Not only does the book describe 117 such plants, but it also shares the entertaining stories about people behind the plants, such as Felder’s great-grandmother, Pearl.

Each plant essay includes common and scientific names, culture and often includes the history of the plant. In case you can’t find someone with the plant you want, the book also includes mail-order sources, many of which are still current.

Although the book concentrates on southern plants, some require “moist soil” which can be difficult in the Austin area. Do pay attention to the growth rate description, as some plants can tend to be invasive.


Other books written or co-written by Felder Rushing:

- Gardening Southern Style
- Tough Plants for Florida Gardens
- Tough Plants for California Gardens
- Container Gardening (Can’t Miss)
- New Junior Garden Book: Cool Projects for Kids to Make and Grow
- Tough Plants for Northern Gardens
- Slow Gardening: A No-Stress Philosophy for All Senses and All Seasons
Tropical Plants and Central Texas
by Bob Beyer

On a 12 day eco-tour of Costa Rica, I was astounded by the lush, fast growing, beautiful plants, flowers, and the wildlife they attract. In fact, Costa Rica has created a healthy eco-tourism economy by deciding to leave significant portion of their natural environment alone. This was accomplished by placing 26.6% of their land into national parks plus other preserves totaling 31%. This fact drew us to see for ourselves a pristine and healthy rain forest ecosystem that thrives from sea level all the way to volcanic mountain ranges above 6,000 ft.

There is a combination of native and introduced plants from similar tropical regions around the world, but all share one thing in common – they not only survive, but thrive in their chosen adaptive environment. How I wished I could have dug up every different plant I saw and put it in my central Texas garden – wishful dreaming!! In fact, when living along the Gulf coast in SE Houston, I tried growing every exotic plant I thought I could get through the winter months. But on our trip through Costa Rica, I came to a clear understanding of why growing native and adaptive plants is important in any region of the world. Never can we duplicate the rain forest’s tropical environment of Central America and never can Costa Rica duplicate the unique beauty of the dry climate plants that grow in Texas. I also observed the very important relationship and interdependence between the plants and wildlife that occurs in a specific ecosystem.

That little Ficus plant bought in Austin grows to over 100’ tall and wide with aerial roots in it’s native environment producing fruit eaten by monkeys, birds, lizards, and other wildlife. The philodendron and other tropical foliage plants grow leaves over 2’ wide as they meander up huge kapok trees up to 20’ diameter. The Episcas and gesneriads we grow as indoor potted plants are used as a year round ground cover. This is not to say we shouldn’t grow these plants as house plants or seasonal outdoor plants, but to really appreciate a plant’s potential, it must be seen growing in its ideal, natural habitat. So, the tropics beckon and amaze those who can travel there to see firsthand, the glory of the tropical rain forests that are being destroyed at an alarming rate during our lifetime.

OK, so we can’t grow many of the tropical beauties well or at all in

Above: A Tropical Garden in Costa Rica
Photo by Bob Beyer.
Tropical Plants

So, if you want to have a “Tropical Look” garden, that is possible. Some plants associated with the tropics can be surprisingly adaptive to even our Austin environment, if you are not too choosy. There are many cold hardy palms, cycads, and citrus that can provide a year round tropical look. Knowing which ones is the trick. Plants that grow in the tropics but could survive as root hardy in Austin in a protected, shaded area include large leafed philodendron, Clerodendron, Duranta, Plumbago, Pride of Barbados, Cannas, Hedychium and a few species of Gingers. Other hardy native and adaptive plants that possess a tropical look include the Mexican Bird of Paradise, Rose of Sharon (in place of the Hibiscus rosa-sinensis), Crinums, hardy Manihot, Oleander, and Esperanza. Many tropical plants look very much like temperate zone plants, but are genetically tropical. Texas and Costa Rica do have some plant types in common. For example, agaves and yuccas are found frequently in the tropics, albeit different species, but they still add to the diversity of the tropical ecosystem. Climate wise, it is much cooler in central America than central Texas in summer. Average temperatures range from 70 – 85 degrees year round and this stability in temperature allows such a diversity of plant life to thrive whereas we are limited by extremes in environmental and climatic conditions.

