



McLennan County Master Gardener Association
Volume XI Issue 8 August 2009

PRESIDENT'S LETTER



About two dozen flies were using my hands, legs, and bald head as a landing pad and annoyingly searching my skin for what ever their appetite drove them to seek. The sun was bright and seemed to focus on the areas of skin not hardened by my "farmer's tan". My feet were itching and my toes were crowded into the front of my shoes as I slid forward on sloping jagged rocks. The glare was taking its toll on my eyes and rubbing them made the sting worse. If only I had remembered where I had placed my sunglasses. BUT, SO WHAT I was in the mountains of New Mexico fishing for rainbow trout in a beautiful lake nestled between two mountains. The temperature was about 75 degrees, the smell of pine trees was in the air, I could here thunder echoing through the canyon below, and the temperature in Waco, Texas was 106 degrees.

It is so great to get away and give your mind and body a chance to relax and refresh. We all need time to focus on something other than the normal everyday routine which identifies our daily activities. It is nice to be able to escape to the mountains, but we can find similar opportunity to adjust our focus right in our own back yard. Actually, the need to gather our wits is probably why we enjoy gardening. Years ago I asked my friend Rudolf what he did on his vacation. Rudolf stated in broken Czech translated here, "Three days in front yard, three days in the back yard, vacation shot!!!" To spend a week, only working in my yard; wow, that would be great. I seem to have more to do in my yard

than I could ever have time to accomplish. I am forever finding a new plant which stimulates interest and begs to come home with me. Dr. Joseph Novak, senior lecturer in the Horticulture Department at Texas A&M University, utilizes the Holistic Gardens as an example with emphasis on horticultural therapy and the gardens as a tool in neighborhood rejuvenation. Gardens give us a special place to retreat to and reconnect with a world that requires participation of each of our five senses. We find ourselves surrounded by smells, color, and sound which stimulate a sense of peacefulness and serenity. We reach out and touch our surroundings as if we could draw energy and confidence from the essence of their creation. We taste, literally and spiritually, of the fruits of our labor. The exercise we get and the produce we put on the table are merely a bonus. The sense of accomplishment and one on one bonding with creation refocuses our mind far beyond the daily toil of life, forcing us to acknowledge a power greater than our own. For a moment we are "out of this world" but we have experienced an attitude adjustment which can generate optimism and confidence for days to come.

Hopefully each of you will take time to experience the natural world around you and if at all possible don't forget to "Get out of Dodge" every so often.

---Steven Lovecky

McLennan County Master Gardener Association Officers 2009

President- Steven Lovecky Vice President- Jan Serface Secretary- Nelda Cooper
Treasurer- Louie McDaniel Sponsor- Shane McLellan Newsletter- James Storrs
Send volunteer hours to Julia Khoury at 8512 Bosque, Waco 76712, or tkhoury@hotmail.com
www.mclennanmastergardeners.org



Steve's column is a lot of fun. Find it at <http://grumpygardener.southernliving.com/>

MINUTES FROM JULY MEETING

The McLennan County Master Gardeners met July 8, 2009 at the arboretum. President Steven Lovecky called the meeting to order. The June minutes were approved as written in the newsletter.

Treasurer's Report: Louie McDaniel reported an ending balance of \$12,055.36. Discount cards to area nurseries are available from Louie.

Business: Doug Quicksall announced that opportunities are available to serve on the state master gardener level. See the state MG web site for more information.

Projects and Committees: Jeanette Kelly reported that the Earthkind Rose Demonstration project at TSTC has been completed. A date will be set for October for everyone to get cuttings from the roses. No more workdays will be needed.

The Children's Garden Fair will be Sunday, Oct. 18 at the arboretum. Contact Jeanette or Judy Schmeltekopf to help.

Announcements: The program for August is "Texas Tough Plants." Steven Chamblee of Chandor Gardens in Weatherford, TX will be the guest speaker. The program is open to the public. The business meeting will begin at noon and the program will be from 1-4 at the arboretum.

The meeting was adjourned for the program "Fall Vegetable Gardening" by Dr. Joe Masabni.

