

Urban Dirt

Gardening Events and Information for Harris County

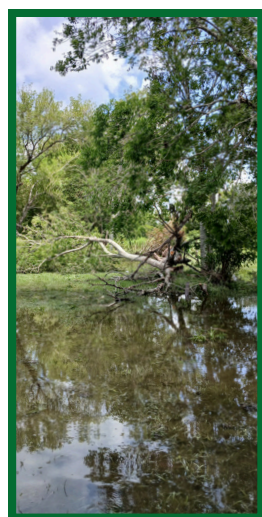


Dealing with Disaster: The Post-Beryl Cleanup

Article and photos by Terri Simon, Master Gardener



Terri's front yard Post-Beryl



Terri's side yard Post-Beryl

Hurricane Beryl blazed a path of destruction in our area on July 8, and we didn't have the full brunt of it. The storm landed near Matagorda. In the Houston area, nearly three million of us lost electricity. The rain and wind damage took its toll. I wasn't home; I was on the ride out team at my job. Three days later I returned to see the damage. The bulk of my plants are in pots and were floating in my yard. My neighbor rounded them up for me. Some are still AWOL. The yard was flooded, there were a few trees down, lots of branches, and the roof may need to be replaced.

So where do you need to start to repair your garden? Make a list and prioritize things. Assess your soil. The heavy rains can damage shallow root systems, the soil in beds has probably been beaten flat and with flooding it's possible all the nutrients in your beds have been leached out. Strong winds probably damaged the parts of your plants that were above ground. My banana tree's leaves were shredded like vermicelli. Too much water can flood and drown plants.

Address the problem of storm debris first. Remove branches and limbs. If burning is not allowed in your area, stay tuned to your local news and see when and if there will be assigned heavy trash pickup of trees and limbs. Sometimes debris must be cut to a certain size and bagged before pickup. I recommend wearing boots and gloves.

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Have Garden Questions?

Submit your questions to: <https://hcmga.tamu.edu/ask-a-question/>

Upcoming EVENTS

Youth Activities
 Genoa Friendship Gardens
 Public Gardening Lectures
 Educational Programs
 Plant Sales
 Green Thumb Gardening Series

Tuesday, September 3, 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
 First Tuesday Meeting
 Lecture: 12 Common Landscaping Mistakes, and How to Avoid Them by
 Skip Richter, Retired AgriLife Horticulture Agent and GardenLine Host
 Trini Mendenhall Community Center, 1414 Wirt Rd, Houston

Wednesday, September 4, 10:30 a.m.
 Container Gardening by Harris County Master Gardeners
 Tracy Gee Community Center, 3599 Westcenter Dr, Houston

Saturday, September 7, 9 a.m.-1 p.m.
 Houston Science Festival
 Humble Civic Center, 8233 Will Clayton Pkwy, Humble

Monday, September 9, 10-11:30 a.m.
 Heirloom and Pass-along Plants
 HCC @Home Gardening Series Register in advance to receive the link
<https://hcc.idloom.events/gardening-series/register>

Tuesday, September 10, 12 p.m.
 Fall Gardening by Harris County Master Gardeners
 Weekley Community Center, 8440 Greenhouse Rd, Cypress

Wednesday, September 11, 10:30 a.m.
 Decorating for Gardening Fun by Harris County Master Gardeners
 Tracy Gee Community Center, 3599 Westcenter Dr, Houston

Monday, September 16, 8:30-11 a.m.
 Open Garden Day at Genoa Friendship Gardens
 1210 Genoa Red Bluff Rd, Houston

Tuesday, September 17, 10:30 a.m.
 Composting by Harris County Master Gardeners
 Glazier Senior Education Center, 16600 Pine Forest Ln, Houston

Tuesday, September 17, 11 a.m.-12 p.m.
 Heirloom and Pass-along Plants
 Harris County Public Library
 Facebook Live <https://www.facebook.com/harriscountypl/events/>



September 18-24
 Plant Sale Northwest Fall Sale: Perennials, Veggies,
 Native Plants, Bulbs & Rhizomes!
 Pre-order online <https://hcmga.tamu.edu/plant-sales/> for pickup at the
 sale on Saturday, September 28

Wednesday, September 18, 12:30 p.m.
 Fall Vegetable Gardening by Harris County Master Gardeners
 Tracy Gee Community Center, 3599 Westcenter Dr, Houston

Thursday, September 19, 10 a.m.
 A Few Perennials by Harris County Master Gardeners
 Glazier Senior Education Center, 16600 Pine Forest Ln, Houston

Monday, September 23, 1 p.m.
 Rainwater Harvesting by Harris County Master Gardeners
 Fonteno Senior Education Center, 6600 Bissonnet, Houston

Tuesday, September 24, 10 a.m.
 Container Gardening by Harris County Master Gardeners
 Steve Radack Community Center, 18650 Clay Rd, Houston

Wednesday, September 25, 6 p.m.
 Composting by Harris County Master Gardeners
 Pasadena Public Library, 4330 Fairmont Parkway, Pasadena



Saturday, September 28, 9 a.m.-1 p.m.
 Plant Sale Northwest Fall Sale: Perennials, Veggies,
 Native Plants, Bulbs & Rhizomes!
 Alabonson Park. 9650 N. Houston Rosslyn Rd. Houston



Texas AgriLife Extension Service
 Horticulture Program in Harris County
 13105 Northwest Freeway, Suite 1000
 Houston, TX 77040 713.274.0950

**CEA- Horticulture
 (Commercial/Green Industry)**
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Upcoming EVENTS

Youth Activities
 Genoa Friendship Gardens
 Public Gardening Lectures
 Educational Programs
 Plant Sales
 Green Thumb Gardening Series



October 1-17

Plant Sale Southeast Fall Sale: Cold-hardy Perennials and Plantings for Spectacular Fall Color!

Pre-order online <https://hcmga.tamu.edu/plant-sales/> for pickup at the sale on Saturday, October 19

Tuesday, October 1, 11a.m.-12:30 p.m.

First Tuesday Meeting

Lecture: "New Earth-Kind Roses are Coming in 2025!" by Paul Winski, Green Industry Program Specialist, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension
Trini Mendenhall Community Center, 1414 Wirt Rd, Houston

Wednesday, October 2, 10 a.m.

Native Plants by Harris County Master Gardeners

Fonteno Senior Education Center, 6600 Bissonnet, Houston

Thursday, October 3, 10:30 a.m.

Stimulating Senses in Earth-Kind Landscape

by Harris County Master Gardeners

Glazier Senior Education Center, 16600 Pine Forest Ln, Houston

Monday, October 14, 10-11:30 a.m.

Gardening for Extreme Weather

HCC @Home Gardening Series Register in advance to receive the link

<https://hcc.idloom.events/gardening-series/register>

Tuesday, October 15, 11 a.m.-12 p.m.

Gardening for Extreme Weather

Harris County Public Library

Facebook Live <https://www.facebook.com/harriscountyp/1/events/>

Wednesday, October 16, 6 p.m.

Growing and Cooking Mushrooms by Harris County Master Gardeners

Pasadena Public Library, 4330 Fairmont Parkway, Pasadena

Thursday, October 17, 10 a.m.

Rain Gardens and Conserving Water by Harris County Master Gardeners

Glazier Senior Education Center, 16600 Pine Forest Ln, Houston

Friday, October 18, 10 a.m.

Plant Propagation by Harris County Master Gardeners

Tracy Gee Community Center, 3599 Westcenter Dr, Houston



Saturday, October 19, 9 a.m.-1 p.m.

Plant Sale Southeast Fall Sale: Cold-hardy Perennials and Plantings for Spectacular Fall Color!

Genoa Friendship Gardens, 1210 Genoa Red Bluff Rd, Houston

Saturday, October 19, 11 a.m.-3 p.m.

KBR Kids Day & Tony Marron Park Send-Off

Buffalo Bayou East, Free Event, Kids Day

Tony Marron Park, 808 N York St, Houston

Monday, October 21, 8:30-11 a.m.

Open Garden Day at Genoa Friendship Gardens

1210 Genoa Red Bluff Rd, Houston

Tuesday, October 22, 9 a.m.

Container Gardening by Harris County Master Gardeners

Peckham Aquatic and Fitness Center, 5597 Gardenia Lane, Katy

Friday, October 25, 5 p.m.-8 p.m.

Trick or Treat

Woodchase Park, 3951 Woodchase Dr, Houston

Tuesday, October 29, 1 p.m.

ID and Managing Good and Bad Bugs by Harris County Master Gardeners

Glazier Senior Education Center, 16600 Pine Forest Ln, Houston

*Plant Sales
Save the Dates!*

September 18-24

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- Alabonson Park. 9650 N. Houston Rosslyn Rd. Houston

October 1-17

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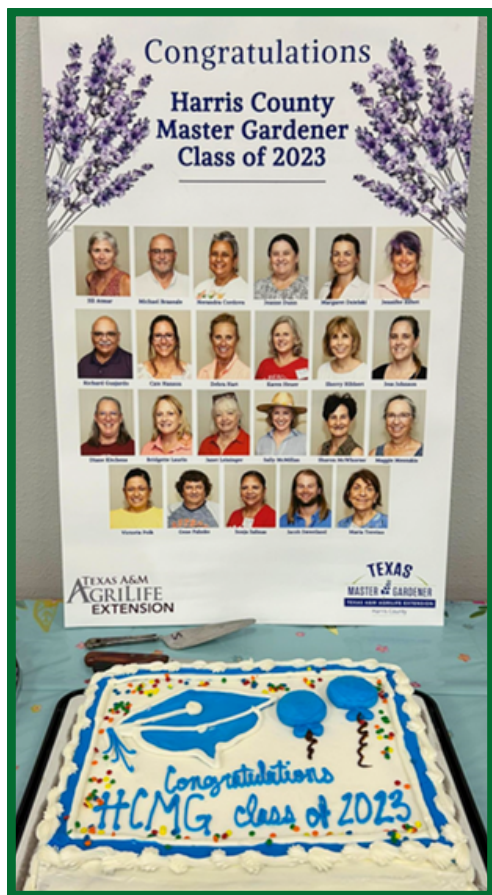


2023 Harris County Master Gardener Graduation

June 18, 2024

Article by Cate Hanson, Master Gardener

Photos by Victoria Polk, Master Gardener

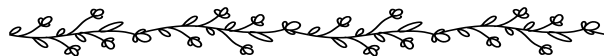


Hats off to the 2023 MG Interns! The class of 2023 aced their gardening studies and volunteer work, earning the prestigious Texas Master Gardener title. They now hold the keys to spreading horticultural wisdom far and wide in Harris County. Let the green-thumb celebrations begin!

- | | | |
|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Jill Atmar | Debra Hart | Sharon McWhorter |
| Michael Breazeale | Karen Heuer | Maggie Mentakis |
| Nerandra Cordova | Sherry Hibbert | Gene Pahnke |
| Jeanne Dunn | Jess Johnson | Victoria Polk |
| Margaret Dzielski | Diane Kitchens | Sonja Salinas |
| Jennifer Elfert | Bridgette Laurin | Jacob Sweetland |
| Richard Guajardo | Janet Leininger | Aledwina Townsend |
| Cate Hanson | Sally McMillan | Maria Trevino |



All in attendance for the 2023 Master Gardener Graduation



Harris County Master Gardeners Northwest Fall Plant Sale

Vegetables, Herbs, Flowers, Bulbs & Natives



**Saturday
Sept 28th,
9am- 1pm**

Alabonson Park
9650 N Houston
Rosslyn Road,
Houston

NEW: Pre-order plants online for pickup at the sale: Pre-orders open from September 18- 24!

Pre-order link will go live on Sept 18th at:
hcmga.tamu.edu/plant-sales

Plant Sales!

Southeast Houston Sale

Perennials & Plantings for
spectacular fall color!

October 19, 2024

Genoa Friendship Gardens
1210 Genoa Red Bluff Road



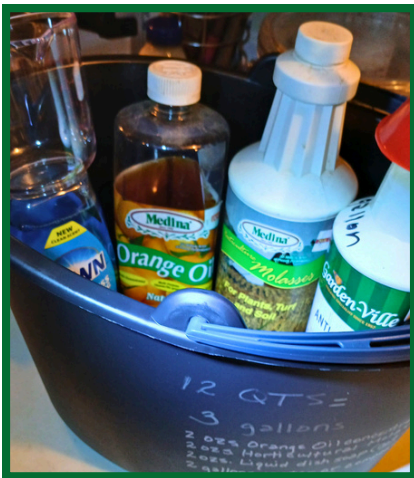
Dealing with Disaster: The Post-Beryl Cleanup

Continued from page 1

Be on the lookout for snakes and fire ants. We no longer have fire ant mounds in our yard. They have adopted a condo lifestyle and moved into my potted plants. Others have built micro-anthills in the yard, and you don't notice them until they start biting. I used my go-to bucket number one to deal with them.



