

# Inside Dirt

Henderson County Master Gardener Newsletter



*Upcoming Meetings:*  
Meetings are held at noon on the third Wednesday of the month at the East Texas Arboretum  
1601 Patterson Rd,  
Athens TX

*January 18, 2017*  
*February 15, 2017*  
*March 15, 2017*

## President's Message

by Yvonne Sparks

Happy 2017 to All! To close out the 2016 year, HCMGA held its annual Christmas Party. We welcomed new interns to our organization. The new intern class is an eager group of individuals. They are David Bickerstaff, Jacob Cole, Claudia Durham, Shelley Fugit, Loretta Humble, John Maloch, Peg Martinez, Elizabeth Murphy, and Lora Tomlinson.

A new group of MGs was certified as well. This group has already proven they are a force to be welcomed and

encouraged. The new MGs are Linda Belssner, Jeanne Brown, Janelle Cole, Peter Cole, Sara Drummond, Kathi Murphy-Boley, Lyndon Patrick, Martha Rainwater, David Seymore and Paula Winters. Many of these new MG have accepted positions as members of the Board or Chairs of committees within the MG association. I personally want to congratulate each of these members. (con't p.5)



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## Welcome 2016 Officers

President :	Yvonne Sparks
VP Program & Administration	Jeanne Brown
VP Member & Community Education	Linda Schafer
Secretary	Linda Bellsner
Treasurer	Kathi-Murphy Boley
Historian	Cherie Tanneberger
Parliamentarian	Lyndon Patrick



# 2016 Awards



Wayne Stafford earned his 15 year pin for serving faithfully to the Henderson County Master Gardeners for the past 15 years! Great job Wayne, we sure appreciate all you do!!

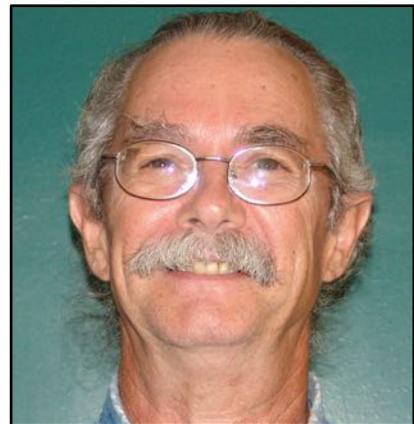


This year's Volunteer of the Year is shared by two very qualified individuals!! Bill Hancock and Lydia Holley!! Great job to both of you!!!

Our 10 year pins went to : Elmer Belssner, (not pictured) Jack Busby, Lynn Stroud, and Dodie Tucker. Great job everyone!



Our 3 year pin winners were Pictured: (Rt to Lt) Kathy Vest, Linda Singleton, Marylee Haldeman and Bob Erickson. Not Pictured: Shannon Greene, and LaTrecia Jeffcott. Thank you for your hard work!



Intern of the year is awarded to David Seymour for his tireless work getting the Green House to what it is today!! We are so proud of you David!!

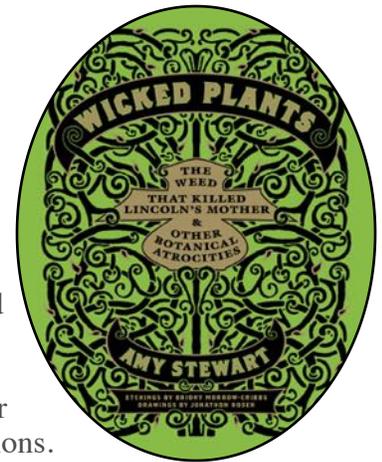
# HCMGA 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Spring Conference “Wicked Plants”

A tree that sheds poison daggers; a glistening red seed that stops the heart; a shrub that causes paralysis; a vine that strangles; and a leaf that triggered a war.

Enjoy dinner and New York Times best-selling author, Amy Stewart, as she delves into the dark side of the plant kingdom.

