



THE GRAPEVINE



Volume XVI, Issue 6

*Fort Bend County
Master Gardeners, Inc.*

November-December 2006

From the Garden

By Mary Beth McCaughey, President, FBMG S2000

Not much gardening news to report from my house. The good thing is that when you build landscape beds with lots of compost the first time, which I did, fortunately—the perennials simply do their thing without a lot of additional effort on your part. Of course they tend to grow happily until they sort of scare the neighbors. I'll be trying to tame some of the material as I mulch in the coming weeks. We live on a lake and tend to get cold, drying winds in the backyard in the winter—so mulching is one of the chores I take very seriously this time of year. Even if I lose foliage to winter conditions, I can usually count on the plants returning from the roots as long as I have protected them with a good layer of mulch.

It has been a busy fall season. My thanks to everyone who worked on the Ag'tivity Barn and the Fort Bend ISD In Service Day. To everyone who helped organize and put on the In the Garden Seminar—you did a great job of putting together this first time event. FBMG really shined that day, reaching a new level in fulfilling our mission of sharing knowledge with the community. Our gardens look great and we have also welcomed 17 new Certified Master Gardeners into our ranks, with the graduation of the Spring 2006 class. Add that to all of the *other* accomplishments this year and I think we've all earned a well deserved break from weekly workdays and meetings!

Inside this Issue ...

From the Garden	1
November Monthly Program	2
Upcoming Monthly Programs	2
Green Thumb Seminars	2
Awards Banquet	2
Mac's Message	3
TMGA Awards	3
In the Garden Seminar	3
Landscape Updates	4-5
Blue Bell Inspiration	5
Why Should I Work in the Gardens	6
Farmers Market	6
FBMG Operations Manual	8
Tip for Reducing Holiday Waste	8
EarthKind™ Environmental Landscape Management Program	9
Dates to Remember	9



You'll find several references in this issue to the new "Quilt" Bridge, pictured above, in the Cottage Garden. If you haven't seen this creation yet, make time to get out and see this one-of-a-kind feature!

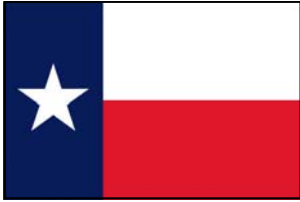
Before we all slip into holiday revelry and time with our families, I want to encourage everyone to turn in their 2006 hours and to come out for the Awards Banquet on December 6. The recognition program has been improved this year to acknowledge years of service. A small percentage of our membership volunteers several hundred hours each year which is a real accomplishment for anyone, but we are now also going to be recognizing continuous years of service—which is key to our ongoing success as an organization.

On behalf of the 2006 Board of Directors, let me say "Thank You" to all of our members and associates. We appreciate your efforts, and we look forward to working with you in 2007.

Onward.

-Mary Beth





**NOVEMBER
MONTHLY
PROGRAM:**

**“WILDFLOWERS OF TEXAS”
GARY JAMES TIDWELL, RETIRED PRODUCER
OF “THE EYES OF TEXAS” PROGRAM**

**THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 16
PROGRAM—7:15 PM
MEMBER MEETING FOLLOWS THE
PROGRAM**

**BUD O’SHEILES COMMUNITY CENTER
1330 BAND ROAD , ROSENBERG
OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

Community Relations

Our Community Relations Director, Brenda Dresner (FBMG F2005), is hard at work lining up monthly program speakers for all of 2007. If you have suggestions on topics or speakers for the programs, please contact Brenda at 281-342-3391 or bmdresner@aol.com.

Upcoming Monthly Programs

No monthly program in December.

Jan 25—“The Basics of Growing and Caring for Fruit in this Region” by Dr. Bob Randall, Executive Director of Urban Harvest. This 2 hour program will begin at 7 PM.