4 Musketeers vs Fire Ants



Terri's Go-To Bucket Number One



Anti fuego directions

Items in Go-To Bucket Number One

This suggestion came from the garden guru herself, Angela Chandler. You can mix your own organic fire ant solution if you don't have anti fuego available. From left to right in a three gallon bucket I have:

- A measuring cup
- Dawn dish detergent (do NOT use an anti-bacterial soap)
- Pure orange oil, not orange oil cleaner
- Horticultural molasses
- Anti fuego
- A funnel



DIY fire ant solution:

- 2 oz. Dawn dish detergent
- 2 oz. Pure orange oil
- 2 oz. Horticultural molasses

Add the above ingredients in the amounts shown to 2 gallons of water or 2 gallons of compost tea.

Drench the fire ant mounds with the solution starting at the perimeter and work your way in. I have written the amounts on the bucket for reference. Reapply within a day or two if necessary.

On the anti fuego, I have written the reconstitution amounts on the bottle itself (mix 1 gallon of water and 4-6 oz. of anti fuego). This helps because the instructions are in tiny print, and I need "cheaters" to read them.

Don't forget the mosquitos. After most of the water had drained off, I tossed organic mosquito dunks in low areas that still held water. In Brazoria County, we can apply online for mosquito sprayers. Currently, 23 cases of West Nile virus cases have popped up in Harris County. Wear mosquito repellent!

After the heavy rains, the snails moved in and they have begun chomping on a few of my plants that survived Beryl. For them, I opened up Terri's Snail Jails. I placed some low saucers with inexpensive beer on the ground within their reach. They are cheap drunks.



Mosquito Dunks



Dealing with Disaster: The Post-Beryl Cleanup

Continued

One other problem popped up in my yard after Hurricane Ike. I noticed strange plants popping up. They weren't delivered by FedEx. They were carried there by floodwaters. If you see this happening in your yard, pull them up. I pulled some up, but there was one that had cute blue flowers, so I left it alone. It's a Whitemouth dayflower and it's invasive. I still have a few popping up years later.

Before taking any drastic action, let the soil drain. I estimate I lost a third of my plants. The flood water smells rancid, so I am trying to transplant the potted plants into different soil. I don't want to fertilize them too much because of the heat, but I am trying to amend their soil. For garden beds, when the soil has dried, pull any dead plants. You could till the soil a little if the rain compacted it. Add a little gypsum or perlite and work it in. Your soil could be barren after the flooding and lacking minerals. Mix some Azomite into it as well, then top off with a small amount of compost. Cover with mulch.

In June, I paid good money and traveled to North Carolina for a plant propagation class at one of my favorite nurseries, Plant Delights Nursery. I drove home with three precious flats of transplanted cuttings and soon-to-be precious seedlings. Hurricane Beryl hit and, in my rush to go to work, I left those flats on the ground under the carport. I'm down to one flat now. That's the reason I need my go-to bucket number two. It has nearly everything I need to transplant the North Carolina babies and more of the other potted plants that were floating in the yard.

Items in Go-To Bucket Number Two

I keep this bucket nearby because I use it the most. From left to right, it contains:

- Cut up venetian blind plant labels
- Pencils for writing on the plant labels along with a black and gold permanent marker for writing on pots
- Green garden plant tie tape
- Cheap dollar store scissors
- A resealable jar to store my garden gloves in. ** Best idea ever to store my dry garden gloves in so creepy crawlies don't get into them.
- A funnel
- Ground cinnamon (poor man's rooting hormone)
- A garden cultivator
- A Cobra Head weeder (best investment ever)
- A hand trowel
- Bambi's antlers
- The small bunny clothespins I place on pots to remind me which ones require shade.



With a little luck, our remaining plants can still recover before the cold weather sets in. As for me, I'm going to hope my remaining plants thrive so I can take some to the October plant swap. Time to start over. 🌱



Terri's Go-To Bucket Number Two

References:

PBS News: Hurricane Beryl death toll in Texas rises to 36, including more who lost power in extreme heat
<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/hurricane-beryl-death-toll-in-texas-rises-to-36-including-more-who-lost-power-in-extreme-heat>

Tips to Recover Your Garden After a Storm or Flood
<https://disastercompany.com/tips-to-recover-your-garden-after-a-storm-or-flood/>



Heirloom and Passalong Plants

Uses in our Landscapes

Article by Valerie Depew, Master Gardener

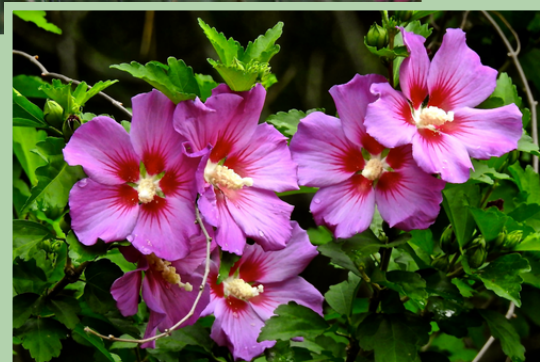
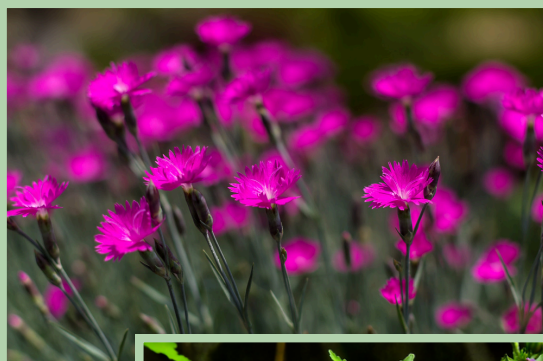
When we hear both of these terms, we tend to think of our Grandparent's garden full of colorful flowers, lovely old garden shrubs or a small vegetable patch. We may consider these to be old-fashioned and out of the mainstream—garden plants that no one wants to grow anymore...or do we? As we talk more and more about resilience and sustainability, it is interesting and beneficial to look at some of these plants that have been gracing our landscapes for hundreds of years. If they have endured this long, it is for good reason!

Heirloom and passalong are not terribly precise categories, and there is tremendous overlap. After all, one category relates to origin, while another relates to how the plant is perpetuated by gardeners. Generally, an heirloom plant has the following qualities:

- Grown and passed down through multiple generations in a family or community
- Open pollinated
- Possibly unavailable at commercial nurseries
- A contributor to biodiversity
- Wide range of traits and resistances naturally selected over time

Heirlooms are grown for their values, whether that is beauty, taste, disease resistance, ease of propagation and much more. They have adapted to a variety of growing conditions and provide resilient characteristics that are increasingly important as our climate and gardening conditions are challenged. Heirloom plants are not fussy or troublesome, they endure while many other plants that we love struggle. As such, heirloom plants should continue to thrive while some of our other garden favorites may fade away.

Dianthus



Rose of Sharon

Passalong plants are known as such because they offer some of the values mentioned above, but also because they are resilient enough to propagate and share easily. They are usually acquired from someone else as a start, slip, cutting or bulb. Passalong plants often have a story, or historic roots of some kind. At times they were brought into an area by early settlers or immigrants, so they reflect the country of origin and the family's roots. Early Texas settlers brought some of our best-loved landscape plants to the state in the early nineteenth century, and many more followed as the state developed. Among these were: Althea (Rose of Sharon), Pomegranates, Dianthus, Calendula, Fig trees and many more.



Heirloom and Passalong Plants

Uses in our Landscapes

Continued

While both heirloom and passalong plants can differ, one commonality stands out—these are plants to be shared! As for those who love to grow things, a common trait among gardeners is to share the product of this enthusiasm with others. As Master Gardeners we do this constantly, whether it is growing vegetables and ornamentals from seed to share with friends, dividing perennials to bring to First Tuesday, offering cuttings for Master Gardeners to propagate or digging up garden seedlings to distribute to others. Plant swaps and social media have grown into powerful ways to share with other gardening enthusiasts. Some of these events have grown quite large, with specific guidelines in place to ensure that everyone has a fair trade.



To hear some stories about heirloom and passalong plants, or to learn more about specific examples, please log on to our Green Thumb presentations on September 9 (HCC) or September 17 (HCPL FB Live).

Heirloom and Passalong Plants through the Houston Community College on September 9 at 10:00 a.m.

<https://hcc.idloom.events/gardening-series/register>


You can also join the Heirloom and Passalong Plants presentation on Harris County Public Library Facebook page on September 17 at 11 a.m.

<https://www.facebook.com/harriscountypil/events/>



Calendula

For references on learning more about these wonderful additions to the landscape, check out:

- Bender, Steve and Rushing, Felder. Passalong Plants. University of North Carolina Press, 1993.
- Welch, William C. and Grant, Greg. Heirloom Gardening in the South: Yesterday's Plants for Today's Gardens. Texas A & M University Press, 2011. Second Printing 2017.
- River Oaks Garden Club. Lorna Hume Terrell, ed. A Garden Book for Houston, 1929. Gulf Publishing Company. Fourth Revised Edition 1995. 

Have Garden Questions? Submit your questions to: <https://hcmga.tamu.edu/ask-a-question/>



Gulf Coast Gardening and Weather Extremes

Article and Chart by Margaret Pierce, Master Gardener

We can all agree that weather extremes are, well, becoming more extreme. In the greater Houston area, we have recently experienced more high temperature days, more extremely low temperature days (although warmer winters on average), droughts, deluges, hurricanes, derechos and increased flooding. This appears to be the new normal.

Whatever the causes—climate change, subsidence of ground levels due to human or natural causes, urban expansion due to population growth, particularly into previously undeveloped areas and increased impervious surfaces leading to reductions in water absorption, we gardeners need to adapt!

Those of us living in the Gulf Coast region think of our climate as being almost tropical! We have planted bougainvillea, palms, bananas, pittosporum, boxwoods, photinias, gingers, bottlebrush, Japanese yews and citrus. Many of these plants did not survive our winter deep freeze events over the last 5-10 years. Other plants in our gardens froze back to the ground but eventually started growing again.

Our very hot summers of recent past have either been accompanied by drought conditions or by excessive rain and flooding. Many plants have not survived or have not thrived with hot and dry or hot and wet conditions. Recent drought conditions killed magnolias, pines, turf grass, roses, jasmine and Indian hawthorn. Recent weather resulting in waterlogged soil has limited oxygen in the soil and reduced plant root efficiency, causing stress and sometimes plant demise.



Extreme Heat

Our recent “hot droughts” have stressed not only our trees, shrubs, perennials and annuals we plant for seasonal color, it has also impacted our soil. Extremely dry soil causes smaller pores and compaction, leading to cracks and less oxygen in the soil. Soil thrives with adequate water, moderate heat and moisture. Extremely dry and hot soil can reduce microbial action, which is what makes soil “alive” and working symbiotically with nearby plant roots. With dry soils, plants have less ability to absorb nutrients, resulting in poorer growth, production, flowering, etc.

Hardened soil leads to more erosion and can reduce the nutrient rich topsoil (reminiscent of the Dust Bowl of the 1930s??). In the wild (and in our backyards), fewer plants due to drought means less plant materials to sustain wildlife.

As I write this article, we are awash in water from recent extreme weather events—most of our lawns and gardens are boggy and there is standing water all over Harris County (hello, mosquitoes). The ground is so saturated that trees and shrubs with shallow root systems are challenged to remain upright!



Gulf Coast Gardening and Weather Extremes

Continued

Every year we all live in a semi-anxious state during ‘hurricane season’ hoping that this year we will not experience “the big one”. Sadly, this year, we have already experienced one hurricane, and the season is young. We must remain vigilant and prepared.

If we didn’t love the many great things about living in the Houston region, we might just pick up and move to a less extreme climate! But we love the springs and falls, the great cultural diversity, the restaurants, the museums, the great outdoor activities, the proximity to the coast and the resilient economy.



Hurricane Harvey

So let’s try to be garden savvy as best we can in anticipation of future hard freezes, droughts, rain deluges, flooding, wind, hurricanes and other weather events Mother Nature might throw our way.

