



Horti-Bull

HORTICULTURAL BULLETIN

Published Monthly by the SAN ANTONIO MEN'S GARDEN CLUB
A club for Men and WOMEN interested in all aspects of gardening

WEBSITE: mensgardenclubofsa.org

Volume 2026

February

Number 2



Alberto Del Rio

FEBRUARY PRESIDENT'S CORNER

February is here and that usually means that love is in the air. NOT! I think it's more likely lots of Mountain Cedar pollen perfect for allergies. No bueno!

This is going to be a busy month. Try to make cuttings of plants for our future sales. Let's also get our potted plants ready for our future plant sales.

I'm looking forward to participating at the 70th Annual Regional Science and Engineering Fair, 21-22 February, at St. Mary's University. For those who have never been there, I highly recommend that you go and see the amazing projects that these kids come up with. It's a very worthwhile event, and it helps us realize that we count on the future generation to carry the torch of science and innovation forward.

Likewise, with our upcoming San Antonio Stock Show and Rodeo. The kids that are involved with the FFA have amazing skills in creating and welding different projects for their personal and agricultural use. The same goes for our 4-H and FFA kids who learn the responsibility of raising livestock and showing them off for breeding and cash value. Let's cheer on these kids for they are our future. As a FFA member long ago, I too learned how to weld and raise livestock for show and sale. It's creative, but it also gives them a strong sense of responsibility that goes with all of those projects.

At the September 2025 meeting we passed the hat raising money in support of the Kerr County Flood Relief Fund. Club members responded with a cumulative donation of \$500.00 as noted in the Thank You letter on page 8. A big Thank You to all members who supported this effort.

As our upcoming events are announced, please consider volunteering. These events make our club more visible to the public, and we have the opportunity to visit with, and stay more connected to, and learn from, members of other clubs and the greater San Antonio gardening community.

This is also the time of the year when we are receiving many beautiful seed catalogs and excess 2026 calendars. If you are overwhelmed with too many catalogs, or duplicate calendars, please consider bringing them to our upcoming MGCSA meetings to share with our membership.

At our February meeting, help me welcome our speaker, Ms. Robin Norton, a well-known Rainbow Gardens staff member who will give us lots of information on Plants for Pollinators. I'm looking forward to seeing all of our members at our February meeting.

Alberto Del Rio

The letter to the right was received in December and was inadvertently left out of the January 2026 Horti-Bull. The content and sincerity are still the same.

The Next MGC Meeting

Thursday February 5th at the

San Antonio Garden Center, **1310 N. New Braunfels Ave**, Corner of N. New Braunfels Ave and Funston Place, part of the San Antonio Botanical Gardens Complex
6:30PM Social—7:00PM Meeting

February Speaker is Ms. Robin Norton-Carranco, topic, **'Plants for Pollinators'**
See Page 2

COMING IN 2026

Science Fair 21, 22 February

Irish Heritage Day 22 February

Earthwise Living Day 7 March

SAWS Spring Bloom 14 March

Home & Garden Show 27-29 March

Basil Fest 16 May

Festival of Flowers 30 May

Hollywood Park Yard Sale No Date Yet

To the Editor of the MGCSA Horti-Bull,
Sir,

I would like to express my deep appreciation for the recently held MGCSA Christmas Dinner which I attended. Coming into the room, where all the tables were set and there was a happy crowd of members gathered, I was impressed by the CLASS which the table decorations showed: tasteful colors, candles in elegant holders, place mats and Christmas favors. Many thanks to Sylvia Tamez and her volunteer team, which included our President, Al Del Rio, for this work. It is not to be underestimated the hours put in by MGCSA members to set up a festival room for MGCSA and, on the part of this member, is deeply appreciated.

L. J. McDaniel

Horti-Bull Gardening Calendar for February 2026

From Dr. Calvin Finch



For the last few years, we have had a blast of freezing weather in February, but it is also the month when many gardeners think about initial spring plantings. Among those plantings are potatoes and onions. There is also time to plant snap or sugar peas, radishes, carrots, lettuce, and beets by seed. Broccoli, spinach and Swiss chard transplants can even be planted early in the month.

