

# Urban Dirt

## Gardening Events and Information for Harris County



### Plants of the Bible

Article and graphics by

Debra Caldwell, Advanced Master Gardener: Entomology

Over a hundred plants are described or named in the Bible. However, many did not actually grow in the Middle East thousands of years ago. There were frequently problems with translation or plants were not identified correctly. For example, "corn" is mentioned in the King James translation, but the term was used to refer to "grains" in general. Corn is a New World plant that did not grow in the Middle East thousands of years ago.

In researching this topic, the goal was to learn about plants that were grown in the Middle East during Biblical times and can also be grown in our area today. Obviously, the climate of Eastern Texas is quite different from the Middle East but there are some plants that can be grown in both places.

You may be interested in choosing some of these plants to create a Bible Garden at your home or on the grounds of a church or synagogue.



Photo generated by Copilot

### Trees and Vines

*"All the trees of the field will know that I the Lord bring down the tall tree and make the low tree grow tall." – Ezekiel 17*

Trees and vines are mentioned many times and signify growth and strength. Some, like the cedar, provided shelter and shade while others yielded fruit. Olives, date palms and almonds were important food producing trees. Pomegranates (*Punica granatum*) were grown for thousands of years throughout the Middle East. They were often carried for their juice by desert dwellers. A Jewish tradition taught that the pomegranate was a symbol of righteousness because the fruit has 613 seeds, representing the 613 commandments in the Torah. A pomegranate may have hundreds of seeds but not that exact number.

Continued on page 5

TEXAS A&M  
AGRI LIFE  
EXTENSION

TEXAS  
MASTER GARDENER  
TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION  
Harris County

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 2 [Upcoming Events](#)
- 3 [MGs Serving the Community](#)
- 4 [2025 Plant Sales](#)
- 7 [Herbs of the Bible: Mint](#)
- 9 [Youth Empowerment Activities](#)
- 11 [Native Plant Spotlight: Texas Sage](#)
- 13 [Bamboo, Reconsidered](#)
- 16 [Recipe Spotlight: Peach Berry Caprese Salad](#)
- 17 [Bug Spotlight: Asian Needle Ants](#)
- 19 [Getting Down to Earth – News from Genoa Friendship Gardens](#)
- 21 [Spring Branch Elementary Garden](#)
- 25 [Plant Spotlight: Purple Coneflower](#)
- 26 [Herb Spotlight: Borage](#)
- 27 [Coffee Grounds, Eggshells and Epsom Salts: A New Perspective](#)
- 29 [Master Gardeners in the City](#)
- 30 [Ask A Master Gardener Events](#)
- 31 [Genoa Friendship Gardens](#)
- 32 [Gardening Calendar](#)
- 34 [2025 Green Thumb Gardening Series](#)
- 35 [Ask a Master Gardener Online](#)
- 38 [Want to Know More?](#)
- 39 [Leaves of Change](#)
- 44 [Planting Guide](#)

# Upcoming EVENTS



**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)**  
**Stephanie Gray**  
stephanie.gray@ag.tamu.edu  
**Master Gardener  
Volunteer Coordinator**  
coordinator@harriscounty  
mastergardeners.org



## 2025 Board of Directors

**President**  
Mary Stokman

**First Vice President**  
Dianne Lawrence

**Second Vice President**  
Valerie Depew

**Past President**  
Alexa Haass

**Secretary**  
Lucia Hansen

**Treasurer**  
Sharon McWhorter

**Director 1**  
Marsha VanHorn

**Director 2**  
Robin Kendrick-Yates

**Director 3**  
Carolyn Boyd

**Director 4**  
Jo Ann Stevenson

**Director 5**  
Chevy Tang

**Director 6**  
Maggie Mentakis

**Assistant Treasurers**  
Cindy Moore, Marsha VanHorn

**Genoa Friendship Gardens  
Steering Committee Advisor**  
Pam Longley

.....

