

Here's the Dirt Newsletter July 2026

July 2026

Vol. 4 Edition 7

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

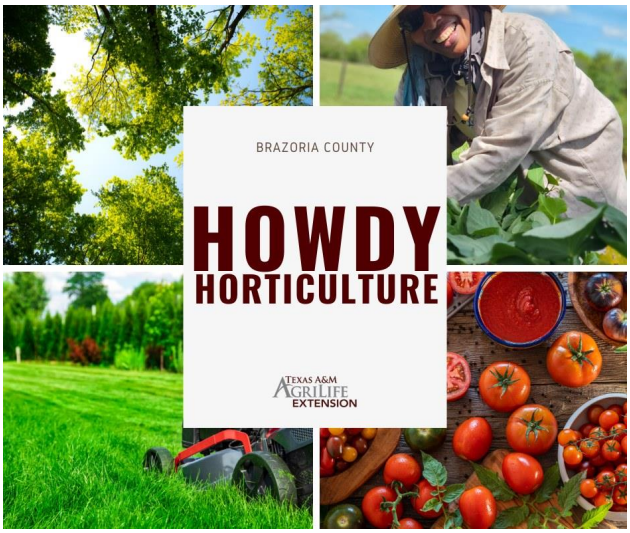
- Awards- Lisa Woods
- Membership- Loretta Allen and Karen Brennan
- Hospitality- Jan Smith and Chamane Barrow
- BEES Maintenance- Neil Newton (with Mike Mayfield as BEES Supply Chain lead)
- New Member Development- Rose Wagner
- Greenhouse & Propagation- Ruth and August Aimone
- Library Seed Exchange 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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July Happenings



Photo credit: Patty Brinkmeyer

If you've stepped outside lately, you already know that July has officially arrived in Texas. The heat is on, the humidity is doing its thing, and our gardens are reminding us that summer gardening is more of a marathon than a sprint. While we may not be planting as enthusiastically as we were in the spring, there's still plenty to do. A good layer of mulch, deep watering, and keeping an eye out for heat stress can help our landscapes weather the hottest part of the year. And don't forget to take care of yourself, too. A hat, sunscreen, and a water bottle are just as important as your pruners this time of year.

Even in the middle of summer, the garden has a way of rewarding those who slow down and pay attention. Pollinators are hard at work, butterflies continue to visit nectar-rich flowers, summer vegetables are finding their way into kitchens, and many of our trees and shrubs are putting on a beautiful display despite the heat. Some of my favorite moments happen early in the morning with a cup of coffee in hand, before the day's temperatures remind me it's time to head back inside. Those quiet moments are a great reminder that gardening isn't just about

growing plants, it's about enjoying the process and appreciating the life that our landscapes support.

As we look ahead, we're already preparing for another busy season of educational programs, fall gardening, and community events. Until then, I hope you'll find something in this month's newsletter that inspires you to try something new, solve a gardening challenge, or simply spend a little more time outdoors. Thank you for being part of our gardening community and for helping us share research-based horticulture across Brazoria County. As always, I'm glad you're here, and I hope you enjoy this month's edition of *Here's the Dirt*!

-Kimberly

Nominate a Horticulture Hero










TEXAS
Agriculture Hero
April 2024
Jo Anne Kindel
Lipan
Mahan
Nacona


Horticulture Hero
March 2025
Jessica Smith





🌿 **Horticulture Hero – July 2026: Dana Arnold**

This month's **Horticulture Hero** is **Dana Arnold**, a dedicated Master Gardener who has generously shared her knowledge with fellow volunteers for many years.If you've attended our Intern Training Program, chances are you've learned from Dana during her popular **Rainwater Harvesting** class. With her hands-on experience working with barrels, pipes, fittings, and irrigation systems, she has a talent for taking what can seem like a complicated subject and making it practical and easy to understand. Whether she's explaining how to build a rain barrel system or demonstrating ways to conserve water in the landscape, Dana's enthusiasm and expertise always shine through.Water conservation is an important part of gardening in Texas, and Dana's willingness to share her specialized knowledge helps ensure that our Master Gardeners are equipped with practical skills they can use at home and pass along to others in the community. We are grateful for the time, talent, and experience she brings to our program each year.Thank you, Dana, for being such a valuable asset to the Brazoria County Master Gardener family. We appreciate your dedication to education, conservation, and helping others grow!

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.



2 - It's not too late to join us for the next Between the Leaves Book Club. See the flyer for the next meeting date and book title.



3 - This class is already filling up! Get registered before it's too late and learn how to create a pollinator habitat in your landscape. Less mowing. More butterflies. https://square.link/u/B3AnB4eH

Agent's Corner



Pollinators Need More Than Flowers

By Kimberly Mayer, County Extension Agent – Horticulture, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, Brazoria County

When most people hear the word “pollinator,” they immediately think of honey bees. While honey bees play an important role in agriculture and food production, they are only one part of a much larger pollinator community that exists right here in Brazoria County.

