

THE GARDEN SOLUTIONS ISSUE

# GULF COAST *Gardening*

ISSUE 244 • JULY / AUGUST 2024



**TEXAS**

MASTER  GARDENER

TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

Galveston County

WRITTEN BY GALVESTON COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS  
IN COOPERATION WITH THE GALVESTON COUNTY OFFICE  
OF TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION SERVICE

## Gardening Solutions - That's what we are here for



MG Kevin Lancon

This month's newsletter is about gardening solutions. Each of us became Master Gardeners because we had a passion for gardening, and we wanted to learn more. Our late and esteemed Horticulture Agent, Dr. William Johnson had a wise saying, "knowledge not shared is knowledge lost" and it has become the cultural tag line of the Galveston County Master Gardener organization. Not only are we always learning but we are also continuing to seek out additional means to share the knowledge that we have learned with the public.

This newsletter is one of the most popular tools that we use to share relevant, timely and valuable knowledge with others. We have an incredibly diverse organization, relative to interests, knowledge, and backgrounds and you will notice so many different authors writing on so many different and diverse topics, from vegetables to perennials, to insects and diseases and so much more. The topics are endless, and the knowledge is too. This newsletter is only one such tool though. Additionally, we have educational seminars on most weekends, numerous plant sales, garden solution advice through our hotline phone service, public outreach events throughout Galveston County and of course our 4.5-acre demonstration garden inside of

Carbide Park in La Marque.

I hope you enjoy this issue of our newsletter and invite you to join us as we spread our passion and knowledge for gardening at one of our many educational events and avenues for sharing our knowledge. Please visit our web site at <https://txmg.org/galveston> and also our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/galvcountrymg/> for more information of upcoming events and activities. We also thank you for supporting the Galveston County Master Gardeners and hope to see you soon.

*Kevin Lancon*

Discovery Garden Coordinator



MG Ann Ross explains how to handle vegetable vines  
MG Karolyn Gephart



MG Karolyn Gephart

## Have a Garden Problem? We Might Have Your Solution

July 'fun in the sun' has arrived and with it come gardening concerns and watering chores that make patio baskets and containers a frequent destination. This issue addresses specific problems that occur and offers solutions to them. Check out the Contents on page 3 and you might see one of your problems listed. We hope to solve it for you! But that's not all in this issue: Meet our new Extension Agent – Horticulture Boone Holladay and check out the top three tomato varieties that won the 2024 Intern's Tomato Tasting event. (You might want to plant them in the fall). Did you know there is a community garden in Bacliff that is thriving under the care of volunteers? Read all about it. Learn how to get rid of poison ivy and how to recognize venomous spiders. You will also get a new appreciation for certain flies. Have children/grandchildren who say no to vegetables? Check out the two delicious recipes in Seasonal Bites. Even picky spouses and friends will devour these. Enjoy your AC while looking out the window at your beautiful yard...with problems solved.

*Karolyn Gephart*



Pentas provide color in summer MG Vickie Hall

Special thanks to Brandi Keller,  
County Extension Agent - Coastal & Marine  
Resources, for editing this issue of GCG.  
Her hard work is greatly appreciated.

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Louis Pouget  
Barry Landry



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to Gulf Coast Gardening

# Annual Color for the Texas Heat



Vicki Hall  
GCMG 2023

After the cool temperatures of autumn and the winter frost, gardeners love the rebirth of spring and the allure of beautiful gardens. But this euphoria only lasts a few months. Gardeners struggle when heavy May rainfall causes drainage problems and, more significantly, the heat and drought of the south Texas summer begin..) Is your garden holding up in this Texas plant-sizzling summer?

So, how do we keep our gardens looking lush and beautiful throughout our summer? Annuals. One of the major goals of gardening in our area is finding colorful, high performing plants that add excitement to our summer landscapes and hold up to our hot climate. There are many warm-season annuals that are tough, heat-tolerant and are ideal for planting at this time of the year. They add an instant impact of color and textured foliage all season long, either in containers or garden beds.

Each season you have an opportunity to add color, texture, and design elements to your garden through the use of annuals, but remember, they need care and maintenance.

One of the most important things you can do is to ensure your soil will support these plants. Most annuals prefer a pH of 5.5-6.5. Add N-P-K 1:1:1 fertilizer to newly created beds.

Seasonal color planting usually begins mid-March through April after the threat of frost has passed. Many warm season plants, such as periwinkles (*Vinca minor*) cannot tolerate cool soil temperature. Planting should be delayed until the medium reaches 70 degrees. Spacing of the plants should be determined by the species, the plant size, and the time of year. Moist plants are easier to remove from a container without disturbing the root ball. If the soil is dry, soak the plant in water for 10-15 minutes prior to planting. If roots are compacted, loosen the roots gently before planting. New plants will need to be watered well after planting and then frequently until they are established and new growth has started. Deep, infrequent watering is better than frequent light watering to encourage deeper root growth, which will help the annuals through our tough summer heat. Adding a two- to three-inch layer of mulch adds a “finished” look as it reduces weeds and conserves soil moisture for better growth. The best mulches are organic, such as bark chips, pine needles, shredded leaves, peat moss or hulls. While bark chips can move and float away during rains, a quality hardwood mulch that is comprised of various sizes will usually stay in place, yet provide enough space for water to penetrate.

Annuals, such as vinca (*Catharanthus roseus*) and salvia (*Salvia spp.*), require little additional care. Their flowers fall cleanly from the plant after fading and do not need to be manually



Pentas MG Linda Steber



Cowpen daisy GCMG Database



Periwinkles MG Frank Resch

## “Add color, texture and design using annuals...”

removed. Others, such as marigolds (*Tagetes spp.*) and cosmos (*Cosmos sulphureus*) will need to be deadheaded. This will keep your plants attractive and more productive, but will also discourage disease, and prevent the spread of seeds. Some flowers, such as petunias (*Petunia*) and marigolds (*Tagetes spp.*), may need to be pinched back after blooming to ensure bushier growth of the plant.

In most of Texas, areas for seasonal color can be changed two to three times per year. Spring annuals are planted in late February through the end of May. An additional planting of heat tolerant annuals, such as verbena (*Verbena x hybrida*), periwinkle (*Vinca minor*), or common portulaca (*Portulaca oleracea*), can be done through the hot summer months. Cool season annuals, like pansies (*Viola x wittrockiana*) and dianthus (*D. plumarius*), are planted when temperatures begin to drop in late September or October. Managing color changes with the seasons is important to keep your landscaping at its best.

Selecting annuals is the most critical element for success with seasonal color in the landscape. Below is a list of the most common annuals that are available for our area. These plants require full sun and well-draining soil.

Alyssum -White Stream Lobularia (*Lobularia 'White Stream'*)– 4-6” tall, Flower color: white

Angelonia (*Angelonia angustifolia*)-12-18” tall, drought tolerant, Flower colors: white, purple, pink

Bidens, Pirate’s Pearl (*Bidens ferulifolia*)-12” tall, drought tolerant, Flower color: white

Blue Daze (*Evolvulus glomeratus*) – 9-18” tall, drought tolerant, Flower color: blue

Celosia (*Celosia plumosa*)10-14” tall, Flower color: yellow, red, orange, or magenta

Cosmos (*Cosmos sulphureus*)- 1-6’ tall, Flower color: yellow, white, pink, orange, yellow, red

Cowpen Daisy (*Verbesina encelioides*)- 2-5’ tall, drought tolerant, Flower color: yellow

Dianthus (*D. plumarius*)-6-36” tall, Flower color: white, lilac, red, pink

Globe Amaranth (*Gomphrena globosa*) 1-4’ tall, Flower color: white, pink, lavender, purple

Lantana (*Lantana*)- 3-4’ tall, drought tolerant, Flower colors: yellow, orange, red, purple, white, peach

Marigolds (*Tagetes spp.*) - 1-3’ tall, Flower color: yellow, orange, white, red, gold, bicolor

Pentas (*Pentas lanceolata*)-2’ tall, Flower color: pink

Petunia (*Petunia*)- 6-18” tall, Flower color: white, pink, red, purple, blue, and yellow, mixed

Purslane (*Portulaca oleracea*)-4-10” tall, Flower color: mixed

Salvia (*Salvia spp.*)- 2-4’ tall, drought-tolerant, Flower color: blue, pink, purple, red, white, yellow

Verbena (*Verbena x hybrida*)- 1-2’ tall, Flower color: white, red, purple, pink, lavender, bi-colored

Vinca Cora® Series (*Catharanthus roseus*)- 14-18” tall, Flower color: red, purple, pink, white, orange

Zinnias (*Zinnia x marylandica*, *Zinnia elegans*)- 3’ tall, drought-resistant, Flower color: multi-colors

Whew! I think I am ready to tackle this Texas heat with annuals. What about you?

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Seasonal Color – Care and Maintenance, Don C. Wilkerson, Ph.D., Professor & Extension Horticulturist, Texas A&M University System, College Station, Texas

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Good Choices for Seasonal Color in Houston, LMC Landscape & Tree Care



Verbena GCMG Database

# The Resilience and Benefits of Drought-Tolerant Native Trees



Doris Durbin Heard  
GCMG 1990

Our shifting climate has had an impact on trees, underscoring the importance of choosing resilient native species for our yards. Texas weather, often unpredictable, has demonstrated extreme swings from floods to droughts in recent years. These fluctuations can have a huge impact on the trees in our area. Do you remember Tropical Storm Claudette in 1997,

which inundated our region with a record-breaking 42 inches of rain in just 24 hours? Then there was the 2011 historic drought where there was not a drop of rain for 9 months! This past year you might have noticed a number of dead trees in our area that were impacted by the 2023 drought, coupled from pre-existing freeze damage.

If there is available space in your yard for adding or replacing a tree, it's worth considering both large and small native trees that thrive in our region and have proven their ability to withstand severe droughts. Beyond their resilience to centuries of climate change, these trees offer a diverse range of significant benefits. They serve as vital habitats and food sources for wildlife, provide shade, reduce stormwater runoff, purify air and water, act as effective windbreaks, and even enhance property value.

Consider the following factors when selecting a tree for your yard:

**Diversity:** Choose multiple tree species if space allows, as it reduces the risk of disease related issues.

**Mature Height and Width:** Ensure that the mature dimensions align with the available space in the chosen location – consider overhead wires, proximity to your house or neighbor's fence, etc.

**Evergreen or Deciduous:** Choose between evergreen and deciduous based on your preference for summer shade and winter sunshine. Deciduous trees offer the added benefit of collecting leaves for composting.

**Soil Preferences:** Consider the tree's soil requirements, such as sandy, loamy, or clay soil, as well as moisture levels ranging from moist to well-drained.

**Sun Exposure:** Understand the optimal sun conditions for the tree to thrive – whether it requires full sun, partial shade or full shade.

**Flower/Fruit:** Attract birds, butterflies, pollinators and wildlife by selecting trees with appealing flowers and/or fruit.

By considering these aspects, you can make an informed decision that not only suits your preferences but also promotes the health and longevity of the chosen tree.