Hard Freeze:

- Container plants are more vulnerable, so bring in or cover. Succulents are particularly at risk in a freeze.
- Emphasize hardy plants such as natives—consider adopting a philosophy of “only the strong survive” and replace non-natives, tropicals and exotics that did not survive the prior winter’s freeze with more resilient plants.
- Moisten soil—hydrated roots are much more resilient.
- Mulch to protect roots and base of plant from extremes of cold.
- Trim tree branches near power lines to avoid broken branches bringing them down.

Drought:

- Emphasize water smart plants.
- Mulch to hold in moisture.
- Water deeply in longer intervals rather than daily shallow watering.
- Water in the morning to reduce evaporation and leaf burn.

Excessive rain/wind/flooding:

- Consider a rain garden if an area continually floods or has standing water. <https://harris.agrilife.org/files/2011/05/raingardens.pdf>
- Incorporate raised beds in your landscape to improve drainage and weed control.
- Mulch to assist in absorption of excess water.
- Shrink the size of lawns in favor of beds with long-rooted plants to increase absorption.
- Prune dead or damaged limbs to reduce chance of breakage during storms.
- Trim tree branches as described above.
- Turn off automatic sprinklers after excessive rain to avoid waste and runoff.
- Use pervious systems for pathways and driveways to increase water absorption.



Extreme Drought



Gulf Coast Gardening and Weather Extremes

Continued

More on Mulch

- Beneficial year-round and for all weather extremes.
- Absorbs excess rainfall, helps with drainage and gives beds a “finished look”.
- Apply 2-4 inches every six months to a year or as needed.
- The best mulch is the simplest—such as from shredded native trees.
- Avoid mulch that contains dyes (black, red) or mulch made from treated lumber—your soil and your plants will not benefit from the black or red dye or the chemicals in the treated lumber!
- Avoid using shredded rubber mulch—it retains heat and can damage plants and animal paws. It can ignite and release dangerous chemicals into the air and soil. It breaks down over time and can release toxic chemicals into the soil and groundwater. It adds nothing beneficial to soil.
- Avoid mulch volcanoes around trees, which lead to suffocation of the lower trunk and root flare area and can increase spread of disease and decay.

What to Plant in Harris County, courtesy of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension:

Native Landscape Plants for Harris County <https://harris.agrilife.org/files/2011/05/natives.pdf>

Native & Adapted Plants for Houston <https://harris.agrilife.org/files/2011/05/houstonplants.pdf>

Gardening with Perennials in Harris County <https://harris.agrilife.org/files/2011/05/perennials.pdf>

And don't miss my Tough Plants for Harris County's Extreme Weather chart on the following pages to help you plan your garden!

We can be proactive as Gulf Coast gardeners, knowing that we will always be dealing with weather extremes, but also that there are steps we can take to reduce the impact.



Winter Storm

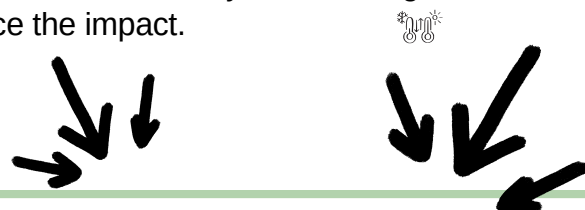
References:

Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center
<https://www.wildflower.org/>

Missouri Botanical Garden Plant Finder
<https://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder/plantfindersearch.aspx>

North Carolina Extension Gardener Plant Toolbox
<https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/>

AgriLife Today Texas Superstars Archives
<https://agriflifelife.tamu.edu/tag/texas-superstars/>



To learn more about gardening for extreme weather, please log on to our Green Thumb presentations on October 14 (HCC) or October 15 (HCPL FB Live).

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Gulf Coast Gardening and Weather Extremes

Continued

Tough Plants for Harris County's Extreme Weather
Sorted by Category

*Native or Cultivar of Native

Botanical Name	Common Name	Category	BLOOM COLORS + CALENDAR												DEC	NOV	OCT	SEP	AUG	JUL	JUN	MAY	APR	MAR	FEB	JAN	MAX. HEIGHT (FEET)	MAX. SPAN (FEET)	LIFE SPAN	WATER NEEDS	LIGHT NEEDS
			JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC																	
<i>Salvia farinacea</i> 'Henry Duelberg'	Salvia 'Henry Duelberg'	Perennial																							36	24	P	Avg	Sun		
<i>Salvia farinacea</i> *	Mealy Cup Sage	Perennial																							36	24	P	Avg	Sun		
<i>Salvia greggii</i> *	Autumn Sage	Perennial				white																			36	24	P	Avg	Sun/Part Sun		
<i>Salvia leucantha</i>	Mexican Bush Sage	Perennial																							60	36	P	Avg	Sun		
<i>Salvia x 'Amistad'</i>	Friendship Sage	Perennial																							60	36	P	Avg	Sun		
<i>Sliphium simpsonii</i> *	Simpson rosinweed	Perennial																							60	36	P	Avg	Sun		
<i>Solidago sempervirens</i> *	Seaside goldenrod	Perennial																							72	36	P	Dry	Sun		
<i>Teucrium cubense</i> *	Coast germander	Perennial																							24	20	P	Avg-Dry	Sun/Part Sun		
<i>Tradescantia occidentalis</i> *	Prairie Spiderwort	Perennial																							24	6	P	Dry	Sun/Part Sun		
<i>Verbesina virginica</i>	Frostweed	Perennial																							72	36	P	Avg	Sun/Part Sun		
<i>Vernonia missurica</i>	Missouri ironweed	Perennial																							72	48	P	Avg	Sun/Part Sun		
<i>Phyla nodifolia</i> *	Frogfruit	Perennial - ground cover				white																			12	8	P	Avg	Sun/Part Sun		
<i>Rivina humilis</i> *	Pigeonberry	Perennial - ground cover				white																			36	18	P	Avg -Wet	Sun/Part Sun		
<i>Callicarpa americana</i> *	American Beautyberry	Shrub																							60	36	P	Avg	Sun		
<i>Cephalanthus occidentalis</i> *	Buttontbush	Shrub																							72	60	P	Avg -Wet	Part Sun		
<i>Erythrina herbarcea</i> *	Coralbean	Shrub																							72	60	P	Dry	Sun/Part Sun		
<i>Hamelia patens</i> *	Firebush	Shrub																							144	72	P	Avg	Sun/Part Sun		
<i>Ilex vomitoria</i> 'Nana'	Dwarf Yaupon	Shrub																							48	36	P	Avg	Sun		
<i>Itea virginica</i> *	Virginia Sweetspire	Shrub																							72	36	P	Avg -Wet	Part Sun		
<i>Lantana urticoides</i> *	Texas Lantana	Shrub																							60	36	P	Dry	Sun		
<i>Laurus nobilis</i>	Bay Laurel	Shrub																							120	96	P	Avg	Sun/Part Sun		
<i>Malvaviscus arboreus</i> var. <i>drummondii</i> *	Turk's Cap	Shrub																							120	36	P	Avg	Sun/Part Sun		
<i>Morella cerifera</i> *	Wax Myrtle	Shrub																							144	72	P	Avg -Wet	Sun/Part Sun		
<i>Plumbago auriculata</i>	Blue Plumbago	Shrub																							60	30	P	Avg	Sun/Part Sun		
<i>Tecoma stans</i> *	Esperanza, Yellow Bells	Shrub																							72	36	P	Dry	Sun/Part Sun		
<i>Aspidistra elatior</i>	Chaste Tree, Vitex	Shrub/small tree																							20f	10f	P	Avg	Sun		
<i>Cornus drummondii</i> *	Rough-leaf Dogwood	Shrub/small tree																							15f	8f	P	Avg -Wet	Sun/Part Sun		
<i>Duranta erecta</i>	Golden Dewdrop	Shrub/small tree																							20f	10f	P	Avg -Wet	Sun/Part Sun		
<i>Lagerstroemia indica</i> cultivars	Crape Myrtle	Shrub/small tree																							25f	15f	P	Avg	Sun		
<i>Viburnum obovatum</i> *	Walter's Viburnum	Shrub/small tree																							18f	12f	P	Avg	Part Sun		
<i>Cercis canadensis</i> *	Eastern Redbud	Tree																							30f	15f	P	Avg -Wet	Sun/Part Sun		
<i>Chionanthus virginicus</i> *	White Fringetree	Tree																							30f	15f	P	Avg -Wet	Part Sun		
<i>Crataegus marshallii</i> *	Parsley hawthorn	Tree																							25f	10f	P	Avg	Sun/Part Sun		
<i>Ilex decidua</i> *	Possumhaw Holly	Tree																							30f	15f	P	Avg	Sun/Part Sun		
<i>Quercus virginiana</i> *	Southern Live Oak	Tree																							80f	40f	P	Avg	Sun/Part Sun		
<i>Taxodium distichum</i> *	Bald Cypress	Tree																							75f	50f	P	Avg	Sun/Part Sun		
<i>Ungnadia speciosa</i> *	Mexican Buckeye	Tree																							25f	8f	P	Avg-Dry	Sun/Part Sun		
<i>Bignonia capreolata</i> *	Crossvine	Vine																							50f	36f	P	Avg	Sun/Part Sun		
<i>Clematis pitcheri</i> *	Purple Leatherflower	Vine																							10f	5f	P	Avg	Sun/Part Sun		
<i>Lonicera sempervirens</i> *	Coral Honeysuckle	Vine																							20f	3f	P	Avg	Sun/Part Sun		



Tomatillos The Overlooked Heirlooms

Article and photos by Terri Simon, Master Gardener

No one claimed the bag of tomatillos after the July First Tuesday meeting, so I did. I'm not sure how they got overlooked, but to me they were like a Christmas present. Wrapped in a brown husk, they were waiting to be opened and rinsed and I couldn't wait to get them home and try my first salsa verde, or green tomatillo salsa, as some call it. Some were yellow because they had ripened a little more, but that was fine with me. When they are yellow, their flavor is not as tart, and my co-workers raved about that batch of green salsa. I was ready to make another batch.

There is some disagreement on what classifies a plant as an heirloom. They are open pollinated plants with great flavor and retain their original genes. Many of these original heirlooms are kept by two main seed collecting depositories: The Seed Saver's Exchange, located in Decorah, Iowa and the Svalbard Global Seed Vault located in Norway. Some say that varieties grown before 1951 are heirlooms. This is when the primary hybrids were developed. Others know there are heirlooms that have been cultivated for hundreds of years.

Tomatillos (*Physalis ixocarpa*) are in the nightshade (Solanaceae) family and related to tomatoes. They are also called ground cherries or Chinese lanterns. Archaeologists believe tomatillos are some of the oldest plants in the tomato family and go back 52 million years. Yes, Penn State researchers found fossilized tomatillos dating back that far! The plants are native in Mexico and Central America and were used in Aztec and Mayan dishes. Today tomatillos are grown outdoors around the world in warm areas and several varieties are available. There are the standard green varieties, some yellow cultivars and even purple tomatillos. They have a tart flavor and can be cooked or eaten raw. They can be used in many ways: baking, in desserts, curries, marmalades, stews, green salsas (salsa verde) and as a base for a green mole (pronounced MO-lay) sauce that also uses serrano peppers.

To grow tomatillos in our area, plant seeds indoors for at least 6-8 weeks before transplanting them outside. They should be transplanted at least 2 weeks after the last freeze in our area. If you buy starts, plant them outside after the last freeze as well. In zone 9b, they are an annual but in zones 10-11 they can be perennials. They mature in 60-80 days. In our area, it's possible to have two crops a year. Tomatillos are hardy in zones 5-12. Remember that tomatillos are not tomatoes. They look different, they have a tart taste, and they are smaller. Depending on the variety, their average size can range from ½" to between 2-3". Purple varieties are sweeter and can be eaten raw.



Tomatillos



Tomatillos The Overlooked Heirlooms

Continued

For increased production, try growing two varieties. Plants should be 2 feet apart and rows 3 feet apart. They need at least 6 hours of sun but cannot handle our tough Texas afternoon heat. Use a shade cloth if necessary or plant them in the shade of larger plants. They can get bushy and large so prepare to cage or stake them.

