

# Wise Water Words

Hello fellow Master Gardeners. I hope you are all doing well and enjoying your gardens in these slightly cooler temperatures.

This month, I would like to tell you about a new program that we have incorporated into our outreach. The program started last year and is titled '*Cultivating Communities*.' It is focused on educating Home Owners Associations (HOA) and their neighborhoods.

The concept begins by working with the HOA Board of Directors to develop the overall plan for the program and review conservation practices for the community maintained areas.

The first phase for the homeowners is a Cultivating Communities Fair at the HOA community center, where we set up several tables with Master Gardeners to answer various gardening questions and to promote several types of workshops we can give at the next phase. The residents will sign up for the workshops they are interested in attending during the next phase. This may be done as a stand-alone event or in conjunction with an already scheduled neighborhood event, depending on how the HOA Board organizes it.

The second phase is the educational workshops for the residents to learn more about native planting, Earth-Kind principles and water saving techniques. The plan is for a morning of 2 workshops for the neighborhood residents that will teach and demonstrate how to incorporate these concepts in their home landscapes.

The final phase is the individual sessions at residences in the HOA, called Landscape Reviews. SAWS irrigation consultations will be included in the program. Residents will be asked to sign up for SAWS consultations through the HOA and during the workshops, with the goal of having them complete before the BCMG Landscape Review. These reviews will last approximately 45 minutes to one hour with 2 Master Gardener volunteers, by appointment on set dates after the workshops. We only do individual sessions for those who have attended a workshop.

This idea developed out of interactions with HOAs who were interested in educating their residents on water conservation practices. It can be tailored to fit with various HOAs of Bexar County. The program must be requested by the HOA management, and the phases must be done in order. This program is funded by SAWS and there is no charge to any of the HOAs or their residents.

This past week, two of our Master Gardeners, Brian and Candy Roach, represented BCMG at an event called Community Association Day. Brian and Candy, pictured below, were there to promote Cultivating Communities to the HOA management who attended the event. Brian and Candy have participated in the Cultivating Communities Landscape Reviews and are very familiar with this program. There were about 7 HOAs that are now interested in having BCMG give this program to their residents.



We can use more help with MG volunteers and also getting the word out as we look to support these interested HOAs and to continue to grow our program. Feel free to pass the information to your neighbors and HOA if your

neighborhood has one. Here is the link on our website with the information about Cultivating Communities: <https://www.mastergardenersofbexarcounty.org/events-programs/cultivating-communities/>

I am the point of contact for both volunteering and for interested HOAs, and can be reached at [anna.vogler@bexarmg.org](mailto:anna.vogler@bexarmg.org).

Come join us! Our volunteers who have been involved in this program have enjoyed being a part of it.

Conservationally yours,

Anna Vogler  
Water Conservation Coordinator