The trees listed below not only weathered the historic 2011 drought but did so with minimal or no supplemental watering. These trees and many more are listed in a brochure by the Houston Parks Board, generously funded by the Wortham Foundation. In response to the significant loss of millions of trees, a dedicated team of 18 experts spent over six months to carefully curate a selection of the hardiest drought tolerant native trees. The selections offer unique characteristics, providing diverse benefits to the ecosystem and landscapes they inhabit. The brochure containing detailed information on each tree is available on The Garden Club of Houston website [link](#). It serves as a valuable resource for those seeking resilient tree species that can thrive in challenging conditions.

Large Trees: (30 to 100 feet tall) Drought Tolerant



Mexican Plum Carolyn Fannon



Red Bud Carolyn Fannon



Parsley Hawthorn Pauline Singleton

# “...resilient species {with} survival capabilities...”

**Live Oak** (*Quercus virginiana*) – evergreen, fast growth rate and long-lived. It is resistant to salt spray near the coast. It will tolerate poor drainage and compacted soil. The acorns are an important source of food for birds and mammals.

**American or Mexican Sycamore** (*Plantanus occidentalis*, *Plantanus mexicana*) – deciduous, fast growth rate and long-lived. It produces brown seed balls that attract small birds like the American Goldfinch.

**Montezuma Bald Cypress** (*Taxodium mucronatum*) – fast growth rate and long-lived. This evergreen or semi-evergreen differs from the Bald Cypress by rarely developing “knees.”

**Cedar Elm** (*Ulmus crassifolia*) – deciduous, fast growth rate, long-lived. It will tolerate a wide variety of soils. Despite the name, this is not a cedar, but an elm and produces inconspicuous flowers in the fall.

**Eastern Red Cedar** (*Juniperus virginiana* var. *virginiana*) – evergreen conifer, tolerating a wide variety of soils. The foliage is fragrant, and the female produces pale blue berries.

## Small Trees – (10 to 30 feet tall) Drought Tolerant

**Texas Redbud** (*Cercis candensis* var. *texensis*) – deciduous, fast growth rate. It does not do well in low, wet areas. Beautiful edible, pink flowers precede seed pod development.

**Mexican Plum** (*Prunus Mexicana*) – deciduous, single trunk, relatively slow growth rate. In early spring, white, fragrant flowers appear before the leaves. It produces small, purple fruit, that can be collected with a tarp.

**Parsley Hawthorn** (*Crataefus marshallii*) – deciduous, slow growth rate. It is multi-branched with some thorns. Showy white flowers appear in the spring. Its leaves resemble parsley.

**Yaupon Holly** (*Ilex vomitoria*) – evergreen, fast growth rate. This tough small tree tolerates seasonal poor drainage and spreads in areas that are not maintained. The female has small white flowers in the spring followed by red berries in the fall and winter.

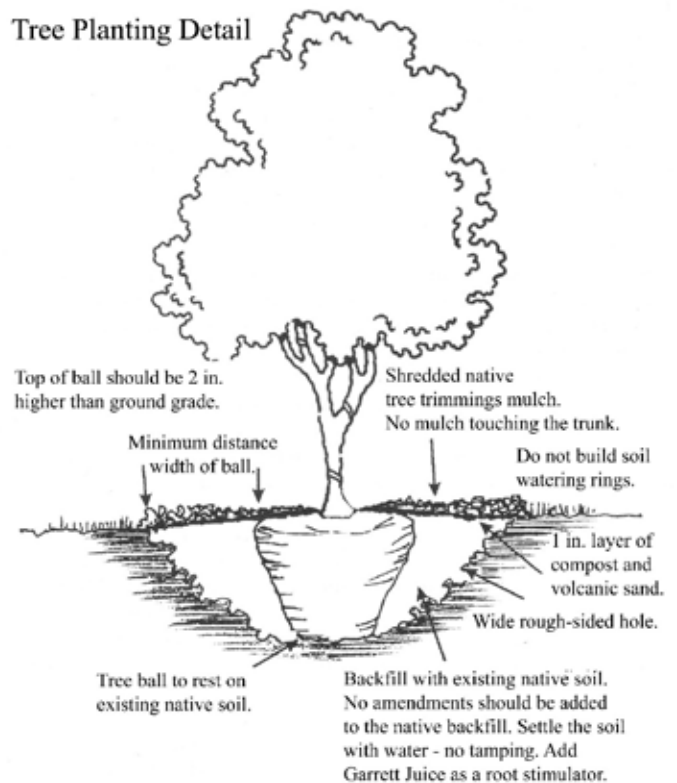
**Southern Wax Myrtle** (*Morella cerifera*) (*Myrica cerifera*) – evergreen, fast growth rate. It can be kept maintained as a large shrub or small multi-trunked tree and is tough once established. The female produces small berries along the branches that are a favorite of the Yellow-rumped Warbler during winter.

Ensuring the success of any tree begins with employing proper planting techniques (see diagram below) and adequate watering during the first years of a tree’s establishment phase. The ideal tree planting time is the fall. Consider incorporating these resilient species not just for their survival capabilities but for the multitude of ways they contribute to and enhance the environment and your surroundings.

## References:

*Tough Texas Trees for Houston* – (Heard, et al., 2012) It is on The Garden Club of Houston website at <https://www.gchouston.org/education/>.

## Tree Planting Detail



Howard Garrett, the Dirt Doctor [DirtDoctor.com](http://DirtDoctor.com)



Montezuma Cypress MG Doris Heard



Eastern Red Cedar Brenda Thompson

## Container Vegetable Gardening - *a little slice of heaven*



Barbara Lyons  
GCMG 2014

Growing vegetables in containers is great for beginner vegetable gardeners and for experienced gardeners looking to downsize. Several factors must be considered: (1) access to a water supply and required sunlight (2) growth habits of vegetable varieties (3) potting soil quality and (4) ascertaining the grower's taste in vegetables. Further, the expense must be weighed in

terms of time, resources, and output. Depending on materials used, starting container gardening can cost more than the value of the vegetables initially grown. However, with time and experience, the quality and quantity of edibles grown can pay off. And, who can put a price on the taste of your own home-grown vegetables or the ability to show children the origin of their food?

Deciding where a container will be placed is of utmost importance. Vegetables need 6 to 8 hours of sunshine to grow well. Placing the container near a water source is key. Otherwise, the gardener will need to take water to the plant, sometimes on a twice-a-day schedule which can be physically taxing. A handy hose can benefit both the plant and the gardener.

Vegetable selection does require forethought. The many-warm and cool season vegetables available are only limited by the gardener's taste and site limitations. Many people desire growing tomatoes, the most popular of the home-grown vegetables. Large slicer varieties are generally not suitable for containers but there are many smaller candidates, including patio

tomatoes and grape or cherry types. Determinate (versus indeterminate) tomatoes grow shorter and require less staking. Leaf lettuces and other greens are suitable for cool weather and can be harvested repeatedly throughout the growing season. Dwarf beets, such as the Babybeat variety, are a great choice and are harvested when quite small and sweet. Beet greens can be selectively harvested and make a nice contrast in a salad of mixed greens.

Baby eggplant varieties, such as Fairy Tale, produce fruit only 3 to 4-inches long. Grilled or roasted, they are a perfect summer meal accompaniment. Peppers, running the spectrum from mild to hot varieties, are suitable for container growing. Choices include a rainbow of sweet bell peppers and hot peppers. Even those labeled as ornamental may be consumed. Okra not only makes a delicious summer vegetable, but the plant has attractive flowers as it is related to hibiscus. The Baby Bubba variety is a compact plant which has good taste and production. Grilled okra is a delicious low-calorie alternative to fried okra. Radishes are a good starter container plant as they have a short period of growth before harvest. There are many small types from which to choose. Green beans of just about any non-climbing type, such as Provider, would be appropriate. Potatoes can be grown successfully in the spring in buckets. The foliage makes an attractive plant with its flowers while the potatoes form under the soil. Container grown potatoes will likely be smaller in size but delicious, nonetheless.

Smaller edibles will benefit from a pot that gives them ex-



Arapahoe County Extension



Michigan State University



## *“Start small...improve as you grow”*

tra space to grow. The more soil edibles have to grow in, the more helpful it is with watering, because it reduces watering and sometimes allows plants to grow larger.

Herbs of all sorts, both cool and warm season varieties, are a safe bet for container gardening and can be harvested and used either fresh or dried. Think of a tasty basil-infused marinara sauce or a minty mojito with freshly harvested herbs.

Choosing the right container for the selected vegetable is important. The depth of root systems and growing habits of the plant are key to matching the container size with the appropriate plant. Tomatoes will require a deeper container whereas herbs and lettuces can be grown successfully in smaller containers. Many options are available: Five-gallon buckets, storage containers, hanging grow bags, self-watering rolling tomato planters with trellis, and more. One is just limited by needs and finances. Growing habits are a consideration so decide before planting if a trellis or stake is needed. Roots require aeration so any container will require adequate drainage. The color of a container can be a factor in heat absorption so avoid ones that are black which may cause root damage during hot summers. Give care of the spacing of the containers and within a container so that plants have proper air flow and do not become pot bound when growing to their mature size. Estimates of the mature size of plant varieties are easily available on seed packets or plant information inserts of starter plants.

Soil is another important aspect to consider. The method of plac-

ing stones or gravel at the bottom of a container is a myth. Uniform soil throughout the container allows for more consistent moisture. Choose a good quality potting soil, either conventional or organic. Do not use topsoil, either bagged or ambient. The potting soil should be refreshed each growing season for the best results, since new bags of medium are considered sterile, reducing chances of pests and disease.

Container plants show susceptibility to damage from garden pests, e.g., insects, fungus, and the like, just like in a conventional garden. Inspect plants for signs of problems and treat once the problem is identified. Some problems might be induced by the gardener from misapplication of water or fertilizer. Of note is the fact that container plants require fertilizer more often due to runoff from the more frequent watering schedule.

While container gardening may not always result in substantial harvests, it can be a fun hobby to grow some fresh food. As with any new gardening endeavor, start small with a trial run and improve as you grow.

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<https://s3.wp.wsu.edu/uploads/sites/403/2015/03/container-drainage.pdf> (a University of Washington Extension publication)



Tumbling Tom tomato *Arapahoe County Extension*



*Oregon State University*



*umd.edu*

# Low Maintenance Plants to Give Novice Gardeners



Norma Torok  
GCMG 2022

We all have friends who believe they cannot grow plants for various reasons. They don't have the time. They don't have the space. They don't have the know-how. To set up a non-gardener for success with growing plants, we must find a low maintenance plant for our friend that will be easy to grow.

Plant growth is contingent on soil, nutrition, water, and light factors. There are many low maintenance plants with simple needs that make lovely gifts to lure non-gardeners outdoors.

One such plant that requires limited care is **Aloe vera**, commonly known as the "burn plant." It is a perennial herb with pointed basal leaves that have small white marks, is categorized as a succulent, and is a very hardy plant. It can grow in poor soil with little water and will last for years in a pot, enduring hot climates. When grown outdoors, it yields yellow or red flowers on a long stem in late winter or early spring. The plant's size will be contingent on its container size. When planted in a large pot, the plant will grow to two feet tall.