Feb 22—“Waterfowl and Wetlands” by David Lobpries, Texas Parks and Wildlife

Upcoming Green Thumb Seminars

Now being presented in Sugar Land each month

Jan 17, 2007 – “Fruits and Vegetables”. Eldridge Park Conference Center, 2511 Eldridge Road in Sugar Land. 7-9 PM

February 8, 2007—“Plant Propagation”. Eldridge Park Conference Center, 2511 Eldridge Road in Sugar Land. 7-9 PM

**Awards Program
December 6
You Won’t Want to
Miss It!**



**Turn in your record of
Advanced
Training and Volunteer Service hours to
Margo McDowell by Thursday November
30 and then plan to attend the Annual
FBMG Awards Banquet on Wednesday
evening, December 6.**

The banquet is a chance to relax in a holiday atmosphere and celebrate FBMG successes during the year. There will be recognition for both hours served and the number of years individuals have been part of FBMG. We’ll also take a look at all the organization accomplished this year—education programs, outreach in the community, accomplishments in the gardens and the addition of new members to our ranks.

Watch your email for a message from Sallie Bourgeois, our Member Relations Director, about arrangements for the banquet. It will be slightly different this year—the ham and turkey will be provided and we’re asking our members to provide the salads, vegetables and deserts. This will give everyone a chance to share a favorite recipe—and we’ll publish the recipes in the January-February Grapevine! Bring a copy of your recipe to the banquet or email it to Mary Beth McCaughey (mccaugheymb@aol.com) and we’ll share your special recipe with everyone to enjoy.

Hours can be submitted in hardcopy on the standard blue forms, or there is an Excel version of the hours tracking sheet available in the “Members Only” section of the website. If you have any questions about hours, contact Margo at mmcdowell@ag.tamu.edu or 281-633-7033.

**Don’t Forget to Turn in
Your HOURS!**

**The 2006 Awards Banquet is
December 6. Hours must be turned in
before November 30 in order to be sure
you certify for 2007**

Don’t wait until the last minute...

Mac's Message

by Margo "Mac" McDowell,
Fort Bend County
Master Volunteer Coordinator

Hello Everybody!

It's hard to believe this year is just about over. Since I've been your Coordinator it seems as though the years are passing by faster and faster. I can remember marking my 2000 calendar and just "thinking" about what we would do in 2003, and here it is almost 2007. I can remember back when everyone said, "I sure am busy." But now 6 years later and it seems as though everyone is just overwhelmed with the word "busy"; I think we have gone beyond what busy really means! Our lives sure have changed during these 7 years! The Master Gardener program has changed in the past 7 years too! We, as an organization, are busy too! And my how we have grown and matured!

We've done a lot this year, and our demonstration grounds and our outreach abilities have sure blossomed. That means we as Master Gardeners have blossomed as well. This means that we, as a group, are expanding our horizons, yet, as individuals – we are growing too. We've come a long way, nevertheless, we have a long way to go. Believe me! That is a very positive statement! I think if we didn't have a long way to go, and we stopped learning and giving to others, then we might as well put the shovels away. Having a ways to go means we will still have room to gain more knowledge and grow within ourselves, and then we increase our ability to teach others—while we, as individuals, have developed too. That's a good thing, as I really can't stand the thought of putting the shovels away!

As folks say, you have done a "splendid" job as Master Gardeners this year, and I applaud you in everything that you do! You all have the "green thumb" touch as everything you did this year was green with emerald success! And I'm not talking just the gardens, its everything -- our monthly programs, emails to each other, the refreshments, Green Thumb seminars, phone calls to each other, In the Garden, work days, our personal differences or likes & dislikes, the hotline, classes, , , recording your hours...the list can go on and on.

We all have different personalities, and we come from many walks of life wearing out many pairs of shoes from many directions. We may not always agree with how things are run or how a garden is designed or even agree on a favored tree, but where Fort Bend Master Gardeners do agree, and where they shine the best, is that we all are gardeners. That makes us special, and a very unique group of folks. Fort Bend Master Gardeners have been known for putting aside opinions or harmful critiques, trying one another's ideas, keeping open minds and always, always, always digging in and helping each other. The shovels are never put away. We have that solid foundation as an organization because this

(Continued on page 7)



Texas Master Gardener Association Awards

The Texas Master Gardener Awards Program recognizes and presents awards for exemplary achievement in the following categories:

- A. Publications
- B. Graphics Presentation
- C. Mass Media
- D. Educational Programs
- E. Projects
- F. Newsletter
- G. Individual Master Gardeners
- H. Outstanding Associations, Groups, or Corporation

Carolyn McDaniel, FBMG F2001, our Awards Director, will soon be coordinating work on FBMG submissions for the 2006 TMGA Awards. We could use assistance from our members to write and edit the award submissions in December and January. If you'd like to help, please contact Carolyn at mcdaniel-mcmeans@earthlink.net.



