

Jasper Master Gardeners—2014 in Review

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Jasper County, Butterfly Capital of Texas



Jasper Master Gardeners (JMG) celebrated their fifth year, and their third annual Butterfly Festival. Members continue to be active in many areas of the community; we are a large group with many diverse interests. This year we started some new traditions, continued old ones, and got a new Ag/ NR agent Brock Fry.

Our sister organization, Longleaf Ridge Master Naturalists (LRMN), graduated a new class, their second group, who will work with us on many joint projects. This is our annual Holiday Review for members, mostly in pictures, to remind us of how much we've accomplished in 2014, and a peek at what's coming in 2015.



Ag Agent Brock Fry started in March, 2014

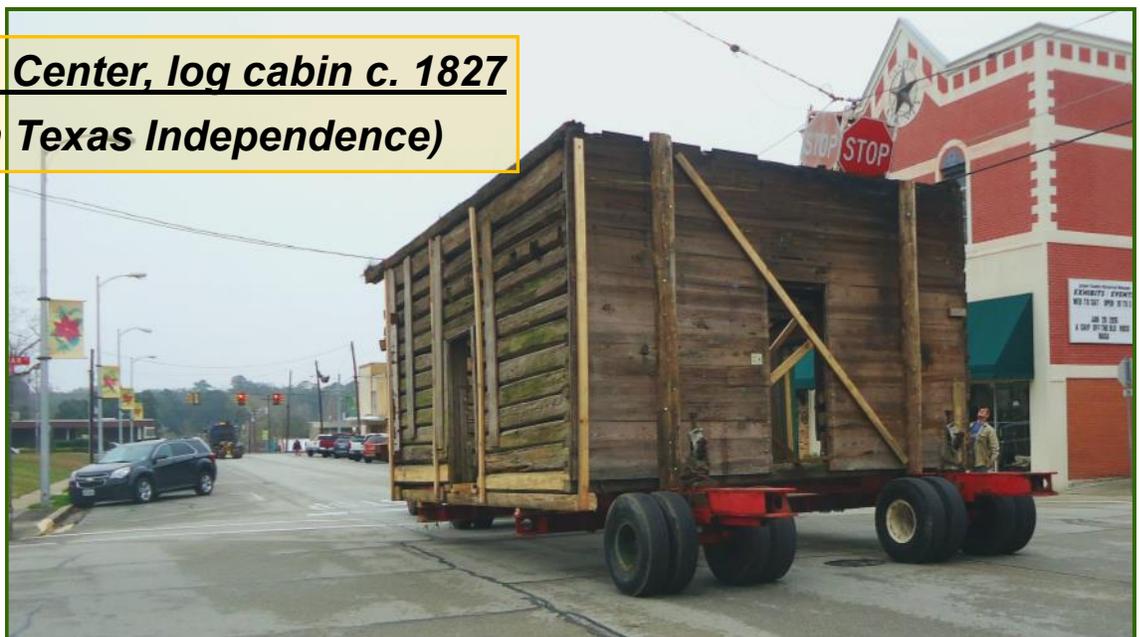
Partnerships & on-going projects:

Many of our members wear more than one hat and our club works together with several local organizations on civic projects. Perhaps the largest of these is the **Jasper Arboretum and Butterfly Gardens** (<http://jasper.agrilife.org/jasper-arboretum-project/>). The City of Jasper owns the land, part of the park system that runs along Sandy Creek from Highway 96 to the pond on Marvin Hancock Drive. Master Gardeners work in the gardens of the historic Beaty Orton House, the library gardens, Butterfly Garden, meditation pond and fountain area — all the park areas on Water Street from Main to Zavalla Streets.

JMG members built and maintain the master gardener greenhouse, new propagation greenhouse, and Outdoor Learning Center. Plans for 2015 include replacing the temporary butterfly house, which is erected each fall for Butterfly Festival, with a new permanent year-round butterfly house designed by master gardener instructor Hugh Pickle.

Future Nature Center, log cabin c. 1827 **(older than Texas Independence)**

Hardy Pace cabin, special delivery from its original location between Jasper & Peachtree Community near Indian Creek, just in time for a winter project.