Aloe vera has beneficial properties, including, medicinal value for skin burns, wounds, and other dermatitis irritations. Simply break off a leaf and apply the cut end to the skin issue. Many over-the-counter skin care lotions and gels contain aloe vera.

Initial studies conducted by NASA found that aloe vera along with many other house plants can help clean toxins out of indoor air.

Finally, aloe vera is a sharing plant. It will yield pups for one to share with family and friends. What a wonderful giving plant for the rookie gardener.

Speaking of plants that yield pups, a **Bromeliad** (*Bromeliaceae*) also propagates itself by growing small offshoots when the mother plant is finished blooming. This plant is a variety within the pineapple family. It is native to North and South American tropical areas. It is a light maintenance plant gift.

Bromeliads come in a multitude of varieties. The bromeliad has small roots mostly for attaching and taking in water and nutrients. They are most interesting in shape and form and the leaves themselves can vary in colors of green purple, red, pink, and yellow. They generally grow in a rosette formed base that will have symmetrical leaves which may be straight, twisted, or curled. Their leaves form a funnel that function to hold water and nutrients for sustenance.

Flowering can vary amongst bromeliads, with blooms ranging from small flowers to long spikes. Some bromeliads bloom in a panicle, a loose branching cluster of flowers, while others bloom as a raceme, a stem with flowers that increase in bloom at the top as the original blooms at the bottom of the branch die off.



Aloe vera MG Database



Bromeliad MG Margie Jenke

## “Plants with simple needs make lovely gifts...”

These plants can be raised inside or outside. They do not tolerate cold, so bring plants inside in winter temperatures. Bromeliads can be attached to trees as they are epiphytes, plants that grow on other plants. They will generally need indirect sun; direct sunlight will burn their leaves.

Since bromeliads like to be pot bound, this gift can survive for a few years in the same planter with watering every two weeks. How's that for low maintenance?

**Tillandsias** are one of the most fun low maintenance plants. They are often called air plants. Surprisingly, this plant requires no soil, no fertilizer, and may surprise you with a bloom when you least expect it

As a member of the bromeliad family, they have leaves that are epiphytes [,] meaning they attach to a nearby support. Tillandsia depends on air for its nutrients; they have a way of trapping air moisture and dust through their trichomes, a particular hair-like structure on their leaves. There are two types of air plants: Mesics which are found in South American rain forests and xeric which are found in desert-like climates.

Indoor lighting from an east or west window would be best. To provide water for the tillandsia, either mist or bathe the plant. Simply dunk it in water for a few seconds or place it under a faucet for a few seconds and bathe the whole plant, then place on a paper towel to dry.

Air plants bloom one time in their life and then yield a pup. You can remove the pup when it has grown one third of the size of the mother plant, or you can leave the pup on the mother plant.

Tillandsia can be suspended from a wire, placed in a shell, or laid in a pot where they can make an interesting statement like the lady in the photo.

Some commonalities of these low maintenance plants are that they can be grown indoors or outdoors. They all need to be watered only once every two weeks. No fertilizer is needed. They all flower. But most of all, plant care is minimal.

So, with one of these plants in mind, ease your novice gardener into the beauty of growing plants. Your gift may be the seed that grows another plant lover or possibly a future candidate for a master gardener.

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Tillandsia MG Margie Jenke



Bromeliad MG Database

## Ask a Master Gardener: How can I get rid of Poison Ivy?



Briana Etie  
GCMG 2017

Many people misidentify poison ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*). Virginia Creeper, (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*) or peppervine (*Ampelopsis arborea*) are commonly mistaken as poison ivy. All three are native to Texas and produce berries that are a food source for birds and small mammals. All three can cause skin irritation.

Virginia Creeper contains raphides, needle-shaped crystals of calcium oxalate. These calcium oxalate crystals are found in more than 200 plants families and can irritate the skin. Peppervine sap contains irritants that can cause dermatitis. Despite potential for dermatitis, both are usually not as irritating as poison ivy.

Poison ivy, poison oak (*Toxicodendron pubescens*), and poison sumac (*Toxicodendron vernix*) contain urushiol, an oily mixture of organic compounds with allergenic properties that can cause contact dermatitis.

Poison sumac is usually only found in very wet, wooded regions of Texas, typically in the east. It is a tall shrub 3 to 6 feet. Poison oak is present in Galveston County but is less prevalent than poison ivy. It is a small shrub growing one to three feet.

Every part of poison ivy is poisonous including roots, stems

leaves and berries. Burning and inhaling urushiol oil is more harmful than contact dermatitis.

Leaf count can help in identification. Poison ivy has three leaves and the plant does not form a vine. Poison oak has three or more leaflets and does form a vine. Poison sumac has seven to thirteen leaves on a branch. Peppervine and Virginia Creeper each have five leaves per cluster.

The late Dr. William McCray Johnson, Galveston County Extension Agent for over 30 years, contributed articles for a weekly column in the Galveston Daily News. Published May 16, 2018, *Poison Ivy: Leaves of three, Let it be* included his advice that anyone who has touched poison ivy to use rubbing alcohol first on the skin area to break up the plant oil then to use cool water, emphasis on cool.

He also gave three methods to control poison ivy if it appears on your property, as follows:

“Three methods can be effective in eradicating poison ivy in landscapes. The first is hand pulling or digging it out when the soil is moist, getting out as much of the roots as possible. Use long-gauntlet, rubber gloves available at local hardware stores or use dishwashing gloves when handling the vines and wear a long-sleeved shirt. Place the plants into a plastic bag, seal it (in consideration for trash collectors).



Peppervine MG Margie Jenke



Poison Ivy Courtesy Joseph A. Marcus, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

## “Leaf count can help in identification...”

The second method is to carefully spray the foliage with a systemic herbicide. This is only possible when the spray will not get on the foliage of desirable plants. If needed, nearby desirable plants can be covered with plastic sheets or bags to protect them while you do the spraying. Be sure to wet the foliage of the poison ivy vine thoroughly with the herbicide spray. Systemic herbicides are absorbed by the foliage and enter the plant’s “circulatory system,” sending the material into the vine’s roots and killing them as well. Glyphosate (Round-up, Eraser, Hi-Yield Killzall and other brands) or triclopyr (Brush-B-Gon, Brush Killer and other brands) are commonly recommended for poison ivy control. Once the vine dies it may be removed. The dead leaves still contain the rash-causing oil and should be handled cautiously with gloves.

The third method of removal is for larger, established vines growing up in trees or intertwined in shrubs. Spraying the vine foliage is not practical in these situations because of the potential to injure desirable trees and surrounding landscape plants. Poison ivy control in sensitive areas can best be achieved by the cut-vine method. Cut off the vine a few inches from the ground with loppers and immediately treat the surface of the freshly cut stump with undiluted triclopyr (Brush-B-Gon, Brush Killer, Greenlight Cut Vine and Stump Killer and other brands). The vine in the tree or shrub will die because it has no root system. The treated stump will die because the herbicide gets absorbed by the freshly cut surface and translocates to the roots. Applying the herbicide to the fresh cut is necessary because it prevents the stump from re-sprouting. This method is very effective and may be used any time of the year.”

Getting poison ivy off your property will probably take repeated herbicide applications. Follow instructions on all chemical products. Watch out for this unwelcome plant and be prompt and aggressive in your efforts to control it.”

I offer another possible method to get rid of or control poison ivy — goats. Yes, goats! Poison ivy is one of the first plants they eat. If roots are not eaten, the plant returns so consistently eating it is best. They love it! I’ve learned from a local goat farm owner that land clearing by hiring goats is on the rise.

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Poison oak Courtesy Joseph A. Marcus, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center



Poison sumac Inaturalist



Virginia creeper Courtesy Lee Page, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

# Planting Under Trees



Carey Little  
GCMG 2022

The picturesque vision of a stately tree with wide reaching branches and a lush, green understory of plants is very appealing. In reality, this is not an easy task to undertake. There are many variables to consider when contemplating understory planting for trees.

The first consideration is the tree itself. Understanding the tree root system is critical to successful understory planting. For instance, magnolia tree roots systems run wider than most and tend to girdle (circle the root ball or trunk). Disturbing the root system with understory planting could cause damage to the tree. Other trees that could be damaged by understory plantings include pine (*Pinus*), beech (*Fagus*), and many oak (*Quercus*) and maple (*Acer*) varieties. On the other hand, American holly (*Ilex opaca*), Eastern redbud (*Cercis*), red maple (*Acer rubrum*), and sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*) are tolerant of some root disturbance.

The tree root system will be the first to use available water and nutrients. It is important to provide adequate water and fertilizer as needed to encourage the health of both the tree and the plants at the base of the tree.

Site preparation is key to success in understory planting. The urge could be to till an area deeply to prepare a space for plantings or to install a raised bed. Tilling under the tree can destroy roots vital to the tree's health. This practice could encourage the introduction of pathogens and disease as well as welcome unwanted insects into the root system. A raised bed would prevent the uptake of oxygen by smothering the root system. Never allow added soil or mulch to contact the tree trunk. It encourages moisture that can compromise the bark, encouraging pests and disease.

To properly prepare an area for understory tree plantings it is foremost important to have a gentle touch. Using a hand trowel to work with a tree's root system can prevent



Coleus MG Carey Little



English Ivy MG Carey Little



Heuchera - Coral Bells MG Carey Little



Begonia MG Carey Little

## “Site preparation is key to success...”

damage one might encounter by use of a larger shovel. Working with the tree’s root system means learning or identifying the location of the major roots and carefully digging small holes for the plantings in between them. Once the plants are placed, add a 2-inch layer of mulch — organic matter, such as leaf mold compost or well-rotted manure. Then make a slight well in the mulch above the root area of each plant. Keep the mulch away from the trunk flare, leaving uncovered. Stay 1-inch away from the tree trunk when digging the holes for the plants. Do not use herbicides with understory plantings. Chemicals for weed control can impact trees causing damage and even death. Herbicides should not come in contact with foliage or the roots of trees.

The final consideration is what plants to select that grow well under trees. Consider the depth of the tree’s canopy as well as its density. Those will be indicators in determining the amount of shade the plants will have. Due to the canopy, the plants would need to tolerate shade and

dryer soil conditions. Native and adaptive plants are typically heat and drought tolerant. They often require less water, fertilizer and pesticides. Give thought to holly fern (*Cyrtomium falcatum*), autumn fern (*Dryopteris erythrosora*), and lyreleaf sage (*Salvia lyrata*). Other dry shade perennials include hosta, columbine (*Aquilegia*), ajuga, heuchera and liriop.

Since most flowering plants require full sun, the shade garden may consist of predominately green plantings. Use of plants with interesting leaf contrast such as texture, leaf shape and variegation can bring interest to a green garden. For a more dramatic, effective appeal, limit plant choices to a few and plant in masses such as three or five plants of the same variety.

An attractive ground cover very tolerant to shade is English ivy (*Hedera helix*). Consider planting some areas with annuals such as begonias, impatiens or coleus for a pop of color.



