

Here's the Dirt Newsletter April 2026

April 2026

Vol. 4 Edition 4

A newsletter to distribute our love and expertise of gardening and to share some Howdy Horticulture Hospitality with you.

Brazoria County Master Gardeners

Board Members:

Officers

- President- Sheila Pierce

- 1st Vice President-Tammy Green and Ellen Armistead
- 2nd Vice President, Demonstration Gardens- Andra Halnon
- Treasurer- Tracy Ning
- Secretary- Linda Pirtle

Appointed Board Members

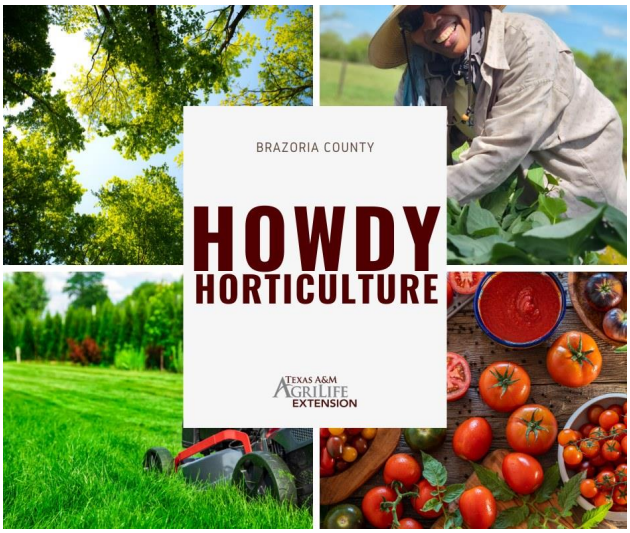
- Awards- Lisa Woods
- Membership- Loretta Allen and Karen Brennan
- Hospitality- Jan Smith and Chamane Barrow
- BEES Maintenance- Neil Newton (with Mike Mayfield as BEES Supply Chain lead)
- New Member Development- Rose Wagner
- Greenhouse & Propagation- Ruth and August Aimone
- Library Seed Exchange Program – Drake Delacruz
- Plant Sale- Sandy Shanks and Linda Erdman
- Tree Sale- Andra Halnon, Tracy Ning
- Seedling Sale- Ruth and August Aimone
- Webmaster- Lisa Woods and JoAnne Knodel
- Social Media-Sandy Shanks
- Technology- JoAnne Knodel and Linda Ulmer
- Texas Master Gardener Directors- Carol Butler and JoAnne Knodel

TEXAS MASTER GARDENER
TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION
Brazoria County

Brazoria County Horticulture Agent



Kimberly Mayer, CEA, CPTM



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April Happenings



April has a way of waking everything up, including us. After a few teasing warm days, spring is now in full swing, and gardens across Brazoria County are stretching, blooming, and begging for a little attention and maybe just a bit more rain. If you have stepped outside lately and found yourself lingering a little longer, you are not alone. This is the season that reminds us why we love to dig in the dirt.

With planting in full swing, now is the time to get those warm-season favorites in the ground and start planning for months of color, pollinator activity, and harvest ahead. Of course, we will take any rain we can get to help things along. Our landscapes and our water bills would certainly appreciate it.

April also brings moments to pause and celebrate. As Easter approaches, many of us will gather with family, enjoy traditions, and maybe even admire the beauty of spring blooms that feel right on cue. For many, Easter marks the resurrection of Jesus Christ and is a celebration of hope, renewal, and new life. It is a natural reminder of growth and fresh starts, something gardeners understand well.

And speaking of growth, National Volunteer Week gives us the perfect opportunity to recognize the incredible individuals who give their time and talents to make our programs and community

flourish. Whether they are answering questions, leading workshops, or tending demonstration gardens, our volunteers are truly the roots of what we do.

So here is to April, longer days, hopeful skies, and the simple joy of being outside with your hands in the soil. Let us grow something good together.

Nominate a Horticulture Hero










TEXAS
Agriculture Hero
April 2024
Jo Anne Kindel
Lipan
Mahan
Nacona


Horticulture Hero
March 2025
Jessica Smith





We truly have an amazing group of individuals within the Brazoria County Master Gardener Association. I wanted to make sure that we recognize and fully appreciate our volunteers on more than just a yearly basis. That's where this program comes in to play. I would love for you to send me your nominations for a monthly Horticulture Hero. The requirements are simple. Just send me an email with a paragraph explaining why this individual should be nominated for this award. I will make the final decision each month and then award that person at the General Meeting. Some examples could be: above and beyond service at an outreach event, behind the scenes planning and coordinating, or even an outstanding presentation to a local group, The possibilities are endless. Get your nominations to me by the last day of the month. Email me : kimberly.mayer@ag.tamu.edu