Tomatillos like watering, but don't overwater. Allow plants to dry a little between watering. They like well-draining, slightly acid soil with a pH between 6.0-7.0. Check the pH of your soil; if it is lower, add lime, if it is higher, add a little sulfur. Use mulch to hold moisture in and lower evaporation. Common varieties that do well include Rio Grande Verde, Toma Roja and Purple de Milpa. Tomatillos are heavy feeders, but try and stick to organic fertilizers. Espoma Tomato-tone has good nutrients along with calcium, which can help eliminate blossom-end rot.

Your tomatillos will be ready to harvest when they feel firm and the husk changes color from green to light green or light brown. This should be approximately 60-80 days after planting.

References:

[University of Wisconsin-Madison: Heirloom Vegetables](https://hort.extension.wisc.edu/articles/heirloom-vegetables/)

<https://hort.extension.wisc.edu/articles/heirloom-vegetables/>

[OSU Extension Service: Grow Your Own Tomatoes and Tomatillos](https://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/pub/ec-1333-grow-your-own-tomatoes-tomatillos)

<https://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/pub/ec-1333-grow-your-own-tomatoes-tomatillos>

[Santa Fe College: Tomatillos](https://www.sfcollege.edu/floridaheritagefoods/collections/latin-american/tomatillo.html#main)

<https://www.sfcollege.edu/floridaheritagefoods/collections/latin-american/tomatillo.html#main>



Yellow tomatillos

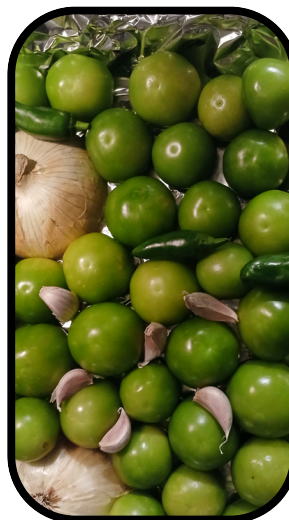
Green Tomatillo Salsa

Yield: about 6 cups



Recipe

- 5 lbs. tomatillos
- 1 medium onion, unpeeled, cut in half
- 5-7 jalapeño peppers
- 5-8 garlic cloves, unpeeled
- 4-6 tbsp fresh lime juice
- 1 bundle roughly chopped cilantro (add to processor, do not broil)
- Salt to taste, optional



Tomatillos before broiling



Roasted tomatillos

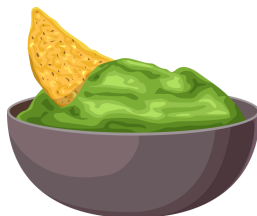


Tomatillos The Overlooked Heirlooms

Continued

Green Tomatillo Salsa

Yield: about 6 cups



Enjoy!

Instructions:

- Use the broiler setting on the oven. Place foil-lined baking pan on the second level from the top of the oven. Don't place it on the first. This is too close to the broiler element.
- Husk the tomatillos and rinse well. Dry and place on the baking pan with the unpeeled onion halves (peel side up), the peppers and unpeeled garlic cloves. Oven temps vary, so watch carefully. Broiling should take approximately 5 minutes or less on top side, then flip and broil reverse side of the vegetables. Broiling the bottom halves takes less time, so watch closely. Even 1 minute can make a difference. There is a difference between charred and burnt.
- Remove as much skin as possible from the tomatillos. I do not core them because the cores are small. If you try to completely skin and core the tomatillos, there will be nothing left. Remove the skin from the onion and chop it into a few large pieces. Peel the garlic cloves. I scrape off as much skin as I can from the jalapeños; remove the seeds if you wish. Try to discard as much of the charred pieces as possible or you will have black specks throughout your salsa. Reserve the liquid from the pan so you can add it back if you need it.
- In a food processor place the tomatillos, onion, peppers and garlic. Process until combined. If the salsa is too thick, add back some of the reserved liquid from the pan. I prefer to add the cilantro last because I like to see a few green flakes in the salsa. If salsa is still too thick, add 1 tablespoon of water at a time, to reach your desired consistency. Add the lime juice last. Add a little at a time and taste. Now is the time to add salt. I use maybe 1 teaspoon because I prefer to let the seasonings speak for themselves. If you are planning to process the green salsa, you may want to add an additional 1/2 teaspoon of citric acid.
- Store leftover salsa in the fridge for up to 5 days or can and process the remainder.



Tomatillos in blender

Notes: This recipe is flexible. You can add jalapenos and garlic in the amount you are comfortable with. Yellow tomatillos are green tomatillos that have ripened a little more. They make a slightly milder tomatillo sauce.

- Uses: Serve with chips for a snack. Tomatillo salsa is versatile. You can use it at breakfast as a topping on omelets, migas or as a salsa on soft breakfast tacos.
- It can be used as a topping on nachos or as a sauce for enchiladas. Top it with your favorite cheese.

Tip: if you decide to can it, you can give it away as presents or grab a jar of it along with a bag of chips as an appetizer for parties.



Have Garden Questions? Submit your questions to: <https://hcmga.tamu.edu/ask-a-question/>



Growing with Plants and Nature

by Growing with Plants & Nature – Youth Activities Committee

Activity created by Nerandra Cordova, Master Gardener, with contributions from Robyn Adair, Master Gardener Program Coordinator

SOIL

@HomeActivity



A lesson on soil texture

PURPOSE: to help students experiment and learn what type of soils conduct and retain water to help plants grow.

WHAT IS SOIL:

- the loose material that covers the land surfaces of the Earth.
- where most plants grow.
- made up of remains of minerals, plants and animals.
- a place where small organisms live, including fungi, bacteria, insects, worms and other animals.
- made up of three types of soil particles or bits: sand, silt, and clay.

MATERIALS:

Demonstration

- 1 L clear bottle
- Black sharpie
- Metric Ruler (10 cm)
- A soil sample from nature (enough to fill 10 cm)
- Water

Activity 1

- Different types of “pure” soil for testing: sand, clay, silt or potting soil
- Zip plastic bags

Activity 2

- Water
- 3 small cups
- 3 larger clear plastic cups
- 3 wide mouth mason jars
- Stop watch
- Nail (or other object for poking holes in cups)

Demonstration

1. This should be prepared in advance of the activity to give particles time to settle.
2. Measure and mark 10 cm on the side of bottle.
3. Add soil sample to clear bottle up to 10 cm.
4. Add water to bottle, leaving some airspace.
5. Shake bottle and allow to settle 1-2 hours.
6. Allow participants to observe and measure the different colors and textures of soil after the activities.

Activity 1

1. Ask participants to observe and touch the soils.
2. Ask participants to describe the colors, size differences, and how they feel, etc.
3. Encourage them to predict what the soils could be used for, and which will be the best for growing plants.
4. Tell participants the name of each soil type.
5. Compare their predictions after part 2.



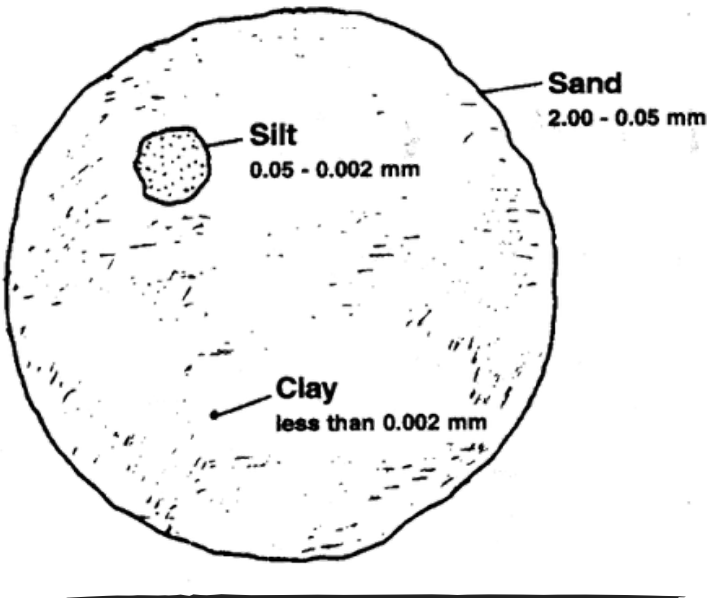
Growing with Plants and Nature

Continued

@HomeActivity

SOIL

A lesson on soil texture



Activity 2

1. Using the nail make five small holes on the small plastic cups to help the water drain.
2. Fill each plastic cup with one of the three different types of soil.
3. Label each plastic cup with the name of the soil
4. Place each cup inside of a clear cup to catch water.
5. Get the stop watch ready to time how long the water takes to pass through the soil.
6. Pour equal quantities of water in the cup with the sand and start the stop watch to tell how long the water took to drain from the cup.
7. Measure the amount of water that went through.
8. Repeat steps 5-7 with the silt and the clay soil.
9. Which soil retains the most water?
10. Which soil will you recommend for growing plants?

Come out to see us in September for a fall vegetable planting activity, and in October for a creepy-crawly bugs and spiders activity!

Houston Science Festival,
Saturday, September 7, 2024
9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Humble Civic Center
8233 Will Clayton Pkwy, Humble, TX 77338



KBR Kids Day & Tony Marron Park Send-Off
Saturday, October 19, 2024
11:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Tony Marron Park
808 N York St, Houston, TX 77003
Buffalo Bayou East, Free Event, Kids Day

Trick or Treat
Friday, October 25, 2024
5:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Woodchase Park
3951 Woodchase Dr, Houston, TX 77042



Save the Date for an activity in December!

Christmas Celebration
Friday, December 6, 2024
5:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Woodchase Park
3951 Woodchase Dr, Houston, TX 77042





Growing with Plants and Nature

Continued

@HomeActivity

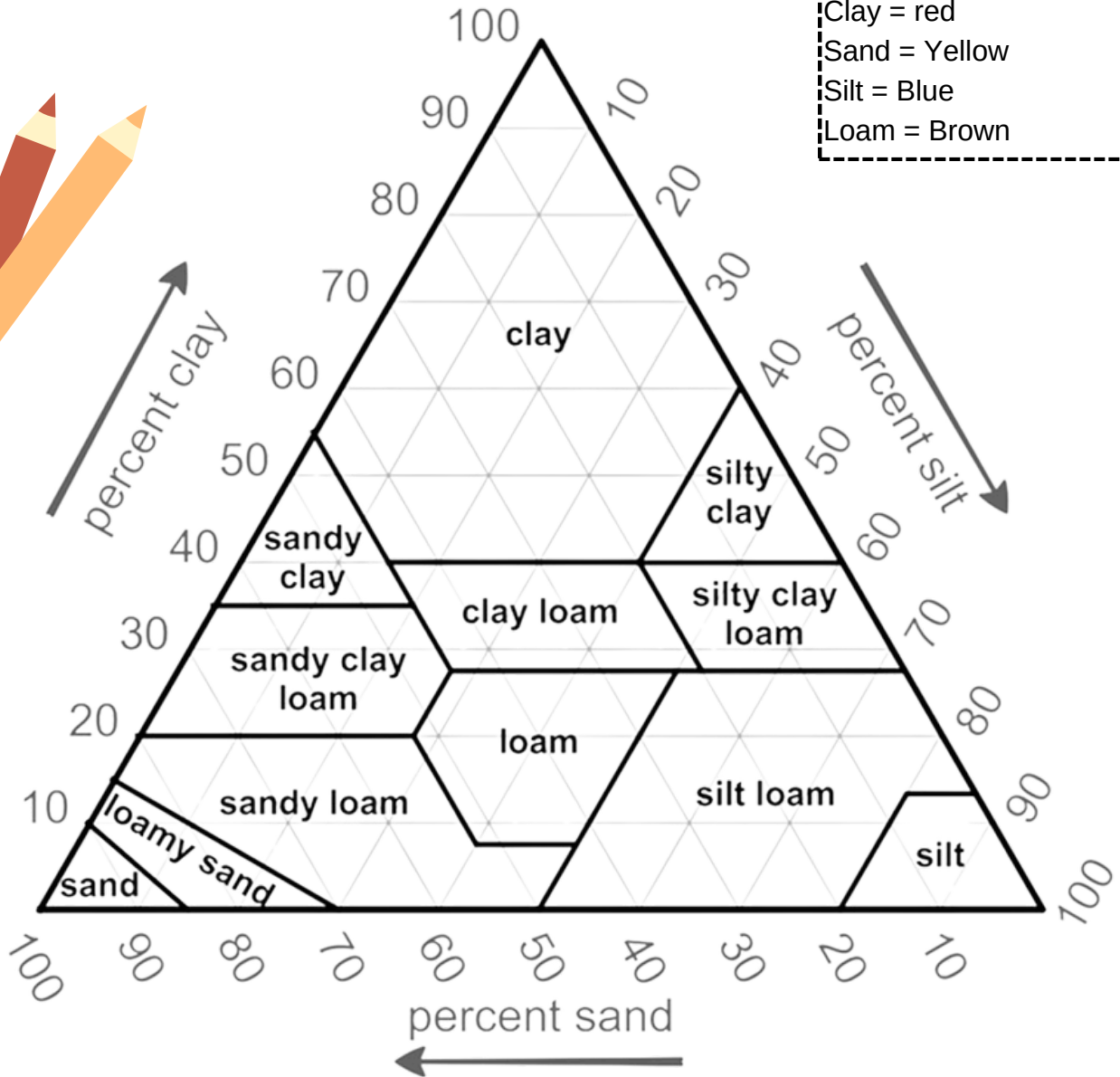
SOIL

A lesson on soil texture



Color the Soil Texture Triangle using the following key:

- Clay = red
- Sand = Yellow
- Silt = Blue
- Loam = Brown



Growing with Plants and Nature offers children and their families opportunities for learning about gardening and nature through hands-on activities and lessons focused on plants and the creeping, crawling, and flying creatures with whom the plants share the natural environment. We provide programs to community organizations, plant sales, fairs, farmers markets, and other events.