Hosta MG Carey Little



Southern Shield Fern MG Carey Little



Holly fern GCMG database



Liriope GCMG database

# What are the TEXAS SUPERSTARS®?

## *A guide to understanding Texas-tough plants*



Sue Bain  
GCMG 2018

Do you want and need plants that can withstand our crazy Texas weather — plants that can withstand heat, drought, and freeze? I have good news for you. These plants do exist! They are Texas Superstars®, and they are Texas-tough.



Karen Nelson  
GCMG 2020

In 1980, Texas A&M Agriculture Research and Texas A&M Extension partnered with nursery growers to identify plants that could withstand all the many facets of our Texas climate. Testing and growing plants for the entire state was a challenge. Plants were trialed using the Earth-Kind® method by preserving and protecting the environment through water conservation, reduction of fertilizer and pesticide use, landscaping for energy conservation, and reduction of landscape waste in landfills. As of 2023, there were 90 perennials, annuals, fruits, vegetables, and specialty plants that have received the Texas Superstar® designation.

With combined effort, after receiving advanced training certification in Texas Superstars® in 2022, we followed up by initiating a project for the Discovery Garden to enhance the knowledge and understanding of the Texas Superstars® of Galveston County. Today, the Discovery Garden is home to an abundance of Texas Superstar® plants, each designated with educational signage and further identified with the Texas state sign and a gold star. These signs offer ease in a self-guided tour of the Texas Superstars®.

Below are highlights of a few of our favorite Texas Superstar® plants.

Below are highlights of a few of our favorite Texas Superstar® plants.

**Annuals** have a life cycle of one year; they grow from seed, bloom, produce seeds and die in one growing season, thus are self-seeding.

**Texas Bluebonnet** (*Lupinus texensis*) was chosen by the Texas Legislature in 1901, as the state flower to pay homage to the many brave Texas pioneer women. In 1971, all six varieties of bluebonnets were declared the Texas state flower. The maroon bluebonnet named “Alamo Fire;” a hybrid from a white and pink plant, obtained Texas Superstar® status in 2000. If the blue and maroon varieties grow side by side, the blue will dominate if it is not removed. You will see them in the Discovery Garden in the Earth-Kind®, Pollinator Habitat and Pergola gardens. Keep in mind they are only in bloom from March to May.

**Blue Daze** (*Evolvulus glomeratus*) became a Texas Superstar® in 2020. With a coveted blue color, this low growing and spreading plant loves the heat and sun. It makes a good spiller in a container with a cascading form. It also makes a good ground cover, mass planting or border. Its mature height is 9 to 18-inches and spreads to 36-inches, having high tolerance to salty conditions. This little plant is in the Pergola area.

**Pansy** (*Viola x wittrockiana*) is the newest annual to make the Texas Superstar® status as of March 2024. It is a cold hardy ornamental that enjoys soil temperatures of 45 to 65-degrees, grows 6 to 12-inches tall and 6 to 8-inches wide. There are a whole host of colors from purple to orange, blue to yellow, and their dark centers are called a “face” or “blotch.” They are great for containers and the flowers are edible if not treated or exposed to chemicals. Trailing varieties, Cool Wave® and Freefall®, are good as spiller plants in containers or baskets. They are planted in the fall months.



Superstar Sign to be in garden MG Karen Nelson



Balsamic basil blooms



## “They are Texas-tough...”

**Perennials** are plants that live more than two years. The term per-+ennial, means “through the years” and is used to differentiate a plant from shorter-lived annuals and biennials. There are so many perennials, but here are our chosen few.

**Gulf Muhly** (*Muhlenbergia capillaris*) **Henry Duelberg Salvia** (*Salvia farinacea*), **Mexican Bush Sage** (*Salvia leucantha*), **Pink Flare and Peppermint Flare Hibiscus**, **Red Yucca** (*Hesperaloe parviflora*) and **Turk’s Cap** (*Malvaviscus arboreus* var. *drummondii*) all grow in most soils, thriving in the heat and sun. Each attracts hummingbirds and butterflies. These plants are scattered throughout the Earth-Kind® and Pollinator Habitat gardens.

**Woody Shrubs** are perennial woody plants that have persistent woody stems above ground and can either be deciduous or evergreen. They are different from trees by their height and multiple stems.

**Grandma’s Yellow Rose** (*Rosa* ‘Nacogdoches’) made Texas Superstar® status in 2010. Its fragrance is light and spicy. The rose blooms from spring to hard frost with showy yellow blossoms. New leaves are bronze in color then turn dark green. Needing full sun for at least six hours per day, it grows to a height of 4 to 5-feet. It can be used in containers or as an accent in beds. See this rose in the Pergola area.



Grandma's yellow rose



Texas bluebonnet

**Specialty Plants** include a variety of vegetables, herbs, and fruit. Examples are Celebrity and Tycoon tomatoes, ‘Green Magic’ broccoli, Gorizia rosemary, Natchez blackberry and ‘Victoria Red’ grape.

‘**Balsamic Blooms**’ basil plant was awarded Texas Superstar® status in 2017. It thrives in full sun reaching heights of 18 to 24-inches with a mounding appearance. The entire plant is edible; purple blooms have a minty flavor and the leaves have a sweet basil flavor. This plant can be grown in borders, containers and as an ornamental. It is pollinator friendly and although the seeds at this time are extremely difficult to find available for purchase.. ‘Balsamic Blooms’ is in Bed-2 of the veggie section.

Come check out the Texas Superstar® plants in the Discovery Garden by taking a self-guided tour. You will find them in the Earth-Kind®, Pollinator Habitat, and Pergola gardens, the vegetable and herb beds, the vineyard, and among the trees. The Discovery Garden is a wonderful place to view these plants, and it is open to the public every Thursday from 9 am until noon. All photos [agrilifetoday.tamu.edu](http://agrilifetoday.tamu.edu)

### References:

<https://texassuperstar.com>

Texas A & M AgriLife Research

Texas A & M AgriLife Extension



Salvia (*Salvia farinacea*)



Blue Daze

# Growing Oleanders in Galveston County



Jan Brick  
GCMG 2001

“Oleanders are very popular in Galveston County and the surrounding Gulf Coast area. Once established, they give plentiful, eye-catching blossoms, sometimes as long as from late spring to the Thanksgiving season, with very little care. Their water requirements are minimal, making oleanders an excellent choice for the Xerotropic low-water, or

low-maintenance landscape.” ([https://hortipm.tamu.edu/galveston/weekly\\_Q&A/ts&p\\_1.htm](https://hortipm.tamu.edu/galveston/weekly_Q&A/ts&p_1.htm))

The oleander is easy to grow and maintain, needing only sun and adequate moisture. Generally, it does not require much in the way of fertilization...no muss, no fuss with this plant. It comes in many varieties with colors that include pink, salmon, red, white and yellow, and it blooms profusely. Also, this plant is easy to propagate, especially during the warmer months. Roots will grow from cuttings placed in a rooting medium or in plain water.

All parts of the oleander are toxic and must not be ingested. Sterilize all tools after they are used with oleanders.

The International Oleander Society (IOS) reports the most frequently asked questions involve pruning.

**Why prune?** The main reason is to shape them into attractive silhouettes and to force more branching, encouraging more flower clusters.

**When should I prune?** The best time to prune is September into early October. Pruning any later will cut offspring growth.

**Does the flower bloom on old wood or new wood?** Flower clusters appear at the tips of new wood.

**How much can I trim my plants?** Oleanders are very strong and can take a good amount of pruning. Don't be afraid to cut them back to whatever base height you may prefer.

According to Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, oleanders bloom profusely without pruning. They are primarily pruned for shaping and controlling their size. The popular, newer dwarf oleanders need even less pruning, perhaps just enough for thinning or shaping.

It is a hardy evergreen shrub that can be frozen back to the ground during significant freezing events, but will grow back. It suffers from the occasional attack of common aphids, mealybugs, or scale but is easily controlled, and, should they make an appearance, pesky galls may be cut off with a sharp knife.

## Common Oleander Problems:

**Sooty Mold** is a fungal growth associated to aphids, scale, mealy bugs, and whiteflies. These sucking insects feed on plants causing a release of honeydew, which in turn feeds the fungus. To reduce sooty mold, control the insect pest. Treat with insecticidal soap or products containing neem oil to control the pests.

**Oleander Aphids** appear in early spring to feed on young growth. Try first to spray down the leaves with a hose to dislodge them. If they still persist, use insecticidal soap, horticultural oil or a product with pyrethrins. Don't forget to spray the undersides of the leaves. Sometimes, natural biological controls take care of it.

**Black Scale**, brown or black crusty bumps appearing on branches, leaves, twigs. Spray with a systemic insect control and dormant oil.

**Bacterial Gall** appears as wart-like spongy cankers causing the leaves to become distorted and yellow. They will not kill the plant. Prune out and destroy stems below the galls. Disinfect pruner between cuts.

**Witches' Broom** are abnormal growths at the end of branch tips that turn brown and die. Prune and discard affected areas.

Galveston is called The Oleander City. People who admired the plant formed a group and incorporated in 1967, as the National Oleander Society in Galveston. In 1987, the name



Kewpie Gaido Barry Landry

*“...easy to grow, maintain...”*

became the International Oleander Society to express the wide appreciation and study of the plant. This Galveston organization is devoted to preserve the varieties that thrive in this area. During the spring and summer months, attention is drawn to the oleander and its unique status among the inhabitants, tourists and sightseers to the island. The IOS hosts an annual festival in Galveston featuring the many varieties of oleanders found in the county.

The history of the oleander is interesting and touches on many parts of the planet.

Historical research reports oleanders were mentioned in writings as early as 4000 B.C. and continued to be cited throughout history. Murals of oleanders appeared in books and accounts of ancient Rome. The Greeks believed that the oleander was named for the Greek god, Nereus, and gardens of oleanders were maintained so that the blooms could be used to decorate altars constructed in his honor.

The oleander is considered a native plant in India and Japan, but its popularity encompassed a large portion of the globe from North Africa, Israel, Syria, and Lebanon to the European nations of France, Spain, and England. Also, much admired by the Dutch, a painting of an oleander became one of Van Gogh's masterpieces.

IOS reports the first oleanders came to Galveston in 1841, through a prominent merchant, Joseph Osterman, who brought them to the island from Jamaica. He gave the new plants to his wife and sister. It was his sister, Mrs. Isadore Dyer, who shared them with family and friends. The double pink oleander she grew in Galveston now bears her name.

Much folklore throughout time has been passed down on how the plant got its name “oleander.” IOS accounts one such tale about the pirate, Jean Lafitte. There is a legend that Lafitte played a role in the naming of the oleander on the island. Having attacked and killed all but one of the voyagers on a Norwegian schooner, Lafitte spared the man who was clinging to a beautiful flowering plant. Lafitte brought the man to the island and made him his gardener. The man's name was Ole Anderson but Lafitte called him Ole Ander and named the plant in his honor.