In the Garden

With the Fort Bend Master Gardeners

By Barbara Brannon, Fundraising Director, FBMG F1999

Congratulations to all the volunteers for a job well done!!! Our first attempt at having educational seminars was a great success thanks to the time and effort from each of you

I had so many good reviews about what we were doing and how pleased everyone one was on the out come. I think everyone who attended went away with as good feel and certainly a lot of useful information.

Our vendors also went away happy. We are always our own best customers and with 60 plus volunteers we did our part to keep them happy. They all asked about returning next year.

We'll have a wrap-up meeting soon so that we can start planning next year's event.

Thank you again for all the time and effort that each of you gave to make this such a big success!



LANDSCAPE UPDATES

Butterfly Garden Progress

By Ellen Frank, Butterfly Garden Co-Chair, FBMG F2005

The pathway through the Butterfly Garden is in place. By those ribbons of crushed granite you can see the outline of what the garden will be. We're beginning to collect plants that meet our butterflies' needs: a Meyer lemon tree surrounded by rue for the Giant Swallowtails; another senna for the sulphurs; parsley and fennel for the Black Swallowtails; and nectar plants—almond verbena, agastache, kidneywood, skullcap, mistflower, bright red porterweed. And the word is getting out: a few days after we installed two Dutchman's pipevines, one had about eight or so tiny, creamy white Palamedes swallowtail eggs.

But the big news for the Butterfly Garden is something that hasn't happened yet. Because we're expanding into essentially new space, we have the opportunity to amend and rework the soil. Following soil testing, we'll add nutrients through tilling in compost and any other substances needed, and we'll deal with some drainage and water management issues. After that, the planting will begin. And we've lots of other plants in mind.

"Wait a minute," you say. "What about all those new plants you mentioned? Aren't you getting ahead of yourselves?" Well, not really. You see, they weren't really planted; we've "collected" and "installed" them—still in their pots—so we can pop them out of the earth, set them aside while we work on the soil, and then actually put them in the ground where we want them to go. By proceeding in this way, we were able to take advantage of the plants' availability and present a more finished display for our visitors during "In the Garden" and the Victoria Master Gardeners' tour. So look for the Butterfly Gardeners to be flexing their muscles in the months ahead—with lots to show for it.

An update from the November workday:

Saturday's Workday was a great success. Bags and bags of leaf mold compost with expanded shale (just the thing for our thick gumbo) were spread and tilled into the earth. As someone said, "We started out with dirt; we ended up with soil." We started with the main central part of the garden and will do the left and right sides later.

Then we re-planted the plants in pots and covered the ground with mulch. Boy, does it look good! And if we were very quiet, we could hear the plants saying "thank you, thank you."

Water Garden Success

By Glenn Dresner, Greenhouse Co-Director, FBMG F2005

John Howell of Countryside Water Gardens shared his expertise in what needed to be done to the FBMG water

garden to solve issues we had brought to his attention. John felt that the ground surrounding the pond could hold water at a higher level than the pond and thus caused the liner of the pond to float. He recommended that surrounding the pond with foundation blocks and then pulling the liner over them to raise the pond level. This would, in affect, raise the level up some 4-6 inches above the existing ground level. Raising the pond level would also cover the liner and keep the sun from heating up the black liner (Note: Reducing the heat generated by the liner would help to reduce the growth of algae in the pond). With this as the plan, Margo sent out an APBee for help to make the renovation of the pond a reality. The Ft. Bend Master Gardeners rose to the occasion and lent their help (especially a strong back) and made the changes needed to raise the pond level. Members came and removed all the rocks and flagstone, they then lined the pond with the concrete foundation blocks and replaced the rocks to cover the pond liner. A pathway of flagstone was installed leading up to the bridge and the remainder of the flagstone was laid on the opposite side of the bridge to create a sort of "patio" type of area. This may sound simple when it is written down, but this renovation took a lot of thought along with the hard work to ensure that everything was just "right". After the rocks and flagstone were laid, then the FBMG set about laying landscaping the area with plants. There were too many people to name in thanks for their work on this job, but two individuals, Catherine Pennington and Cheryl Huber need to be given a big "pat on the back" for staying with the project. Without their expertise this area would not be the place for reflection that it now is. FBMG has created a place for everyone to be proud of.