Native Plant Spotlight

Plant Natives for Extreme Weather

Article and photos by Robin Kendrick-Yates,

Advanced Master Gardener: Composting & Entomology



Scarlet Sage, Gulf Coast Penstemon, Coreopsis, and Rattlesnake Master in the Native Garden Bed at Genoa Friendship Gardens

Houston is becoming quite familiar with extreme weather. For example, during the winter of 2020-2021, while I was waiting to hear if I had been accepted into the Master Gardener training class, Winter Storm Uri put a frozen lock on the entire state. The Houston mercury plunged to 13° F, setting all sorts of records.

And then last year, just two years after Uri, we redefined what extreme heat means. We experienced 45 consecutive days of 100°F or higher and no measurable rainfall for 8 weeks! Once again, setting the worst kinds of records. And let's not forget the city's perennial flooding. For plants, surviving those conditions is only for the hardiest of species. Which are the best for our gardens and landscaping as we plan for the future?

I suggest that native plants, meaning the plants here before European colonizers arrived, are the proven champions for enduring the extremes of our climate. What makes natives so durable?

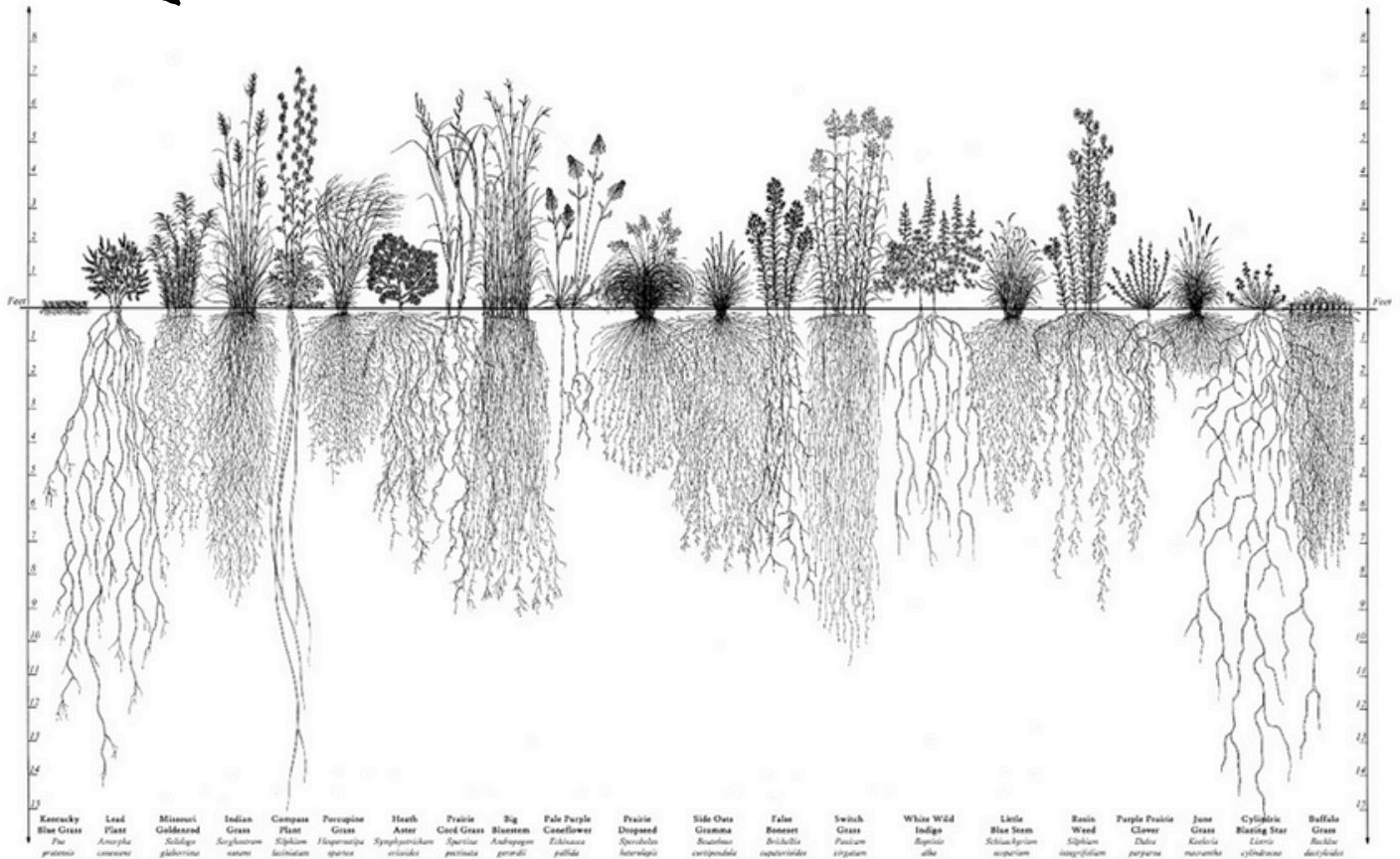
The Texas Gulf Coast was once coastal tallgrass prairie, of which less than 1% remains today. The prairie used to endure heavy grazing and disturbance from bison and periodical wildfires. How did the plants thrive during such devastation? The answer is not visible to the casual observer. It is below, in the soil, where the deep root system of prairie plants gives them the survivability advantages we are looking for through climate extremes.

Note the diagram on the next page by Dr. Natura showing the root systems of prairie plants. The depth of the established prairie plants is measured in feet, not inches, with some reaching over 10 feet deep! Both native grasses and flowering plants form a sod of deeply interconnected roots. In this way, 75% of the prairie's biomass is actually underground. Thus, the life of these plants is insulated from the heat and drought of summer, the frost and freezing of winter, in addition to the floods throughout the year. They may go dormant for a spell, but are more likely to survive than say, for example, St. Augustine, or other turfgrass. St. Augustine's shallow roots are in the diagram too, way, way over on the far left. Compared to the native prairie plants, it barely has any roots at all.

It should be noted that it will take several years for perennials to become established once they have been introduced to your yard. They may require supplemental irrigation through any dry spells during this period of adaptation. Yet, once established, plants that evolved in this ecosystem, in this soil, with this sub-tropical climate, are more likely to survive the extreme weather that is becoming more of a concern for gardeners here in southeast Texas.



Native Plant Spotlight
 Plant Natives for Extreme Weather
Continued



Root Systems of Prairie Plants

Living Habitats

Heidi Natura 1997

Used with permission. Heidi Natura

If you are curious as to what are some possible options for your yard or garden, I have provided three lists in the links below. If you would like to dive deeper into native plants, now is the time to sign up for the Native Plant Landscaping Certification Classes (<https://www.npsot.org/our-work/class-schedule/>). I have taken all 4 levels and enjoyed each one.

Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center
 Special Collections Western Gulf Coastal Plain
<https://www.wildflower.org/collection/collection.php?collection=er34>

Native Plant Society of Texas
 Native Plant Database for Ecoregion Gulf Coast Prairies and Marshes
https://www.npsot.org/posts/native-plant/?_sfm_max_height=0+120&_sfm_max_spread=0+80&_sfm_ecoregion=Gulf%20Coast%20Prairies%20and%20Marshes

Native Plant Society of Texas
 Greater Houston Area Plant List
<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/9no5p3ta0414bj7a0x1q/NPSOT-Houston-Area-List-20.0615.pdf?rlkey=3pm4ki7qhjne851qbmug85yws&e=1&dl=0>



Native Plant Spotlight
 Plant Natives for Extreme Weather
Continued

Also, three years ago, the kind folks at GFG gave me permission to develop a native plant landscaping bed. Throughout the year, you will find various plants in bloom, going to seed, and reproducing. I have been known to thin the 'babies' and pot them up for my master gardener colleagues! I am recruiting other native plant enthusiasts to assist me in the management and development of this bed. If you are interested, please contact me, or just show up on most Mondays and Saturday workdays. There is always something that we can do. Right now I need help with pulling out unwanted species in the frogfruit and horseherb ground cover areas. Bring your gloves, soil knife/spade, and we can learn more about these wonderful plants together. I hope to see you soon!



Native Plant Landscaping Demonstration Bed at GFG, with new natural pathway added, and Bluebonnets in bloom



Frogfruit groundcover demonstration



Purple Coneflower and Texas Coneflower

References:

- [National Park Service Tallgrass Prairie Ecosystem](https://www.nps.gov/tapr/learn/nature/a-complex-prairie-ecosystem.htm)*
- <https://www.nps.gov/tapr/learn/nature/a-complex-prairie-ecosystem.htm>*
- [Native Plant Society of Texas Native Landscape Certification Program](https://www.npsot.org/our-work/class-schedule/)*
- <https://www.npsot.org/our-work/class-schedule/>*



Recipe Spotlight

Roasted Butternut Squash and Tomato Sauce

Article and photo by
Jo Ann Stevenson, Master Gardener



You can thank me now. I almost brought you a pumpkin spice recipe, but I came to my senses!! This time of year we are inundated with pumpkin spice everything. As soon as September 1 hits, my inbox and my social media feeds are filled with recipes containing pumpkin spice. I do admit that we've made a very good pumpkin granola for yogurt parfaits and a very tasty pumpkin chocolate chip muffin – but I promise I won't do that to you this year, and we will see if I have that same strength when next year comes around.

Getting back on track, this spotlight recipe makes use of butternut squash that is plentiful this time of year and into the early winter. We served this sauce over homemade potato gnocchi, but you could serve it over pasta, chicken parmesan, meatballs or even spaghetti squash. It would also be delicious as a dip for fried cheese or baked potato wedges, or as a base for pizza.



The sauce has great color and consistency



Sauce served over gnocchi with side salad

Tips:

- You can use fresh butternut squash or purchase pre-peeled and cubed squash.
- You can leave out the wine. If the sauce is too chunky for your liking, feel free to add some vegetable broth to loosen it up.
- If you use a blender, be sure to pulse it if you do not want a smooth sauce.

[Original recipe](https://sweetsimplevegan.com/roasted-butternut-squash-tomato-sauce/) can be found at <https://sweetsimplevegan.com/roasted-butternut-squash-tomato-sauce/>

Roasted Butternut Squash and Tomato Sauce

Prep time: 10 minutes

Cook time: 40 minutes

Servings: 5

Ingredients

- 10 cloves garlic, peeled
- 2 lbs. medium tomatoes, stems removed
- 2 cups cubed butternut squash
- 1 large onion, peeled and roughly chopped
- 1/2 cup dry red wine (such as Pinot Noir)
- 1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tablespoon chopped sage leaves (or 1 teaspoon chopped dried leaves)
- 1 tablespoon chopped rosemary leaves (or 1 teaspoon chopped dried leaves)
- 1/2 teaspoon Italian seasoning
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/2 teaspoon sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
- 3 tablespoons tomato paste

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees.
2. In a large casserole dish, add all of the ingredients except the tomato paste and mix until everything is evenly distributed. Place into the oven and roast for about 40 minutes or until the skins start to lift from the tomatoes.
3. Once roasted, remove the dish from the oven and allow it to cool for 10-15 minutes.
4. Carefully transfer everything from the baking dish with all of the juices into a food processor (or blender) along with the tomato paste and pulse until you reach your desired consistency. You can process it until smooth or keep some texture. Adjust seasonings to taste.
5. Reheat the sauce if using immediately or transfer it into an airtight container to store in the refrigerator for about a week or in the freezer for 3-4 months.