**References:**

- Oleander: Plant overview and Guide by Mixa Lungu
- The Handbook on Oleanders by Richard and Mary Helen Eggenberger
- [www.oleander.org](http://www.oleander.org)
- [www.tamu.edu](http://www.tamu.edu)

*Barry Landry is an artist, photographer, landscape architect and historian of the International Oleander Society.*



Mrs. Runge Barry Landry



Oleander 'Centennial' named to honor UTMB's 100th anniversary Barry Landry



Papa Gambetta Barry Landry

## Flies in the Garden



Hedy Wolpa  
GCMG 2018

We spend more time outdoors in summer, so we seem to notice flies in the garden as well as at our social gatherings. Flies in the garden are usually welcome as pollinators for plants and as beneficial predators of other insects. At our picnics, flies are mostly unwelcome, but there are reasons for their presence around your food. Flies are attracted to sweet food because it reminds them of nectar. When they light on your beer can, or other yeasty beverages, it reminds them of fermented fruits and vegetables. When they perch on your chicken, pork, or hamburger, they're looking for a protein meal. Flies even seem to rub their feet together while eating, and that's exactly what they're doing: The small sensors on their feet help them smell and taste but they can get clogged with dirt, pollen, and food particles, so the insects rub them together to "clean" them before enjoying their meal.

Flies, belonging to the insect order Diptera, can help in the garden in many ways. We can learn to recognize them and understand their behaviors, thereby giving them the respect they deserve as beneficial insects. In fact, if your vegetable and flower gardens are growing and blooming, flies are probably contributing to your success!

Flies are excellent pollinators.

Some flies are predatory and eat undesirable insects.

Flies may be considered better "workers" than bees because they "work" longer hours than bees (who return to their hives at dusk) and can better withstand extreme shifts in weather than bees.

Here are some common, or at least familiar flies, that you're likely to encounter:



Long-legged fly; GCMG Database

**Hover flies**, also called flower flies or syrphid flies, are often seen hovering over flowers. This is one way that adult hover flies avoid being eaten by other predatory insects and birds—they hover, shift, and dart while they are feeding on nectar or pollen. Their tiny larvae, which look like caterpillars or slugs, eat lots and lots of aphids. Adults resemble bees in size and color, which also helps them avoid predators. Unlike bees, they only have one set of wings, while bees have two sets. You can encourage the presence of beneficial hover flies by having lots of flowering plants that provide food year-round. Hover flies don't bite or sting and are attracted to flowers instead of humans!

**Long-legged flies**, known as dolichopodids, are a large family of strikingly beautiful insects with iridescent wings and metallic bodies. They can be blue, green, turquoise, copper or bronze. You'll find them around your garden foliage hunting for prey, or boggy gardens and water sources. They are predatory as both larvae and adults, and feed on mosquitos, aphides, mites, and thrips. They are also eaten by a variety of larger insects, which make them very important to the food chain. Adults have long legs, slender bodies, and very delicate, clear wings with black markings. Environmentalists, and especially forest ecologists, like long legged flies because they help control bark beetles, a destructive pest that kills pine trees that are increasingly susceptible during periods of drought.

**Tachinid flies** are parasitic, meaning that they can kill the host, usually a caterpillar, a beetle, or a bee, that they have parasitized. They may lay their eggs on another insect, or their eggs might be ingested by a caterpillar eating leaves. In either case, the larvae will hatch and eat the host before going on to pupate and then morph into an adult. Tachinid flies look like house flies but may vary in size and color. TA tachinid fly's



Tachinid fly; Pixabay.com

## “Flies...pollinators, beneficial predators...”

value to the gardener lies in its ability to control insect pests through biological control, thus limiting the amount of pesticide or insecticide that would otherwise be used.

**Robber flies** are predators that hunt and eat other insects, making them an important ally in the garden. They will grab and poke other insects with their sharp proboscis and inject a digestive saliva into their prey to immobilize it before eating. Their legs are strong to hold on to prey and the wings are marked with dark patterns. The robber fly tends to fly low and are sometimes mistaken for wasps. Robber flies are considered beneficial, although they may eat other beneficial insects. Look for them in your garden and watch as they grab their prey in mid-air!

**Soldier flies** are also beneficial, but in a different way from other flies. They are harmless to humans, and their talent lies in helping to decompose garbage and rotting animal carcasses. Their larvae are small, legless, and flat and can be found in dung, decaying fruit or veggies, or rotting wood. Adults, up to 5/8” long, vary in color from metallic blue, green, purple to black with colored markings; the wings are smoky black. They can be confused with wasps, but they have no stinger. As they are considered beneficial, you can leave them alone to do their work of decomposition. But if you find them in the house, they’re usually looking for the fastest way back outside!

And then we have house flies and patio flies that are truly annoying. They can also cause potential health and nuisance problems due to their ability to carry pathogens from their breeding and feeding sites to food preparation areas. Here are some suggestions to keep them out of your way:

Set up a fan or two. Flies cannot fly in windy conditions Set up

a fan or two. Flies cannot fly in windy conditions, so a ceiling fan or box fan on the patio is helpful.

Use herbs to distract and pull flies away from your picnic or party.

Eliminate breeding areas by picking up pet poo in your yard. Keep garbage cans away from your patio or party area and put lids on the cans. Pick ripe fruits and veggies from your garden; flies are attracted to decaying produce.

### References:

[citybugs.tamu.edu](http://citybugs.tamu.edu)

[txmg.org](http://txmg.org)

[agrilifeextension.tamu.edu/insects](http://agrilifeextension.tamu.edu/insects)



Soldier fly; Texas A & M AgriLife



Robber fly; Pixabay.com



Hover fly; Pixabay.com

# Venomous Spiders



Marilyn Haupt  
GCMG 2019

Lurking around my garden and in my greenhouse is an assortment of arachnid species in the arthropod phylum, also known as spiders. Every morning, I find spider webs, moist with dew, beautifully spun from plant to plant throughout all the beds. I see spiders poised under the petals of flowers or hiding down in zucchini plants, where they lie in wait for the

opportunity to attack an unsuspecting insect. I do not have a fear of spiders. I find them absolutely fascinating, and I respect their capabilities.

Spiders are very beneficial to a garden as they eat insects that may carry disease or damage plants and crops. They have the ability catch insects through three modes. Some spiders actively chase down their prey, others will conceal themselves and pounce on their catch when they get near, and finally, spiders can spin a web to entangle their next meal. Spiders do not have teeth, so they use their venom to immobilize and digest their prey. Their venom consists of neurotoxins that disable insects, while the cytotoxins that are present will liquefy the body of the insect allowing, the spider to suck up the digestible fluid.

Most spiders are nocturnal. During daylight hours, they conceal themselves in dark hiding places. There are, however, some spiders that can be seen during the day. Spiders are shy and will typically run away when disturbed. They are not aggressive towards humans. Spiders will, however, bite in

self-defense if they are approached with a threat. The venom of most spiders is not dangerous to people but there are a couple of species whose venom can cause illness and damage to human beings. These spiders are the black widow (*Latrodectus mactans*) and the brown recluse (*Loxosceles reclusa*). Both are commonly found in Texas. For those who work or play outside, being able to identify these venomous spiders and knowing ways to avoid them is important.

## Black Widow Spiders

Like all arachnids, the black widow spider has two segments. The first segment is referred to as the cephalothorax and consists of the eyes, mouth, fangs, and eight legs. The second segment is large and round and is referred to as the abdomen. The underside of the abdomen on the black widow spider has a signature red, hour-glass shape present. In addition, a single red dot can commonly be found on the top of the abdomen. A line of red dots may also be seen in this species as well. Female black widow spiders are shiny and black, with bodies that can reach up to 3/8-inch in length. With legs fully extended, these spiders can reach the size of a half dollar. The males are smaller with a body reaching up to 3/16-inch in length. Males also have white lines found along either side of their backs. They too have an hour-glass shape on the underside of their abdomens but it may appear more orange in color. This nocturnal spider can be found in and around darkened areas of structures, under rocks, woodpiles, gardens and crop fields. They catch their prey in webs typically spun near the ground.



Brown Recluse Spider (*Loxosceles reclusa*)  
Lisa Ames, University of Georgia, Bugwood.org



Female Black Widow Spider (*Latrodectus mactans*)  
James O. Howell, University of Georgia, Bugwood.org

## “Both commonly found in Texas...”

Once caught, the spider will conceal it by spinning silk around it. During the summer, the female black widow may lay one to two egg sacs containing up to 400 eggs each. The sacs are white to grey in color being 1/4 to 1/2-inch in size. They are hung in the spider web so they can be watched over and protected by the mother.

### Brown Recluse Spider

Brown recluse spiders are small to medium size and brownish-grey in color. Two hallmark characteristics include the presence of three pairs of eyes in a semi-circle configuration on the front of the head and a telltale violin shaped mark on the dorsal side of the head. In some brown recluse spiders, however, this mark is not as obvious. Like the black widow, brown recluse spiders are nocturnal and also prefer to be undisturbed. They create their nests in areas that are protected by trees, rocks, or building materials, such as wood piles. The nests are used to lay up to five egg sacs each spring into summer. Each of these egg sacs can contain up to 50 eggs. These spiders actively hunt down their prey.

While working in and around areas where spiders may be found, carefully observe the area first before entering or placing your hands in potential hiding spots. It is very important to wear protective gloves and clothing. Keep your work areas clear of clutter. Brown recluse spiders are also notorious for hiding in clothing, gloves, and shoes. Careful observation of these articles prior to donning them is recommended. Bites

from black widow and brown recluse spiders are dangerous to humans. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), a variety of effects from the bite of a black widow spider may include pain at the site of the bite, muscle cramping, nausea, vomiting, fever, chills, swelling, tissue damage, infection, difficulty breathing, but symptoms are rarely fatal. The bite from a brown recluse spider may go unnoticed initially, but are associated with infection, including damage to the tissue from the venom. Tissue damage can become extensive requiring surgical intervention. Contact your health care provider and the Texas Poison Center Network (current telephone number, 1-800-222-1222) if a bite from either spider occurs.

### References:

Cranshaw, W. & Shetlar, D. (2018). Garden Insects of North America: The ultimate guide to backyard bugs. *Natural enemies of insects and pollinators: The beneficial bugs* (pp.644-648). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Field guide to common Texas Insects: Southern black widow spider. *Texas A & M AgriLife Extension*. Retrieved from <https://texasinsects.tamu.edu/southern-black-widow-spider/>

Merchant, M. Insects in the city: Control of brown recluse spiders. *Texas A & M AgriLife Extension*. Retrieved from <https://citybugs.tamu.edu/factsheets/biting-stinging/others/ent-3003/>

Venomous spiders: Recommendations for employers and workers. (2018, May). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/spiders/recommendations.html>



Male Black Widow Spider (*Latrodectus mactans*)  
Sturgis McKeever, Georgia Southern University, Bugwood.org

# The Bacliff Community Garden



Don Hogarth  
GCMG 2019

**History:** The initial community garden was envisioned in 2015, and is sustained through a continuing partnership between Lighthouse Christian Ministries, Kenneth E. Little Elementary School, and Clear Lake Presbyterian Church.