Native bees, butterflies, moths, beetles, flies, hummingbirds, and even bats all serve as pollinators. These animals help transfer pollen from one flower to another, allowing plants to produce fruits, seeds, and the next generation of plants that support both wildlife and people.

Pollinators play a critical role in our food system. It is often estimated that one out of every three bites of food we eat depends on pollinators either directly or indirectly. Many fruits, vegetables, nuts, and seed crops benefit from pollinator activity. Even some self-fertile plants, such as tomatoes, often produce better yields and fruit quality when visited by pollinators.

The good news is that supporting pollinators does not require acres of land or a perfectly designed landscape. Small actions taken by homeowners can collectively make a significant impact.

One of the biggest misconceptions people have is believing that pollinators simply need flowers. While flowering plants are important, pollinators actually need suitable habitat that includes diverse food sources, access to water, nesting and shelter areas, and thoughtful pesticide practices.

Diversity is one of the best ways to support pollinators. Instead of focusing on a single season of color, homeowners should aim to provide blooms throughout the year. Early-season flowers support emerging pollinators in spring, while summer and fall blooms provide resources during periods when natural forage may be limited.

Native plants are excellent additions to Texas landscapes because they have evolved alongside local wildlife. Plants such as Texas lantana, Turk's cap, Gregg's mistflower, autumn sage, native sunflowers, and regionally appropriate native milkweed species can all provide valuable nectar and pollen resources.

Creating pollinator habitat also means rethinking what a "perfect" landscape should look like. Many pollinators depend on spaces that homeowners often remove during routine yard maintenance.

For example, approximately 70 percent of native bee species nest underground. Leaving small areas of undisturbed bare soil can provide important nesting habitat. Dead stems and leaf litter can also offer shelter for beneficial insects during different stages of their life cycle.

Water is another simple but often overlooked resource. Pollinators need safe places to drink, especially during our long Texas summers. A shallow dish filled with water and a few stones can create a safe watering station without requiring much space or expense.

Perhaps one of the most important lessons for gardeners is recognizing that not every insect is a pest.

Many insects provide valuable ecosystem services, including pollination and natural pest control. Before reaching for a pesticide, homeowners should properly identify the issue they are trying to solve. Integrated Pest Management, commonly referred to as IPM, encourages using multiple management strategies and applying pesticides only when necessary.

If treatment is needed, avoid applying pesticides to blooming plants and always read and follow label instructions.

Healthy pollinator populations depend on healthy habitats, and communities have tremendous opportunities to create those spaces one yard, school, park, and neighborhood at a time.

That growing interest in pollinator conservation is exactly why Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service in Brazoria County created Pollinator Academy.

This educational event was designed to bring together homeowners, gardeners, Master Gardeners, Master Naturalists, educators, municipalities, and anyone interested in creating healthier environments for pollinators.

Participants will learn from experts about bees, butterflies, habitat design, pollinator-friendly landscapes, and practical strategies they can immediately implement at home and in their communities.

Pollinator conservation is not about achieving perfection or transforming every yard into a wildflower meadow overnight. It is about making intentional choices that support biodiversity while creating resilient landscapes that benefit everyone.

Every flower planted, every unnecessary pesticide application avoided, and every educational conversation shared helps build a healthier environment for future generations.

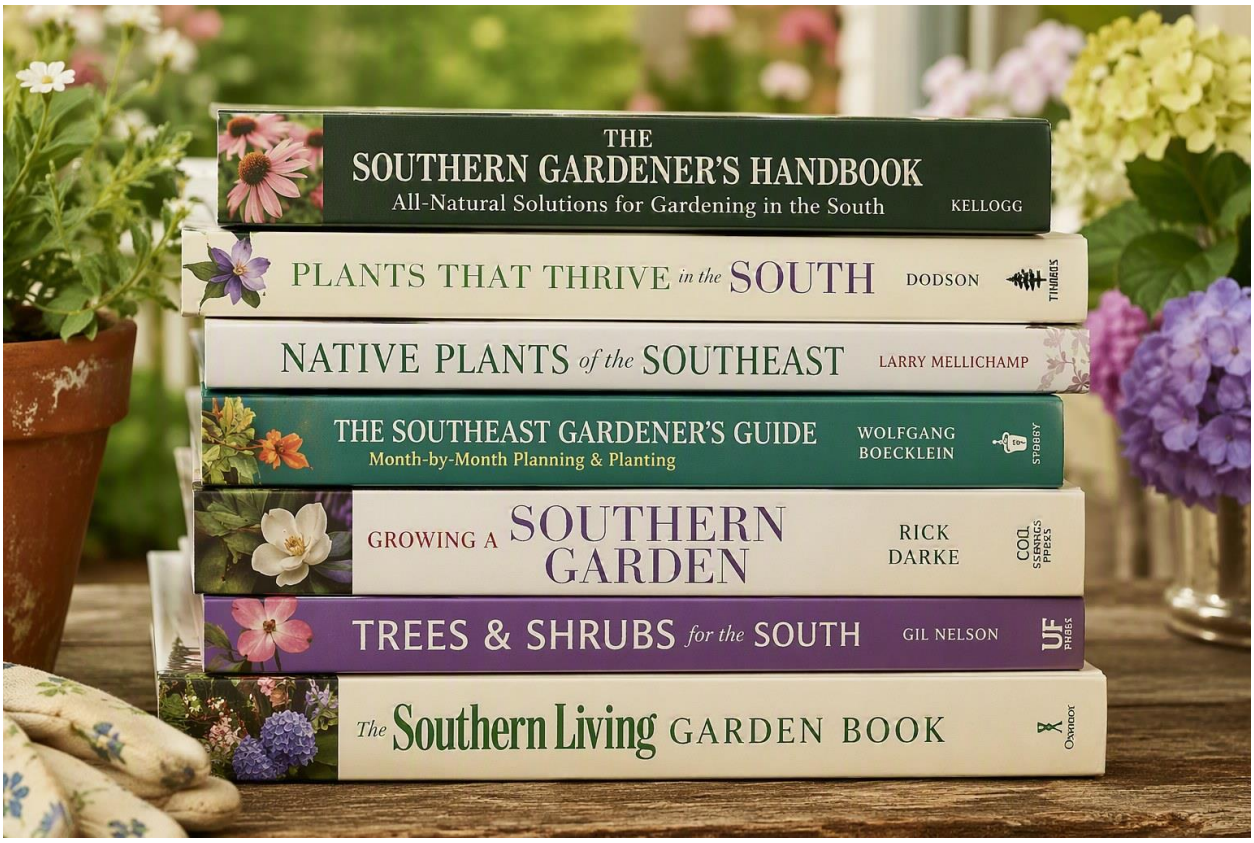
Sometimes the smallest creatures remind us of one of nature's greatest lessons: small actions, repeated across an entire community, can create meaningful change.