Bug Spotlight

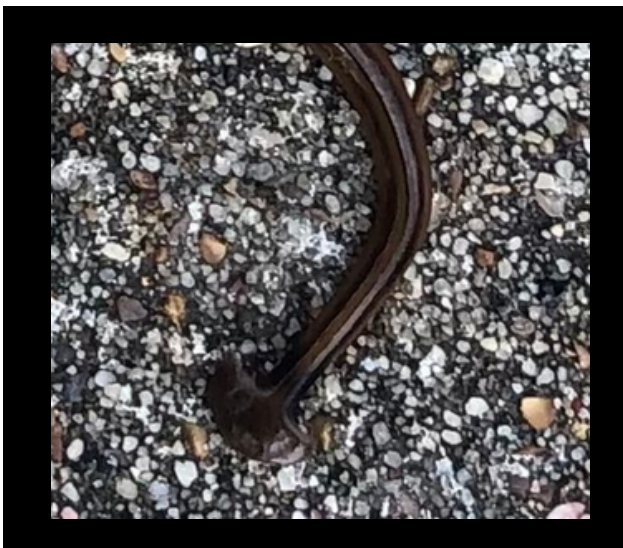
Hammerhead Worms

Article and photos by Debra Caldwell, Advanced Master Gardener: Entomology

Hurricane Beryl brought fallen trees, no power, squadrons of mosquitoes and now an increase in hammerhead worms *Bipalium kewense*! This invasive species, originally from Southeast Asia, was introduced to the United States in 1891. They were reported in the Beaumont area in the 1980s. These invertebrates thrive in damp, humid and warm habitats (sounds like Harris County) and now are distributed around the world.

The carnivorous worms prey on earthworms, slugs, insect larvae and other invertebrates. They pose a threat to ecosystems, farmlands and gardens because they target earthworms. Unlike earthworms, which are segmented worms in phylum Annelida, hammerhead worms belong to phylum Platyhelminthes or flatworms. You might remember a cousin, the cute little planarians (now genus *Dugesia*) from your biology classes.

Flatworms have a digestive system with only one opening at the end of a pharynx. To capture prey, they push them to the soil's surface and cover them in slime. The hammerhead worm secretes a neurotoxin, tetrodotoxin, which is also produced by pufferfish and some newts. The neurotoxin immobilizes their prey. They pump digestive enzymes into the hapless victim and suck the digested tissues back into the pharynx. After the food is digested and nutrients are absorbed, waste passes out through the same opening in the pharynx.



Hammerheads lack respiratory systems, relying instead on diffusion of gases throughout their flat bodies. Their nervous system is rudimentary with cerebral ganglia and nerve cords. The head region contains light sensitive receptors and auricles which give them the 'hammerhead'. The auricles contain receptors that are sensitive to touch, moisture and chemicals. The worms have both male and female reproductive systems in the same body which allows them to reproduce sexually but they also have the ability to regenerate body parts.

Bug Spotlight: Hammerhead Worms

Continued



Their neurotoxin can cause nausea and vomiting in our pets and children if ingested and can cause skin irritation if held in your hand. In addition, flatworms such as the hammerhead carry parasites. The Texas Invasive Species Institute recommends wearing plastic gloves when picking them up. Put the worm in a Ziploc bag with salt and vinegar or orange essence (citrus oil) and dispose of the plastic bag. DO NOT cut the worm into pieces because each half can regenerate into a new worm!

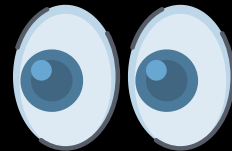
I saw the hammerhead worm shown in the photos on my neighbor's sidewalk in Katy a couple of years ago. These pests have been with us for quite some time, but we may see an increase because conditions here during the summers are so favorable.

The Texas Invasive Species Institute tracks the distribution and prevalence of these pests.

<https://tsusinvasives.org/home/database/bipalium-kewense>

To report a sighting of a hammerhead worm you:

- can either set up an account <https://www.texasinvasives.org/observations/login.php> or
- send an email to invasives@shsu.edu with the location information and an image



Have Garden Questions?

Submit your questions to:

<https://hcmga.tamu.edu/ask-a-question/>

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Goodness
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Getting Down to Earth

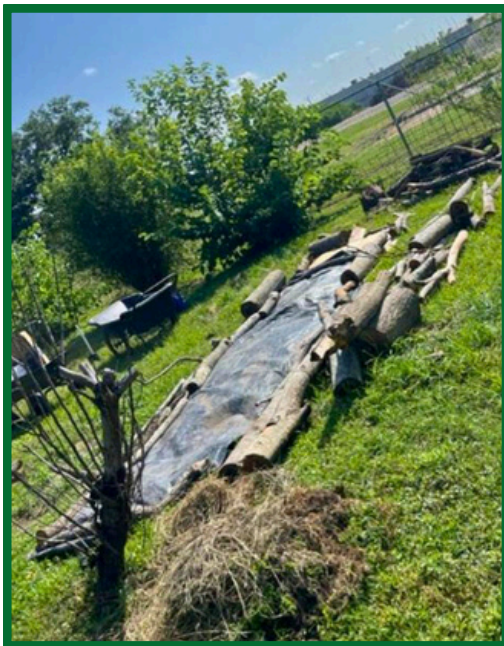
News from Genoa Friendship Gardens – Houston, 77034

Article by Pam Longley, Master Gardener

Photos by Robin Yates, Advanced Master Gardener: Composting & Entomology and Pat Daniels, Master Gardener

I am devoting my column this time to all the interns who have come out to GFG to help with our projects this summer. We are so grateful!

We had two intern class days at the Education Building on July 11 and August 1. I was there for the second class and enjoyed getting to know some of the enthusiastic ladies working their way to Master Gardener status, including The Tracies! There was a big group in the greenhouse bumping up broccoli and cauliflower starts after Robin Yates taught a class on composting inside and outside. After lunch, there were several speakers who came out to do the afternoon sessions.



Materials being staged for the new Hügelkultur garden



Sarah Bell cleaning the area



Ken Neville and Sarah Bell sifting compost

Robin Yates is leading the building of a Hügelkultur, which is a raised garden bed constructed of a bottom layer of large branches, then a layer of smaller branches, followed by a layer of compostable biomass and then one of garden soil. It is considered a permaculture practice and has been used by Germans and Eastern Europeans as a gardening method for hundreds of years. Sarah Bell, Ken Neville, Tracy Mason and Tracy Jenkins are the interns involved in this project.



Before photo of the pond

Pat Daniels' prayers were answered when Martin and Andrew volunteered to help clean out the pond. Pat cut cattails for a vegan intern who eats them. Martin donned waders and vet gloves and braved the muck with a smile. We are getting iris, hibiscus laevis, marsh milkweed and lizard tails plants from Urban Harvest to replant.



After photo with Martin Volz

Getting Down to Earth

Continued

Georgia Watson has volunteered to take over our glorious and WILD wildflower garden. She has had plenty of practice with natives in her own garden.



Texas wildflowers



The Greenhouse



Avid weeders Thomas Gibbs and Becky McGraw Wall

Maggie Mentakis, 2023 intern and now certified Master Gardener, has answered the call (more like the plea) to be the point person for the greenhouse.



Christ the Good Shepherd Garden – Spring 77379

Article and Photos by Jack Goodwin, Master Gardener

At CGS garden, we are once again at the midsummer rotation cycle for our raised beds. Ten of our beds are in solarization mode for a few weeks to rest the soil and kill all weed seeds before the next planting cycle. We stretch plastic sheeting over the beds and anchor them with bricks to prevent winds from moving the plastic. Within a month to six weeks, prior to our next planting in those beds, we will remove the plastic sheeting, till the soil and add 13-13-13 fertilizer and our homemade compost.



10 plastic covered beds



Okra



After completing the tomato, squash and pepper harvest, we planted six beds of okra. We had almost 100 percent germination of the okra seeds, which were planted four weeks ago. The plants are eight to twelve inches tall and will be thinned in a week or two for maximum growth space.

Getting Down to Earth

Continued

Our eight beds with sweet potatoes are growing well, and we are hoping for a big harvest during the fall and winter.



Sweet potatoes

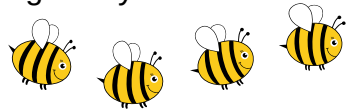


Jack Goodwin



CGS Bee Castle

In the next issue, we will give an update on our beehive project, which is coming along nicely.



Our workdays are Mondays, Thursdays and Saturdays from 7:30 a.m. to 10 a.m. Come visit our garden on Klein Church Road in Klein.



Christ The Good Shepherd Garden is a 100% volunteer operated vegetable donation garden benefiting food pantry facilities in the Spring Klein area. Most of our volunteers are members of the Christ the Good Shepherd church, the owners of the garden. Several master gardeners are involved on a weekly basis. CGS is a year-round operation with 28 raised beds forty feet long. These beds are refurbished after each harvest with tilling, fertilizing with 13-13-13 and adding compost from our year-round compost operation headed by John Zdansky with help from many volunteers. Five large silos full of grass clippings and chopped leaves are aged, watered and turned for two to three months.



Master Gardener Spotlight

Article by the Membership Committee

Master Gardener of the Month

July

Congratulations!

Jess Johnson, a member of class of 2023, is Master Gardener of the month for July.

Born and raised in Northern California, Jess and her family relocated to Katy in 2018. She has always loved gardening and growing her own food but found incredible joy when she started growing vegetables for her neighborhood, too. Jess loves to visit nurseries and botanical gardens on any trip her family takes, and you will often find her flying home with a plant as a carry-on. With a calling for community service and a passion for teaching others to garden, joining the Master Gardener program was a perfect fit. Jess is a member of many committees but most notably heads the Westside Sales Committee where her enthusiasm for fundraising gets to shine.

Thank you, Jess, for all you do!



August

Congratulations!



Jennifer Elfert, a member of class of 2023, is Master Gardener of the month for August.

With experience exceeding two decades, Jennifer's story began like many others — in a simple backyard garden. Although mishaps often outnumbered victories, each challenge became a lesson that deepened her love for horticulture. She's always been a plant pusher and eager to share her garden with neighbors and friends. Following a 15-year career in digital marketing and events, she found her clients increasingly seeking horticultural guidance until it eventually took the spotlight.

She spent several years as Creative Director at Dewberry Farm, converting more than 20,000 square feet of empty land into lush garden displays, planning immersive seasonal themes and horticultural initiatives across the expansive 100-acre venue. To her, gardening symbolizes more than just plants; it signifies relationships and the creation of spaces for people to connect with and appreciate nature, prompting her focus to include residential gardens.

From crafting seasonal displays and sidewalk planters to creating a vibrant herb garden or reviving a forgotten space, her commitment lies in showcasing the transformative power of plants. In her role as a Master Gardener (when her hands are not covered in soil), she values the mentorship of experienced gardeners and enjoys working with the gardening community to help spread knowledge among Harris County residents.

Thank you, Jennifer, for all you do!



MASTER GARDENERS in the city

NEW! Visit our
Ask a Master Gardener
table in the Family Gardens
1st Saturday of each month!

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension
in partnership with
Hermann Park Conservancy
are pleased to present

Master Gardeners in the City at McGovern Centennial Gardens

The Harris County Master Gardeners maintain the vegetable, herb, berry, and citrus beds in the Family Garden on Tuesday and Thursday mornings, so if you see one of us working there, feel free to say hi.

McGovern Centennial Gardens at Hermann Park
1500 Hermann Drive
Houston, Texas 77004

Extension programs serve people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, disability or national origin.
The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas cooperating.