Here is a list of past winners:

Horticulture Heroes from 2023 - 2025 (Started February 2023)

February - Terry Bohr

March – Cynthia Finney and Linda Erdman

April – Sandy Shanks

May – Cindy Ducros

June – Sandy Henderson

July – Al Fedoruk

August – No newsletter

September – Lisa Woods

October – Preston Armistead

November – Rosa Fletcher

December – Linda Ulmer

Horticulture Heroes for 2024

January- Rose Wagner

February- Kathy Pittman

March- Mike Layman

April- JoAnne Knodel

May- Jessica Chase

June- Tracy Ning

July- Paula Hanson

August- Neil Newton

September- Ruth and August Aimone

October- none submitted

November- Tammy Green

December- Christmas Party

2025

January – none submitted

February – Loretta Allen

March – Janice Smith

April – Ann Hughes

May – Joy Hargett

June- Mike Mayfield

July- Jessie Phillips

August- Drake de la Cruz

September- David Higginbotham

October- Ricky Price

November-

December- Christmas Party

2026

January - Don Bushman

February - Bill Adriance

March - Melinda Louvier

April - Karen Brennan

Our April Horticulture Hero is Karen Brennan, and what a joy it is to celebrate her this month.

If you attended the recent Tree Sale, chances are you felt Karen's impact firsthand. She kept our volunteers fueled, hydrated, and going strong with pots and pots of homemade chili and chicken tortilla soup that truly hit the spot. It was not a small effort, and she even recruited her husband to jump in and help make sure everyone was cared for. That kind of behind-the-scenes support is what keeps events like ours running smoothly, and Karen did it with generosity and heart.

Beyond the Tree Sale, Karen's dedication continues to shine. She is my official book buddy and showed up as the sole attendee for our rescheduled and relocated Light Eaters book club meeting, proving that commitment in the smallest settings can mean just as much as in the biggest ones. When schedules became overwhelming, she graciously opened her home to host our most recent book club gathering, making it easier for our Pearland members to attend and stay connected.

Karen embodies what it means to serve with kindness, flexibility, and community spirit. Whether she is nourishing bodies with a warm meal or nurturing connections through shared learning, she makes a lasting impact.

Please join us in celebrating and thanking Karen Brennan for her incredible generosity and unwavering support. We are so grateful for all that she does.



Upcoming Educational Opportunities





1 - Dates and times are now available for The Big Grow Series. See Facebook for event listings and to register for the classes. Feel free to share with your friends and neighbors.



Agent's Corner







Designing a Flower Bed That Blooms All Season

By Kimberly Mayer, Brazoria County Horticulture Agent

Originally published in The Facts, April 2026

Spring planting season has arrived, and with it comes the opportunity to create a flower bed that offers more than just a few weeks of color. A well-designed landscape can provide visual interest, support pollinators, and perform reliably from spring through fall. The key is not simply choosing attractive plants but approaching your garden with a clear design strategy.

Start with Site Assessment

Before selecting a single plant, take time to evaluate your site. How many hours of sunlight does the area receive? Is the soil sandy, clay-heavy, or somewhere in between? Does water drain quickly or tend to collect?

In Southeast Texas, these factors are especially important. Many common garden failures can be traced back to plants being placed in conditions they are not suited for. Matching plant needs to site conditions is often referred to as “right plant, right place”. This is the foundation of sustainable landscape design.

Build a Framework with Layering

A successful flower bed is structured in layers. This approach improves both aesthetics and plant health.

- **Background (height):** Taller plants create a backdrop and anchor the design.
- **Mid-layer:** These plants provide fullness and connect upper and lower levels.
- **Foreground (edge):** Low-growing plants define the border and soften edges.

This tiered arrangement ensures that all plants receive adequate light while creating depth and visual flow. In larger beds, consider repeating groupings of plants rather than planting one of each species. Repetition creates cohesion and helps guide the eye through the landscape.