This renovation project is just another example of what Master Gardeners are all about. When the call for help is sent out, FBMG respond with their knowledge and strong work ethic. To be a Master Gardener means being willing to volunteer and get involved. The people that worked on this water pond exhibited all of what a Master Gardener is about.

Cottage Garden Notes

By Becky Smith, Cottage Garden Co-Chair, FBMG F2004

Many changes have taken place in the Cottage Garden recently. First of all, in July we decided to amend the soil by adding alfalfa pellets, cottonseed meal, chicken manure and 62 wheelbarrow loads of mulch, hauled by Glenn Dresner.

Then we added some beautiful plants from Treeseach Farms, such as the Hannah Ray Bottlebrush, Mexican Bauhinia, White Shrimp Plant, and the Queen Emma Crinum. We also planted many of the plants from the Butterfly exhibit at the Fair, such as the Cranberry Tea Hibiscus, Jewels of Opar, and the Panama Rose. Most all of our plants are now labeled with common names, as well as scientific name.

Another addition is the Quilt Bridge that covers the dry creek bed. (We finally moved the grass pallet to the
(Continued on page 5)

LANDSCAPE UPDATES

(Continued from page 4)

dumpster!) The bridge is made of Stained glass, concrete, and treated wood. It is amazing how a bowl of ice cream can be such an inspiration! (*Editor's note—see the next article for the complete story on the Quilt Bridge inspired by Blue Bell ice cream*).



Blue Bell Ice Cream Inspires Creative Patchwork Quilt-Style Bridge in Cottage Garden

The following letter was written by Glenn Dresner, Greenhouse Co-Director, FBMG F2005, to Paul Kruse, CEO and President of Blue Bell Ice Cream in October.

Dear Mr. Kruse,

Howdy!! I would like to explain how I came to know your name and the reason for sharing this letter with you. My name is Glenn Dresner and am from the Class of '69. At the First Yell Program at Reed Arena this past September my wife, Brenda and I saw that you were an Officer for Blue Bell Creameries Inc. There were several other pictures of Former Students that had gained success with the degree that they received from Texas A&M. I would not be writing you this letter except for the circumstances that happened while taking a gardening break with some Blue Bell ice cream. If you will bear with me for a few moments, I will hopefully explain the reason for sharing this letter and picture.

My wife and I are part of an organization called the Ft. Bend County Master Gardeners. Master Gardeners is a program across Texas, as well as the United States that teaches individuals like my wife and I the aspects of gardening. The Master Gardener Program is under the umbrella of the Texas Cooperative Education Program, which is part of the Texas A&M University System. The Master Gardener program includes classroom training on many aspects of gardening, (i.e. vegetables, lawns, watering, trees, etc.) plus volunteer hours working with the community and in the various demonstration gardens at the Extension Service. In the Ft. Bend Master Gardener demonstration gardens, we have one that is called the Cottage Garden. All the plants and décor would be similar to what one would remember from our grandparents gardens. In our Cottage Garden, we have a rock lined drainage ditch which separated two areas of this garden. We needed to come up with some sort of bridge to allow people to cross from one garden area to another, but we did not know what the bridge should look like. Now this is where the Blue Bell ice cream comes into the picture. On the workdays that we have at the gardens, we try

to take a break in the mid-morning to have some Blue Bell ice cream, so we can cool off before we continue working. On one of these "Blue Bell breaks", we started doing some brain storming about what the bridge should look like so it would compliment the theme of the Cottage Garden. We came up with the idea of making concrete stepping stones with various flowers made from glass set in the stones, and then arranging the stones so they looked like a patch work quilt. The picture included in this letter is a result of this "Blue Bell" brain storming session. Becky Smith was responsible for designing and making the twelve concrete stepping stones and my wife and I built the wooden structure to hold them. We don't know if the Blue Bell ice cream was totally responsible for this successful idea, but we do know that we have received a lot of compliments on how unique and beautiful it is. When someone asks how we came up with the idea, we share that it was from our "Blue Bell" ice cream break.