Also, in the tropics, rainfall is greater than 100 inches per year so plants recommended for a tropical look in central Texas are those that can adapt to our 30 inches per year in central Texas but still provide a tropical feel. I always recommend that any gardener study the native region that a plant comes from in order to understand how to grow it best. By simulating it as much as possible, the more successful we will be in growing plants not native to our area. But bottom line is that we shouldn’t push past rationality which will only lead to gardener’s frustration. I have accepted the fact that there are just some plants I can’t grow well or at all, so why create unneeded stress when gardening is supposed to be therapeutic and relaxing. Go with the flow and grow what grows best in our unique ecosystem instead of dreaming of all the plants you wished you could have in your garden from elsewhere. We all long to grow what we want rather than what we can.

That’s what vacations and travel are for – to explore the wonderful world of plants and wildlife in different ecosystems around the world where they live if possible. Put Costa Rica on your wish list!!

Used with permission from the Gardening In Central Texas blog www.centraltexasgardening.blogspot.com

Above: A tropical but ground hardy Butterfly (Hedychium) Ginger blooming in our Austin garden
Photo by Bob Beyer.
Celebrate the Three Sisters: Corn, Beans and Squash
by Alice Formiga

According to Iroquois legend, corn, beans, and squash are three inseparable sisters who only grow and thrive together. This tradition of interplanting corn, beans and squash in the same mounds, widespread among Native American farming societies, is a sophisticated, sustainable system that provided long-term soil fertility and a healthy diet to generations. Growing a Three Sisters garden is a wonderful way to feel more connected to the history of this land, regardless of our ancestry.

Corn, beans and squash were among the first important crops domesticated by ancient Mesoamerican societies. Corn was the primary crop, providing more calories or energy per acre than any other. According to Three Sisters legends corn must grow in community with other crops rather than on its own — it needs the beneficial company and aide of its companions.

The Iroquois believe corn, beans and squash are precious gifts from the Great Spirit, each watched over by one of three sisters spirits, called the De-o-ha-ko, or Our Sustainers. The planting season is marked by ceremonies to honor them, and a festival commemorates the first harvest of green corn on the cob. By retelling the stories and performing annual rituals, Native Americans passed down the knowledge of growing, using and preserving the Three Sisters through generations.

Corn provides a natural pole for bean vines to climb. Beans fix nitrogen on their roots, improving the overall fertility of the plot by providing nitrogen to the following year’s corn. Bean vines also help stabilize the corn plants, making them less vulnerable to blowing over in the wind. Shallow-rooted squash vines become a living mulch, shading emerging weeds and preventing soil moisture from evaporating, thereby improving the overall crops chances of survival in dry years. Spiny squash plants also help discourage predators from approaching the corn and beans. The large amount of crop residue from this planting combination can be incorporated back into the mound at the end of the season, to build up the organic matter in the soil and improve its structure.

Corn, beans and squash also complement each other nutritionally. Corn provides carbohydrates, the dried beans are rich in protein, balancing the lack of necessary amino acids found in corn. Finally, squash yields both vitamins from the fruit and healthful, delicious oil from the seeds.

Native Americans kept this system in practice for centuries without the modern conceptual vocabulary we use today, i.e. soil nitrogen, vitamins, etc. They often look for signs in their environment that indicate the right soil temperature and weather for planting corn, i.e. when the Canada geese return or the dogwood leaves reach the size of a squirrels ear. You may wish to record such signs as you observe in your garden and neighborhood so that, depending on how well you judged the timing, you can watch for them again next season!

Early European settlers would certainly never have survived without the gift of the Three Sisters from the Native Americans, the story behind our Thanksgiving celebration. Celebrating the importance of these gifts, not only to the Pilgrims but also to civilizations around the globe that readily adopted these New World crops, adds meaning to modern garden practices.

Success with a Three Sisters garden involves careful attention to timing, seed spacing, and varieties. In many areas, if you simply plant all three in the same hole at the same time, the result will be a snarl of vines in which the corn gets overwhelmed!

**Instructions for Planting Your Own Three Sisters Garden in a 10 x 10 square**

**When to plant:**
Sow seeds any time after spring night temperatures are in the 50 degree range, up through June.
Celebrate the Three Sisters: Corn, Beans and Squash

**What to plant:**
Corn must be planted in several rows rather than one long row to ensure adequate pollination. Choose pole beans or runner beans and a squash or pumpkin variety with trailing vines, rather than compact bush. At Renee’s Garden, we have created our Three Sisters Garden Bonus Pack, which contains three inner packets of multi-colored Indian Corn, Rattlesnake Beans to twine up the corn stalks and Sugar Pie Pumpkins to cover the ground.