The usual way to grow potatoes on February 1 is to dig a trench one foot deep and place a portion of a seed potato with at least one eye and egg size every 18 inches in the trench. If your soil is not deep enough for a foot trench plan on mounding soil to that depth over the row as the plants emerge from the soil. You can begin harvesting new potatoes when the plants begin to bloom. Finish the harvest when the plants brown.

February is the month when Rodeo tomatoes become available. It is too cold to plant them in the garden until April 1 but they can be "potted-up" in a number one container and placed in the sun out of the wind as long as you carry them into a warm shelter when the temperature forecast predicts temps of 45 degrees or less. You would consider the "potting up" exercise if you want to make sure you get access to the new Rodeo tomato for the year and if you want fast production before the hot summer temps arrive. The Rodeo Tomato is always a determinate or semi-determinate variety that grows to full size quickly and concentrates on fruit production before the end of June.

Two "Rodeo Tomato Potting -Up" classes are scheduled in San Antonio in February. The first class is at Milbergers Nursery at 10:30 AM on Saturday, Feb 21. Milbergers is at 1604 E and Bulverde. Register for the first class by calling 210 497 3760. The classes are free and the first 35 enrollees will receive a "potted up" Rodeo Tomato.

The second class is at the Dreamhill Estates Education Resource Center at 6802 Dorothy Louise Dr at Medical Center. It is scheduled for Saturday Feb 28 at 10 AM. Call 210 382 4455 to reserve a seat at this class and receive a free "potted up" Rodeo Tomato.

It is too early to fertilize the lawn but to prevent summer sand bur germination apply a pre-emergent such as Dimension at the end of the month. February is also a good time to aerate and top-dress the lawn with compost. A number of lawn service companies provide the service, or you can rent an aerator and have a load of compost delivered to your lawn. You only need to cover the lawn with a half inch of compost to have a noticeable positive impact.

In the flower garden all the winter annuals should be going strong but remain ready to cover the cyclamen with Insulate if a temperature of 28 degrees or less is predicted. Also have your tent-like covers and mechanic's light heat source ready to protect the Mexican limes and Meyer lemons in the landscape.

FEBRUARY Refreshments

M thru Z

IT IS YOUR TURN M thru Zers. We encourage you to stay after the meeting to help clean and straighten up so everyone can leave as soon as possible.

MGCSA Officers for 2026

President	Alberto Del Rio	210-518-5097
1st V.P	Charles Bartlett	210-337-6428
2nd V.P.	Vallerie Hartfield	210-240-1466
3rd V.P	Robin Van Dusen	210-845-6055
Treasurer	Paul Huegel	210-385-8972
Secretary	Jeff Brown	210-993-6215
Chaplain	Vallerie Hartfield	210-240-1466

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Ken Wolgram	210-788-0177

2025-2027

Gary Ross	210-836-4952
Andrew Waring	210-307-9704

2026-2028

Sylvia Tamez	210-884-5861
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Other

EX Officio	Elena Schriener	210-268-8222
HB Advertising	Paul Huegel	
Historian	Paul Huegel	
Webmaster	Ivan Roman	
HB Editor	Larry Cromer	210-521-5350



Our February Speaker

"Robin Norton-Carranco is the Events Manager at Rainbow Gardens and a widely recognized expert on plants for pollinators. She's an animated dynamo and pollinator specialist who gives us the facts and fun behind each plant. She's recently appeared on the Central Texas Gardener TV show, WOAI radio, KSAT-TV, YouTube, and social media. Let's welcome this famous gardening expert!"

Five Herbs to Grow in San Antonio

From Jane McDaniel

How can one resist herbs with names like Sweet Joe Pie, Good King Henry, Meadowsweet, Sweet Basil, Rosemary for Remembrance, Sweet Rocket, Johnny Jump up, or Fragrant Lavender???

Much as the temptation leads towards a mass of herbs, there are five which we cannot do without in the San Antonio kitchen and home. These are:

SWEET BASIL: This important culinary herb, with its warm, spicy flavor, sends cooks into poetic raptures. There are many varieties of basil, including shrubby basil, which is a tropical species. In Haiti, it belongs to the pagan love goddess, Erzulie, as a powerful protector, and in rural Mexico it is sometimes carried in pockets to magnetize money and to return a lover's roving eye. The stories surrounding basil in all its forms are legion.