In her New York Times bestseller *Wicked Plants: The Weed That Killed Lincoln's Mother and Other Botanical Atrocities*, Amy Stewart takes on Mother Nature's most appalling creations. It's an A to Z of plants that kill, maim, intoxicate, and otherwise offend. Drawing on history, medicine, science, and legend, Stewart presents tales of bloodcurdling botany that will entertain, alarm, and enlighten even the most intrepid gardeners and nature lovers.

unforgettable cast of characters and tells their tales with her own wicked sense of humor. Stewart's talk is accompanied by dazzling photographs, historical images, copper engravings, and other visuals as illustrations.



**Did you know?**  
All parts of **LILIES** (*Lilium spp.*) are toxic to cats, causing kidney failure and death within 24-48 hours.

Amy Stewart and her talk come highly recommended by those HCMGA members who heard her speak at the 2016 Master Gardener state convention. Join us for this informative and lively event, March 30, 2017, at the Hart-Morris Conservation Center, 5601 CR 4812 (also signed Peninsula Point Road), Athens, Texas 75752.

Find out which plant killed Abraham Lincoln's mother, which shrub ignited a global war, and what plant has killed 90 million people. From strychnine to castor bean, from poison sumac to monkshood, from carnivorous plants to weeds that spontaneously combust, Stewart introduces an

*A very wicked plant*  
*Without question, the world's most wicked plant is TOBACCO (Nicotiana tabacum), responsible for the deaths of at least 90 million people worldwide.*

Doors open at 5:30pm  
Program begins at 6:00pm

Tickets are \$25.00 per person and include dinner. Seating is limited. Advance purchase of tickets is encouraged.

Tickets may be purchased from any Henderson County Master Gardener, by calling 903-675-6130 or emailing [HendersonCMGA@gmail.com](mailto:HendersonCMGA@gmail.com)

**Beware**  
**DAPHNE** (*Daphne spp.*), a beloved winter shrub, produces attractive red berries so toxic they could kill a child.

## President's Message (con't)

by Yvonne Sparks

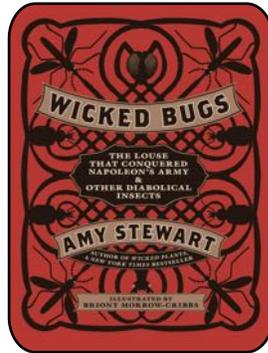
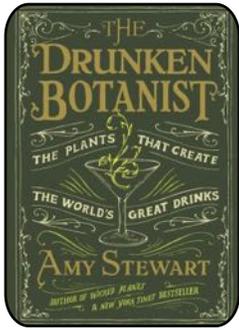
Congratulations to David Seymore, 2016 Intern of the Year and Lydia Holley and Bill Hancock, 2016 Volunteers of the Year. All three of you did outstanding work in Henderson County through your leadership in the TVCC Greenhouse, as President of HCMGA and at South Athens Elementary Children's Garden. I

salute you!  
This year will be a year of new opportunities. It is my hope that all MG become even more involved in our many projects.

*Yvonne*

# Amy Stewart - Author

Amy Stewart is the author of eight books. Her latest is *Lady Cop Makes Trouble*, which is the second installment in a series based on the remarkable true story of three sisters in the 1910s. She has also written six nonfiction books on the perils and pleasures of the natural world, including four New York Times bestsellers: *The Drunken Botanist*, *Wicked Bugs*, *Wicked Plants*, and *Flower Confidential*. She lives in Eureka, California, with her husband Scott Brown, who is a rare book dealer. They own a bookstore called Eureka Books. The store is housed in a classic nineteenth-century Victorian building that Amy very much hopes is haunted.



Since her first book was published in 2001, Stewart has appeared on NPR's

Morning Edition and *Fresh Air*, she's been profiled in the *New York Times* and the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and she's been featured on CBS Sunday Morning, *Good Morning America*, the PBS documentary *The Botany of Desire*, and—believe it or not—TLC's *Cake Boss*.



Amy has written for the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and many other newspapers and magazines. She is the co-founder of the popular blog *GardenRant*.

## HCMGA Appreciates their Sponsors

Henderson County Master Gardener Association (HCMGA) appreciates all the individuals and businesses that donate to the organization – whether it is time, expertise, products, or money. It is through fundraising events like the Spring Plant Sale and the Spring Conference that generous sponsors are able to support the mission of HCMGA and provide high quality horticultural information to the residents of Henderson County. Upcoming free educational opportunities are listed in each edition of the *Inside Dirt*.