**Note:** A 10 x 10 foot square of space for your Three Sisters garden is the minimum area needed to ensure good corn pollination. If you have a small garden, you can plant fewer mounds, but be aware that you may not get good full corn ears as a result.

**How to plant:**
Please refer to the diagrams to the left and to individual seed packets for additional growing information.

1. Choose a site in full sun (minimum 6-8 hours/day of direct sunlight throughout the growing season). Amend the soil with plenty of compost or aged manure, since corn is a heavy feeder and the nitrogen from your beans will not be available to the corn during the first year. With string, mark off three ten-foot rows, five feet apart.

2. In each row, make your corn/bean mounds. The center of each mound should be 5 feet apart from the center of the next. Each mound should be 18 across with flattened tops. The mounds should be staggered in adjacent rows. See Diagram #1

3. Plant 4 corn seeds in each mound in a 6 in square. See Diagram #2

4. When the corn is 4 inches tall, its time to plant the beans and squash. First, weed the entire patch. Then plant 4 bean seeds in each corn mound. They should be 3 in apart from the corn plants, completing the square as shown in Diagram #3.

5. Build your squash mounds in each row between each corn/bean mound. Make them the same size as the corn/bean mounds. Plant 3 squash seeds, 4 in. apart in a triangle in the middle of each mound as shown in Diagram #4.

6. When the squash seedlings emerge, thin them to 2 plants per mound. You may have to weed the area several times until the squash take over and shade new weeds.

Links to Legends about the Three Sisters:
http://www.birdclan.org/threesisters.htm
http://www.schoolnet.ca/aboriginal/7gen/creation-e.html
Celebrate the Three Sisters

Further Reading


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Jane Bramlett, MG Firewise Landscape Specialist wants to bring the following Texas Forest Service bulletin to everyone's attention:

Extreme Wildfire Danger

The most common cause of wildfires is **Humans**!
  - Careless debris burning.
  - Unattended campfires.
  - Dumping hot charcoal or hot ashes.
  - Driving on a flat tire.
  - Parking or driving in dry grass.
  - Dragging chains on the road.
  - Welding/cutting.
  - Farm equipment.
  - Discarded cigarettes/cigars.
  - Escaped prescribed burning.
  - Arsonists!

**You** can make all the difference!
  - Remove combustible materials away from your house.
  - Keep your grass mowed short.
  - Obey burning bans.
  - Please be very careful with anything that could cause a spark.

For wildfire updates, check http://texasforestservice.tamu.edu.

Reminder:

TCMGA 2011 yearly $25 dues are now past due!

If you have been remiss, please send a check to Barb Powell, TCMGA Membership, 5301 Valburn Circle, Austin, Texas 78731

Can’t remember if you renewed? Send an email to Barb at Barbepowell@gmail.com to find out.
Squash Vine Borer
by Wizzie Brown

This may seem to be another weird insect to be thinking about at this time of year, but I’m trying to help those of you who want to actually get a crop of squash this year. The past two years, I’ve planted squash but ended up with nothing to show for it other than some photos of squash vine borer. Squash vine borers attack summer squash, winter squash, pumpkins and to a lesser degree cucumbers and melons.

The squash vine borer is a moth that resembles a wasp. They are really quite pretty, but I am not happy when I find them on my squash plants. Adults are about ½ an inch long with orange abdomens marked with black. The front wings are a metallic green and the hind wings are clear, but the hind wings are often folded under the front wings when the moth is at rest. Larvae are creamy white with brown heads and can be almost an inch in length. Eggs are flat and brown.

Eggs are laid singly at the base of desired plants. After about a week, eggs hatch and larvae bore into the center of the plant stem. Larvae continue boring and feeding through the center of the stem which causes the plant to wilt and eventually die. Larvae remain within the plant for about 4-6 weeks. When they emerge, they burrow in the soil to pupate.

A good plan for squash vine borers is to try avoiding them altogether. Monitor squash plants on a daily basis and squish any brown, flat eggs that you encounter. Utilize row cover to protect the squash. Row cover should be anchored so that insects cannot crawl underneath it. Also, make sure to remove row cover while the squash is blooming so squash will get pollinated and be able to set fruit.

