

Tarrant County Master Gardeners



TEXAS A & M AGRILIFE EXTENSION SERVICE

Volume 3, Issue 6

July 2019

Fitzgerald Elementary OLE Receives Important Recognition

By Patsy Miller & Leeann Rosenthal

The dedicated volunteers who work at the Fitzgerald Elementary Outdoor Learning Environment are very proud of the garden and all that they have accomplished in 15 years. But it's always a struggle to find the funding and manpower to maintain the status quo, let alone accomplish "dream list" wishes. Recently, however, the school honored them in a very important way.

Fitzgerald Elementary School is one of only 10 schools (K-12) in the Arlington School District receiving the designation of Managed Performance Empowerment (MPE) for its high performance. Principals earn the designation for their schools for their leadership practices resulting in continuous improvement of instruction, and "thinking outside of the box" to provide relevant, innovative and rigorous learning experiences for students.

The schools each received a \$20,000 grant to be used for desired projects. Fitzgerald's principal, Cindy Brown, elected to give a portion of their grant to the Outdoor Learning Environment because the garden was instrumental in winning the designation.

Leeann Rosenthal, Tarrant County Master Gardener, is the garden lead. "We are ecstatic! There are so many projects we put on the back burner for lack of resources, and now to know that the school's staff decided to give us a significant portion of their grant to use in the garden, well, we're all so very honored and extremely happy!"

So, she and Stephanie Schneider (second grade teacher, garden liaison and coordinator for the after-school Garden Club) met with a few of the other garden volunteers and quickly came up with a detailed plan (designs, vendors, materials lists, etc.) to put the money to good use!



Left: Richard Kurth prepares wood for projects.

Below: Sue Sappington, Caryn Hutchinson & Patsy Miller pot up plants for OLE plant sale.



Tarrant County Master Gardeners

Fitzgerald OLE continued

Projects to be started and/or completed this summer include:

A Fossil Dig which will help teach students about the natural history of our region, including types of soils in our area and how they developed, and the evolution of our plants, animals, and insects. "This has been on our wish list for a long time," says Leeann. "We already have quite a few fossils saved up that we've collected from our own gardens and surrounding areas."

Stephanie adds, "It will all be age appropriate. For example, pre-K and kindergarteners will use toys to sift soil and explore soil; fifth and sixth graders will learn about erosion, and how fossils are formed and their properties."

The pond, which was enlarged a couple of years ago, will be enhanced. "We're adding a deck around one end of the pond. It will provide another access point for the students to observe the plants and animals, as well as to do experiments. We will also be able to finish the waterfall to provide aeration. The needed pump was an expensive purchase," said Leeann.

Redesigned shelves will allow more storage area for the plant nursery. Fitzgerald MG volunteers and the Garden Club students propagate most of the plants sold in the twice-a-year plant sale. The plant sales are a major fundraiser for the garden. "We also teach a lot of adults at our plant sales," said Leeann. "We spend a lot of time helping them to choose the right plants for their needs and teaching them how to care for them, and how to conserve water and other resources. And, of course, we love to talk about everything else in our garden, too!"

A long-time volunteer parent will oversee construction of a greenhouse made of 2-liter plastic bottles. The whole school will be involved with a bottle drive contest in the fall!

He will also be heading up construction of a keyhole garden which will serve as a demonstration gardening method for the school and the community.

The raised vegetable beds used by each grade level will be rebuilt using a new design to replace the deteriorating timber walls on the existing beds.

And ten cubic yards of decomposed granite will spruce up the walkways and minimize the muddy spots around the *almost ½-acre garden*.

MG Richard Kurth will be leading the construction of the fossil dig, pond deck, plant shelves, and raised beds. A lot of the preparation work for the fossil dig has already been done by Mike Warren's community service teens, and Leeann and the rest of the Fitz Fanatics are looking forward to their help throughout the summer. "My adult volunteers are some of the hardest workers I know, but it's really nice to get help from workers with a tad younger muscles!"

The garden is an important teaching tool, says Principal Cindy Brown. "The funds to improve the garden were part of a proposal we wrote to enhance the learning experience for students at Fitzgerald outside of the regular classroom setting. We know that students need opportunities to learn in that are both rigorous and relevant. By having a space such as our Outdoor Learning Environment, teachers can plan lessons to tap into students' natural curiosity about the world as well as help develop an appreciation of our environment. We specifically want to increase the variety of learning spaces in our OLE by maximizing access

Tarrant County Master Gardeners

to our pond by creating an observation deck and waterfall so students can more easily make observations of the aquatic habitat, and creating a dig area where students can work in a simulated fossil dig or discover other items buried by their teacher. We know students learn best when they are truly engaged in the activity and we want our OLE to continue to be a unique place for highly engaged learning for our students.”

Leeann adds that she views the garden as a teaching tool for the entire neighborhood. “Yes, we serve Fitzgerald, but we are also trying to serve as a plant and gardening resource for members of the surrounding community. We think it’s important for the community to be involved with the school, and vice versa. And we’re glad that we can help make that happen.”

You can follow the Fitz OLE on Instagram at [fitz_ole](#), and on Facebook at [facebook.com/fitzgeraldole](#). In addition to regular Monday workdays, there will be many other workdays this summer to work on the projects! Extra help would be much appreciated! Please contact Leeann at wild4lee@sbcbglobal.net for more info or to be added to the email list.

Right: Mike Warren & his Community Service teens prepare area for decomposed granite delivery.
Below Right: Ten cubic yards of decomposed granite delivered.
Below Left: The pond where a deck will be added & waterfall completed.