HCMGA is a non-profit organization and donations are gratefully accepted throughout the year. But, it is the first few months of the year that Henderson County Master Gardeners make a special effort to seek sponsors that will help

fund the educational programs for the year.

Donations from sponsors help support the outreach, teaching and demonstration projects of HCMGA. Working together we are protecting and conserving natural resources through the teaching of safe, effective, and sustainable horticultural practices that promote healthy gardens, landscapes, and our community.

Individuals and businesses that want information on how to be a 2017 HCMGA Sponsor may do so by contacting their favorite Henderson County Master Gardener, calling the County Extension office at: 903-675-6130 or by emailing HCMGA at: [HendersonCMGA@gmail.com](mailto:HendersonCMGA@gmail.com).

# Blue Basil

## By Linda Belssner, HCMG



While walking through a local nursery I came across a bed of purple flowers, covered in bees. Since I was planning on getting a beehive soon, I thought, I need some of this plant. So I *snipped a few seed heads and took a few pictures. Only to find out the*



*seed heads are nonviable and would do me no good.*

*I did some research on the internet and found out the plant was African Blue Basil.*

African blue basil is one of

a few types of basil that are perennial. It is a sterile hybrid of two breeds of basil, unable to produce seeds of its own, and is propagated by cuttings.

**Scientific name:** *Ocimum kilimandscharicum* × *basilicum* 'Dark Opal'

**Rank:** Hybrid

*This plant is also call Bee Basil. The best way to help bees is to plant flowers they love.*

*A favorite staple bee flower is African Blue Basil, a plant that hums with bees from sunup to sundown every day in the garden. It's a beautiful plant, with green-purple foliage; a plump, round growing habit; a bewitching herbal smell; and an eye-catching spray of purple and white flower spikes. For a basil, it's a surprisingly forgiving plant: if you forget to water or prune an established plant it will bounce right back.*

The leaves of African blue basil start out purple when young, only growing green as the given leaf grows to its full size, and even then retaining purple veins.

It blooms profusely like an annual, but being sterile it never goes to seed. It is also taller than many basil

cultivars. These blooms are very good at attracting bees and other pollinators.

I enjoy the pesto I make from it, and everyone I know who has used it has agreed it makes great pesto.

To summarize, for those new to this plant, it's a woody shrub growing to 3 feet tall, perennial where frost is absent or slight. It can be grown in a large container, sheltered during frosts.

Propagation made easy: A personal story.

The African Blue Basil I purchased were in a stressed condition when I received them, so I removed the flower heads before I planted them. Because the bees were enjoying the flowers, I propped the flower heads up in a jar on my patio table. It rained during the night and I forgot all about them.

Two weeks later I went to toss out the flower heads, only to discover that they had all grown roots. I quickly planted them in to soil and brought them inside. I also made cuttings

from the plants, some of which I put in jars of water and others I

planted in soil. I placed the jars in a southern exposure window, all grew roots within two weeks. As of now the rootings placed in

soil are doing just fine.



# Walk with Me

## by Nina Ellis (MG Emeritus)

As we enter my garden the three bur oaks (*quercus macrocarpa*) will catch your eye. They shade my home from the searing Western sun during July and August. The first friend I made when I moved to Montalba 35 years ago gave me the acorns. Beneath one of them are the Lent lilies (*narcissus pseudonarcissus*) and campernelle jonquils (*narcissus xodorus*) that must have been planted in this hard red clay by a determined gardener long before my tenure. These two narcissus have scattered themselves throughout the garden, blooming faithfully every spring as they have for centuries in their Southern European habitat. Along the driveway, the narcissus *Italicus* are usually the first bulbs to bloom in spring. They are a gift from a friend's garden that is on the site of a long gone log cabin. Nearby are many narcissus that were given me by a bulb grower in Mt. Pleasant. In the same area a blue plumbago thrives in hot dry soil. My daughter-in-law brought it to me from her garden in San Antonio. It is a magnet for butterflies all summer long.