If you notice your plant wilting and it’s not from lack of water, you can attempt surgery on the vine to remove the borer(s). Use a sharp knife to slice open the stem lengthwise and locate the borer(s), remove and then bury the vine under moist soil and hope that it takes root.
Coming Events

An Afternoon with Felder

Wednesday, April 6, 2011, 2:00 p.m. - 3:30 p.m. (maybe even to 4:00 p.m.)

Austin Community College, South Campus, 1820 West Stassney Lane, Room 1130
Austin, Texas

Full to capacity! Call Rosalie Russell to be put on a waiting list (just in case). You will laugh and learn as Felder Rushing discusses how to write books & articles, give presentations, talk on the radio and generally communicate about gardening. Rushing is the author or co-author of 15 gardening books and a former Extension Service urban horticulture specialist writing thousands of gardening columns, and has had hundreds of articles and photographs published.

Cost: $25/person received by April 1st. Class limited to 50. Checks payable to TCMGA and mailed to Rosalie Russell, 2401 Spring Creek Drive, Austin, TX 78704. Please write your e-mail address on check. You will be notified when your check arrives. Check must arrive on or before April 1st. Attendees will be e-mailed full details several days prior session.

Questions? e-mail: GISatHCCS@aol.com

What’s Bugging my Vegetables?

Saturday, April 9, 2011, 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Homewood Heights Community Garden
2606 Sol Wilson Avenue, Austin, Texas 78702

Learn about the most common garden insects ... good and bad. Knowledge is power and you’ll walk away knowing you can identify the eggs, nymphs and adults. Discover Integrated Pest Management (IPM), an effective and environmentally sensitive approach to pest management that relies on a combination of common-sense practices. IPM programs use current, comprehensive information on the life cycles of pests and their interaction with the environment. This information, in combination with available pest control methods, is used to manage pest damage by the most economical means and with the least possible hazard to people, property, and the environment.

Park in the neighborhood. The garden is on the north side of street west of Sol Wilson/Ridgeway intersection. This seminar is free and open to the public. It is presented by the Travis County Master Gardeners, a volunteer arm of the Texas AgriLife Extension Service in Travis County. For more information see www.tcmastergardeners.org or call the Master Gardener Help Desk at (512) 854-9600.

Making Great Compost

Saturday, April 16, 2011, 10:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Spicewood Springs Branch Library
8637 Spicewood Springs Road, Austin, Texas 78759

Compost is organic waste matter decomposed and recycled as a fertilizer and soil amendment. Soils that include compost are responsible for healthier plants and can be used in all indoor and outdoor gardening.

Composting yard wastes can reduce what goes to the local landfill by 30% or more! Get the scoop on what to use and how to make compost at this informative seminar led by Master Gardener, Richard Moline. We’ll provide you with reference material you can take home and use to get your garden growing!

This seminar is free and open to the public. It is presented by the Travis County Master Gardeners, a volunteer arm of the Texas AgriLife Extension Service in Travis County. For more information see www.tcmastergardeners.org or call the Master Gardener Help Desk at (512) 854-9600.
Coming Events

**Funky Chicken Coop Tour**

**Saturday, April 23, 2011, 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.**

Throughout Austin, Texas

Come join us for the third annual Austin Texas Funky Chicken Coop Tour! Have you been thinking about keeping urban chickens? Do you need coop design ideas? Then this is the tour for you! Hey, this is even for those of you that already have backyard chickens and are thinking about changing your coop design (there’s always room for improvement, right?). Also, feel free to come peck (oops, meant pick ;-) our brains on raising chickens.

Tour will go on rain or shine.

Where: All around Austin city limits. Carpooling or other green alternatives highly recommended!

This free event features coop design ideas and community fellowship.

For more details visit the http://fccooptour.blogspot.com website. Watch for a map closer to the tour on our website.

**Gardening in Deer Country**

**Saturday, April 30, 2011, 10 a.m. - 12 p.m.**

Steiner Ranch Bella Mar Community Center

12401 Bella Mar Trail, Austin, Texas 78732

Deer populations in Central Texas are a growing problem as suburban neighborhoods sprawl into our natural areas. As deer grow accustomed to living around people, they do more damage to gardens and landscaping. In this seminar you will learn about deer behavior and how to manage them in your environment.

Master Gardener Sue Nazar will equip you with information about non-preferred plants, chemical repellants, scare techniques and devices to help you devise a strategy for your own property.