---Nelda Cooper

PRESENT AT JULY MEETING

Attendance: Jane Anderson, Sandy Back, James Bays, Bonnie Belanger, Dick Belanger, Grady Bonner, Ila Jean Carothers, Mark Clark, Nelda Cooper, Kim Dougherty, Sarah Downs, Victor DuPart, Eva FitzGerald, Melody Fitzgerald, Xan Foulks, Renee Garrett, Brenda Golubski, Jeanette Kelly, Rachelle Kemp, Donna Lindsey, Steven Lovecky, Lori Lutz, Sarah McCormick, Louie McDaniel, Barbara Mersinger, Elizabeth Milam, Andrea Moore, Sarah Ortiz, Ernie Petru, Anne Plasek, Sherry Prather, Doug Quicksall, Art Reinking, Carol Reinking, Dawn Segrest, Della Setser, Gale Storey, James Storrs, Mary Lou Trice, Judy Tye, Jo Von Rosenberg, Melba Waldrop, Sonia Warriner, M J Whitehead, Genova Wilson, Carol Wood.

Interns: Sandy Burleson, Cindy Geletzke, Penny Gifford, Terence Irvine, James Prause.

---Nelda Cooper, Secretary

PROGRAM PREVIEW

August meeting: Wednesday, August 12

Carleen Bright Arboretum

Business meeting at 12 noon

Special program **1:00-4:00 PM**: Texas Tough Plants; Improving your Landscape

Guest Speaker: Steven L. Chamblee

Chief Horticulturist, Chandor Gardens, Weatherford

Steven is a
Sperry, who
his columns in
newsletter. He
sought-out
speaker. Do a
Chandor
Weatherford



favorite of Neil
often features
his monthly e-
is a much-
public
search for
Gardens
for more

information about Steven and the gardens themselves. There is quite a story about how the place came to be.



The program is free of charge and registration will begin soon after 12:30. Please spread the word. If you will distribute flyers, contact Carol Reinking. For more information call the AgriLife office at 254-757-5180. Members turn in 3 education hours.

Topics covered will include best choices for annuals and perennials, trees, groundcovers, roses, other shrubs and bushes, and accent plants.



If you missed Judy Tye's article *Cool Container Combos* in [Waco Today](http://www.wacotrib.com/today/content/wacotoday/stories/2009/07/31/07292009wacWTgarden.html), this URL should bring it up:
<http://www.wacotrib.com/today/content/wacotoday/stories/2009/07/31/07292009wacWTgarden.html>

Also, if you are willing to take notes and write up Steven Chamblee's August lecture for the September newsletter, as Sandy Burleson did for this issue, beside doing a service for people who aren't able to attend and those with short memories, you will earn volunteer hours. The first to e-mail me gets the privilege. Thanks to Sandy for a good job and to Judy Tye for her book review this month.

We also owe Julia Khoury thanks for letting the group store potting soil and mulch at her house. It's a great convenience for those who live on the west side. Unfortunately, someone accidentally got into her personal supplies, including the not-inexpensive expanded shale, so we all need to call Julie before going by to make sure she is going to be available.

When the dog days of summer are over, I'd like to do more features on members and their plants. If you have a greenhouse containing some of your treasures, or if you have a showy fall vegetable garden or a pretty fall rose display, or winter plants such as dianthus, johnny jump-ups, pansies, snapdragons, Dusty Miller, etc., don't be shy! Send me an e-mail and we'll set up a time for me to show up with a camera.

---James Storrs (We have three Jameses now.)

PROVEN VEGETABLE PRODUCTION TECHNIQUES

Lecture by Dr. Joe Masabni, McLennan County Master Gardeners, July 2009

Dr. Masabni provided a wonderful presentation after the July business meeting. Here are some of the tips for successful vegetable gardening that I picked up from his lecture:

1. Begin with a plan. Tall plants should not be planted next to short plants. Instead arrange your garden from tall growing to short growing. Tall plants can be on one side of the garden and short on the other. You do not want to shade out your shorter plants.
2. Crop selection is the next most important part of a successful garden. Use AgriLife extension recommended varieties. You can also ask other successful gardeners or get a list from one of our local nurseries. Along with variety, another important aspect of selection is the space that you have. Some vegetables require much less space than others. Some space-intensive vegetables are squash, corn, and melons.
3. Garden site selection is the third step to a successful vegetable garden. The crops must receive a minimum of 6 hours of direct sunlight. You must have fertile soil to begin with, or you may need to amend to make soil fertile.
4. Garden site preparation is the next step to a successful vegetable garden. Always add organic matter (compost) to your bed before you plant anything. If this has been done every year then about 3 inches a year can be mixed in with your soil. Much more may be needed for a new bed. Once you have the compost mixed into your soil then you should saturate the area with water. This needs to be done several days prior to planting. Fertilizer should be added at the proper rates. Once more we are reminded to do a soil test. Dr. Masabni recommended that for the first few years we do it every year. After that the soil test may be done every other year. Another option that you may want to do as part of your preparation is to solarize the site 6 to 8 weeks before planting. Solarizing is disinfecting soil by using heat generated by sunlight. This is especially helpful if you struggle with diseases such as blight. To solarize first thoroughly wet the area. Then cover with a clear plastic sheet. It is very important that the plastic is clear and also it must be held down with bricks or pins that are made for that purpose.
5. The fifth step to a successful vegetable garden is to plant your vegetables properly. This includes spacing, timing, and crop rotation. Never overcrowd your vegetables. Follow labels or ask your nursery person about the spacing between each plant. For instance, tomatoes need to be spaced at least 2 feet apart. Some plants are best planted from seed and other