Photo credits: Patty Brinkmeyer



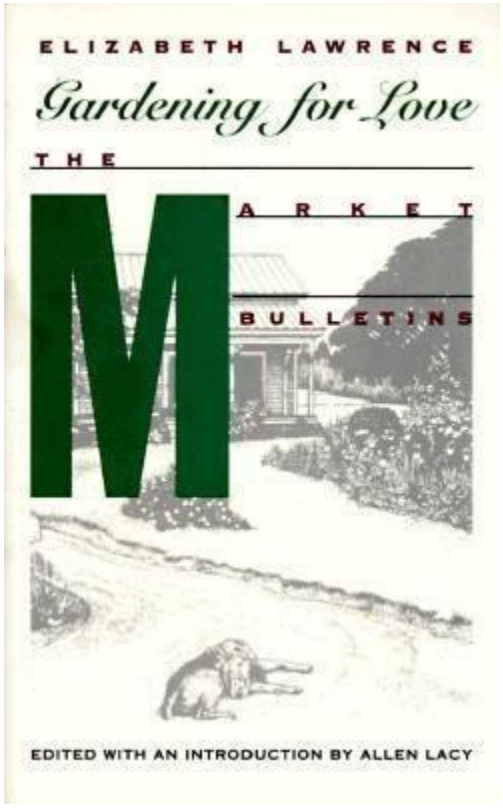


What I'm Reading

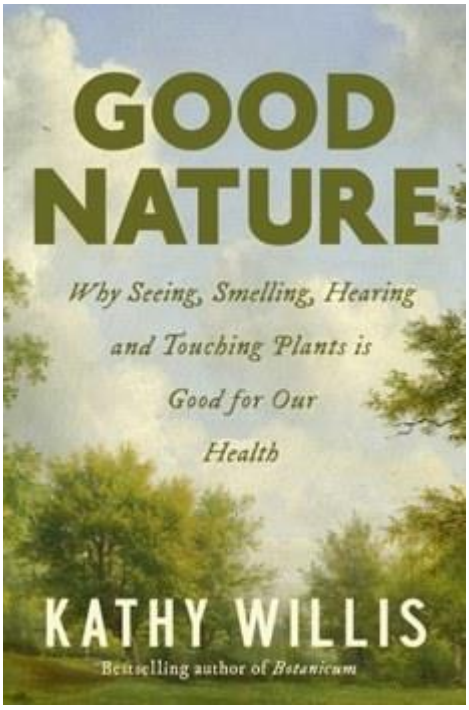




4 - A fascinating look at the insects and arthropods that buzz, sting, and bite, and the important roles they play in our ecosystems.



5 - "In Gardening for Love , Lawrence reveals another world of garden writing, the world of the rural women of the South with whom she corresponded extensively from the late 1950s into the mid-1970s in responce to their advertisements for herbs and ornamental perennials in several market bulletins (published by state departments of agriculture for the benefit of farmers)."



6 - This month's Book Club choice.

Upcoming Events:



7 - July 3rd - Independence Day Observed (County offices closed)

July 4th - Independence Day

July 7th - Board Meeting

July 10th - General Meeting

July 17th - Tame Those Texas Weeds

July 31st - Between the Leaves Book Club

Contact Us

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