If you would like to receive new editions of the Urban Dirt newsletter each month, please add your name to the mailing list [HERE!](#)



Plant Spotlight

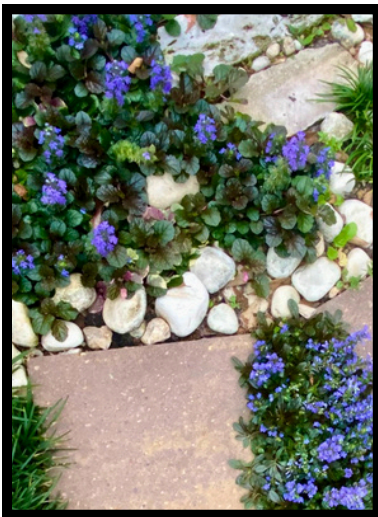
Ajuga reptans

Article and photos by Jennifer Elfert, Master Gardener



Ajuga (*Ajuga reptans*), also known as bugleweed or carpet bugle, is a perennial, hardy in zones 3 to 9, in the Ajugeae tribe of the mint family Lamiaceae. Some resources state that this plant is invasive, however, I have yet to see that anywhere in our region. It grows best in partial shade, although the foliage develops its best color in full sun. It tolerates most any kind of soil and prefers a moist location that drains easily. Although small, ajugas are tough enough to help with erosion or simply add color to a shady corner where nothing else seems to grow.

This plant blooms with stunning bluish-purple flower spikes every year around April, but I focus on growing ajuga for its beautiful ground hugging, high contrasting foliage. It's well-behaved at the front edge of a garden and perfect for filling in crevices where its puffy scalloped leaves soften the edge of stepping stones and walkways.



Ajuga is not only appreciated for its aesthetic appeal but also for its low-maintenance nature. It's deer-resistant and can choke out weeds, providing a natural weed barrier. This makes it an excellent ground cover choice for both novice gardeners and seasoned horticulturists alike.

Ajuga has short runners that root the plant in soil, however, they tend to clump over themselves and become over-crowded. To maintain plant health, it's best to thin clumps every two to three years. Just lift the runners and snip off the rooted pieces to plant elsewhere or pass along to a friend.

Whether you're looking to add a splash of color to a shady garden, to fill in gaps between pavers or simply enjoy low, lush foliage, ajuga is a great solution. Its ability to thrive in various conditions while requiring minimal care makes it a beloved choice for many garden enthusiasts.

A photograph showing a clump of Ajuga reptans with pink, cream, and white flowers growing between large, dark rocks.

Burgundy Glow Ajuga has tricolored foliage shades of pink, cream, and white. Photos show how plant nestles itself neatly between rocks without invading nearby plants

A photograph showing a clump of Ajuga reptans with purple and green foliage growing between large, dark rocks.

Reference:

[Recommended Ornamental Plants for Southeast Texas Including Houston and Beaumont: Ground Covers](https://aggie-hort.tamu.edu/plantanswers/publications/beamont/ground.html)
<https://aggie-hort.tamu.edu/plantanswers/publications/beamont/ground.html>





Herb Spotlight

Papalo, *Porophyllum ruderale*

Article by Jennifer Bennett, Master Gardener Intern

Photos by Aurora, Master Gardener Intern

While gardeners' thoughts turn to cooler weather, we still have a lot of warm days to enjoy. As you sip your favorite drink and nibble on salsa made with cilantro that you had to buy because cool-season cilantro can't make it through our heat, consider an alternative that you can grow for just such an occasion—papalo or *Porophyllum ruderale*. It is also referred to as summer cilantro, quilquiña, yerba porosa, killi and papaloquelite. "Papaloquelite" is the Nahuatl word for butterfly leaf, possibly because the plant attracts pollinators.



Thriving papalo in Centennial Gardens

Papalo is an annual that thrives in warm tropical to sub-tropical zones. It is native to South America and has spread through Central America and the Southwestern United States. It predates cilantro, which was introduced to Mexico in 1500. Papalo was a culinary ingredient used in the Aztec and Incan civilizations and was used to treat stomach ailments, reduce inflammation after injuries and lower blood pressure.

Today papalo is served fresh to be sprinkled over tacos, soups, salads, salsas, and paired with just about any seafood or meat dish. In Bolivia, restaurants place a fresh vase of papalo at the table, tearing the leaves slightly to release the aroma. Martha Stewart has a burrata recipe that uses diced papalo leaves.

You can easily grow papalo from seeds, which look like dandelion seeds with a stalk and umbrella. Papalo loves heat and light. In our climate, you would sow the seeds in the spring, but I encourage you to experiment now and take some notes for next year. It only takes 5-20 days for seeds to sprout, and the best tasting leaves are the young ones. Older leaves have a more pungent flavor. Papalo is not a fussy plant. It does not need much water or particularly great soil. It is pest-repellant, probably due to its pungent smell. Harvest as you would basil, pinching off leaves to keep a bushier shape. If you are lucky with your experiment this fall and get a few plants, prune them to a few inches above the soil before a big frost.

But does it really taste like cilantro, you ask? Papalo has been described as a mixture of nasturtium, lime and cilantro by some and as a spicy mix of arugula and cilantro by others. Interestingly, there are two types of papalo—the narrow-leaf, with its soapy taste and the broad-leaf, which is the type used for its distinctive flavor in culinary dishes. Despite its strong smell from oil glands under the leaves which repel pests but attract butterflies, papalo has managed to intrigue the likes of famous chefs like Martha Stewart and Alice Waters.

And if we place fresh cuttings at the table, will Martha not approve? 🦋

References:

[Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences Extension, University of Florida Kids in the Garden - Global Gardening: Papalo \(including Burrata with Tomatillos, Malabar-Spinach Buds, and Papalo Recipe courtesy of Martha Stewart\).](https://www.ifas.ufl.edu/media/ifasufledu/martin/docs/pdfs/KidsintheGarden_Papalo.pdf)
https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/media/sfylifasufledu/martin/docs/pdfs/KidsintheGarden_Papalo.pdf

[Specialty Produce: Papalo](https://specialtyproduce.com/produce/Papalo_9186.php)
https://specialtyproduce.com/produce/Papalo_9186.php

[Papalo: Grow A Fantastic Cilantro Substitute](https://www.epicgardening.com/papalo-herb/)
<https://www.epicgardening.com/papalo-herb/>



Closer view of papalo

Ask A Master Gardener In Person Events

Saturday, September 7, 8 a.m.-12 p.m.
Urban Harvest
 2752 Buffalo Speedway, Houston, 77027

Saturday, September 7, 9 a.m.-12 p.m.
McGovern Centennial Gardens - Family Gardens
 1500 Hermann Dr, Houston, 77004

Saturday, September 7, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
Mercer Botanic Gardens
 22306 Aldine Westfield Rd, Humble, 77338

Saturday, September 14, 9 a.m.-1 p.m.
Tomball Farmers Market
 205 West Main St, Tomball, 77375

Saturday, September 14, 9 a.m.-12 p.m.
Farmers Market on Grand Parkway
Church of the Holy Apostles
 1225 Grand Parkway S, Katy, TX 77494

Monday, September 16, 8:30-11:30 a.m.
Genoa Friendship Gardens Open Garden Day
 1210 Genoa Red Bluff Rd, Houston, 77034

Saturday, September 21, 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
Towne Lake Farmers Market
 9955 Barker Cypress Rd, Cypress, 77433

Saturday, September 21, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
Mercer Botanic Gardens
 22306 Aldine Westfield Rd, Humble, 77338

Saturday, September 28, 8:00 a.m.-1:30 p.m.
Harris County Master Gardeners
Westside Fall Plant Sale at Alabonson Park
 9650 N. Houston Rosslyn Rd, Houston, 77088

Saturday, September 28, 8:30 a.m.-1 p.m.
Memorial Villages Farmers Market
 10840 Beinhorn Rd, Houston, 77024

Saturday, September 28, 10 a.m.-3 p.m.
Katy Area Safety Fest
 5000 Katy Mills Circle, Katy, 77494



Saturday, October 5, 8 a.m.-12 p.m.
Urban Harvest
 2752 Buffalo Speedway, Houston, 77027

Saturday, October 5, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
Mercer Botanic Gardens
 22306 Aldine Westfield Rd, Humble, 77338

Saturday, October 5, 9 a.m.-12 p.m.
McGovern Centennial Gardens
Family Gardens
 1500 Hermann Dr, Houston, 77004

Friday, October 11, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. and
 Saturday, October 12, 9 a.m.-1 p.m.
The Garden Club of Houston
82nd Annual Bulb and Plant Mart
The Church of St. John the Divine
 2450 River Oaks Blvd, Houston, 77019

Saturday, October 12, 9 a.m.-1 p.m.
Tomball Farmers Market
 205 West Main St, Tomball, 77375

Saturday, October 12, 9 a.m.-12 p.m.
Farmers Market on Grand Parkway
Church of the Holy Apostles
 1225 Grand Parkway S, Katy, TX 77494

Saturday, October 19, 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
Towne Lake Farmers Market
 9955 Barker Cypress Rd, Cypress, 77433

Saturday, October 19, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
Mercer Botanic Gardens
 22306 Aldine Westfield Rd, Humble, 77338

Saturday, October 19, 11 a.m.-6 p.m.
Christ the Good Shepherd Fall Festival
 18511 Klein Church Road, Spring, 77379

Monday, October 21, 8:30-11:30 a.m.
Genoa Friendship Gardens Open Garden Day
 1210 Genoa Red Bluff Rd, Houston, 77034

Saturday, October 26, 8:30 a.m.-1 p.m.
Memorial Villages Farmers Market
 10840 Beinhorn Rd, Houston, 77024



Genoa Friendship Gardens



The Flower Trial Garden



The Water Garden



The Greenhouse

The Texas A&M Extension Service and Harris County Master Gardeners
invite you to join us at

The Genoa Friendship Gardens

located at
1210 Genoa Red Bluff Road
Houston, Texas 77034

Weekly Garden Hours: Open all year round, Monday and Wednesday mornings,
9 a.m.-11 a.m. (weather permitting)

We welcome professional organizations, schools, churches and individuals tours of the
garden! If interested in a tour, please email the HCMGA Program Coordinator at
coordinator.harrishort@gmail.com

Open Garden Days

are on the 3rd Monday of the month, **March through October**, 8:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.
Admission to the Exhibit Gardens is free, and register at the Welcome Table
to receive additional monthly notices for children and family events.

- Tour the variety of exhibits to inspire you with vegetable, perennial, rose, tropical and native gardens.
- Visit our Ask a Master Gardener table for information about planting citrus, fruit or berries for your home orchard, or planting your vegetable garden.
- Contemplate the joy in the Earth-Kind Garden and catch a view of the Water Garden.
- Don't leave the GFG until you have shopped the Greenhouse where seasonal herbs, vegetables and perennials are available for sale.



Gardening Calendar

By Karen Shook, Master Gardener

As I write this in early August, rainfall has been well above historic averages. The forecasts say there is a small chance that this will continue. Keep your beds mulched and continue to check for "too wet, too dry, just right" and water accordingly.

"The best time to plant a tree was twenty years ago. The second-best time is now." — Chinese proverb. October, in our area, is prime time for planting woody ornamentals, shrubs, trees, vines, groundcovers and many types of annuals and perennials. Don't forget your fall vegetables.

Beryl just gave us a reminder to keep trees trimmed. September is often an active hurricane month. Speaking of reminders, start thinking about winter freeze precautions.

Perennials, Ornamental Grasses and Natives

- Some spring flowering perennials can be divided in September (daylilies, calla lilies and irises). Others should wait until it is a bit cooler in October (shasta daisy, gaillardia, cannas).
- When the weather cools a bit, plant new perennials and fertilize the new plantings with 1/2 strength soluble fertilizer. Marigolds, chrysanthemums or perhaps Texas Superstar Mari-mum (*Tagetes erecta*) are nice fall choices.
- Plant bluebonnet and Indian paintbrush seed in early fall. Scarified bluebonnet seeds germinate more quickly. Rake them gently into the ground.
- Consider adding columbines. Two native species of columbines are Red (*Aquilegia canadensis*) and Hinckley's (*Aquilegia chrysantha* var. *hinckleyana*)
- Continue deadheading (removing spent blossoms down to first set of leaves). As blooms decline, cut back perennials by 1/3 to help promote new growth. Gently work some compost into the soil around the plants, being careful to not disturb roots or rhizomes. Fertilize and water after cutting.

Annuals

- In September, start seeds for cool season flowers like snapdragons, stock, calendula, alyssum. They will typically be ready for transplant in October (6 to 8 weeks). You can start the hardening process once two sets of leaves appear. Note these plants can also be direct seeded in October.
- You may want to wait until November for pansies and violas although some sources include them in October plantings.
- Biennials like poppies, larkspur, bluebonnet seeded in October will germinate, spend the winter as a small plant, then in spring grow and bloom. Mix fertilizer into soil before planting.
- Lightly fertilize annual beds in October to give warm season annuals a boost and get cool season annuals off to a good start.