-Basil likes warm sun and well-drained soil, frequent watering. Sow its seeds thinly in pots or in a sunny location in the garden, after danger of frost has passed. Avoid over-watering, always water at midday, not in the evening as basil seedling are prone to "damping off".

-Use in many Mediterranean dishes, pasta, pesto, sprinkle over salads and sliced tomatoes with mozzarella. Use to flavor blended vinegars.

---**A quick insecticide:** 8 oz. leaves (chopped basil, elder, artemisia); simmer in 4 cups of water for 30 minutes, stir, strain and cool. Dissolve 1 teasp. of dishwashing detergent or soap flakes in 2.5 cups of cold water. Mix with the above. (Helps to stick mixture to leaves, especially the reverse of leaves where aphids love to hang out.)

Spray in the late evening on a windless day, to prevent harming bees and butterflies.

Use only organic insecticides as these are harmless for humans, dogs and cats.

ROSEMARY: This herb, the essence of a summer herb garden, has been used by cooks and apothecaries from earliest times. With a reputation for strengthening the memory, it became the emblem of fidelity for lovers. The Spanish revere rosemary as the bush that sheltered the Holy Family on their flight to Egypt; as the Virgin Mary spread her cloak over the herb, the white flowers turned blue. In times past, resinous rosemary was burned in sick chambers to purify the air, and branches were strewn in law courts as a protection from "jail fever" (typhus)



Basil



Rosemary

--Plant rosemary in sunny sites, protected from cold winds. It needs excellent drainage. Rosemary can also be grown indoors in containers in a sunny position. Over-watering kills rosemary. Toss fresh rosemary in salad, cook a sprig of it with pre-cooked potatoes pieces and raw onion slices in a pan for a delicious whole meal. Pound with sugar, mix with cream and add to a fruit puree.

CHIVES/GARLIC: One of the most popular and widespread flavoring is the onion family, what the Chinese in ancient times called "a jewel among vegetables". Pyramid builders and Roman soldiers on long marches were fed a daily ration of garlic, the power of the allium/onion even extended to protection from black magic and vampires. Chives were recorded 4000 years ago in China; they were appreciated there and reported back to Europe by the traveler Marco Polo.

-Plant garlic bulbs 1.5 inches deep in January or February, when the ground has warmed; site should be sunny, can be partially shaded. Soil should be rich, moist and well drained. Transplant onion sets to 9 inches apart, harvest when green tops turn brown. Thin garlic transplants to 6 inches apart. Remove flowers for better flavor, and divide and replant garlic clumps every 3 - 4 years. Sprinkle chive flowers on salads, acts as a stimulant and to promote digestion. Eat chives in sandwiches, soups and chopped up, add to butter or cream cheese, allowing one hour for flavor to infuse. Use garlic sparingly; rub clove around salad bowl or fondue dish to improve flavors. Garlic when chopped roughly and fried in butter loses some of its sharp aroma.

THYME: Thyme has inspired poetic praises from Virgil to Rudyard Kipling, who wrote of "wind-bit thyme that smells of dawn in Paradise". A soup recipe of 1663 recorded the use of thyme and beer to overcome shyness, while Scottish highlanders drank tea made of wild thyme for strength and courage, and to prevent nightmares. It is a powerful antiseptic and its preservative properties were well known to the Egyptians who used it for embalming. Grow it in full sun, the soil light and well drained, preferably alkaline. Thin or transplant to 9 -15 inches apart, prune frequently. Protect from frost. Can also be grown indoors in pots. Thyme is loved by bees and its honey highly rated. Mix with parsley and bay to a bouquet garni, add to stocks, marinades, stuffings, sauces and soups. Use cautiously when fresh, as fresh thyme is very pungent. Add to chicken, hot vegetables, fruit salads and jams, use to flavor beef.



Garlic/Chives



Thyme

Continued on Page 5



Our spotlight this month falls on Jeffery (Jeff) Brown, 2 term past President and currently our Secretary, and member since 1994.

He likes the friendliness of the members and their willingness to communicate their knowledge and experiences. Jeff especially likes the special events and the educational programs presented by our guest lecturers.

His interest is in flowering shrubs, and some fruits. His favorites are crepe myrtle, gardenias, plumerias, and damianita. Sweet olives is another favorite. Like so many 'hands in the dirt' gardeners, he has had to slow down a bit in recent years.