**Mission:** a) Maintain an inviting space that engages community volunteers including local area residents, church groups, Scouts, honor societies, elementary students, and other community organizations, b) grow fresh produce distributed through Lighthouse Christian Ministries’ weekly food pantry, and c) train individuals in gardening techniques and naturalist stewardship of butterfly and beneficial insect habitats.

**Facility:** Construction began in the spring of 2016, on a two-acre plot at Dickinson ISD’s Kenneth E. Little Elementary School located on Oklahoma Avenue in Bacliff. The current 2000-square foot garden includes 12 raised beds of vegetables, two beds for beneficial insects, one bed for butterfly habitat, and various fruit trees.

The irrigation system includes a rooftop collection system, 4 x 1000-gallon rainwater storage tanks and a water delivery system. The water delivery system was completed in 2020, as part of an Eagle Scout project and consists of four diaphragm irrigation pumps on timers, a 200-watt, 12-volt solar energy system, 1000 feet of PVC U/G piping, and a drip irrigation system contained within all producing beds.

The irrigation system’s lack of dependence on city water and power was modeled after self-sufficient rural irrigation facilities that are being installed around the world. (Don Hogarth

designed all the irrigation and solar systems and was the operation manager until January 2024. He became involved in the garden when he retired, three years before joining the Galveston County Master Gardener program).

An amphitheater was added in 2018, as part of another Eagle Scout project. The 400-square foot platform with benches located under a large oak tree provides a peaceful teaching environment adjacent to the garden. Art classes from KE Little painted garden scenes on the storage tanks. In 2023, the KE Little Elementary “Grateful Gators” Garden Club was reformed, and teachers and students can now access garden lesson plans on their phones via coded signs installed at various locations throughout the facility.

### Annual Statistics:

~1,200 community volunteer hours

~300 KE Little Elementary student hours

~1,200 pounds of produce harvested and donated to the Lighthouse Food Pantry for distribution.

**Garden Schedule:** Volunteers are invited to join the core group each Thursday morning from 8:30 to 10:30 am. Additional workdays accommodating community groups are routinely scheduled on various Saturday mornings. The elementary students’ garden club meets during weekday afternoons as scheduled by the teachers. The comradery of the group and gardening knowledge shared are amazing and worth a visit.

Volunteers are critical to the garden’s success. For information on volunteering, please contact Crystal Matthews at Lighthouse Christian Ministries - [crystal@lighthousecm.org](mailto:crystal@lighthousecm.org) or (281)339-3033, Ext-301.



Ampitheater at the site



Collards and lettuce



Irrigation and solar panels. All photos MG Don Hogarth



Garden overview



Volunteer at work





# Horticulture

## July Events

<https://txmg.org/galveston/>



### Amazing Succulent Plants

07/13/24 9:00am - 11:00am

### Gulf Coast Gardening Seminar

Explore various succulent plant species. Learn about soil and water needs, container planting and propagation, and home care.

To register, visit:

<https://galveston.agrilife.org/horticulture/>

### Open Public Garden Days

Every Thursday, 9:00am - 11:00am

### Gardening with Master Gardeners

The Discovery Garden will be open to the public for visitors and gardening questions.

Location: in Carbide Park, 4102 Main St, La Marque, TX 77568



Galveston County Texas A&M Agrilife Extension  
4102-B Main Street (FM 519) La Marque, TX 77568

<https://galveston.agrilife.org/horticulture/> 281-309-5065



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## Travel: A Visit to Winterbourne Garden in Birmingham, England



John Jons  
GCMG 2003

Within Birmingham, the second biggest city in England, is a world scale industrial and commercial center, as well as the home of Ozzy Osborne and Led Zeppelin. It is also home to an outstanding botanical garden, Winterbourne Garden. It is the garden of the Edwardian Winterbourne House, and a rare 20th-century example of a high status “villa garden.” It consists of lushly landscaped seven acres.

The house and garden were built by the Nettlefold family in 1903 using red rock in the Arts & Craft style. The garden was designed by Margaret Nettlefold who focused on developing color themed plant borders. She was influenced by the books and designs of the garden designer Gertrude Jekyll. The house then passed through several owners to eventually be owned by John Nicolson who bequeathed the house, on his death in 1944, to the University of Birmingham. The garden was initially used as the University’s botanical garden. In 2010, the house and garden were restored and opened to the public as a United Kingdom (UK) Heritage site. Winterbourne House and Garden has over 70,000 visitors a year.

The garden and the house have a British Heritage “Grade II Listing.” This means the house and garden are considered a particularly important building of more than special histori-

cal and cultural interest. The garden and the house are legally protected from being modified or altered without obtaining the consent from the appropriate local and/or historical planning authorities. Some of the garden’s plant collections are considered “National Plant Collections” which are collections of plants designed to protect and develop the heritage resource plants of the UK.

Throughout the garden are walkways that take you through a curvy walled garden that was used by the resident family for growing vegetables. It still contains some vegetable plants, but it now also contains multicolor displays of flowering plants. Some of the walkways are made of Cotswold stone. You will walk past lean-to glass greenhouses that contain collections of orchids, alpinas, carnivorous plants, and cacti. You then stroll through sunken rock gardens, across a Japanese bridge, through shade gardens and plant tunnels, along the stream, past a pergola and into the woodlands walk. Along these walkways you are walking past well-manicured lawns with stunning color and greenery border plantings. Then, when you finish enjoying the garden, you can enjoy a nice cup of tea and lunch on the terrace in the Terrace Tea Room. To see more pictures of the garden, visit my YouTube video called “A Visit to Winterbourne Garden in Birmingham, England.” <https://youtu.be/4b-jNuS6JBg>



Winterbourne Garden MG John Jons



Winterbourne Garden MG John Jons

# Plant of the Month: Bougainvillea



Pam Hunter  
GCMG 2018

Bougainvillea (*Bougainvillea glabra*) are a genus of thorny, ornamental vines belonging to the four o'clock family and were discovered in 1768 by Admiral Louis de Bougainvillea on a journey to the Pacific. If you are thinking of planting a bougainvillea in your garden, be sure to allow plenty of room for it to spread and grow. Bougainvillea can be pruned into small topiaries, a medium size bush, or trained to sprawl over fences or trellises.

These plants are heavy feeders and respond best to constant feeding with half strength, water soluble fertilizer. With high light and constant feeding, the plant will bloom at least 11 months of the year. Straight hibiscus food has also been a very successful fertilizer. These plants flower under stress. Keep them slightly on the dry side.

The vibrant color of this vine comes not from the small, white tubular flowers, but from the three large paper-like bracts that surround each flower. They grow readily from cuttings four inches to six inches long and in four to six weeks will develop a good root system when given bottom heat and mist.

Many do not bloom for a few years after purchasing, especially when the plant is young and flowering was forced for market. Once planted in the yard, it's natural for them to take a few years to bloom on their own.



GCMG database

## Common Name(s)

Bougainvillea

**USDA Hardiness Zone(s): 9-11**

## Plant Characteristics

Duration: Seasonal

Family: Four o'clocks, Nyctaginaceae

Height: Up to 40 feet

Water requirement: Low

## Bloom Information

Bloom color: Orange, pink, purple, red, white, yellow

Bloom size: Up to four inches

Bloom time: Late spring to early autumn

## Culture

Light exposure: At least four hours of direct sunlight daily; bright light at other times.

Soil moisture: Low

Soil description: Well drained, rich loamy soil

Native habitat: Brazil, Peru, and Argentina

Reference: Texas AgriLife Extension Service



GCMG database



GCMG database

## Meet a Master Gardener: Rachel Montemayor



Trish McDaniel  
GCMG 2001

Rachel Montemayor's introduction to the MG program came after her plants were damaged by the hard freeze of 2011. Come springtime, Rachel attended a free seminar on how to train shrubs. She happened to sit next to a Master Gardener who encouraged her to apply to the program. Following up, she received an application from Laura Bellmore, Class of 1992, at the old Galveston County headquarters in Dickinson. Laura told her she would then schedule her for an interview. Rachel laughs now, remembering how she thought, "You really need an interview to be a gardener?"

During her internship, she was recruited by former GCMG Henry Harrison, MG Class of 2011. Under his wing, she became versed in many new skills including woodworking, welding, and pipe bending. Rachel went on to help build the Discovery Garden's aquaponics system, hoop house, gardening beds, and other projects. She also helps set up the MG Plant Sales, which for so many years were assembled at the Galveston County rodeo arena. Currently, she manages the workshop, affectionately known as "the Barn." With the heavy lifting, she receives help from Kevin Lancon, MG Class of 2018, and Larry Brizendine, MG Class of 2022, and interns. Recently the crew installed a new product made of light concrete to replace the rot-prone wooden borders of the gardening beds. A worthy experiment, it will be interesting to know how this material performs throughout the coming seasons.

Moving from the South Houston community of Sageglen in 2010, Rachel and her husband, Santos, found their perfect home on a tree lined street in Friendswood. The beautiful one-story home met all their parameters and they continue to enjoy their life there. The interior of the home is bright and airy. Each room has dimensions of generous height and breadth, imparting a welcoming, and uplifting lightness to those who enter the front door.

Rachel worked for nine years as a mortgage loan officer for Bank of America, until her retirement in 2009. Santos was a corporate safety professional and retired five years ago. These high school sweethearts, originally from Beeville, will celebrate their 57th wedding anniversary this summer. They cherish their beautiful family of three children, and three grands. Most Sundays find three generations around their dinner table where they bring the family together for a nutritious meal ranging from King Ranch Chicken, roasts, plenty of fresh vegetables, sometimes Santos's specialty of chicken fajitas – and always Rachel's extraordinary homemade bread.

In recent years, her passion for baking bread peaked. Rachel is an ardent believer in using only the freshest, organic ingredients she can procure. Because she grinds her own whole grains, Rachel's bread retains the vital nutrients that are missing in store bought breads. I



Rachel in kitchen with her bread MG Trish McDaniel



Rachel with Kathy Maines & Sharon Zaal MG Carolyn Gephart

## “Leading a healthy lifestyle is a sacred practice...”

couldn't resist the offer of a fresh slice, buttered and heated – which was delectable. As testament to the nutritional benefits of her bread, her husband's cholesterol, and her daughter's gluten intolerance are no longer an issue.

In 2021, Rachel was in a car accident that put her in the hospital for five days with a broken left hip and hand. During the long months of recovery, Santos would drive her to the Discovery Garden, and, with help from Larry B., would accomplish a list of “honey dos” in her stead. He continues to be a great hand at the Discovery Garden and now takes exclusive care of trimming the formally sculpted home garden. Chinese privet (*Ligustrum sinense*), Yaupon holly (*Ilex vomitoria*), and Carolina cherry laurel (*Prunus caroliniana*) are carefully shaped into hedges, cones, and columns. Most curious and charming are the tiny house shapes of his own design, tucked in throughout the landscape. Rachel built his and her work benches that keep things neatly sorted in their large, tidy-as-a-pin garage.

