What's Growing On?

BASTROP COUNTY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION

September 2026



Inside this issue:

Spider Mites	2–3
President's column	4
Water conservation seminar	5–7

Spider Mites

By Wizzie Brown

It's hot. It's dry. It's time to look for spider mites! Spider mite populations start out on the underside of leaves. While you may not be able to see the mites—depending on life stage, species, and your eyesight—you should be able to see the webbing they create. Feeding can cause discoloration of foliage leading to a speckled appearance. Severe infestations can cause foliage to turn silver or bronze and may result in leaves dropping from the plant.

Spider mites are arachnids, more closely related to spiders and ticks than insects. They can produce silk and often cover leaves with webbing. Webbing tends to start on the underside of leaves, but when populations grow larger, webbing expands to cover more of the foliage. Webbing helps protect the mites and their eggs from natural enemies and harsh environmental conditions and may sometimes protect them from pesticides.



Spider mites lay their eggs along leaf veins during the growing season. The mites can develop more quickly when temperatures are warmer, with some spider mites going from egg to adult in less than a week. Further exacerbating spider mite problems is that spider mites thrive in dry conditions while their natural enemies require more humid conditions. Dry conditions allow spider mite populations to grow with little predation or parasitism that would help to keep populations at an acceptable level.

There are many predatory arthropods that feed on spider mites. Some of these include predatory mites, spider mite destroyers (a type of ladybug), minute pirate bugs, big-eyed bugs, and predatory thrips. Proper watering of plants may help reduce spider mite outbreaks as it can reduce plant stress brought on by drought. Using strong jets of water on plants can help to dislodge spider mites.

Miticides or acaricides can be used to manage spider mite outbreaks but use as a last resort. Some active ingredients can also kill beneficials and lead to worse spider mite problems since spider mites recover more quickly than their predators. Look for active ingredients such as horticultural oils (watch temperature when you use oils), insecticidal soaps, azadirachtin, or bifenthrin.

For more information or help with identification, contact Wizzie Brown, Texas A&M

(Continued on page 2)

Volunteering

Master Gardeners volunteer in the community to teach others about horticulture. We follow the research-based recommendations of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension. Members who complete 50 hours of volunteer service in the year after training earn the designation "Texas Master Gardener." We use our title only when engaged in Texas A&M AgriLife Extension activities.

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What's Growing—More Than What You See

Reflections from Dale Weiss, BCMGA President



This is one of those times of year when a lot is happening within BCMGA. We have the Water Conservation Symposium, the Fall Plant Sale, Garden Treasures, ongoing community projects, and our regular meetings and activities.

What most people see is the finished event—the plants lined up and ready for sale, the speakers at the symposium, or a garden project coming together. What they may not see are all the people working behind the scenes to make it happen.

There are members making phone calls, coordinating volunteers, arranging deliveries, gathering supplies, preparing educational materials, cleaning, and pricing donated items, setting up tables, and handling the many last-minute details that always seem to come up. Even something as simple as changing the date and location of a meeting takes people working together to find a solution and keep everyone informed.

Some members are comfortable being out front, while others would rather quietly do what needs to be done. Both are important. Every person who gives a few hours, shares an idea, answers a question, or steps in when help is needed contributes to the success of BCMGA.

As president, I have had the opportunity to see much of this work taking place. I continue to be impressed by how willing our members are to help one another and support the work of the association. We may not always stop long enough to recognize everything that goes into what we do, but it does not go unnoticed.

BCMGA is about growing plants and sharing gardening knowledge, but it is also about service, relationships, and community. Those things grow because of the people behind them.

Thank you to everyone who continues to show up, lend a hand, and help make BCMGA what it is. Whether your contribution is seen by many or only a few, it matters. See you in the garden!

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Water Conservation Starts at Home

By Debbie Mikel



We hear a lot about water these days. How much we use, how we can conserve it, and what the future of this precious resource looks like. It can sometimes feel overwhelming. What can one person do to make a difference?

The answer may be closer to home than you think. Our landscapes are more than plants, lawns, and flowers that need to be watered. Every time it rains, or we turn on the irrigation, we make choices that affect what happens to that water. Does it soak into the soil and nourish our plants, or does it run off our property carrying soil, fertilizer, and other pollutants with it? What happens in our yard doesn't necessarily stay in our yard. The choices we make on our property can affect our neighbors, our creeks, our rivers, and everything downstream.

It all begins beneath our feet. Healthy soil is not just dirt. It is a living ecosystem filled with organisms that help our plants grow, hold water, and reduce runoff. When we build healthy soil, choose plants suited to our environment, water wisely, and find ways to capture and use rainwater, we can reduce the amount of water our landscapes need.