Our picture is of Jeff remembering his front yard before the 2021 Big Freeze.

****Membership Spotlight****

An Elite Crepe Myrtle—With San Antonio Roots

From Charles Bartlett

BACKGROUND. Crepe myrtles have been one of our most beloved flowering trees for decades. Crepe myrtles (*Lagerstroemia*) grow wonderfully in Central Texas, but are native to southern China, southeast Asia and Japan. Tropical and subtropical areas from China, to Africa, from Australia to South American now all feature spectacular displays of these colorful trees. Among the 55 *Lagerstroemia* species, several are huge, growing up to 125 feet tall, and providing prized lumber. Crepe myrtle lumber is highly resistant to weathering and decay, resists termites, is fire resistant, and the trees have been used extensively for erosion control and reforestation. The timber is prized for its beautiful, curly, grain pattern and used for fine cabinets, furniture, tool handles, boatbuilding, and even for railroad ties!

In China, the trees have been grown for timber and as a major flowering ornamental for about 1,500 years. They were introduced into Europe in the mid-1600's by Magnus von Lagerstroem, a Swedish merchant and director of the Swedish East India Company, but the introduction to the United States came later, when trees were planted at Charleston, South Carolina in 1787.

MODERN HYBRIDS. Because of their ease of production, long-lasting summer bloom, diverse flower colors, striking exfoliating bark, and vivid red Fall color, new forms of crepe myrtle continue to be produced. For years, most crepe myrtle plants were *L. indica* (a Chinese species), but these often had bacterial leaf spot, and mildew problems. In 1956, a Japanese species (*L. fauriei*) was found by Dr. John L. Creech, on a collecting trip to Japan. He collected seeds from a tree on the highest peak on remote Yakushima Island, and sent them back to the US via a US Air Force plane. Crepe myrtle species hybridize readily and the hybrid plants produced from *L. indica* x *L. fauriei* exhibited great resistance to the common crepe myrtle diseases, especially powdery mildew.

Beginning in 1959, Dr. Donald R. Egolf and his staff at the 446-acre US National Arboretum, Washington, D.C., began an extensive (200,000 seedlings) program of crepe myrtle breeding and selection. Between 1981 and 1990, their program released 29 cultivars of crepe myrtle, most of them selections of complex crosses between *L. indica* and *L. fauriei*. These new crepe myrtles combine the superior flowering characteristics of *L. indica*, with the *L. fauriei* resistance to

mildew. Many also displayed the exceptional and colorful exfoliating bark of *L. fauriei* as well as outstanding Fall foliage color. They carried American Indian tribal names such as Hopi, Caddo, Arapaho, Cheyenne, etc. Crepe myrtle hybridizing work continues in many locations to this day.

'MISS SANDRA' A series of new *Lagerstroemia* cultivars were released in 2015 by the USDA, Agriculture Research Service, and registered with the US National Arboretum, which is the world-wide International Registration Authority for *Lagerstroemia*.



Miss Sandra Bloom

Miss Sandra resulted from a pollination between an unregistered purple-flowering seedling collected in San Antonio, Texas as the female parent and 'Tonto' as the male parent, about 2001. Among the hundreds of seedlings, it was selected as an elite purple-flowering seedling, and underwent a further 9 years of field testing at the Thad Cochran Southern Horticultural Laboratory in Poplarville, Mississippi, beginning about 2005.

Miss Sandra displayed beautiful crown-branching and exceptional foliage coverage and leaf retention. In Central Texas it starts flowering in late May, showing rapid development and an excellent toleration of environmental fluctuations such as lack of water, rapid temperature changes, and fertility. Flowering continues into early November. Inflorescences average 8" in length and width. Individual flowers are about 1 ½ inches wide and have ruffled margins. The disease-free foliage is persistent and turns a brilliant red in the Fall, and is held on the tree until early January.

Continued on Page 6

Ronnie Grell
Managing Partner

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Five Herbs *Continued from Page 3*

OREGANO / MARJORAM: The Greeks gave us the legends and the name of this ancient culinary herb - oros ganos = joy of the mountain. A Greek friend recently brought me back a jar of wild marjoram which she had collected on a hill in Greece; it had a sweet spicy smell, stronger than any bought herb. The Egyptians knew oregano for its power to heal, disinfect and preserve. The 17th Cent. herbalist, Gerard - his book "Gerard's Herbal", still a standard for herb growers and users - advised marjoram tea for those "given to overmuch sighing".