Bulbs

- Refrigerate tulip and hyacinth bulbs by late September to give adequate chill time for December planting.
- Plant bulbs (except tulip and hyacinth which are in your refrigerator waiting for December). A general guide is to plant at depth 3 times the diameter of the bulb (so a 2 inch diameter bulb would be planted at a depth of 6 inches). Mulch and water when you plant.
- In October, divide spring to early summer blooming bulbs (daffodils, paperwhites, amaryllis, columbine, purple coneflower, etc.).



Gardening Calendar

Continued

Roses

- Roses (other than once blooming) that were not pruned in late August, should be pruned in early September. Reduce size by 1/3 (or to desired height) making cuts just above a bud. Remove dead wood, diseased canes, twiggy growth. Fertilize and water after pruning. Continue regular fungicide spray schedule.
- No fertilizer should be used after early October (2 months before first frost).

Shrubs

- Check soil acidity. Many plants prefer slightly acidic soil and Harris County tends toward alkaline. Acidify as needed especially for acid loving azaleas and camellias.
- Red tip photinias sheared early in October should give a nice show with colorful new growth in cooler weather.
- Mid to early fall is a good time to take semi hardwood cuttings for plants you want to save in case of severe winter weather or plants you just want to share.

Lawns

- Apply pre-emergent herbicides in early to mid-October.
- Winterize your lawn in September or early October.
- Watch for brown patch (circular brown areas with yellowing grass at the outer edge of the circle). Milder temperatures and rainy weather encourage brown patch.
- If needed, plant sod in dead areas giving it time to establish before winter.

Edibles (vegetables, herbs, berries, fruits)

- It is time to plant most cool weather vegetables (after weather cools a bit, but not so late in September that we have a freeze before veggies are ready to harvest). Check your seed packet to estimate timing.
- See the following link for recommended plantings times:
- [Harris County Veg Planting Guide](https://harris.agrilife.org/files/2019/03/Vegetable-Planting-Chart-2019.pdf) <https://harris.agrilife.org/files/2019/03/Vegetable-Planting-Chart-2019.pdf>

Groundcovers and Vines

- October is planting time for groundcovers.



References:

A Garden Book for Houston. 2nd ed., River Oaks Garden Club, Houston, Tx 1968.

Groom, Dale, and Dan Gill. Texas Gardener's Handbook. Cool Springs Press, Minneapolis, MN, 2012.

Richter, Robert. Month-by-Month Gardening Texas. Cool Springs Press, Minneapolis, MN, 2014.

www.weather.gov/wrh/climate



Visit us at these social media pages:

Harris County Extension Horticulture Facebook Page

Harris County Master Gardeners Facebook Page

Harris County Master Gardeners Instagram Page

Green Thumb 2024 Gardening Series

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and the Harris County Master Gardeners are pleased to offer the FREE **Green Thumb Gardening Series of Lectures**
Got questions? Go to hcmga.tamu.edu/ask-a-question/

Second Monday, 10:00 A.M. – 11:30 A.M.

Houston Community College @Home Gardening Series

Register in advance to receive the link: <https://hcc.idloom.events/gardening-series/register>

Second Monday of each month

January 8 – *Intro to Aquaponics*

February 12 – *Success with Spring Vegetables*

March 18 – *Edible Landscaping*

April 8 – *Gardening in Containers*

May 13 – *Identifying “Good and Bad” Bugs*

June 10 – *Seed Saving and Starting*

July 8 – *Fall’s Best Vegetable Garden*

August 12 – *Growing Bulbs in Texas*

September 9 – *Heirloom and Pass-along Plants*

October 14 – *Gardening for Extreme Weather*

Third Tuesday, 11:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.

Harris County Public Library Facebook Live

No reservation required – <http://facebook.com/harriscountyppl/events>

Third Tuesday of each month

January 16 – *Intro to Aquaponics*

February 20 – *Success with Spring Vegetables*

March 19 – *Edible Landscaping*

April 16 – *Gardening in Containers*

May 21 – *Identifying “Good and Bad” Bugs*

June 18 – *Seed Saving and Starting*

July 16 – *Fall’s Best Vegetable Garden*

August 20 – *Growing Bulbs in Texas*

September 17 – *Heirloom and Pass-along Plants*

October 15 – *Gardening for Extreme Weather*



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Ask A Master Gardener Online

by the AAMGO Committee



Q: We had four 'Steeds Upright' Japanese holly shrubs that replaced Eugenia (which grew very well but did not survive a freeze) in a south-facing, full sun location in a front flowerbed. We bought some of the Steeds hollies from a nursery outside of Texas and some from Amazon. Two hollies died, one is barely alive and one was planted in the ground but looked like it was dying, so we put it in a container and moved it to a partial shade location in the back yard where it has survived. We planted a replacement holly in the front flower bed, and it died.

We thought we saw whiteflies attack them, so we treated regularly, but it didn't help. They may also have had some mildew. We're not sure if it is positioning of the shrubs or the soil itself. The bed is well-draining. Currently, they are a mess, though. Should I trim off all the dead branches and hope they will grow again to shape or are they too far gone to save. Any ideas?

We wanted four conical-shaped trees that would grow to be about 8' – 10' tall and cold and heat hardy for Houston. Do you have other plant suggestions for trees/shrubs to be planted close to the house before I try to replace them again? Thank you for your help.

A: Thank you for your question. Even though the 'Steeds Upright' Japanese holly is considered suitable for hardiness zones 5-9, the zone designation indicates whether a plant will be hardy in our average minimum low temperatures; it's not a good indication of how well a plant will handle our heat and humidity in the Houston area. Unfortunately, it looks like the various cultivars of Japanese hollies (*Ilex crenata*) don't do well in our full sun, high heat summer conditions, as you'll see in [THIS](#) article from North Carolina State University. You might be able to get Japanese hollies through a summer where we don't have many days above 100 degrees if they are planted somewhere where they get a lot of afternoon shade (which explains why the one plant perked up when you put it in a container and moved it to a shadier location), but summers like the one we had last year with several weeks of temperatures well over 100 are probably going to be too much for the Japanese hollies.

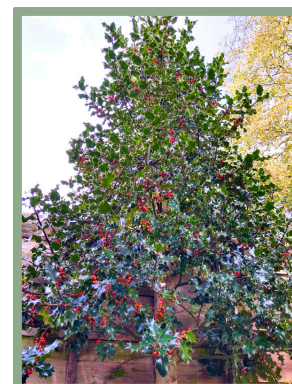
Your best strategy for finding great plants that will handle Houston's humidity and temperature extremes is to shop at our local independent nurseries. We can't recommend specific businesses, but nurseries like Enchanted Gardens, Enchanted Forest, Arbor Gate, Buchanan's Native Plants, Joshua's Native Plants, Nelson's Water Gardens, and Caldwell Nursery (to name a few that would be a reasonable drive from your zip code) carry plants that do well in our area and typically have knowledgeable staff.

We have several great resources that will help you identify plants that do well in our area before you shop and will give you more information about gardening in general and gardening for our area. The Earth-Kind® Plant Selector, found on our EarthKind Landscaping website below, is a great resource for researching plants that will do well in our area. Just type in your zip code to find your region. Then, put in the criteria for the type of plant you want. The Earth-Kind® Plant Selector rating system "takes into account the predicted water use, heat tolerance, plant adaptability to varied soil conditions, growth with little attention to applying fertilizer and the overall freedom from insect and disease pests." Ratings range from 1 to 10, 10 being the best adapted.

The Texas Superstar plant list has plants that have been tested and performed well all over the state, and our Harris County Horticulture website has links to a large selection of excellent gardening publications on a variety of topics. Here are the resources:

- [Earth-Kind® Landscaping](http://ekps.tamu.edu/) <http://ekps.tamu.edu/>
- [Texas Superstar Plants](https://texassuperstar.com/texas-superstar-plants/) <https://texassuperstar.com/texas-superstar-plants/>
- [Harris County Horticulture links to Landscape Plant Publications](#) - You'll want to start with [Native Plants for the Landscape](#) and [Recommended Landscape Plants](#).

I hope this information gives you some ideas for choosing the right plants for your landscape. Best wishes!



Ask A Master Gardener Online

Continued

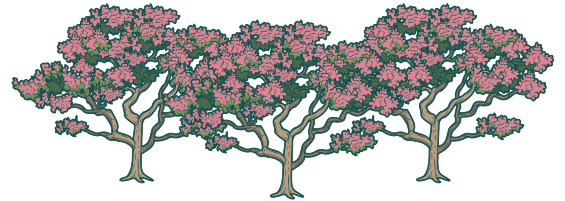


Q: Hurricane Beryl has blown down three crape myrtles in my front yard between the sidewalk and the street. The trees are about 15 feet tall with about a 6-inch diameter trunk, and I know that they are 30 years old because they were here when I bought this house. They're laying over on their side. Can they be propped back up and staked so they live or is it a lost cause, and I should just chainsaw them and haul them off?

A: Thank you for your email. I'm very sorry that your crape myrtles were uprooted. I've had a couple of trees die as a result of weather situations in recent years, and I know that it can be hard to lose them, and then deal with the landscape changes. Unfortunately, your crape myrtles are not likely to survive attempts to replant them, so it would be more practical to finish removing them.

Younger, smaller and recently planted trees stand a better chance at surviving the replanting process, as long as their roots haven't dried out, and then it will take some dedicated aftercare. Here are some very helpful articles about uprooted tree situations and post-storm care:

- [A large evergreen was partially uprooted in a storm. Can I save it?](#) - Iowa State University
- [Restoring Trees After a Storm](#) - University of Florida
- [After the Storm: Tree First Aid:](#) - TAMU - good care recommendations for tree damage other than uprooted trees



"GUESS WHAT TIME IT IS?
HURRICANE SEASON IS KNOCKING
ON OUR DOOR! ARE YOU ALL SET
FOR THE STORMY RIDE?!"



URBAN DIRT INDEX

Weather
Insects
Natives
Vegetables
Soil
Fruits & Nuts
Lawn
Shrubs
Recipes
Flowers
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Trees

Our monthly newsletters are jam-packed with information. The Urban Dirt is now indexed by various gardening categories. Click [HERE](#) to dig deeper into past Urban Dirt issues.

Have Garden Questions? Submit your questions to: <https://hcmga.tamu.edu/ask-a-question/>

Planting times are for seeds unless otherwise noted	Vegetable Garden Planting Dates for Harris County											
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Artichoke	Dormant Crowns								Transplants			
Asparagus (dormant crowns)	Dormant Crowns								Transplants			
Beans - Snap & Lima (Butterbean)			Snap&Lima					Snap				
Beets												
Broccoli (transplants)												
Brussels Sprouts (transplants)												
Cabbage (transplants)												
Cabbage - Chinese (transplants)												
Carrots												
Cauliflower (transplants)												
Chard, Swiss												
Collards (transplants)												
Corn												
Cucumbers												
Eggplant (transplants)												
Garlic												
Kale (transplants)												
Kohlrabi (transplants)												
Leeks	Transplants								Seeds			
Lettuce - also Arugula, Mache, Sorrel												
Melon - Cantaloupe, Honeydew												
Mustard												
Okra												
Onion - bulbing	Transplants											
Onion - multiplying/bunching												
Peas - English & Snap												
Peas - Southern												
Pepper (transplants)												
Potato - Irish (cut pieces)												
Potato - Sweet (slips)												
Pumpkin												
Radish												
Spinach												
Squash - Summer												
Squash - Winter												
Tomato												
Turnips												
Summer Greens - Malabar, Amaranth												
Watermelon												

Average Last Freeze Dates (Hobby 2/8, Bush 3/1) Average First Freeze Dates (Bush 11/30, Hobby 12/20)

Plants grown over winter may require protection during freezing weather. Seeds and transplants started in the heat of summer will benefit from shading during establishment.

Home Grown Podcast

The Home Grown podcast is presented by the Agriculture & Natural Resources (ANR) Unit of the Harris County Texas A&M AgriLife Extension office. The series provides information on urban agriculture / horticulture / gardening and ag literacy. The program focuses on topics that are relevant to the urban gardener. The podcast can also be found at the following site:

www.listennotes.com/podcasts/home-grown-podcast-paul-OM7PKqityX/

Log on to listen to a recent interview with Master Gardener volunteer Rick Castagno. He shares his experiences at Houston demonstration gardens, and a few stories of what's been grown in the vegetable beds.

<https://bit.ly/3w4cUAR>