from transplants. Always use transplants for tomatoes, peppers, and eggplant. If you do plant a vegetable from seed then you must thin your transplants to achieve the proper spacing. The timing of planting vegetables is also important. Some vegetables such as broccoli, lettuce, cabbage and other leafy vegetables are winter/early spring crops. Others such as okra and squash should be planted in late spring. Tomatoes if planted too early will be stressed from freeze. If planted too late it will be too hot for the plant to produce fruit. Crops should be rotated every 3 years.

Here are a few more tips that I personally picked up from Dr. Masabni:

1. RPS method for fertilization– RATE PLACEMENT SCHEDULE; Follow the rate recommended by your soil test; Place the fertilizer where it will do the most good. Follow the schedule recommended by your soil test results.
2. NPK – 3 main elements in fertilizer; Nitrogen (N) is always needed; Phosphorus (P) is the most abused; Potassium (K) is the element of least concern in most areas of Texas.
3. Tomatoes will need 150 pounds of nitrogen per season in order to produce an optimal crop.
4. Phosphorus – if your soil test recommends the addition of phosphorus then use the 2X2 rule. Put in a band next to the crop row; two inches out and two inches below; this only needs to go on one side of the row.
5. Starter solution – if phosphorus is not recommended in your soil test result then use phosphorus only in your starter solution. Try a mix such as 10-34-0 or 6-24-6. The phosphorus will help with root growth. Mix your starter solution at a rate of 5 pounds per 50 gallons of water.
6. Nitrogen – needed more when flower and fruit are setting and fruit is bulking up; less in the initial vegetative stage where you are growing leaves.
7. Fertilize once a week with nitrogen at first harvest.
8. Don't fertilize in extreme heat. It will only stress the plant.
9. Fertilize at the roots. Foliar feeding is not as effective. The leaves can only absorb 5-10% as much as the roots. Use foliar application only to fix a macronutrient problem.
10. Tomatoes – don't put up with viral infected tomatoes; Remove the plant if it becomes sick; don't compost it! Send it off.
11. Proper selection of a tomato plant – Do not pick plants that require a long growing season. A 52 day variety is best. Stem should be a reddish brown at the bottom. Remove a few leaves from the bottom before planting.
12. Insect control – use row covers or Styrofoam cups. Cut out the bottom of the Styrofoam cup and place around seedling to protect from insects.
13. Dr. Masabni also reminded us that even organic methods of insect control employ insecticides. Use all insecticides with caution. You can kill beneficial insects as well as the predators.

---Sandy Burluson (thank you, Sandy, for doing this)

I have been asked to include parts of a letter to McLennan County Master Gardeners written on July 6 by Elton E. Stuckly, Jr, President of Texas State Technical College.

Texas State Technical College Waco would like to extend our sincere thanks and appreciation for your generous donation. Support such as yours, (sic) has provided valuable assistance to our students and has contributed to their success.

TSTC is committed to being a premier provider of technical education, and is instrumental in strengthening the competitiveness of Texas business and industry by building the state's capacity to

develop the highest quality workforce. The donations and continued support through grants, industry, community, and individuals enables us to offer quality education to all students.

As President of TSTC, I would like for you to know that everyone at TSTC appreciates your support and will strive to make your investment count. Thank you again for your generosity.

You Bet Your Tomatoes!

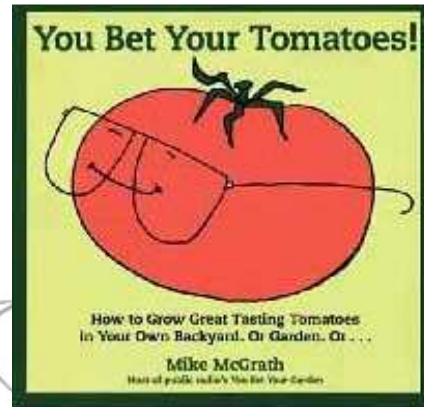
by Mike McGrath

review by **Judy Tye**

It was somewhat strange, reading this book immediately after attending the lecture on fall vegetable gardening by Texas A & M's Dr. Joe Masabni, because of a couple of contradictions. McGrath says that we should certainly grow our tomatoes from seed, while Dr. Masabni stated that we should grow from transplants only. McGrath recommends double-digging, and explains how to do so; Masabni said something like "that sounds like a lot of work to me." (Quite right, too!) You may take your choice, of course; experience has taught me that it never pays to argue with an Aggie.