---Grow in full sun, needs midday shade, in well drained soil, dryish, alkaline, nutrient rich. Sow in Spring, germination can be very slow; when grown is a hardy perennial. Thin out or transplant to 12 - 18 inches apart, cut back marjoram plants by two-thirds before they die down for winter. Oregano plants are winter-hardy in San Antonio. Leave seed heads for bird food. Use in the kitchen: blend with chili, add to meat dishes in the last few minutes of cooking. Add to pizza, tomatoes, egg and cheese dishes. Stuff fresh haddock or any strong-tasting fish with marjoram and breadcrumbs, rub into roasting meat. Give food a faint marjoram flavor by laying stems on BBQ embers. Can be added to a bouquet garnish or used in potpourri and scented pillows.

And what about the Good King Henry, Sweet Joe Pie, the Fragrant Lavender - and the Parsley, flat-leaved or curly, the Meadow-sweet, Johnny Jump Ups....???

There are so many herbs which will beguile you and for which you will find a use. So, you'll have to buy a book.



1. Keith Massa and his ever-present iPad. Keith is a firm believer in taking notes. 2. Ken Wolfram, Robin Van Dusen and Alberto Del Rio discuss a plant purchase. 3. Marie Reyes and Sherri Huegel laugh at my hat.



JANUARY SPEAKER Our speaker for the January 2026 meeting was Ms. Lee Marlowe from the San Antonio River Authority and her topic was "Sustainable Landscape Practices". She said "first and foremost, our garden can be anything you want it to be". It can have little or no rock at all, which can help conserve water usage, or it can be made to attract wildlife. Weather conditions in San Antonio also means thoughtful selections of materials and plants as well as harvesting rainwater in containers or barrels. Swales, which can be made up of various materials, also is a means of directing and slowing water to plants. When selecting plants, Ms. Marlowe said native plants worked well in our San Antonio area. Lawn covers such as "lawn flower", are also a good alternative to turf grass. Other considerations include maintenance requirements of your garden, aesthetic versus ecologic decisions, mechanical versus chemical approaches, supplemental nutrients versus water. She reminded us that "dead" plants in winter provide shelter and safety to wildlife. Seedheads are also a good food source for birds and other animals. The best pruning practices include looking first to see if cocoons, etc., are on the branch you are about to remove. She reminded us that leaf litter, too, is a source of insulation, moisture retention and natural fertilizer. Club members enthusiastically added their comments and questions, and shared their own garden experiences.



Miss Marlowe makes her point on a sustainable landscape



THE NECTAR BAR - NATIVE PLANT NURSERY
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MEMBERSHIP

Attendance at our 1st 2026 meeting, 6 January, 38 members and 3 guest.

Happy Birthday to all January births.

Healing and recovery to all who are sick.

Strength, comfort, peace, and love to all who are coping with losses.

February 2026

MISS SANDRA *Continued from Page 4*

I first saw Miss Sandra growing as a small plant at Fanick's Garden Center a number of years ago. They have an unparalleled crepe myrtle collection of great variety. One of the plants was installed in Bandera County and has undergone cold, drought, alkaline soil, and 100 degree heat. It has been an outstanding success. Other specimens in San Antonio, San Marcos, Austin, and China Grove have been equally successful. The vivid purple flowers are attention getting as is the long lasting, vivid red foliage in the Fall. Miss Sandra is highly recommended for its medium size (16' tall x 8' wide), ease of culture, large flowers, long blooming season, and low maintenance requirements.

Truly, it's a beautiful flowering tree with San Antonio roots.



Miss
Sandra
Potted



Miss Sandra
Tree



Do you see that mass of humanity in the picture to the left? That is judging going



on at last year's Alamo Regional Science & Engineering Fair (ARSEF). MGC members Charles Bartlett, Alberto Del Rio, Paul Huegel, Keith Massa, Joe Shinnars, Mike Stepp, and Robin Van Dusen are out there judging the Junior and Senior competition in the Botany and Environmental categories. This annual event, held on the campus of St Mary's University in February, honors the hard work of students who competed and won at the local level, and are now competing at the regional level. The judges can ask questions but will mostly be listening to the students while grading specific categories of evaluation for an overall score. Some winners will go on to compete at the national level. We are fortunate to always have a stellar crew of judges and this year is no exception.