This seminar is free and open to the public. It is presented by the Travis County Master Gardeners, a volunteer arm of the Texas AgriLife Extension Service in Travis County. www.tcmastergardeners.org. For more information see www.tcmastergardeners.org or call the Master Gardener Help Desk at (512) 854-9600.

**Austin Community Garden Tour**

**Sunday, May 1, 2011, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.**

Throughout Austin, Texas

Please join the Coalition of Austin Community Gardens and Sustainable Food Center for the Second Annual Austin Community Garden Tour, on May 1st. The Community Garden Tour is a free, open house-style tour providing the opportunity to visit each of these unique places, talk to the gardeners there, learn how to get involved, and maybe even start your own. We hope you’ll join us in celebration of these community spaces for locally grown (and self-grown!) food in Austin. A downloadable map of participating community gardens will be available here http://communitygardensaustin.org soon.

Close out the tour with a Panel and Potluck from 6 - 8:30 p.m. at 5604 Manor (home of the Workers Defense Project and Third Coast Activist Resource Center). Speakers will share information about the current landscape of community gardening in Austin. Bring a dish made with locally grown food! Space is limited, if you’d like to attend the Panel and Potluck, visit www.facebook.com/home.php#!/event.php?eid=170433056342051 to RSVP. For more information contact Sari Albornoz at sari@sustainablefoodcenter.org or call 236-0074.
Coming Events

Inside Austin Gardens Tour

Saturday, May 14, 2011, 9am-4pm
Throughout Austin, Texas

The Travis County Master Gardeners Association, in cooperation with the Texas AgriLife Extension Service of Travis County, will host the Inside Austin Gardens Tour 2011 on Saturday, May 14, 2011, from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm. This year, the tour focuses on water-wise gardening. Gardening through a Central Texas summer can be trying. At the same time, escalating water rates and mandatory restrictions have made a water-sapping plant palette or a grass lawn a luxury or an impossibility for many. Increasingly, Central Texas gardeners are turning to water-wise techniques, native and adapted plant selections, and various principles of xeriscaping. The Inside Austin Gardens Tour 2011 will include gardens that feature rain-water collection systems, drip irrigation, xeric and native plant selections, rain gardens, shade gardens, and water-conserving practices. Each garden will feature educational sessions throughout the day.

Tickets can be purchased at each garden on the event date at $10 for the entire tour ticket or $5 for a single garden entry. Please, no dogs. Consult www.tcmastergardeners.org/what/gardentour.html for information. Save the date for a day-long look at what other gardeners are doing to weather the heat and conserve water. You’ll be glad you did.

How To Read a Plant

Saturday, May 21, 2011, 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Reagan Community Garden
(at Reagan High School)
7104 Berkman Drive,
Austin, Texas 78752

Discover the needs of your vegetables by observing the physical condition of the plant. Need water, has a disease, infested with pests? Many practical tips will be shared by Master Gardeners to improve plant health and vegetable production. Park at Nelson Field Stadium and enter the Reagan High School grounds from the St. Johns Avenue fence opening and proceed to the garden (near the Berkman and St. Johns Avenue side of campus).

This seminar is free and open to the public. It is presented by the Travis County Master Gardeners, a volunteer arm of the Texas AgriLife Extension Service in Travis County. For more information see www.tcmastergardeners.org or call the Master Gardener Help Desk at (512) 854-9600.

Propagate Your Own Plants

May 21, 2011, 10 a.m. - 12 p.m.
Sunset Valley City Hall
3205 Jones Rd.,
Sunset Valley TX 78745

Learning how to propagate from existing plants is a great way to fill your garden or pass along favorites to your friends. Join Master Gardeners Tommie Clayton and Susan Jung who will teach you how to make cuttings and divisions and successful strategies for starting plants from seed. You’ll also get tips on how to transplant and care for your new plants to get them off to a good start when placed in the garden.