Rachael's back garden is home to a generous covered patio, natural shaped pool, and gazebo. The immaculate garden is filled with mountain laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*), Esperanza (*Tecoma stans*), roses, and many decorative relics. She enjoys turning castaway items such as headboards, mattress springs, and window frames into one-of-a-kind structures which hold her magnificent Peggy Martin roses, pole beans and other climbers. Near the garage is a fruited apple tree that she nursed through the winter. Beets (*Beta vulgaris* subsp. *vulgaris* ‘Conditiva Group’), Chinese cabbage (*Brassica rapa* subsp. *Pekinensis*), tomatoes (*Solanum lycopersicum* L.) and herbs are growing in various beds throughout. Bordering the gardens are generous mounds of chrysanthemums, ready to burst open any day.

Leading a healthy lifestyle is a sacred practice for Rachel. Three times a week her exercise includes a practice of barre, hot yoga, and weightlifting. She also enjoys a series of podcasts which speak to matters of health.

Rachel's other favorite hobby is reading. Her focus is nonfiction, pertaining to healthy relationships and lifestyles. Her favorite authors include John Maxwell, Jim Kwik, Lewis Howes, and James Clear. She often shares select excerpts with her family in group chats.

Included in her routine of church, family, home gardening and service with Master Gardeners, is a tradition of monthly meetings to play Bunco, which rotates between the homes of twelve dear friends. Balance is a beautiful thing.



Rachel is proud of the bench she built. MG Trish McDaniel



Rachel with Ira Gervais at Ask an MG event MG Karolyn Gephart

## Book Review: *Seed to Dust; Life, Nature, and a Country Garden*



Lisa Belcher  
GCMG 2014

The Green Thumb Book Club recently read and discussed Marc Hamer's *Seed to Dust; Life, Nature, and a Country Garden*. Born in Northern England, Hamer had a rough upbringing which shaped his life dramatically. His mother died when he was young; he was raised by a harsh father. His father believed that a man must act and talk tough, not be some book reading, quiet in the corner sort. Hamer's father knew nothing about fatherhood, let alone how to raise and love his own son. He kicked his son out of the house when he was just sixteen. With no skills learned at school he wandered around, living a rough life for the next few years. Alone, sleeping in the English hedgerows and under brush that he shared with birds on their nests as well as sleeping under the stars, it was these nights that Hamer became aware and in awe of the world of nature around him.

Throughout the book's entirety, Hamer shares his vast knowledge of the countryside and gardening through the calendar year. As the months pass by, the author contemplates the lifecycle of not only the plants he is tending, but life in general. We are soon introduced to Mrs. Cashmere, his employer, who comes often to her summer house on a regular basis with her cigarettes and newspaper. Overtime, the reader learns that Hamer has been tending her estate for nearly two decades and this particular book is written covering a full year of being employed by Cashmere.

This book is very unique; it is written not only in a month-

by-month fashion, but telling the reader about the author's life in a similar calendar-month style as a child, then teenager and adult, all twinned together with gardening words of wisdom. There are months of Hamer being melancholy, content, and utterly devastated. The author does make it very clear to the reader that despite a bitter and harsh childhood and upbringing,

it shaped his adult life to prefer time, a garden over money, not to own too many things in life, and to always try to live in the now.

The only other person we are introduced to in this book is his beloved wife, Peggy, whom he loves so much he had to marry her twice. It is here in these writings we see a truly happy and content Marc Hamer, an almost philosophical man who comes to the realization one can be truly content and calm having just a little, being in love, and quietly humming in a garden. We all should be so lucky.

The Green Thumb Book Club meets the last Wednesday of the month. Future books being read and discussed include the following: *The Victory Garden* by Rhys Bowen, *The*

*Mystery of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon* by Stephanie Dalley, *Murder at the Flower Show* by Neal Sanders and *The Jewel Garden* by Monty Don.



## Photo Gallery: Debby Brady



Debby Brady  
GCMG 2022

MG Debby Brady is showcasing her photography in this issue. She is an acrylic artist and teacher as well as an outstanding photographer. Her artistic talents can be seen in her photos, many of which are taken in her own gardens and in the Discovery Garden.



# DIY: Planting a Salsa Combo Pot



Debby Brady  
GCMG 2022

Fresh salsa is one of my favorite dishes. Planting a Salsa Combo Pot is a fun way to create a lovely and useful container that includes the vegetables that you will need to make your salsa. (It also makes a cute culinary gift for a gardener/friend.)

First, select a container that is at least 12" across or a bit larger. Fill it with potting soil.

You can find many brands that contain some slow-release fertilizer, or make your own and add your favorite fertilizer, as needed throughout the growing season.

Purchase your plants or use ones that you have started at home. I use three vegetables and one herb. This fills up the container nicely as they grow.

Tomatoes - use a bush or determinate variety.

Green onions or bunching onions work well. I start seeds indoors early and transfer outside.

Pepper - I use jalapeño but use your favorite.

Cilantro - or parsley if, like me, you don't care for cilantro.

Cut the bottom leaves off of the tomato plant, leaving about 4"-6" of stem. Plant the tomato deep. This will ensure a good

root system. Fill the pot with soil.

Plant the pepper, green onion and cilantro.

Water well, place in full sun and watch your Salsa grow!

All photos by *MG Debby Brady*

## Fresh Salsa Recipe

Choose ripe tomatoes. Wash and cut into small pieces.

Cut the peppers in half (use gloves) and discard the seeds and veins. Chop into small pieces.

Thoroughly wash the green onions and slice into one-fourth inch pieces or chop if you prefer smaller pieces.

Finely chop cilantro, or parsley.

Finely chop a clove of garlic.

Mix ingredients together.

Add a little salt and pepper to taste.

Squeeze a lime over the salsa and stir.

Serve with tortilla chips.



Plant tomato at side of pot



Plant pepper with room to grow



Growing together



Delicious salsa



All planted



# Seasonal Bites: Adding Flavor to Summer Vegetables



Sandra Gervais  
GCMG 2011

Summer heat equals vegetables here in Texas...and this is a good thing. We all know that eating our veggies will help to keep us healthy. The problem is that we don't always like them. For some, the taste might be bitter or just tasteless or possibly too weird. This may go back to childhood, terrible cooking or just a bad experience.

So let's try to get around this with some different recipes using favorite spices and comforting flavors like cheese, bacon or strong, common spices. Who can say "no" to familiar cheese flavors or pizza spices? Take squash, for example. Many people find it tasteless. Others don't like the texture. And eggplant, beautiful and

glossy as it can be, has many enemies. So here they are...in recipes that might convert a few veggie haters.

The first was made by Master Gardener John Mitchiner for the May meeting of the Master Gardeners. It's a squash casserole with plenty of cheese, sour cream and a soup that's new to me from Campbells, "Cream of Chicken & Mushroom." I can think of several uses for this soup! What took Campbells so long to combine it?

The next recipe uses eggplant, which is a star performer in our Galveston heat.

"Eggplant Pizzettes," is an easy but interesting take on the old Italian favorite, Eggplant Parmesan. It can be used as a side dish or main course and even works in a sandwich. Did I mention that it's easy?



Casserole  
ingimage.com

## Cheesy Squash Casserole

350° oven

2 pounds of yellow squash, sliced about 1/4 inch thick  
1/2 sweet onion finely diced  
4 slices of crispy cooked bacon, drained (keep 3 tablespoons of the grease)  
1 teaspoon salt  
1/2 teaspoon black pepper  
1 can (10.5 ounces) Cream of Chicken & Mushroom condensed soup from Campbells  
1/2 cup sour cream  
2 cups shredded sharp Cheddar cheese (regular or light)  
1/4 cup unsalted butter, melted  
30 buttery crackers (Ritz or similar), crushed

Lightly spray a 9 x 13-inch baking dish with nonstick cooking spray and set aside.

Add melted bacon grease to a large skillet over medium heat.

Add squash and onions, season with salt and pepper.

Cook, stirring occasionally, about 10 minutes—until squash is tender but not mushy.

Drain mixture well in colander to remove excess liquid.

In a large bowl, mix together the can of soup, sour cream, and cheese.

Fold in the squash mixture and crumbled bacon.

Spread in prepared dish.

In a small bowl, mix the crushed crackers with the butter until well coated.

Sprinkle on top of casserole.

Bake uncovered for 25-30 minutes, until golden brown.

Allow to rest for 10-15 minutes before serving.

Note: Use only one can of soup. If the new mixed soup is not available, use one can of either Cream of Chicken or Cream of Mushroom. Get creative and add what you like...chopped green onions, hot peppers, herbs.



Eggplant  
ingimage.com

## Eggplant Pizzettes

425° oven

1/2 cup plain breadcrumbs  
1/2 teaspoon dried oregano  
1/2 teaspoon dried basil  
1/2 teaspoon garlic powder  
3/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese  
1/4 cup mayonnaise (not salad dressing)  
1 firm eggplant, skin on, cut into 1/2-inch round slices  
1 jar (26 ounces) spaghetti sauce (or use your own)  
1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese (can use other Italian cheeses—provolone, etc.)

Combine breadcrumbs, spices, garlic powder and Parmesan in a shallow bowl.

Spread a thin layer of mayonnaise on both sides of eggplant slices.

Dip each slice into breadcrumb mixture.

Press gently to make crumbs stick to both sides.

Arrange on lightly sprayed rimmed baking sheet.

Bake 15 minutes or until tender at 425 degrees.

Remove from oven and reduce temperatures to 375 degrees.

Spread each slice of eggplant with a generous spoonful of tomato sauce.

Top with lots of cheese.

Return pan to oven and bake for 10-15 minutes to melt cheese.

Note: Save time by using seasoned breadcrumbs. However, you may still want to add more herbs and other seasonings,

# Tomato Tasting Announces 2024 Winners



Jim Bridgett  
GCMG 2024

The Galveston County Master Gardener Intern Class of 2024 held the second annual tomato tasting event at the Discovery Garden in Car-bide Park in LaMarque on May 30, 2024. Despite the heat and humidity, 85 people attended the event, including members of the public and veteran master gardeners. The Tomato Tasting event was planned and conducted by the 21 interns as the culmination of their 2024 Tomato Trial project. In addition to different varieties of tomatoes competing for taste, the event also included a salsa competition as well as offering tomato-based appetizers to try. A children’s play area was also provided for guests.

The trial is part of a long-term (10+ years) research project run by the Galveston County Master Gardeners under the guidance and direction of MG Ira Gervais (aka “The Toma-to Guru”) and the County Extension Agent. This research project is conducted each year by interns to determine which

varieties of tomatoes grow best in Galveston County.

The 2024 trial started in late February when a total of 24 plants from 12 different varieties of tomatoes were transplanted into two raised beds. The 12 different varieties were split evenly between indeterminate and determinate types of tomatoes. Determinate varieties can be grown in containers or garden beds, while indeterminate varieties are only suited to garden beds. Since harvesting started on May 2, 2024, almost 400 pounds of tomatoes have been harvested. Tomatoes not used for the tasting event have been donated to area food banks.

The top three winners of the tasting, Super Fantastic, Big League and Hossinator, were also the best producers in this year’s trials. The results can be viewed on the chart.