I hope you enjoy this story because it is meant to be a compliment to you and your company and the great ice cream that is created. One never knows how creative they can be over a bowl of your ice cream—at least not until they try it.

Should you have any further questions or comments, please feel free to call me at

Hope you have a TERRIFIC DAY!!!

Sincerely,

Glenn Dresner

Mr. Kruse responded on November 1:

Dear Mr. Dresner:

Thank you so much for your letter and sharing the story and picture with us. I'm familiar with the Master Gardener Program. The bridge that your group designed and created for the Fort Bend Cottage Garden is absolutely beautiful. I'm happy to hear that "Blue Bell Ice Cream" was a part of your successful brainstorming session.

I have enclosed a couple of gift certificates that we hope you will use for your next work day at the gardens and continue the tradition of having your mid-morning Blue Bell break. The unique bridge may be just the beginning!

Thank you again for writing. We are always so pleased to hear from our friends. If you are even in the area, do stop by for a tour.

Best Regards,

Paul W. Kruse '77

Thank you to Becky Smith, Glenn and Brenda Dresner for creating such a unique feature in the Cottage Garden!

Why Should I Work in the Gardens

By Glenn Dresner, Greenhouse Co-Director, FBMG F2005

September 13, 2006

As a few of us were working in the "Gardens" this past week when in random conversation, the subject of not seeing more Master Gardeners spending time in these various gardens came up. After a few brief words, we went on with the various work activities we had originally started on. Over the past few days I have thought more on this question to see if any specific reasons could be uncovered.

I remember going naively into the Master Garden program thinking it was a program of sitting in a classroom environment and obtaining practices and techniques that my wife and I could put into practice in our gardening activities. Little did I know or realize that volunteering sixty hours was part of the certification process. Since my wife and I had paid the tuition fee for the program, we made sure we performed the service hours needed to get this certification.

As we started to work with present and future Master Gardeners, we found a great group of individuals that shared a common interest in making the Cottage Garden a show place. We found people that did not mind getting their hands and themselves dirty from working with paving stones, plants and soil in this garden. Most importantly we had found a whole new group of friends to visit with and share skills and information with. To this group of friends it was more than just pulling weeds, it was more importantly a sharing from one person to another.

We found out while working in the Cottage Garden that our ideas and thoughts were very much appreciated and many times incorporated into the overall plan of making this area one that could be looked upon as a show place for this era of time. I also found that the more time we spent working that there were other areas that we could help and ultimately learn more of what gardening was all about. As I moved from one garden to another, I found more people who wanted to share what they had learned and wanted to learn from me as well. This moving and sharing added more friends to the ones we had found in the Cottage Garden. It may seem like the idea of adding more friends is not that significant but for me it was. Since I had retired in 2005, the "work" friends were not there every day and making the new friends in the FBMG program was really significant to me in filling the void that had been created with retirement.

Besides the benefits of new friends, I'm not sure that using the word "working" in the gardens is the correct word to describe what is done in these areas. It seems to me that although a person may get dirty, sweaty, and tired while performing the activities in a garden, it doesn't necessarily mean it is work. When you are sharing time with others, learning from each other, and just plain having fun, I do not believe this should be considered as work. To my wife and me, it is all about how one should approach activities in the various gardens. Each of us

can look at our glass and decide is half full or is it half empty? When one looks at the glass as half full, they can see the positives of spending more time sharing skills and knowledge and more importantly making some new friends with a common interest to each of us.

Hopefully, the benefits of sharing knowledge and making more new friends will encourage others to look at their time and make a commitment to spend more time in the various garden areas. With everyone making the commitment of spend additional time, we can even make pulling weeds a pleasant activity because you are doing it with your friends.