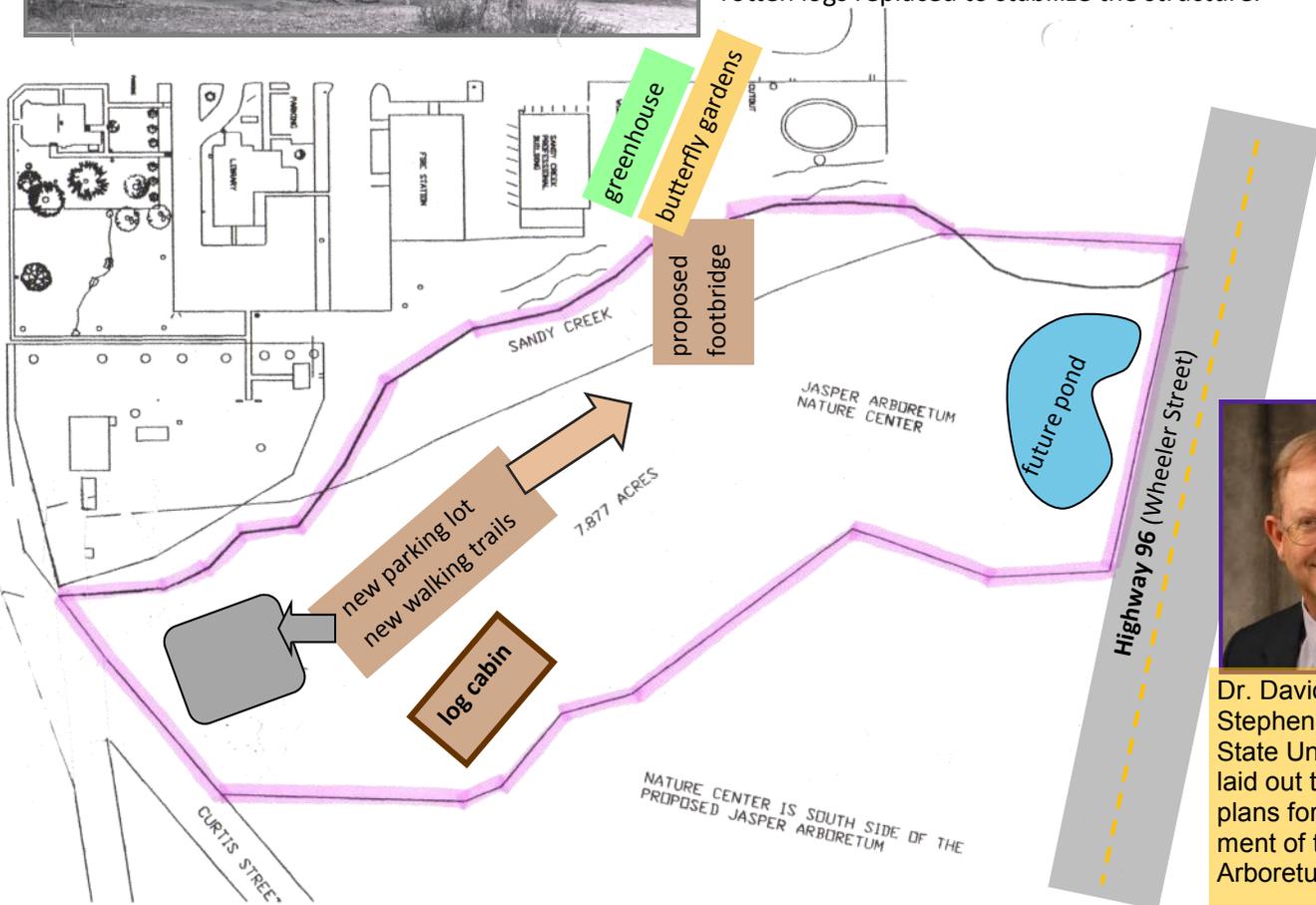


Jasper Economic Development Corporation (JEDCO) approved funding for paved walking trails for the south side of Sandy Creek Park, and in the future a footbridge will connect the more formal north bank gardens to the native plant “wild side” of the creek. A second pond and fountain will be built next to Highway 96.

JMG and LRMN will assist with planning the native plants gardens around the new Nature Center/log cabin. On Dec. 2, the log cabin (circa 1827) was moved to it’s new location in the park, across from City Hall. Members from several groups, including the Jasper County Historical Museum, are also involved in this restoration project.



Left: cabin as it looked in the first half of the 1900’s, when it was only a century old and still in use as a home. Above: cabin as it looked in 2012, abandoned and on the verge of collapse. The side additions have been removed, and a few rotten logs replaced to stabilize the structure.



