



Henderson County Master Gardeners Weekly News Article August 14, 2017

Meet the Masters: Linda and Elmer Belssner by Lydia Holley

Spouses Linda and Elmer Belssner are both certified Texas Master Gardeners. Elmer has been a certified Texas Master Gardener since 2006. A chemist, Elmer became a Master Gardener while working full time. He has remained a Master Gardener for the past 10 years while continuing to work full time. "I find the lunch-time Henderson County Master Gardener Association (HCMGA) meetings, week night workshops, and Saturday special events allow me to stay active as a Master Gardener." He is one of several Master Gardeners that work full time and are able to attend the regular meetings during their lunch break.



Linda, however, waited until she retired in 2015 to take the Master Gardener class. "I love to learn so the Master Gardener program fulfills part of that need. The exchange of information with other Master Gardeners is invaluable. The monthly meetings and special programs are a wealth of information." Linda is currently serving as Secretary of HCMGA and is on the Greenhouse Committee.

The Belssner's home garden is divided between sun and shade. "The front of our house faces the woods and is in the shade most of the day. The back side of the house is in the sun. It is like having two different worlds to garden in." Azaleas, hostas, violets, impatiens, cast iron plants (*Aspidistra eliator*), and caladiums fill the shady part of their garden.

The sunny part of their garden is filled with African blue basil (*Ocimum kilimandscharicum* x *basilicum* "Dark Opal"), several types of bee balm (*Monarda*), four kinds of salvias, verbena and some hyssop. This bed was designed "just for the bees", since the Belssner's keep several beehives on their property. Additionally, they have been keeping worms for vermicompost for over 10 years. Elmer believes these castings "produce the finest fertilizer known to man." Elmer uses the worm castings in his vegetable beds, where he practices organic gardening methods. He has been gardening organically for almost 40 years.

Linda appreciates growing flowers from seed. "As a child I was always interested in watching flowers bloom and make seed. I loved collecting seeds and planting them in the spring. It was a miracle to me how that little seed made such a beautiful flower."

The Master Gardener program is something they both enjoy, and they are each eager to help teach others about gardening. In fact, Linda's favorite HCMGA activity is the community booths. "I like the face to face you get when working a booth. It makes me feel good if I can help or inform a person of a gardening need they have."

If you are interested in becoming a Master Gardener, HCMGA is accepting applications now through August 23 for the 2017 Master Gardener class.

For more information, call 903-675-6130, email hendersonCMGA@gmail.com or visit www.henderson-co-tx-mg.org.