Even if we don't care to grow our tomatoes from seed, the chapter on germination has some good information, especially about how to grow plants under lights. It is somewhat over-simplified, but the basics are there, and it is enough information to interest someone in that method of growing.

The chapter on planting, as well as the one on caging and staking, has a lot of good information too, especially with its emphasis on the need for good-sized, strong cages. I did think McGrath could have been more informative on the subject of fertilizer. I realize that the question of how much is very much a case of "it all depends" but still, just saying "compost" doesn't quite cover the subject. Dr. Masabni did suggest that no one fertilizes enough, and looking at my own tomatoes this year, I can well believe it.



McGrath gave a lot of information about pest control and even more about disease control, which he concedes is harder here in the South. And I liked his information about when to pick the tomatoes: he says that we gain nothing by letting the tomato completely ripen on the vine; that the tomato actually gains in flavor by our picking it at the not-quite-ripe stage, and letting it finish ripening inside. I had heard this before from other seasoned gardeners.

McGrath even goes into the canning process, which may tell some readers more than they really wanted to know; still, it's interesting to know how one might go about it, if one chose to do so.

The weakest part of the book, as far as central Texas gardeners are concerned, is not the author's fault: McGrath lives and gardens in Pennsylvania! He does know that conditions here are quite different from his own, but when he cautions the reader to be careful not to overwater....well then you know that his knowledge about our needs is strictly theoretical.

It did seem to me that at times McGrath strives a bit too hard for laughs, but then I'm an old curmudgeon. The illustrations or

cartoons in the book, done by McGrath's friend, Pulitzer-prize winner Signe Wilkinson, are hilarious, especially the one about the gardener-watching squirrels holding up rating cards, Olympic style...well, I can't explain it. You will just have to pick up the book and look it over!

Jeanette Kelly 776-2178 (jkelly46@aol.com)

Trailside Gardens Trailside Gardens are surviving the heat quite well. More improvements will come in the fall. (Barbara Vance, 741-4000)
barbaravance.com

Docent Program No tours scheduled at present. (Brenda Golubski, 379-4172 brenda1160@yahoo.com).

Pond... The fish and frogs are enjoying the pond and the flowers are blooming.
(Louie McDaniel, 836-4937 ljmac@txwi.net)

Superstar Bed.... All of the plants continue to put on a show.

Habitat For Humanity.... One planting and dedication were held this month.
(melbadwaldrop@aol.com (848-9283)

H.O.T. Urban Gardening Coalition.... Planning has begun for MLK Day 2010.
(Penny Gifford, 772-3508, pgifford@hot.rr.com)

McGregor Demonstration Garden...Weed control and watering are being taken care of by Jene for the summer. No work day planned. (Jene Hering, 840-2459, jhering1127@att.net)

Woodway Elementary Green Classroom
.....Help is needed for the summer. Contact Kim Dougherty, to help get your hours in (399-8316, kiminind@yahoo.com)

Children's Garden Fair...Sunday Oct.18, 2009

Needing volunteer hours? Contact your mentor, any officer, project leader, or me for information.

This has been a trying summer, but there is still beauty at the Arboretum. The photos on the next page were taken the week of July 27. JMS

STATISTICS FOR McLENNAN COUNTY MG FOR THE FIRST 6 MONTHS OF 2009 (THROUGH 6-30-2009)

FURNISHED BY JULIA KHOURY

(first figure cumulative to May; second, June; third, TOTAL)

Volunteer Hours 1921 ¾; 186; 2107 ¾

Education Hours 349 ¾; 37; 386

Contacts 10447; 630; 11,077

Contacts- Media 310,000; 2,000; 312,000

Meetings 222; 36; 258

Arboretum 488; 27 1/2; 515 1/2
(These hours listed are included in the Volunteer Hours)

Trailside Gardens 194; 11 ½; 205 ½

Docent Tour 79 ½; 2; 81 ½

Superstar Bed 122 ½; 11; 133 ½

Miscellaneous 92; 8 ½; 100 1/2
(Pond-Gardener's Gathering- McGregor)

Community Projects Report 7/8/09

