



AROUND THE BACKYARD BIN AND ALL OVER TOWN



A pilot for a new reality show like *"The Amazing Race"* might be the next step for City of Plano Master Composters! Possible titles: *"Where's the Hottest Pile?"* or *"Build It and They Will Come"*. With the help of volunteers **Fred Karr, Barri Montgomery, Garvis Spain, Brenda Steib, Erin Hoffer** and Environmental Waste Route Supervisors **David Goodson** and **Michael Wallace**, piles popped up all over Plano for Earth Day events during April.

Thirty Plano employees came for lunch under the pavilion at the Environmental Discovery Center to learn the *"Secrets of Successful Gardening in Drought Conditions"* and found **Fred Karr's** pile had reached 160 degrees and dropped in volume by 12% in just four days!

Fifty citizens who attended the Grand Opening of the Plano Community Garden got to see **Brenda Steib, Erin Hoffer** and **Deb Bliss** build two piles. The community gardeners later attended Compost 101 to learn how to build, work and use the piles on site.



One hundred twenty-five Plano residents attending *"It's a Natural"* stopped by the Yardwise Fair set up by **Shannon Unruh, Lauren Ice** and **Deb Bliss** and staffed by volunteers **Patty Taylor, Kate Whidden, Brenda Steib, Garvis Spain, Ramiro Ortiz, Scherle Barth, Susan Whitaker, Linda Crabb, Ryan Aghabozorg** and **Scott Sistrunk**. Conversations about safe, easy and responsible yard and garden care continued non-stop for five hours. Door prizes of compost, xeriscape plants, gift certificates and books brought participants out but information kept them engaged at each of our five stations for

about half an hour. Please support the Plano businesses who provided our door prizes: both Calloways, Texas Pure compost, Garrison Gardens, The Pest Shop, Super Wal-Mart near the North Dallas Tollway, and Wells Brothers.

Time travelers **Jeanne** and **Garvis Spain, Janet Hurley, John Sloan, Irene Schlamowitz** and **Katherine Dungan** donned their early 1900's clothes to pitch the benefits of compost in 1906 Plano gardens during the Blackland Prairie Festival.



NEXT MEETING:
WHEN A ROSE IS
MORE THAN A ROSE



Ahhh...there aren't many plants that can beat roses for fragrance and color. Yet many gardeners are frustrated with their vulnerability to disease, fungus and pests. Learn about sturdy Texas Earth-kind roses and how to best prepare your garden beds. Join us Thursday, June 1 from 7:00pm - 8:30pm at Texas A&M Research and Extension Center in the Whitehurst Education Building, 17360 Coit Rd. south of Frankford, for a tour of the Coordinated Extension Marketing Assistance Program (CEMAP) gardens and a talk by Collin County Master Gardener, Michelle Shook.

From Deb's Desk

Here's what I've observed about Master Composters in my first year on the job: they're lifelong learners, they pitch in and get the job done regardless of how glamorous it is, they have many talents, they're generous with their time and in sharing their knowledge and skills. You can count on them to show up for classes and fieldtrips, talk about the latest gardening technique or tool they've found or environmental issue they've read about. Life is never dull if there is a Master Composter around! It's been a joy getting to know and work with each of you. Here's some of the work that's been going on behind the scenes this spring!

Barri Montgomery and **Cliff Beneventi** helped design a child-friendly worm bin and digging box for the Environmental Discovery Center. **Barri** helped shop for the right materials, **Cliff** built a prototype, and **Fred Karr** finished the projects.



Dan Peterson and **Harry Casto** poured the concrete base slab for the Recycling Machine exhibit. **Roger Minehane**, **Fred Karr** and **Harry** installed it a month later.

Nancy Liao brought a slide show of her amazing gardens to a meeting and then welcomed us to her yard after the April work party. She showed us the benefits of using *Texas Pure* products and native plants in her landscape.



Science Experiments on a Grand Scale

A dozen Master Composters braved the wet and cold on a March Saturday to learn about the low energy usage and pollution reduction experiments going on at the experimental Wal-Mart SuperCenter in McKinney. Our guide pointed out:

- Pipes that blend used cooking oil from the deli and used motor oil from the Tire and Lube Express in a biofuel boiler which produces energy for the store and saves on the use of natural gas.
- Food waste from the deli, meat, dairy, and produce departments that is combined with organic waste from landscape materials, pallets and cardboard containers, stored in a self-contained compactor roll-off, fitted with an odor neutralizer system and hauled every three weeks to the Regional Compost Facility run by the City of Plano. Within a year, it returns to the store in the form of bagged *Texas Pure* compost which is sold in the garden center.
- The 14-inch deep pervious pavement that prevents runoff and drains into retention ponds used for irrigation.

There are many self-guiding features at the store. Enter the vestibule near the food center and you will find pamphlets and a video orientation. To find the store, take exit 41 east from Central Expressway to 2041 Redbud. Visit www.walmartfacts.com for more information.

WANTED: BACKYARD INVENTORS

If you have designed your own backyard compost bin or developed a collection and composting system that is working well for you, consider sharing your discoveries with your composter comrades at the August 3 meeting. Contact Deb Bliss at (972) 769-4313 or debb@plano.gov to get on the program.