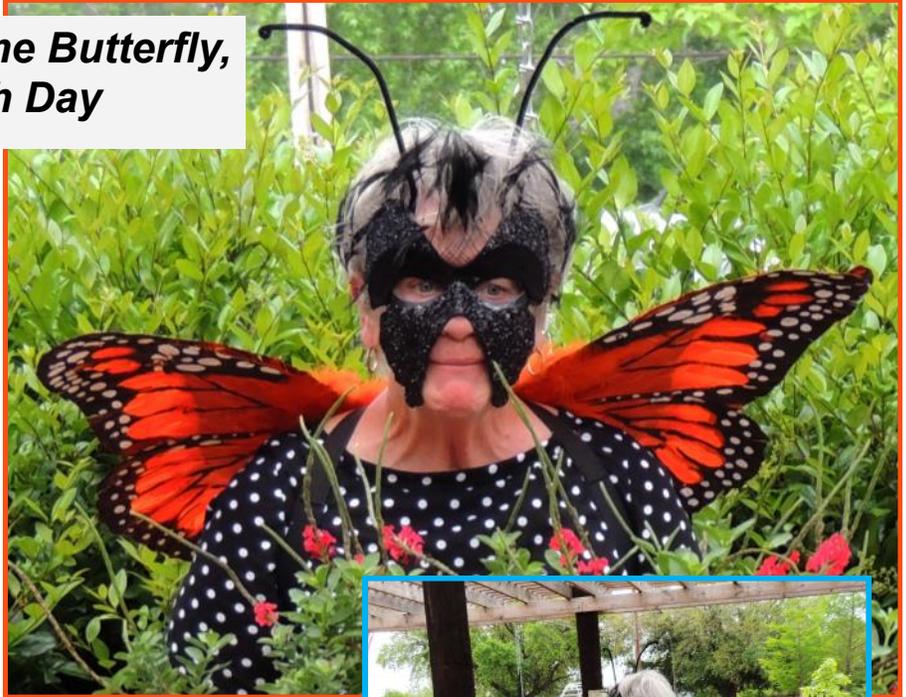
Dr. David Creech, Stephen F. Austin State University, laid out the original plans for development of the Jasper Arboretum areas.

We have a new star, Madame Butterfly, and a new event: Earth Day

Madame Butterfly (Martha Hamilton) made her debut at our first Earth Day event in the park.

JMG VP Julia McCormick planned the event and led the scavenger hunt in the Butterfly Garden.

Master Gardeners helped the kids build terrariums and offered butterfly face painting, thanks to Bee Burkett and Karmen Dossier. The library offered a garden reading program, tour of the Fire Hall and antique fire truck, and the local Rock Club offered a fluorescent mineral show.



More pictures from the first annual Earth Day Garden Party:



Summer library program, terrariums, 6-24-2014:

We do this program for many groups, from pre-K to senior living centers, and everyone seems to enjoy building their own windowsill gardens. It gives us a chance to talk about what a plant needs to grow, about the water cycle in nature and recycling in general.

For small terrariums we use plastic glasses for the bottom and tape an upside down glass for the top. For bigger terrariums, we recycle plastic 2-liter soda bottles cut in half.

With enough master gardeners propagating succulents, this program costs very little and everyone takes home a living garden of their own.



Plant parents needed for more propagation!



You can help: decorating is where people seem to have the most fun. If you visit pet stores, watch for colorful aquarium gravel on sale. At yard sales, watch for small animals, shiny pebbles and tiny sea shells.



NEW for 2014: Beth's playhouse

aka — Propagation Station, the little greenhouse behind the big greenhouse.

If you didn't realize it, the master gardener greenhouse behind the Outdoor Learning Center is open all the time, with an "honor-system" drop box for donations. Most city folks can't believe we do this, but it's worked out well so far. In fact, donations sometimes appear greatly in excess of what we might have charged at a plant sale.

But we needed a separate area for seeds and cuttings, so this year master gardeners installed a smaller greenhouse in back, and it was no small task to get it to its intended home.



Just enough clearance for a hiccup but not a sneeze



Farmers Market:

JMGs completed their 5th year managing the Jasper County Farmers Market Association, but we are in the process of separating the two organizations as was always planned from the beginning. When the first group of JMGs graduated in 2010, they needed a project, and the farmers market board needed volunteers to organize and manage a brand new market. JMG also saw an opportunity to do community outreach, with soil sample bags and advice from gardeners available at every Saturday market. The intention, however, was always that as soon as experienced vendors were available to assume management of the market, the two groups would separate.

