

Compost Matters

Volume 12, No. 3

May/June 2004

Around the Backyard Bin



Volunteers enjoying a picnic in the Garden.

If you have not visited the Environmental Discovery Center since the new exhibits have been built, you will be pleasantly surprised. All the plans that were just on paper in the past editions of the newsletter are now a reality thanks to those of you who participated in the extra workdays on Saturdays and weekdays in April. Volunteers even met one evening under the stars to picnic while spreading mulch, planting trees and moving compost bins to make it ready for the public. That's a truly dedicated composter!

Although the Texas SmartScape Lawn and Garden Showcase event was scheduled for April 24, preparation began in January. Composters volunteered many hours building berms and walkways, planting trees and butterfly friendly plants, pouring concrete and moving mountains of mulch in all kinds of weather in February, March and April. The new additions are very evident now. The pavilion with the street sign roof, the Butterfly Life Cycle walk and the new trees make the Environmental Discovery Center a true education center for the citizens of Plano.

Kudos go to the volunteers who participated in this project. On Saturday, March 27, **Garvis Spain, Roger Minehane, Denisa Moore, Erin Hoffer, Fran Bolin, Brenda Steib, Karen Vissage, Harry Casto, Deb Bliss, Myron Hirshman, Heather** and **Sharon** worked very hard to ready the new butterfly berm and life cycle walkway. Saturday, April 10, was windy and wet and a holiday weekend, but Master Composters rose to the occasion. Thanks to **John Moore** and **Roger Minehane** for digging countless holes and pouring cement. Thanks to **Janet Hurley, Myron Hirshman, Candace Fountoulakis, Deb Bliss, Heather** and **Sharon** who planted, did cleanup and many other tasks. Also, **Kellene El-Shahawy** laid out the walkway that joined the Children's Discovery Garden with the new Butterfly Cycle exhibit and then covered it with mulch. Way to go team!

On Tuesday, April 20 we dined under the cool breeze of the trees, but also accomplished a lot on the endless list. Thanks to **Fernando Aragon, Scherle Barth, Janet Hurley, Claudia Dubuisson, Erin Hoffer, Lonna Jochetz, Heather** and **Sharon** for accomplishing so many tasks especially after working at their job all day.

Our next workday is **Saturday, June 5, 8:00am – 11:00am** so please mark your calendar. Contact Sharon by email, sharonm@plano.gov or phone 972-769-4313 to let her know of your willingness to help. We have only just begun....

MASTER COMPOSTER MEETING



A terrific program has been scheduled for you at the next **Master Composter Meeting, on Thursday, June 3, 2004, from 7:00-8:30pm.** You will learn the geologic history of our local ecosystem, the Blackland Prairie, from an

expert, our guest speaker, Dan Northcut (photo above). Dan is the Director of Environmental Studies at St. Mark's School of Texas and past president of the North Texas Master Naturalist organization. He has an in-depth knowledge of the wildlife and natural resources of this area. I have seen his presentation and I can assure you that you will learn so much about how this area was formed. The meeting will take place at the **Parkway Service Center, 4120 West Plano Parkway, Training Room A.** Mark your calendars now and plan to attend!

Shirts for Sale



If you would like a shirt that identifies you as a Master Composter, then we have a deal for you. You don't have to go to a mall or any clothing store. Just

shop by mail: **Email Sharon** at sharonm@plano.gov to get the form and the price list; then, either pay her at any Master Composter event or **mail** your form along with your check to her at 4120 W. Plano Parkway, Plano, TX 75086-0358. What could be easier! Select from denim or the cotton twill that comes in a variety of colors. The colors are so vibrant! Approximate cost of the shirt is \$15.00-\$17.00. For an extra \$2.00, you can have your name monogrammed on it.

From the Compost Marketing and Education Coordinator



It has been two months since my first day on the job and I must say it appears that everything I've been involved in for the last two decades has been in preparation for this job. I've taught both elementary school age children and adults, managed projects and supervised teams. Besides completing the Plano Master Composter training in November, 2003, I am involved with two other organizations whose goals are to train its members to understand and manage our local ecosystem and to educate others through outreach and service.