Moving along, we encounter two heirloom roses (Monsieur Tillier and J.E. Murphy Pink Tea), probably 4' by 8' that I propagated from cuttings I received while attending a Texas Rose Rustlers meeting. Across the way a gardenia *jasminoides* reaches the roof of the house. This was my husband's favorite flower, a treasured Valentine's Day gift from many years ago. A Mexican buckeye shades the gardenia. My son brought the seeds to me after a visit to the San Antonio Botanical Garden. Today it is 20' tall and rivals the redbuds with outstanding pink blossoms.

There are many Iris in the garden. The first spring I was here I discovered the very old variety "Purple King" with tall stems and velvety purple falls, along with the early white *Iris albicans*. The pecan tree is surrounded by the incredibly fragrant old species German iris, a gift from a dear friend. It is very early blooming and signals the arrival of spring. Many of the newer varieties

of Iris are gifts of Master Gardener friends.

Crinums – there are many—some purchased but most offsets from friends.

Growing crinums is surely a lesson in patience. One morning, maybe years after planting, you will see a bloom spike and rejoice, it is surely worth the wait. While you were waiting for a bloom they covered a lot of ground in the garden with their strap-like leaves and did their part in keeping out the weeds.

A recently planted butterfly garden is planted with a number of native Texas salvias. Our garden staple, *salvia farinacea* and its cultivars along with the fall blooming *salvia regla* and the sprawling summer blooming *salvia darcii* that were purchased from Natives of Texas in Kerrville along with four different varieties of passionflower. If you find yourself in the area it is a great nursery to visit and to purchase native plants. Milkweeds are in abundance for the Monarchs: *Asclepias tuberosa*, *A. curvassia*, *A. incarnata*, *A. texana* and *A. viridis*. My hope is that my garden may qualify as a Monarch way station. Native purple verbena (*glandularia bipinnatifida*) and our Texas lantana (*lantana horrida*) assure me there will be many varieties of butterflies for watching and catching on camera.

Under the trees you will notice a dozen mature dogwood trees. There were none here when we arrived. Through the years the birds have planted them in the garden. To return the favor, they furnish the birds with shiny red berries in winter.

Turning the corner, we come to a perennial bed planted with coneflowers I have grown from seed. You will see *Echinacea pallida*, *E. augustifolia*, *E. tennesseensis*, and the yellow flowered *E. paradoxa*. Growing with them are another favorite of mine, several species of penstemon: *Brazos*, *cobea*, *digitalis*, *laxiflorus*



# Introducing : "Cloud Nine" the 2017 Interns



David Bickerstaff



Jacob Cole



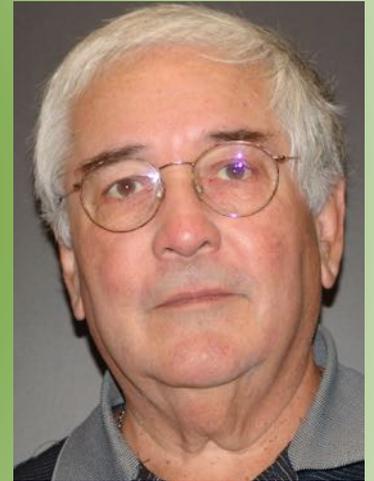
Claudia Durham



Shelly Fugitt



Loretta Humble



John Maloch



Peg Martinez



Elizabeth Murphy



Lora Tomlinson

# 2017 Intern Class



# 2016 Graduating Interns The Dirt-ee Dozen



## What Does Master Gardener Emeritus Designation Mean?

By Judy Haldeman

To answer that question, one must have a little background on the Master Gardener Program itself. The first Master Gardener program was started by the Washington State University Cooperative Extension in 1972. The goal was to provide gardening advice for urban horticulture in the Seattle area. Master Gardeners are now active in all 50 states and 8 Canadian provinces. In the U.S., Master Gardener groups are affiliated with a state's land grant university in cooperation with one of the state's Cooperative Extension Offices.

In 1978, Dr. Sam Cotner, a Texas A&M Extension Specialist, worked to establish the Master Gardener Program in Texas. In 1979, Montgomery County held the first Master Gardener class. Several years later, in 1987, The Texas Agricultural Extension Service officially committed to the Texas Master Gardener program with the hiring of a statewide coordinator. Guidelines for the program specified a minimum of 50 hours of formal educational training plus 50 hours of volunteer service to become a certified Master Gardener. As of 2016 Texas now has 88 Master Gardener Programs

that involve 93 counties.