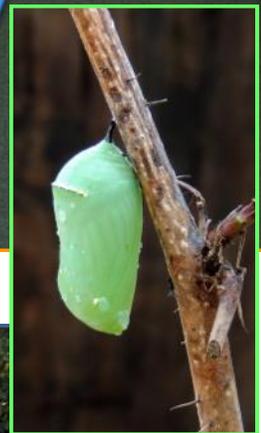
This year, thanks to Commissioners Court, master gardeners also had the opportunity to clean up the blueberry bushes at the old Beechgrove School, and harvest the 2014 crop to sell at farmers market. Funds from blueberry sales will benefit the Outdoor Learning Center and Butterfly Garden at Jasper Arboretum.

Annual Community Events:

JMG participates in many Chamber of Commerce events, including Azalea Fest, Fall Fest and the Business Expo. They also participate on behalf of Farmers Market in the *Taste of Jasper*, a fundraiser for the Pilot Club. Every event is an opportunity to promote what master gardeners can offer, and to publicize programs available from the Texas A&M AgriLife office.



Paige is an experienced butterfly wrangler



More swings were built and installed by master gardeners at the fountain, and benches at the Beaty Orton house for year-round enjoyment.

Master naturalists and master gardeners broke ground on the "wild side."



Master gardeners also build and sell swings to raise money for the park.



More on-going projects:

On Wednesdays, Barbara Methvin and a group of JMG members help HeadStart kids plant and harvest a community garden.

Barbara, with her Master Wellness hat on, also teaches yoga and exercise classes on Tuesdays and Thursdays at the Methodist Church.



Our butterfly people, Gene and Martha Hamilton, take their monarch migration message to schools, clubs and civic organizations. The Hamiltons have raised and released hundreds of monarch butterflies. The master gardener greenhouse propagates and sells or gives away thousands of milkweed plants every year.

Business EXPO is good exposure for both our “masters” groups, and the timing is perfect to promote the Holiday Market, last market of the season.

Holiday Market is the grand finale to farmers market and includes many more arts and crafts, charity bake sales and club fundraisers. This year, it also included a pecan bake-off and decorated hat contest.



Cook-off judges face tough decision

Club meetings, hot topics:

JMG meets first Mondays most months (except as moved for holidays). Most club meetings include a garden topic so that members can claim one or two hours of CEU training. This year Vice President Julia McCormick arranged these speakers & topics:

January, Ralph Beard on creating terrariums, plant selection, aesthetics, and how flower shows are judged. Previously, Ralph demonstrated trough gardens and donated several large log troughs to the Outdoor Learning Center.

February—reset to March, Bob Baker on 2 topics: wildscapes and native plants for urban use. JMG members were also invited to attend upcoming master naturalist training classes and claim CEUs whenever the topic relates to gardening. Many JMG attended Robert Webb's LRMN presentation on Native Bees and pollinators.

Dan Williamson of Third Day Farms talked about Farmers Market, the challenges of farming in East Texas, and his vision for a U-Pick farm experience. Don Ramey, author of *It's Easy — Garden Nutrition, Disease and Insect Control*, spoke about when to pick and how to preserve your harvest.

JMG instructor Hugh Pickle discussed plans for Butterfly Festival and introduced the new Butterfly House Plans, to be built within the next year. City Council approved the footbridge that will connect the 2 areas of the park.

JMG President Brent Meaux is working with Jasper City Council on downtown revitalization plans, primarily development around the courthouse but including the gardens and Arboretum on Water St.

Landscape Specialists Sonya Moore spoke about xeriscaping, water-wise strategies and plant selection. Jennifer Buckner, horticulturalists at Shangri La Gardens, discussed how to propagate heirloom plants. She also introduced the idea of Wild Wednesdays, a summer program at Shangri La that we might copy for the Outdoor Learning Center, partnering with the library.

October is always the popular seed exchange and pass-along plants, a show-and-tell opportunity for JMGs to describe their garden favorites and share.

Texas INVASIVES is a class recommended to all JMG and LRMN members, and to date, about 2/3 of our members have taken the training. This year, Master Naturalists hosted the class Nov 15; JMGs attended to get updates. The program now includes insects and invertebrates in addition to invasive plants; Texas forest Service's Mike Murphrey taught this one.

Bee Burkett demonstrated wreath making, and Shireen Fletcher announced a new Papercrete Planter class. The plan is to hold a practice class for JMG first, Dec. 13, and when we have the kinks worked out, offer a class to the public in the spring, or offer it as an activity at Earth Day 2015.

Barbara Methvin, Denise Banks, Joanna McMurry, Margie Saulsbury and a host of elves planned the joint JMG-LRMN Christmas party. See last page for more photos.