The President's Message

Another reminder – July Monthly Meeting on July 11, 2019. If you show up on July 4 the campus is closed.

Also, there will not be a July Advisory Meeting. Please enjoy the month off and come back on August 22, fresh and ready to be a part of all the happenings this fall.

For me it has been an exciting and busy first 6 months as President. What I have seen over the months is that we all may differ in many ways, but everyone has been very helpful, friendly and wanting to make the Tarrant County Master Garden Association the best it can be.

The TCMGA Help Desk at FWBG was closed at the end June because of all the changes at the Botanical Garden. It will be reevaluated at the first of 2020. As the coordinator, Eleanor Tuck thanks you for all the work and time.

The Silent Auction went very well. Seventeen Projects participated. The total amount received by the Treasurer was \$2,682.00. Debby Stevenson will be distributing the sales monies to the individual projects. The Mid Year Projects reports are due by July 31. The term is January 1-June 30th.

Texas Master Gardener Association is unveiling a new logo. You will hear more about it at the July Meeting.

A Belated Happy July 4th.

Theresa



Phlox carolina

Phlox carolina L.

Carolina Phlox, Summer Phlox, Thicketleaf Phlox

Polemoniaceae (Phlox Family)

Reference: Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

It is one of my most favorite plants in the garden. They are at their peak right now. This is an erect, **perennial** phlox, 24-30 in. tall. The slender, red-streaked flowering stems occur singly or in clusters. Thick-leaf phlox flowers are lavender to pink and arranged in loose, broadly cylindrical clusters. The leaves are bright-green, **oval** and leathery.

This phlox continues to bloom intermittently until frost.

It blooms from May till October during the hottest part of the summer occasionally continues until frost. It has beautiful purple blooms. Grows in sun or part shade. It is heat tolerant. Soil Moisture: Moist to Wet. It self-sows but is not aggressive. It attracts butterflies and hummingbirds. It is a nectar source. Flowers can be very fragrant.



Content provided
by Theresa Thomas



Newsletter Title

Keys to Proper Landscape and Garden Watering

By Steve Chaney
Sharecropper, July 2005

In just a few short weeks we will be in the midst of another hot Texas summer. Properly watering plants during the summer tends to be one of the most confusing and misunderstood of all the gardening chores. Quite often, even ardent gardeners fail to recognize inadequate watering until it is too late and plants are badly damaged or dead.

“How often should I water?” and “how much water should I apply?” are two of the most-open asked questions from gardeners and non-gardeners that we receive during this time of the year. Since water is both essential for health plant growth and often costly to apply in quantity during the summer, it is important to get it to the plant’s roots efficiently and keep it there.

The following tips are suggestions for easier and more effective water for your property. These techniques should apply to all gardening, from shade and fruit trees and vegetable gardens to lawns and houseplants.

Never water strictly by the calendar. We don’t drink water ‘every ten minutes’ or ‘every two days’ or ‘once a week’? Instead, learn how to recognize dry plants and soil and use these as your tip-off for watering. Too many factors determine how fast a soil dries for us to put watering on a regular basis.

When your plants are dry, water them thoroughly. Water lawns so that the soil will be wet several inches down, to encourage deep rooting and drought tolerance. One of the worst mistakes people make in their gardens is trying to ‘sprinkle’ them each day by using their thumb and the end of a running hose. Most gardeners just don’t seem to have the patience to stand in one spot long enough for deep water penetration. Water trees by taking the sprinkler off the end of the hose and letting water barely trickle out and run slowly for several hours out under the drip line (not up near the trunk). Keep an eye on this so that run off does not occur.

Most of your plants should be watered in the early morning when there is no wind and no evaporation. Evening watering increases the likelihood of disease invasion, as a majority of diseases develop most rapidly in cool, moist conditions. Early morning watering is also the most efficient time to water, as your water pressure should be the highest since most people are asleep.

While watering your lawn, try to keep water off the leaves of trees and shrubs as much as possible. This is especially important for such plants as crape myrtles and roses, which are troubled by leaf diseases which spread rapidly on wet surfaces.

Symptoms for plants which have been kept too wet are about the same as for those kept too dry. Roots in waterlogged soils die and do not take up water, so plants wilt and turn yellow.

Organic matter, such as shredded pine bark and composted manure can increase water absorption when they are worked into our native soils. To keep moisture in the soil, use a thick mulch such as shredded pine bark, cypress, cedar, grass clippings or tree leaves. In Addition to reducing evaporation, mulches also keep

Watering continued

Always soak chemical fertilizers into the soil immediately after application. These materials are excellent sources of plant foods, but they are also salts, and can pull water out of plant tissues, resulting in burn, unless they are watered into the soil.

For plants to thrive during the upcoming summer months, they will need plenty of water, but equally important is properly applying much needed water.

The Perennial Garden at the FWBG is pleased to announce that it has filled the position of Administrative Lead with Jim Jenson. However, they still need a co-lead to head up the hands on work in the garden. Any interested individual may contact Valerie Soens or Mercy Kettler. (contact info in the directory.)



Important July Dates:

Monthly Meeting is Thursday, July 11 at the Resource Connection.

There will be no Advisory Board meeting in July.

Enjoy your Summer!



What's Blooming in Your Garden?

From Nora Coalson's garden. Coral honeysuckle, cannas, and purple heart.
Purple Coneflower in front of inland sea oats, and another angle that includes a redbud tree.
A long view that includes all of the above.