Salsa contest winners were as follows: First Place Gene Spell-er (GCMG 1997), Second Place Jim Bridgett (GCMG 2024 Intern) and Third Place Connie Berthiaume-Diaz (GCMG 2024 Intern).

Variety Name	Type	Tasting Rank	Tasting Event Container Number	Production Rank (Thru 5/29/2024)
Super Fantastic	Indeterminate	1	1	1
Big League	Determinate	2	12	3
Hossinator	Determinate	3	10	2
Blushing Star	Indeterminate	4	2	7
Steakhouse	Indeterminate	4	3	6
New Big Dwarf	Determinate	5	8	12
Council Bluffs	Indeterminate	6	5	9
Celebrity	Determinate	7	9	11
Florida 91	Determinate	7	7	5
Mrs. Maxwell’s Big Italian	Indeterminate	8	4	10
Parks Improved Whopper	Indeterminate	9	6	4
Skyway	Determinate	10	11	8



Intern Robert Rodriguez, Ira Gervais and Ginger Benson  
MG Intern Jim Bridgett.



12 jars held tomatoes to taste MG Karolyn Gephart



Chopping tomatoes for the tasting MG Intern Jim Bridgett



Kat Pollack MG Vicki Blythe

*“This research project is conducted each year...”*



Welcome MG Karolyn Gephart



Jim Bridgett and Jill Jesson MG Karolyn Gephart



Tomato jam was popular MG Karolyn Gephart



Ready to serve MG Karolyn Gephart



Serving appetizers MG Karolyn Gephart



Interns who participated in the tasting event MG Jim Bridgett

# 2024 Master Gardener Recertification Hours

Browse online to the members only webpage to review all hours: <https://txmg.org/galveston/membersonly/>

Date	Name of Program	Speaker	MG CEUs
1/6/2024	Wedge Grafting	Hazel Lampton, Debbie Espinosa	2.00
1/6/2024	Growing Peaches in Galveston County	Herman Auer	2.00
1/9/2024	January Mtg. - The Year Ahead 2024	Kevin Lancon, Frank Resch, Stephen B.	1.00
1/11/2024	L&L - Pesticides	CEA Phoenix Rogers	1.00
1/20/2024	Planting Fruit Trees	Herman Auer	3.00
1/20/2024	Growing Great Tomatoes, Pt. 2	Ira Gervais	2.00
2/1/2024	L&L - Ken Clark Foundation update	Samuel Clark	0.25
2/10/2024	Tree Selection for the Home	Briana Etie & CEA Stephen Brueggerhoff	2.00
2/10/2024	Spring Vegetables	Kevin Lancon	2.00
2/13/2024	February Mtg - Plants in Space & Space Crop Production	Dr. Gioia D. Massa	1.00
2/17/2024	Fig Tree Pruning & Propagation	Barbara Canetti	2.00
2/17/2024	Irish Potatoes	Kevin Lancon & CEA Ginger Benson	2.00
3/9/2024	Peppers	Gene Speller	2.00
3/12/2024	March Mtg. - Impacts of Severe Weather	Dr. Mike Arnold	1.00
3/14/2024	Lunch & Learn - Sweet Potato Trial Overview	Michael Reed	0.50
3/16/2024	Growing Avocados	Hazel Lampton	1.00
3/16/2024	Fairy Garden Workshop	Pat Saenz, Briana Etie	2.00
3/23/2024	Tomato Stress Mgmt., Pt 3	Ira Gervais	2.50
3/23/2024	Cucumbers, Squash & Melons	Kevin Lancon	2.00
4/9/2024	April Mtg. -Mars Desert Research Station	Dr. Kay Sandor	1.00
4/13/2024	Louisiana Irises	Monica Martens	2.00
4/16/2024	"Pilot Seminar" - MGs Only - Texas Superstars®	Sue Bain, Karen Nelson	2.00
4/20/2024	Beneficial Insects	Hedy Wolpa	2.00
4/20/2024	Texas Superstars®	Sue Bain, Karen Nelson	2.00
5/4/2024	Patio Citrus	CEA Stephen Brueggerhoff, TDA Janis Teas	2.00
5/4/2024	Plumeria	Loretta Osteen	2.00
5/29/2024	"Pilot Seminar" - MGs Only - Blackberries & Blueberries	Monica Martens	1.00
5/30/2024	Tomato Tasting in the Gardens	2024 GCMG Intern Class	1.00
6/8/2024	Blackberries & Blueberries for Small Yards	Monica Martens	2.00
6/13/2024	Lunch & Learn - Cucumbers	Kevin Lancon, Bobbie Ivey	0.50

**2024 Recertification Hours for MGs**

**Total CEUs (Hours)**

**48.75**

Last Updated: June 13, 2024

**Reminder: In order to maintain your status as a certified Texas Master Gardener, each year you must complete a minimum of 6 hours continuing education, as well as 12 service hours. Additionally, those hours must be reported through the online Volunteer Management System or other means.**

# Welcome to Galveston County Boone Holladay

Boone Holladay is currently the Galveston County Extension Agent in Horticulture with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension. His service began June 6, 2024. Prior to this recent transition, he held a similar title in Fort Bend County for the past 12 years.

He holds an undergraduate degree in Horticulture from Stephen F. Austin State University and a master's degree in Agricultural Education from Texas A&M University. Long before attaining these degree titles, he was an avid gardener and young plant enthusiast. He has previous experience as horticulture staff with The Texas A&M Department of Horticultural Sciences in College Station, and as an urban horticulture educator at M.B. Lamar

High School in Houston.

Having work experience in many horticultural industries from retail horticulture to landscape design and irrigation installation, he brings that knowledge, paired with enthusiasm, into Texas A&M AgriLife Extension programming efforts.

He is happily married to wife Soni who also has a horticulture degree from Texas A&M University and is a member of the horticultural staff at Moody Gardens. They are the proud parents to daughter Bailey, and now reside on Galveston Island.



Holladay with Ginger Benson, County Extension Agent – Family & Community Health and County Extension Office Administrator *Photo by Jill Jessen*



The late Dr. William Johnson, former Extension Agent Horticulture in Galveston County, with Boone Holladay in 2018 at the annual Extension Horticulture Staff Retreat at a commercial vegetable farm in Smith County (Tyler).



Holladay at the pergola on his first day in LaMarque June 6 *Photo by Jill Jessen*



## Graduation, Recognition Event Held in Galveston

The 2024 Graduation, Certification and Recognition Program was held at Mikey and Allen Isbell's home in Galveston on June 11, 2024. Special guest was Dr. Robin Armstrong, County Commissioner, Precinct 4. Galveston County Master

Gardeners Association Vice President Kevin Lancon was the master of ceremonies along with Extension Agent - Horticulture Boone Holliday and Ginger Benson, Extension Agent – Family & Community Health.



Class of 2024 Interns with Extension Agent Horticulture Boone Holladay, Robert Rodriguez, May Casagrand, Lucy Brown, Sam Kusick, Shelly Scimeca, Administrative Assistant Jill Jessen, Second Row: Reagan Mears, Donna Woodbury, Doreen Hughes Third Row: Roxanne Kriticos, Connie Berthiaume-Diaz, Joan Koritni, and Weez Doherty (Not pictured: Jim Bridgett, Laura Houston, Eva Livy, Megan McKay, Tanya Padgett, Kat Pollock, Phil Starks, Beth Strobe and Amaris Wendelburg)



Graduating Class of 2023 with Extension Agent Horticulture Boone Holladay, Dan Walker, Claudia Trujillo-Vargas, Sandy Klaud, Christie McGrath, Administrative Assistant Jill Jessen Second Row: Jamie Hart, Tina Fincher, Ralinda Fenton, Mary Gordon Third Row: Vickie Hall, Sulaiman Mohammed, Fourth Row: Sven Bors-Koefoed, Donna Merritt and Lynne Slaton (Not pictured: Becky Jaschek)



Boone Holladay  
MG Linda Crowston



Briana Etie was awarded a Making a Difference Award  
MG Karolyn Gephart



Commissioner Robin Armstrong  
M.D. MG Linda Crowston



Evening host Mikey Isbell  
MG Linda Crowston



Jerlee Owens was recognized for 42 years as GCMG  
MG Karolyn Gephart



Al fresco dining  
MG Linda Crowston



Four people received the title MG Emeritus. They are Sandra Duvall(1998), Patsy Jewell (1991), Betty Webb (2013) and (not pictured) Kenneth Deslattes (2005).

# Judy's Corner: Galveston County Monthly Meetings



Judy Anderson  
GCMG 2012

Master Gardeners, it is time for the July Fish Fry! Plans are well under way. Fish are running scared with Kevin Lancon, John Mitchiner, Michelle Gauthier, Sven Bors-Koefoed, and Pam Hunter hooking bait and dropping their lines. The 2024 Fish Fry will be led by Briana Etie and John Mitchiner. Fried fish, French fries and hush puppies with the Etie family cocktail sauce are all on the menu. The Master Gardeners always come through with wonderful potluck dishes for this occasion and the desserts are truly awesome.

This year's occasion will kick off with another plant swap beginning at 5 pm. Bring any plants, seed packets, cuttings, garden art, sculptures, books, garden tools, gloves, aprons, garden hats, plant labels and pots you would like to trade. Tables will be set up for your display; wagons and plant trays will be available. This will be under the pecan tree by the bulb bed. For more information contact: Ann Ross, 281-455-2622 or [rossann3@yahoo.com](mailto:rossann3@yahoo.com) or Bettye Vogler, 409-766-0112 or [bvogler@midanilaw.com](mailto:bvogler@midanilaw.com)

As many of you know, the Pollinator Habitat has been undergoing expansion. It is time for the great reveal, and the PH team have agreed to host an Open House for the July Fish Fry attendees. This will provide educational training for those attending. With a grant from the Native Plant Society, many native plants have been included in the PH redesign. Brave the heat and take a stroll out to the 'back forty' to see how it has changed. Learn what new plants have been added, meet the PH team and get information about creating a pollinator garden of your own. The Pollinator Habitat Open House will begin at 6 pm.



Plant Swap MG Judy Anderson

July	August	September
Fish Fry Plant Swap	Hibiscus program	GCMG Backyard Meeting Trish McDaniel
October	November	December
GCMG Backyard Meeting Lynn Shook	Annual Meeting	Holiday Party - Mikey Isbell

The dinner bell will ring when the fish is ready. Door prizes will be given away followed by the blessing. Then it is chow time. Enjoy an evening with friends and family in the Discovery Garden.

## August GCMG Meeting

Enjoy a Tropical Gulf Coast Evening when Greg and Marti Graves of Manvel present their Hibiscus program. They are members of the Lone Star Hibiscus Society and frequent presenters at area garden clubs. They will be discussing both tropical and native or hardy hibiscus and will be available to answer questions. Plan on a fun evening of bright blooms and good food in air-conditioned comfort at the Extension Center at Carbide Park. This program will be Tuesday, August 13, 2024, with social at 6 pm and potluck dinner at 6:30. The presentation will begin at 7 pm. There will be door prizes.



2024 Cooking team MG Judy Anderson



Briana and John with Adrian and Helen MG Karolyn Gephart