Farmers Market

By Tricia Bradbury, FBMG F2005

Searching for locally grown produce? Your search is over!! Creekside Farmers Market is open every Thursday from 4:00 pm to 7:00 pm, year-round. It is located on the 15 acre campus of Creekside Christian Fellowship on Hwy 36 and Fritzella Road, across from the Needville High School. The market allows only local farmers to sell their own produce. There will be no distributors, resellers or importers, so the consumers will know they are buying fresh produce and dealing with the people involved in producing what they buy.

The Creekside Farmers Market allows consumers to buy their fresh fruits, vegetables, meats, honey, cheeses and eggs directly from the local producer. Being a "growers-only" market, buyers are assured of getting the freshest, most delicious foods available. Prepared foods are also available, including jams, salsas and honey.

For more information visit
www.creeksidefarmersmarket.com

Message From Mac—Continued
(Continued from page 3)

organization is made up of caring people who share a common goal. We are FBMG because of who we are collectively as a group, yet for who we are as an individual – and I know that each one of you individually love this organization.

One thing I learned this year (I did learn others things!) is that our communication skills with each other need improvement. Just simple cordial words expressed between people such as feelings, divulging information, and sharing with each other. Isn't that what the concept of being a Master Gardener is all about? Whether it's knowing what Board decisions are being made or knowing what changes the Greenhouse is making or knowing if someone has done something neat in a garden or knowing what discoveries are being made in the hotline – we should all be hearing about it and talking about it. Communication, in essence, is a "contact" sport – it is expressing yourself to someone be it face-to-face, emails, stories in The Grapevine! For the most part we do a pretty good job, but we can always improve our skills in conversing more, and presenting ourselves always in a gracious manner. By the way, this isn't a new problem, it's a very old problem, and not only with FBMG, but I think we need some new ideas here on how to improve this area, and we are open to suggestions. Please send your suggestions my way.

The Fall 06 classes ended Nov. 15 on a note of sadness as they too wanted the classes to continue – just like all of you. Remember that feeling? But they are rejoicing in the wonderment of finishing class and trying to remember all what they heard and learned. I know you all remember that feeling! You will be seeing them in the gardens as they complete their requirements – don't be bashful around them! They certainly aren't a bashful group!

Along with all of you, I would like to think I l've learned a lot this year, and have as a gardener with you. I thank you all for giving me another year of such great happiness because I love being with all of you. FBMG is "You" and "You" make this program great!

I look forward to learning, laughing, and enjoying companionship with you in 2007!

Certification and Your Hours!

One of the things I've noted over the years is how you complete your hours and how many. What has transpired over the years is that the majority of you do more than the required 12/12. (Now you should all know what that means!) In other words, even the busiest of all manage to complete more than their 12 hours of volunteer time. Therefore, beginning December 1, 2006, forward, in order to maintain certification, everyone must complete 12 hours of advanced training, and 24 hours of volunteer time.

Now, what we are going to do differently this year is this: Of those 24 volunteer hours, at least 8 of them must be spent in the gardens in some manner, or in the

Hotline in the afternoons. Now I realize that some can't work in the garden, but there are lots to do for the garden committees. For instance, keep track of what took place (monthly chores) in the garden book - documentation, take photos, make phone calls/emails for the chairs, and you might come up with another idea! The hotline will soon have a data base that needs all kinds of data inputted so we don't have to keep looking up the answers to the same questions! There's research to be done, and files to be made and files to be filed. We have lots for you.

I know there may be some grumblings about this change, but I honestly feel they will be pretty low!

If anyone has any questions about these hours, or if there is any reason why you feel you can't physically complete the extra hours, please be sure to talk with me right away.



It was nippy at the start of the November workday but Mary Fleming, FBMG F2006, was there bright and early, ready to help!



Great progress has been made in the Butterfly Garden recently! Soil improvements were added during the November workday. Gina Goodman S05 & Addie Hostetler F06 helping each other!

FBMG OPERATIONS MANUAL

Earlier this year, FBMG adopted an Operations Manual to serve as a handbook for managing our organization. In response to the growth in FBMG and in an effort to better communicate how the organization works, the Board felt that it was time to pull information about procedures into one resource so that we can all operate “on the same page.” Members received a copy of the Operations Manual by US Mail in November of 2005. If you do not have a copy you can access the current FBMG Operations Manual on our website www.fbmfg.com. (go to the Members Only page and click on the MG Operations Manual link at the bottom of the page), or you can stop by Margo McDowell’s office to pick up a copy.