This seminar is free and open to the public. It is presented by the Travis County Master Gardeners, a volunteer arm of the Texas AgriLife Extension Service in Travis County. www.tcmastergardeners.org
### Coming Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Plant Propagation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Friday, June 3, 2011,</strong> 10 a.m. - 12 p.m.</td>
<td>Travis County AgriLife Extension Office&lt;br&gt;1600-B Smith Rd., Austin, Texas</td>
<td>Plants have developed many methods to ensure survival. Learn propagation techniques which take advantage of some of these methods to create multiple plants from a single plant. Discover the importance of the propagation media, moisture, light, humidity, temperature, rooting hormones which ensure success. Examples of propagation by seeds, leaf and stem cuttings will be covered. This free seminar is presented by the Travis County Master Gardeners, a volunteer arm of the Texas AgriLife Extension Service in Travis County. For more information see <a href="http://www.tcmastergardeners.org">www.tcmastergardeners.org</a> or call the Master Gardener Public Gardening Help Desk at (512)854-9600.</td>
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<td><strong>Rain Gardens</strong></td>
<td><strong>Saturday, June 18, 2011,</strong> 10 a.m. - 12 p.m.</td>
<td>Zilker Botanical Garden&lt;br&gt;2220 Barton Springs Road, Austin, Texas 78746</td>
<td>Excess stormwater carries urban landscape contaminants into storm drains and soil erosion causes sediments to accumulate in our water resources. Dr. Dotty Woodson, Water Resources Specialist with Texas Agrilife Extension, will tell us how to protect streams, rivers and lakes by building a rain garden. These lovely gardens are attractive landscape features planted with perennial native plants designed to absorb stormwater which filters it through plant roots and soil microorganisms. Attend this free presentation and you’ll be ready to make your own beautiful solution.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The Joys of Container Gardening</strong></td>
<td><strong>Friday, July 15, 2011,</strong> 10 a.m. - 12 p.m.</td>
<td>Texas AgriLife Extension Office, 1600-B Smith Rd, Austin TX</td>
<td>Blooming flowers and vegetables can thrive in a container! This gardening method is especially useful if space is limited. Containers may also serve as accent points on the patio or in the garden. Learn how to select a container and the right soil, discover ideal container plants, and witness arranging techniques you can replicate to create your own mini-garden. This seminar is free and open to the public. It is presented by the Travis County Master Gardeners, a volunteer arm of the Texas AgriLife Extension Service in Travis County. For more information see <a href="http://www.tcmastergardeners.org">www.tcmastergardeners.org</a> or call the Master Gardener Help Desk at (512)854-9600.</td>
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# TRAVIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION
## 2011 EXECUTIVE BOARD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President</td>
<td>Carolyn Williams</td>
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<tr>
<td>Immediate Past President</td>
<td>Manda Rash</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vice President for Programs</td>
<td>Rosalie Russell</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vice President for Education</td>
<td>Cher Groody</td>
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<tr>
<td>Volunteer Coordinator for Projects</td>
<td>Margarine Beaman</td>
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<tr>
<td>Co-Volunteer Coordinator for Trainees</td>
<td>Richard Moline</td>
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<td>Co-Volunteer Coordinator for Trainees</td>
<td>Pat Mokry</td>
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<tr>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Susan Jung</td>
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<tr>
<td>Co-Treasurer</td>
<td>Mary Lou Bell</td>
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<tr>
<td>Co-Treasurer</td>
<td>Ferne Mizell</td>
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<tr>
<td>Membership Director</td>
<td>Barb Powell</td>
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<td>Greenhouse Manager</td>
<td>Dorothy Akin</td>
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<td>Greenhouse Manager</td>
<td>Chris Giaraffa</td>
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<td>Greenhouse Manager</td>
<td>Vicki Olson</td>
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<td>Austin Area Garden Council Representative</td>
<td>Joe Posern</td>
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<td>State Council Representative</td>
<td>Jackie Johnson</td>
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<td>State Council Representative</td>
<td>Tommie Clayton</td>
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<td>Director of Publications</td>
<td>Vacant</td>
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<td>Past Presidents (Non-voting):</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bill Baldwin</td>
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<td>Bill Boytim</td>
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<td>Susan Cashin</td>
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<td>Tommie Clayton</td>
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<td>Susan Decker</td>
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<td>Don Freeman</td>
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<td>Manda Rash</td>
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<td>Peggy Stewart</td>
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<td>Becky Waak</td>
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<td>Will Walker</td>
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<td>Ex Officio Member of the Board (Non-voting):</td>
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<td>Texas AgriLife Extension Travis County</td>
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<tr>
<td>Horticulture Agent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Daphne Richards</td>
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<td>1600-B Smith Road, Austin, Texas 78721</td>
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<td>512-854-9600</td>
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<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:drichards@ag.tamu.edu">drichards@ag.tamu.edu</a></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 AgriLife Extension:

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512-854-9600

Visit the websites: www.tcmastergardeners.org and http://travis-tx.tamu.edu

The End...

Time to Get Gardening!