JMG members filled a table at the Chamber of Commerce awards banquet

Classes, workshops, & events:

Although not strictly speaking a master gardener class, the Foodies workshops (5 in all) were geared to garden fresh cooking, and about 2/3 of the members were master gardeners. It was lead by Cindy VanDevender, FCS agent for Jasper County, and included lessons in canning and preserving your fresh harvest. The five classes were taught at Roganville Church, followed by a holiday foodies reunion class at the AgriLife office in November.

Several JMG attended the Feb. 25 Fruit & Vegetable Conference in Nacogdoches that featured speakers from Texas A&M AgriLife, Stephen F. Austin State University, and the Texas Dept. of Agriculture. Highlight was new peach varieties that require fewer chill hours to produce fruit.

More than a dozen JMG members attended the *Down & Dirty* seminar in Louisiana, put on by Sabine Parish Master Gardeners. This has been popular with Jasper master gardeners for several years. JMG member Denise Banks will attempt to create a similar event for JMG in 2015.

Several members also attended the Feb. 15 “2014 Crisis Preparation Expo” that has become a big event in Orange. Although this prepper event had a doomsday bent, we decided that several topics would be suitable for a master gardener/naturalist event, including; saving heirloom seeds, composting, canning, herbs for food and medicinal uses, beekeeping, propagation of citrus, aquaponics, greenhouses — and that we already have specialists who can teach these topics, plus firewise landscaping. The addition of quilting and sewing, which was included in the Orange program, would give FCS agent Cindy VanDevender a chance to participate as well.

JMG, LRMN and the Farmers Market people staged the first annual Outdoor Swap Meet at the Outdoor Learning Center on April 5, with proceeds to benefit the Butterfly House and gardens.



HeadStart spring garden program



Making pasta at first Foodies class, Italian Country cooking



Vendors paid \$10 for booth space in the bank's parking lot, and club members were also invited to clean out their sheds and garages and donate any surplus outdoor gear, from garden stuff to sporting goods. It was like a garage sale but with a theme, as we did not want to detract from other clubs' rummage sales. We said no clothes, kitchen items or household goods, and everyone honored that. One vendor paid for 5 slots to clear out his inventory of trailers; we had several people with sporting goods, assorted tools, and of course the Arboretum held a plant sale. Donations of items & equipment to sell, from members and the community at large, earned the most money.

2014 — more memories



Air layering and recycling all at once.

March 11 we held our annual grape pruning at Sarah's Vineyard with Bill Talcott, CEUs for master gardeners but open to all. Several people from LRMNs & Newton County Master Gardeners attended to learn how to prune and propagate grape vines.

March 29, JMG toured the Antique Rose Emporium near College Station. Founder Mike Shoup issued the invitation during the *Down & Dirty* seminar, and about 25 JMG, spouses and guests attended. Mike took us on a behind-the-scenes tour of the propagation greenhouses.

April 26 JMG held their first annual Earth Day Party at the Outdoor Learning Center, thanks for VP

Julia McCormick. Billed as the Garden Party on Water Street, activities included a scavenger hunt, tour of the Fire Hall, storytelling, Snacks in the Park, fluorescent minerals, and terrariums. Almost 30 kids, ages 3 to 13, attended, along with parents and grandparents.

JMG President Brent Meaux represented the club at the Southern Region Master Gardener Conference 2014.

This year we lost the Daylily Man, Ellis Clifton of Roganville, JMG member and favorite garden speaker, pictured while touring SFASU gardens. Ellis never liked his picture taken, so we're including pictures of lilies he hybridized. Plans are to install a daylily garden in his honor at the Beaty Orton House.

JMG partnered with Lowe's for Library Crashers. Lowe's Heroes chose a garden makeover for their 2014 community involvement program, and master gardeners and Lowe's employees worked shoulder to shoulder to redo the overgrown landscaping around the library and build a new retaining wall.

JMGs also hosted a group of senior citizens from Wesley United Methodist Center in Beaumont. Reverend Wineva Hankamer, Adult Ministries brought a busload up for a garden tour, butterfly lecture and they each made terrariums. Many of the seniors and their families came back for Butterfly Festival.



For the last 3 years, Jasper Master Gardeners have written a monthly column for **The Lakecaster**, which is distributed at convenience stores around Lake Sam Rayburn, Toledo Bend and Steinhagen, and this publication also has professional fishermen worldwide who subscribe to it.



Happy Holidays
& Best Wishes
for a terrific 2015