Design for Seasonal Continuity

To achieve blooms throughout the growing season, incorporate plants with overlapping bloom periods. Rather than relying on a single flush of flowers, aim for a sequence:

- **Spring (March–May):** Early color and critical nectar sources Consider planting:
  - Coreopsis (excellent native option, long bloom window)
  - Indian blanket (*Gaillardia pulchella*)
  - Bluebonnet (*Lupinus texensis*) for seasonal impact
  - Columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*) for part-shade areas
- **Early to Mid-Summer (May–July):** Transition into heat-tolerant performers Strong choices include:
  - Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*)
  - Purple coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*)
  - Salvias (such as *Salvia greggii* or *Salvia farinacea*)
  - Zinnias (annual, but excellent for continuous color)
- **Late Summer to Fall (July–October):** Plants that thrive in heat and support late pollinators Look for:
  - Lantana (very durable and long blooming)
  - Flame acanthus (*Anisacanthus quadrifidus var. wrightii*)
  - Mexican mint marigold (*Tagetes lucida*)
  - Goldenrod (*Solidago spp.*), an important native pollinator plant

By combining plants from each of these bloom periods, your garden will maintain color and ecological value across the seasons. As one group begins to fade, the next takes its place, creating a continuous display rather than a short-lived peak.

Incorporate Native and Adapted Plants

Native plants are an excellent choice for long-term success. Because they are naturally adapted to local conditions, they typically require less water, fertilizer, and maintenance once established. They also play a critical role in supporting pollinators and beneficial insects.

Strong native options for Southeast Texas landscapes include:

- Coreopsis (early to mid-season color)
- Milkweed (essential for monarch butterflies)
- Native salvias (extended bloom and drought tolerance)
- Black-eyed Susan (summer color and resilience)

Adapted plants, those not native but well-suited to the region can also be incorporated to extend bloom periods and diversify the planting palette.

Use Color and Texture Intentionally

Color selection should support the overall design rather than overwhelm it. Limiting your palette to two or three primary colors, with occasional accents, creates a more unified appearance. Repeating these colors throughout the bed strengthens the design.

Texture is equally important. Combining fine-textured plants (such as grasses) with broader-leaved species create contrast and visual interest. Variation in plant form—upright, mounding, or spreading—also contributes to a more dynamic planting.

Plan for Growth and Maintenance

Spacing is a critical but often overlooked component of design. Plants should be spaced according to their mature size, not their size at planting. Proper spacing reduces competition, improves airflow, and minimizes disease pressure.

Mulch can be used to conserve moisture, regulate soil temperature, and suppress weeds while plants are establishing. Over time, as plants mature and fill in, the need for mulch will decrease.

Start with Quality Plants and Local Expertise

Even the most thoughtful design depends on selecting plants that are well-suited to local growing conditions. One of the best ways to ensure success is to source plants from knowledgeable, local organizations.

The Brazoria County Master Gardeners will host their annual Spring Plant Sale on April 18th at the Brazoria County Fairgrounds in Angleton, offering a selection of perennials, annuals, and native plants chosen specifically for success in our region. In addition to plant availability, Master Gardeners will be present to provide guidance on plant selection, placement, and care.

Designing a flower bed that blooms all season is both an art and a science. By assessing your site, layering your planting, selecting appropriate species, and planning for continuous bloom, you can create a landscape that remains vibrant and functional well beyond spring.

Kimberly Mayer is a Horticulturist with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension serving Brazoria County. For questions, contact her at 979-864-1558 or Kimberly.mayer@ag.tamu.edu

Community Outreach Requests



2 - Master Gardener showing his daughter some plants at Harvest for the Hungry.



3 - Master Gardeners Ruth and August Aimone presenting for resident of Richwood.



4 - Horticulture Agent teaching youth how to plant vegetables.

The Brazoria County Master Gardener Speakers Bureau offers a wide variety of research-based gardening and water conservation topics for our area. We are available to speak to groups of 10 or more in our region.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service in Brazoria County and the Brazoria County Master Gardeners are pleased to offer Speakers Bureau services at no charge; however, we are happy to accept donations of at least $25 in support of the educational activities of the Brazoria County Master Gardener Association, a 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization.

Please keep in mind:

- We require 30 day notice for any speaker request. *Please note our February thru April season is one of high demand,* and we recommend to request speakers as early as possible.
- In general, programs are 45-60 minutes, including Q&A. We can adapt our presentations to meet specific requests. Speakers are available to speak in person or virtually.

- We appreciate a donation of at least $25 to help support our organization’s mission of providing education in research-based gardening and water conservation practices.

For outreach requests and questions, please reach out to Sheila Pierce at sheilabcmg@gmail.com or fill out our Speaker's Request at https://txmg.org/brazoria/home/request-a-speaker/

Upcoming Events:

April 2nd - Intern Class

April 3rd - Good Friday (County Offices are closed)

April 7th - Board Meeting

April 9th - Intern Field Trip

April 10th - General Meeting

April 11th - Rosharon Farmers (Agent Hours)

April 15th -18th - Set up and Spring Plant Sale

April 19th - 25th - National Volunteer Week



Contact Us

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