I enjoy coming to work each day. The people that I work with are happy, helpful and very knowledgeable, much like you, the volunteers. I have enjoyed getting to know each one of you and I truly appreciate the help you have given to me and to the program to make it successful. I must also thank

Heather and the Advisory Board for their help as well. If you have suggestions to make this program even better, please let me know.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Friday, May 21
Compost Basics - Teri's Loving Care Home Schoolers
10:00am - 10:45am
Children's Discovery Garden

Wednesday - Thursday,
May 26 - 27
Planet Protectors Water Camp
8:00am - 12:30pm
4120 West Plano Parkway

Thursday, June 3
Master Composter Meeting
7:00pm - 8:30pm
Parkway Service Center
4120 West Plano Parkway
Training Room A

Saturdays, June 5, July 10
and August 7
Workdays
8:00am - 11:00am
Environmental Discovery Garden
4120 West Plano Parkway

Monday, June 14
Compost Basics for Home Schoolers
9:00am - 11:00am
Environmental Discovery Garden
4120 West Plano Parkway

Special Volunteer Skills Displayed in April



The Master Composter program is so lucky to have such talented people who volunteer their skills and time with others in the many events that take place throughout the year. March and April 2004 were very busy times with workdays, **Plano Pure** sale days, puppet shows and special springtime events.

Thanks to those who love digging in the dirt, moving large objects and all of the skills it takes to create and maintain a garden at the Environmental Discovery Center. Please see the article, *Around the Backyard Bin*.

Having the ability to sell is a true gift. The sales on March 20 and April 17 broke all **Plano Pure** sales records. For those of you that did not volunteer or come by to buy **Plano Pure**, you were the only people in Plano that didn't come. The volunteers handled all orders, directed traffic, loaded compost and remained calm even though the wind didn't. Volunteering for the sale days included **Fran Bolin (Mighty Moe), Claudia Dubuisson, Susan Ashley, John and Denisa Moore, Janet Hurley, Brenda Steib, Erin Hoffer, Ramiro Ortiz, Tiffany Stephens, Myron Hirshman, Roger Minehane** and **Sharon Meines**.

A true actor must possess the ability to change her identity to portray someone or something else that is believable to the audience. Wonder Worm and Flo Flower received rave reviews from seventy-five 2nd graders at Davis Elementary, twenty Frisco Home Schoolers and one hundred 3-5 year olds at First United Methodist Church. **Pam Farmer, Lonna Jochetz, Heather Merchant** and **Sharon Meines** are the quintessential puppeteers.

Saturday, April 3 was a perfect day to volunteer for the Great American Cleanup at Bob Woodruff Park. People found so much trash in the creeks and on the streets that is now where it belongs! **Erin Hoffer** was the early bird and helped set up for the event. **Dan McNeill** made everyone feel welcome. **Wilson Yu** and **Sharon Meines** played Musical Litter with the kids. It's a good thing **April Laza** is so techy because she was teaching recycling and monitoring scanners with the contestants. **Garvis and Jeanne Spain** joined in the fun too.

Meeting and greeting the public and educating them on the values of composting was aptly achieved by **Patty Taylor, Kate Whidden** and **Scherle Barth** at the *It's A Natural* event held at Arbor Hills on April 17.

No matter what the medium, a true artist makes even a mailbox a work of art. Thanks to the artists who enriched the Environmental Discovery Center with their cleverly painted mailboxes which will soon house brochures to educate the public about butterflies, worms, trees, plants, mulching and mowing and being yardwise. There are also boxes to hold discovery hunt clues and survey questions. Thanks so much **Dell Perry, Judi Gradt, Heping Yue, Lonna Jochetz** and **Erin Hoffer**.



Heather Merchant Named Outstanding Volunteer Supervisor of the Year.

Photo - Heather Merchant receiving award from Tom Muehlenbeck.

As most of you know by now, Heather was named **Outstanding**

Volunteer Supervisor of the Year at the City's annual VIP Appreciation Reception held March 25 at the Courtyard Theater. The Master Composters were well represented that night and let all attendees know that they were proud of Heather receiving such a prestigious award. We all know that she is tireless and puts in much time and energy to make this program so successful. It was time the city recognized her for her efforts!

Part of her success is her passion for educating the public about composting, and how to take better care of and enjoy their landscape, but the major part of her success is her devotion to and appreciation of the volunteers. The feeling is mutual because as Harry Casto summed it up, "Heather works very hard as our Master Composter leader. She leads by example and is tireless, whether leading us in projects in the cold of winter, or the blazing heat of summer. Heather always has a kind word for everyone and it is always a pleasure to do volunteer work with her."

Heather's achievements include building up the City's Master Composter program and the Compost Demonstration Site. It was her vision that recognized the need to renovate the Demo Site to a beautiful garden that now

serves as an outdoor classroom for both youth and adult audiences. Grant funding covered major development costs for the site, but it was the hard work of Heather and the volunteers that made the vision take on life. Now when the public visits the Environmental Discovery Garden, they see such features as a variety of compost bins, a worm bin, interpretive signs, a hands-on compost play area, a bird and butterfly garden with a fantastic artistic interpretation of the butterfly life cycle, a recycled traffic sign roofed pavilion, examples of native / adaptive plants and trees and the children's garden plots.