Irish Heritage Day

FREE FREE FREE
Sunday, February 22
From noon to 5PM

FREE & OPEN to the Public
Leon Valley Community Center
6427 Evers Road, San Antonio, Texas, 78238

Opening music and piping in at noon by bagpiper Dan Calkins, followed by the Bluebonnet Scottish County Dancers. Storytelling by internationally known and award winning Jane McDaniel. Listen to music played and sung by The Happy Out Irish Band. Enjoy a performance by the Kelly Singers. Make a St. Brigid's Cross. Have a cup of tea and an Irish scone or slice of Irish bread. Visit with Irish and Celtic vendors. Meet with the Irish Society, the Gaelic Athletic Club, and a representative from the Irish Consulate. The Harp and Shamrock Passport to Ireland will be available for children, plus coloring pages and face painting.

The **Children's Vegetable Garden Program** at the **San Antonio Botanical Garden** is a long-standing, hands-on initiative where children aged 6-16 grow their own produce. Running in 2 sessions, spring



and fall, participants manage a 3.5' x 28' plot. They receive expert guidance from Master Gardeners and other experienced gardeners on planting, nurturing, and harvesting. Your participation is needed and welcomed. For more information, call Vallerie Hartfield at 210-240-1466, or go to the Botanical Garden's website.

SPRING HOURS
Tuesday - Sunday
9:30-6:00



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TAKE THE OPPORTUNITY TO VOLUNTEER

Volunteers are needed to support events and activities. Help is needed to set up and break down our event location, sell plants and other garden items, give information to and sign up prospective new members, and teach children how to plant and maintain a garden.

Please contact Vallerie Hartfield at 210-240-1466.

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2026 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Below is your membership application for 2026. You can copy it, fill it out, and mail it in. We will have forms available at the next meetings for your convenience. If you cannot copy it, put all the info needed on paper and mail that in with your check. In all cases, PLEASE write legibly.

February 2026

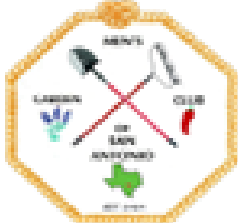
Page 7

Men's Garden Club of San Antonio (MGCSA)

Open to men and women **2026 Membership Application**

CK # _____

Cash _____



Annual Membership	3-year Membership	Life Membership
\$20 Individual	\$30 Individual	\$200 Individual
\$25 Joint*	\$60 Joint*	\$250 Joint*

*Joint membership is one additional member residing in the same household. Both members may enjoy all the member benefits of the MGCSA, but only one receives the club newsletter, the Horti-Bull.

Please circle above the type of membership. Use one form for each membership or joint membership. Please print or write legibly.

Name _____ Spouse _____

Street Address _____

City _____ TX 78 _____ Occupation _____

Phone Number _____ E-Mail _____

Best way and time to connect _____

Today's Date _____ New Member

Sponsor _____ Renewal

Make checks payable to MGCSA; Address:

Paul Huegel, 15619 Cloud Top, SA, TX 78248



**COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION**
— of the —
TEXAS HILL COUNTRY

October 27, 2025

Men's Garden Club of San Antonio, Inc
15619 Cloud Top
San Antonio, TX 78248

Dear Men's Garden Club of San Antonio, Inc,

Thank you for supporting the **Kerr County Flood Relief Fund** of the Community Foundation of the Texas Hill Country. Your gift is more than a financial contribution -- it's a powerful statement of solidarity with our neighbors and communities in need.

We are deeply grateful for your generosity during this challenging time.

Gratefully,

Amy Rector

Amy Rector
Business Manager

Please retain this gift receipt for your tax records

Gift Date: 10/03/2025
Gift Amount: \$500.00
Deposited to: Kerr County Flood Relief Fund

As a 501©(3) public charity, The Community Foundation of the Texas Hill Country (74-2225369) ensures that your donation is fully tax-deductible. No goods or services were provided in exchange for this gift, and the Foundation maintains legal control over all contributed assets.