The good news is that you don’t have to completely redesign your yard to make a difference. Small changes, multiplied by hundreds of homeowners, can have a tremendous impact. Maybe it’s fixing a leaking sprinkler head. Maybe it’s adjusting your irrigation schedule, adding mulch, improving your soil, planting a native species, or finding a way to capture some of the rain that falls on your property. Every drop we keep in the landscape is a drop that doesn't have to be taken from somewhere else.

Come Learn What You Can Do

Join the **Bastrop County Master Gardeners** for our **Water Conservation Symposium** on **Saturday, September 26 at the Bastrop Community Center**. Experts will share practical ideas for efficient irrigation, rainwater harvesting, water-wise landscaping, healthy soil, and other simple changes you can make at home.

Whether you have a large yard, a small garden, or are just getting started, you’ll leave with ideas you can put into practice right away. Let’s learn how the way we care for our

(Continued on page 6)

New Website Features

Check out our website, which features project slideshows, a new photo gallery section, and an events calendar to check out upcoming activities. Find news articles and our newsletters. Thanks to Courtney Dyer for keeping the info timely for us.
https://txmg.org/bastropcounty/

(Continued from page 5)

own little piece of the landscape can help protect water for our entire community—and for generations to come.

For more information and how to reserve your place to attend https://txmg.org/bastropcounty/water-conservation-symposium/.

Meet our speakers

Robert Mace, Ph.D.



Executive Director & Professor of Practice

Robert Mace is the Executive Director and Chief Water Policy Officer at the Meadows Center for Water and the Environment and a Professor of Practice in the Department of Geography and Environmental Studies at Texas State University.

Before joining Texas State University in 2017, Robert worked at the Texas Water Development Board for 18 years, ending his career there as the Deputy Executive Administrator for the Water Science & Conservation office. While at the Board, Robert worked on understanding groundwater and surface water resources in Texas, advancing water conservation and innovative water technologies such as desalination, aquifer storage, and recovery, reuse, and rainwater harvesting regional and state water planning, and protecting Texans from floods.

Jane Duke, Ph.D.



A citizen scientist and expert in soil regeneration

Jane Duke became involved in soil health while managing a horse farm and crop fields in North and West Texas. She holds an M.A. in Environmental Philosophy from the University of North Texas and a Ph.D. In Consumer Economics and Environmental Design from Texas Tech University. She is an active leader of the Elm Fork Chapter of Texas Master Naturalists and coordinates the NICE (Natives Improve and Conserve Environments) program for the Trinity Forks Native Plant Society of Texas. She is also active in Texas Organic Food & Growers and the Texas Beekeepers Association.

As a Soil Restoration Educator and Systems Scientist, she helps land stewards and organizations move beyond guesswork by understanding the biological engine of the soil. Her work is built on a unique “Triple Threat” of credentials that allow her to translate complex soil health data into actionable, ethical, and scientifically sound strategies.

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6)

Ben Gilliland



Proprietor of Grizzly Falls Nursery and Landscaping

After retiring from the Army in 2003, Ben Gilliland started in landscaping business. In 2015, he bought the town's nursery which was going close its doors. With Ben at the helm, Grizzly Falls Nursery has grown and shifted to an emphasis on growing Texas natives. He still oversees his design/build/manage landscape firm as a part of the nursery.

Ben is passionate about water conservation and enjoys helping home-owners create a more water efficient garden that supports local wildlife and reduces the need for constant garden upkeep. This includes teaching clients how to test their irrigation systems, so they are not over or under watering their plants. Over the years he has been a guest on several social media accounts like the Contractor Grow Show and has been featured on the Central Texas Gardener television show.

Natalie McAnarney



aka The Plant Ninja – Texas Gardener @theplantninja-texasgardener

Natalie is a Master Gardener who helps others learn about gardening in Central Texas while balancing HOA rules and the dry Texas climate. She specializes in Native and well-adapted plants, including those that are pollinator friendly. She creates drought-tolerant design that balances beauty and function. She gives her followers real garden updates including her wins, mistakes, and everything in between. Her goal through her social media site is to help others create landscapes that look good, handle the Texas heat, and support the ecosystem.

TEXAS MASTER GARDENER
TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION
Bastrop County

Mission Accomplished!!!

By Howard Nemerov



Three years ago, I began curating Texas Milkweed (*Asclepias texana*) to evaluate marketability, and replace Tropical Milkweed as an easy-to-grow Monarch host plant. This spring, adult Monarchs found the plants and the results are on the right. At the spring plant sale, they sold out within an hour. Look for it and other native milkweeds at our spring 2027 sale!