The Master Composters who cheered her on included; **Dan McNeill, Erin Hoffer, Lonna Jochetz, Candace Fountoulakis, Scherle Barth, Garvis and Jeanne Spain, Pam Farmer, Janet Hurley, April Laza, Barbara Harrison, Sharon Meines, Bernadette Chang, Sara Garetson, Judi Gradt, Patty Taylor and Ben Crawford.** Staff supporters in attendance were **Nancy Nevil, Myron Hirshman, Deb Bliss and Tiffany Stephens.**

This award does not mean that the work stops. Heather still works very hard to make the volunteer and education programs even more successful and make the Environmental Discovery Garden 'the standard by which others are measured'.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

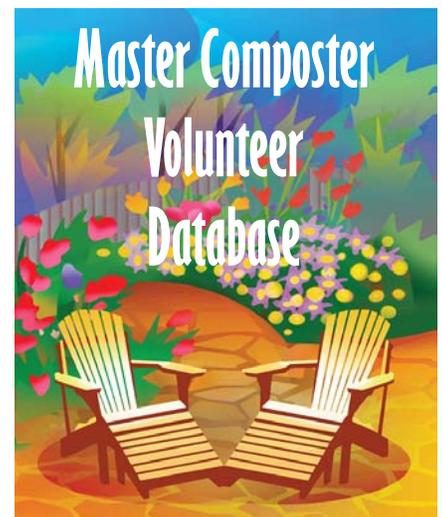
Beginning May 3 and continuing through November, 2004, the City of Plano Reuse Center will be open every **Wednesday from 11 a.m. until 1 p.m.** for your shopping convenience. (**Monday hours 5 – 7 p.m. and Saturday hours 9— 11 a.m. will continue.**) This is a very good opportunity to earn some volunteer hours. Deb Bliss has openings for Monday and Wednesday in June and all times in July are currently open. As always, if you volunteer, please arrive 15 minutes early. If you are interested, contact Deb Bliss at 972-769-4132 or email her at debb@plano.gov.

Lorrie Reeves, Water Education Coordinator for the City of Plano, is hosting a **Planet Protectors Water Camp for students 9-12 years old on May 26 and May 27, 2004 from 8:00am-12:30pm** each day. Environmental Waste Services educators are partnering with her to put on this camp.



The purpose of the camp is to teach children how to protect the watershed, how compost contributes to a healthier watershed and how to prevent litter and chemicals from getting into the water. There should be around 75 kids a day so your help would be greatly appreciated. If you know of kids 9 – 12 who would enjoy this type of event, let their parent know about the camp. They can get more information on registration at

www.planotx.org/water. This will be an excellent way to earn some volunteer hours and learn more about how to save our most important natural resource.



In the next couple of months, volunteer information will be available to Heather, Tiffany and Sharon at the click of a button! One of our Master Composters, Erin Hoffer, is building a volunteer database for us so that retrieving and posting data will be quick and easy. Reporting will be a breeze! The only thing it won't do is puppet shows.

Master Composter

Directory

The time has come for the Master Composters of Plano to have an accurate directory that contains address and phone information about all of its members. The information that is currently available will be printed out so that at the June 3 Master Composter meeting and other scheduled events, you can look it over and make the necessary changes. In the future, please let me know when you make any changes to your home or email addresses or phone numbers so that the directory always stays current. Please note that you do not have to give out any information that you do not want published in a directory, but for city records, they are needed.



Sharon Meines
Compost Marketing &
Education Coordinator
P.O. Box 860358
Plano, TX 75086-0358
972-769-4313

Name Tags

The Master Composter Advisory Board approved the proposal that Master Composters meeting certain criteria receive a name tag. These tags will display our logo, the words - "Plano Master Composter", the member's name and the member's class year. The city is splitting the \$5.00 cost of the name tags with the members, so the cost to each member is \$2.50.

For those of you that were in classes prior to Class 18 (November, 2003), you must meet two qualifications: (1) have completed 40 hours of volunteer work; and, (2) performed volunteer work in the last six months.

For those members that were in Class 18 and for all new classes going forward, the following qualifications must be met. Twenty volunteer hours must be performed in the following manner:

- (1) one public event such as Compost Sales or manning a booth, for 4 hours,
- (2) two workdays at the Environmental Discovery Gardens that equal 8 hours, and,
- (3) Volunteer for 8 hours as you choose.



City of Plano
Environmental Waste Services Division
P. O. Box 860358
Plano, Tx 75086-0358