Reuse Center Now Open 3 Days a Week and We've got Paint



The next time you need paint, cleaning supplies or materials for a decorating job, remember to check the shelves of the City of Plano Reuse Center before heading to the store. You'll find blue and green *Conservation Colors* paint will now be regular items. Master Composter **Dan McNeill** often offers special sales on the products, but it's hard to beat FREE! Doors are now open for your shopping convenience on: Mondays 5:00pm – 7:00pm, Wednesdays 11:00am – 1:00pm, and Saturdays 9:00am – 11:00am. Remember it is volunteers that keep this program running. If you'd like to volunteer and get first pick of what's on the shelf, contact Shannon Unruh at (972) 769-4132 or shannonu@plano.gov. She'll be glad to train and schedule you! It's also another opportunity for compost conversations as you talk with the customers.

Spotlights



Master Composter Volunteer of the Year, Brenda Steib, took the Master Composter training in 2002 and has been a vital volunteer ever since. Brenda works on the Master Composter Advisory Board (MCAB)

planning programs, socials and fieldtrips. She has spent Saturday mornings assisting residents with questions about *Texas Pure* products at the Custer Road Facility. At trade shows you can catch her explaining the virtues of using compost. She'll even take on the task of cleaning out the tool-shed with good humor! Brenda makes every occasion feel like a party! She has put in 211 hours since becoming a Master Composter, 104 hours since 2005.

When **Master Composter Rookie of the Year, Jan Eppard**, signed up for the Master Composter Training, she had little idea of the many opportunities awaiting her in the next few months! Eager to learn and find a diversion to her day job at a desk, Jan's enthusiasm has been an inspiration!



She has put in many strenuous hours helping prepare the Plano Community Garden beds and joined three other class members to adopt three garden plots. Jan has helped maintain the Environmental Discovery Center, worked with customers at the Reuse Center, assisted with the Texas SmartScape Seminars and the *Texas Pure* booth at the Neil Sperry All Garden Show. She now sits on the MCAB. Jan earned 57 volunteer hours in just 3 months!

Congratulations to eight members of Master Composter Training Class 20 for completing their certification requirements of 6 hours of additional training and 20 hours of volunteer service: **Barri Montgomery, Cliff Beneventi, Deb Bliss, Fred Karr, Jan Eppard, Nancy Liao, Vevey Sherrife, and Nelida Spurrell.** **Chris Robin** of Class 15 in 2000 has also completed her requirements. She has been a driving force at Wells Elementary in making the Organics Recycling Program successful by holding training sessions for teaching staff, custodians and students.

Volunteer Opportunities



Assistants are needed for the following events and classes. Contact Deb Bliss at debb@plano.gov or (972) 769-4313 to volunteer.

Garden Work Days: Saturdays, June 3 and July 8, 7:00am – 10:00am
Environmental Discovery Center,
4120 W. Plano Parkway

Compost Exhibit: Wednesday, June 21, 1:30pm – 3:30pm Davis Library, 7501 N. Independence Pkwy.

Worm Composting 101: Thursday, June 22, 7:00pm – 8:30pm, Training Room A, Parkway Service Center, 4120 West Plano Parkway

Compost 101: Saturday, June 24, 9:00am – 11:00am, Training Room A, Parkway Service Center, 4120 West Plano Parkway

Yardwise Series: Tuesdays, 7:00pm – 9:00pm, Parkway Service Center, Training Room A, 4120 West Plano Parkway
June 27 Class 1: Creating and Maintaining Healthy Soils
July 11 Class 2: Green Landscaping Design Using "Texas Friendly" Plants
July 18 Class 3: Texas Friendly Plants, Shrubs and Trees
July 25 Class 4: Environmentally Friendly Pest Control Practices

Camp Friendship: Monday, July 10, 3:00pm – 4:00pm
Liberty Rec. Center, 2601 Glencliff Dr.

Puppet Show: Monday, July 24, 10:00am – 11:00am,
Liberty Rec. Center, 2601 Glencliff Dr.



Preventing Garden Disease

TIPS FROM THE PLANO COMMUNITY GARDEN VEGETABLE GUIDE

- Plan a three-year crop rotation
- Eliminate weeds in and around gardens, especially Johnson grass
- Remove diseased plants immediately
- Do not put diseased plants in the compost pile
- Control insects that spread disease
- Plant disease-resistant varieties
- Use pathogen-free seed or transplants
- Avoid overhead irrigation. Use furrow, drip or soaker-hose to prevent soil-borne organisms splashing on plants
- Amend soil to improve drainage and nutrients

FIELD LESSONS AT FRITO-LAY

Ten Master Composters walked the Frito-Lay campus with Grounds Supervisor, **Jay Newland**, to enjoy the landscaping and learn how he manages 39 acres organically.

Jay's crew mulch grass and leaves when mowing turf and use a pasteurized chicken manure product to feed all of the maintained grounds (236 acres are left in woods and grazing pastures). Cedar mulch is thick in each garden to deter weeds and retain moisture. The grounds are inspected weekly and when pests become a problem, BT, trichogramma wasps or d-limonene serve as his defense. By having diverse plant life and safe breeding grounds for beneficial insects, Jay finds a symbiotic balance is the norm.

Water will be a concern for all of us with irrigation restrictions expected this summer. Jay has found MP1000 Ewing rotor irrigation heads that can be easily changed out on most systems. They produce bigger drops, provide a more even distribution, withstand wind interference and use two-thirds less water than the average head (1/2" at 12' uses .45 gal/min compared to 1.8 gal./min).

Jay's tour showed us that it takes an initial paradigm shift to begin managing your landscape organically and with resource conservation in mind. In the long run, the pay-off will be less time and effort spent in maintenance leaving you more time to enjoy a beautiful yard alive with the color of birds and butterflies.



City of Plano
Environmental Waste Services Division
PO Box 860358
Plano TX 75086-0358