According to the Master Gardener handbook:

"Nominations for Emeritus(a) status are limited to certified Texas Master Gardeners, preferably with five or more years of service to Texas AgriLife Extension Service as a Master Gardener. Texas Master Gardener Emeritus (Emerita) is an honorary title awarded to a retired Master Gardener volunteer for distinguished service to Texas AgriLife Extension Service." As of December, 2016, there have been 31 Emerita awarded this distinction in Texas.

Nina Ellis is the first Master Gardener Emeritus from the Henderson County Master Gardener Association. If you missed Sharon Barrett's Inside Dirt article on Page 7 of the November/December 2016 edition, you should read the article about a very special ambassador for the Texas Master Gardener Program.



## Walk with Me (continue p.5) by Nina Ellis (MG Emeritus)

*and Murrayanus that I rescued from my pasture. These are all native perennials that have thrived for many years and bloom reliably every spring.*

*Completing our tour we come to native deciduous azaleas with yellow blossoms and meadow rue (thalictrum), that were given me after working in the gardens at Pineywoods Native Center. Spreading across the bed are columbines, both Aquilgia canadensis (red) and A. chrysantha (yellow) that are from the original plants given to me by my daughter. They readily*

*reseed and act as a ground cover when not in bloom. Here you see my hip gardenia ("Martha Turnbull") taken as a cutting from Greg Grant's garden in Arcadia. It roots easily so I have been able to share with friends.*

*We have arrived back at the beginning of our walk and I realize I have not begun to point out all the plants that bring out fond memories of friends, family and exciting gardening experiences. I hope your garden is just as full of treasured memories.*

# South Athens Children's Garden Report

by Janelle Cole HCMG



So many things going on in the South Athen's Children's Garden!! First we are so thrilled to report that we successfully grew carrots!! The kids loved going out and harvesting carrots and beets and then trying them in our sessions! Many of



the children really enjoyed the beets and of course most love the carrots. By the last class, we were sampling Kohlrabi, Bok Choy, Beets, Carrots, and Kale - a veritable salad!!

We've spent a good deal of time this past semester talking about nutrition and the

garden. Not only have we introduced new vegetables, grown and harvested in their garden, but we have talked about making

healthy choices as home as well. One week, Kate the Extension Agent brought a game called "Go, Slow and Whoa" where the children



tell whether a food is healthy "GO", in between "SLOW" or not healthy "WHOA." This game taught them about making healthy choices with a variety

of foods to include different breads, cooked items from our dinner plates and snacks. Then she showed them how much sugar was in a 12 oz can of Coke, which surprised many of them!

Classes are on pause right now as we will be relocating the garden in 2017.

The school is building a new gym, so we are moving and modifying the garden at the same time!! We will be turning the



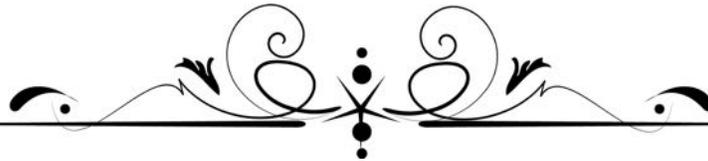
garden into raised beds. We hope to have a variety of raised beds to demonstrate different options for home gardens, to include a handicapped accessible bed. We are excited



to see how the improvements work out for teaching classes in the future!

Save the Dates:

- January 20th HCMG Meeting  
Bill Hancock & Elmer Belssner :Vermiposting
- February 17th HCMG Meeting : Jayla Fry  
(State Coordinator) - Volunteer Management System
- March 30, 2017 \*\* Spring Conference at  
Texas Freshwater Fisheries
- April 22, 2017 \*\* Plant Sale @ The Senior Citizen Building  
\*\* Denotes open to the public! So hope to see you there!



2017 HCMG Spring Conference Announcement

"Wicked Plants"

presented by

Amy Stewart

Author & Speaker

March 30, 2017

Texas Freshwater Fisheries

Athens, Tx

Tickets are on sale \$25, from any  
Henderson County Master Gardener.

(Includes dinner, the speaker & great door prizes!!)

(903)675-6130 for more info