In order to reinforce the importance of this information, we’ll be highlighting sections of the Operations Manual in this column in the Grapevine in the coming months. Please take a few minutes to get a copy of the manual and familiarize yourself with the content. If you have questions about information and procedures defined in the manual, or if you have suggestions for additional subjects you think would be helpful to have included in the Operations Manual, contact any member of the Board of Directors.

Expense Reimbursement and Vendor Payment – this item is defined so that our members and associates understand that there are specific procedures to be followed when FBMG funds are being spent.

Section 19: Expense Reimbursement and Payment

- A. All expenditures that are not budgeted must be pre-approved by the Board.
- B. Sales tax should not be applied to purchases and will not be approved for reimbursement.
- C. Vendors should be paid directly by FBCMG funds and not by members’ funds.
- D. Expense reimbursements will be limited to \$250. If the expenditure will exceed \$250, billing arrangements should be made with the vendor prior to the purchase, or an FBCMG check, payable to the vendor for the amount of the purchase, should be obtained from the Treasurer prior to making the expenditure.
- E. Expenses must be submitted for reimbursement within 30 days of the expenditure.
- F. Expense reimbursements, accompanied by supporting receipts or documentation, must be submitted on the Check Request Form.
- G. Vendor payment requests, accompanied by

supporting invoices, must be submitted on the Check Request Form.

- H. All Check Request Forms must be approved and signed by the appropriate Director before payment will be made. Requests for expense reimbursement submitted by Board members must be signed by another member of the Board of Directors.

There seem to be several areas that our members and associates stumble over on expense reimbursements. To clarify:

- FBMG is a 501(c)3 Nonprofit organization and as such we do not have to pay sales tax. If you are authorized to make purchases on behalf of FBMG, get a copy of the Texas Sales and Use Tax Exemption form (necessary to omit sales tax from purchases) from the Treasurer or from Margo McDowell. In the case of vendors FBMG uses frequently, we may already be defined as a tax-exempt organization, the Treasurer or Margo will be able to help you if you are working with a vendor for the first time.
- Check Request forms can be found online or you can get copies from the Treasurer or Margo McDowell. Please note that Margo McDowell is not an Officer or a Director of FBMG and therefore is not able to approve or sign Check Requests.
- Try to arrange to have FBMG pay vendors directly – this is a requirement when the expenditure will exceed \$250. If you end up making small purchases on your own, make sure that you save your receipts and include them when you submit the Check Request form.
- Please understand that our Treasurer is a volunteer. Payments will be made as promptly as possible, but do not expect reimbursements or payments to be made in less than 7 business days.

A Tip For Reducing Holiday Waste

Buy rechargeable batteries to accompany electronic gifts, and consider giving a battery charger as well. According to the EPA about 40% of all battery sales occur during the holiday season and those batteries also end up in landfills. Rechargeable batteries can last hundreds of times longer than single-use batteries, reducing the amount of potentially harmful materials thrown away—and saving considerable expense in the long run.

This tip is from the December 2005 issue of Environmental News You Can Use, a publication of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ).

EarthKind™ Environmental Landscape Management Program

By Mary Beth McCaughey, President, FBMG S2000

I recently attended the EarthKind™ Specialist Training program and thought it would be good to share the most current information about the program with FBMG members. To start, even though we most often hear the phrase “EarthKind” associated with roses, the EarthKind™ System has a much broader scope—it is designed to provide a meaningful answer to the public’s demand for a “simpler” way to maintain landscapes and conserve natural resources at the same time. The EarthKind™ Landscape Management System currently includes both the EarthKind™ Rose Research and the EarthKind™ Environmental Soil Management programs.

The basis for the EarthKind™ System is to combine the best of organic and traditional gardening and landscaping techniques to create a new horticultural system for the 21st century, a research-proven system based on real-world effectiveness and environmental responsibility.

As Texas A&M University embarked on the research program that eventually become what is now EarthKind™, they chose roses for testing, anticipating that if they could identify roses—the plants that the American public believes to be the most difficult to grow—that could thrive in environmentally responsible conditions, they would have succeeded in the mission.

After more than 5 years of testing under very specific conditions, 13 rose selections have been designated as EarthKind™. These cultivars were tested under the following conditions:

- 3” of finished, plant-based compost was tilled into test beds before planting. (In the case of clay soils, expanded shale was also included to increase aeration).
- Once planted, a 3” layer of native tree mulch was maintained throughout the project.
- No pesticides were ever applied.
- No fertilizers were ever applied.
- Drip irrigation was used regularly in year 1, sparingly in year 2 and irrigation ceased completely in year 3.

In order to receive the EarthKind™ designation the roses had to have demonstrated tremendous heat and drought tolerance, drop only a small percentage of their leaves due to climate extremes or pest problems, and had to be virtually “self-deadheading.”

Texas A&M is now involved in both National and Southern Rose Field Trials—anticipating that some roses will meet the EarthKind™ standard across the country, while others may only thrive in the south. The trials that are being conducted in public gardens are called the Rose Brigade. FBMG would like to join the Rose Brigade by implementing an EarthKind™ Rose garden. If you’re interested in this project contact Nat Gruesen, our Landscape Director, at ngruesen@yahoo.com. For more information on the EarthKind™ System visit earthkindroses.tamu.edu.

Dates to Remember

*Activities marked *ATC are eligible for Advanced Training Credit.*



Nov 16—FBMG monthly program “Wildflowers of Texas”, 7:15 PM, Bud O’Shieles Community Center. Officer elections for 2007 and a brief Member meeting after program. ***ATC**

Nov 30 —Deadline to submit 2006 Volunteer and Advanced Training hours.

Dec 6—Annual Awards Banquet. [RSVP to Sallie Bourgeois by Friday, December 1.](#)

County offices will be closed on Dec 25 and 26 and then again on January 1.

January 1—Happy New Year!

Jan 17—FBMG Green Thumb program, “Fruits and Vegetables” 7:00 PM, Eldridge Park Conference Center, Sugar Land.

Jan 25—FBMG monthly program “The Basics and Care of Fruit in our Region”, 7:00 PM, Bud O’Shieles Community Center. Note that this will be a 2 hour program. A brief Member meeting after program. ***ATC**

Feb 8—FBMG Green Thumb program, “Plant Propagation” 7:00 PM, Eldridge Park Conference Center, Sugar Land.

Feb 22—FBMG monthly program “Waterfowl and Wetlands”, 7:00 PM, Bud O’Shieles Community Center. A brief Member meeting after program. ***ATC**

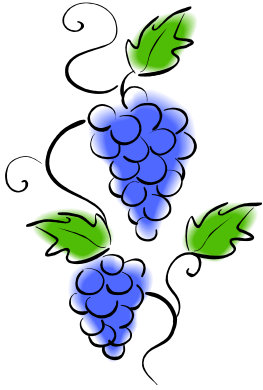
Feb 14—Start of Spring 2007 Master Gardener Training class. This is an evening class.

Wow! It will soon be plant sale season again. Mark your calendar now for these events:

FEBRUARY 10—Fruit Tree Sale

MARCH 10—Spring Perennial Sale

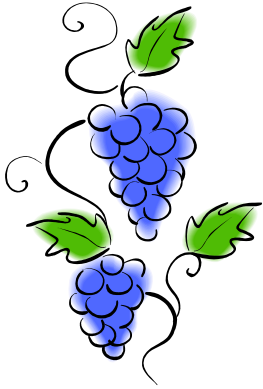
Reminders



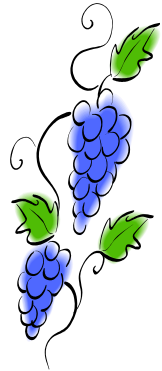
Don't forget that hours information are due by the end of November. Avoid the last minute rush—turn in your hours now!

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You can have your own By-Line!



The deadline to submit articles for the January-February edition of the Grapevine is December 20. Send articles in electronic format to the Editor at mccaugheymb@aol.com



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County Extension Director