**Urban Dirt Editing Team**  
Cate Hanson  
Jennifer Elfert  
Jo Ann Stevenson  
Jennifer Bennett

**Tuesday, July 1, 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.**

**First Tuesday Meeting**

**Lecture: The History of Genoa Friendship Gardens**

**Click here for updates** <https://txmg.org/hcmga/lecture-series/>

**Trini Mendenhall Community Center, 1414 Wirt Rd, Houston**

**Monday, July 14, 10 – 11:30 a.m.**

**Fall Vegetable Gardening by Harris County Master Gardeners**

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

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

**Tuesday, July 15, 11 a.m. – 12 p.m.**

**Fall Vegetable Gardening by Harris County Master Gardeners**

**Harris County Public Library**

**Facebook Live** <https://www.facebook.com/harriscountyppl/events/>

**Monday, July 21, 8:30 a.m. – 11 a.m.**

**Open Garden Day at Genoa Friendship Gardens**

**1210 Genoa Red Bluff Rd, Houston**

**Tuesday, August 5, 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.**

**First Tuesday Meeting**

**Lecture: Houston Botanic Garden by Dr. Katherine Sadler, Ed.D.**

**<https://txmg.org/hcmga/lecture-series/>**

**Trini Mendenhall Community Center, 1414 Wirt Rd, Houston**

**Saturday, August 9, 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.**

**Preserving the Harvest Workshop (Fermentation & Pressure Canning**

**Steve Radack Community Center, 18650 Clay Rd., Houston**

**Monday, August 11, 10 – 11:30 a.m.**

**Plants of the Bible by Harris County Master Gardeners**

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

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

**Monday, August 18, 8:30 a.m. – 11 a.m.**

**Open Garden Day at Genoa Friendship Gardens**

**1210 Genoa Red Bluff Rd, Houston**

**Tuesday, August 19, 11 a.m. – 12 p.m.**

**Plants of the Bible by Harris County Master Gardeners**

**Harris County Public Library Facebook Live**

**<https://www.facebook.com/harriscountyppl/events/>**

**Tuesday, August 19, 1 p.m.**

**Native Plants by Harris County Master Gardeners**

**Freed Community Center, 6818 Shadyvilla Ln, Houston**

Youth Activities - Page 7  
Genoa Friendship Gardens  
Public Gardening Lectures  
Educational Programs  
Plant Sales  
Green Thumb Gardening Series



# Master Gardeners

.....>

*serving the community*



## UBEAM BLOCK PARTY

Community Revitalization Event

May 28, 2025



Urban Bio-Tech  
Environmental  
Agriculture Model

83

**Planted and Mulched**  
plants around the front of  
the Opportunity Center &  
refreshed some existing  
planters around the  
property



**12 Volunteers +  
AgriLife Team**



### Connections

The day's highlight: seeing kids in the program stop by to help out and connect with our volunteers, including Mr. Hill (vocational teacher at the Opportunity Center)

**Contact Us**

angela.camarillo@ag.tamu.edu  
(713) 274-0964



TEXAS A&M  
AGRI LIFE  
EXTENSION

UH  
SYSTEM  
SUGAR LAND



The members of Texas A&M AgriLife will provide equal opportunities in programs and activities, education, and employment to all persons regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation or gender identity and will strive to achieve full and equal employment opportunity throughout Texas A&M AgriLife.



# 2025 PLANT SALES



## 2025 PLANT SALES

### Northwest Location

HCC Katy Campus  
22910 Colonial Pkwy, Katy

- Fruit Tree & Berry Sale - Jan 25
- Tomato, Herb & Pepper Sale - Mar 8
- Spring Into Summer Sale - Apr 26
- Fall Perennial & Veggie Sale - Oct 4

### Special Event Sale

Cy-Fair Home & Outdoor Living Show  
8877 Barker Cypress Rd, Cypress  
**2 Day Plant Sale - Mar 22 & 23**

### Southeast Location

Genoa Friendship Gardens  
1210 Genoa Red Bluff Rd, Houston

- Fruit Tree & Tomato Sale - Feb 15
- Perennial Plant Sale - Apr 12
- Fall Perennial Plant Sale - Oct 18

Visit us online for times & pre-order info



[facebook.com/  
HarrisCountyMasterGardeners](https://facebook.com/HarrisCountyMasterGardeners)



[txmg.org/hcmga/plant-sales](https://txmg.org/hcmga/plant-sales)



[Join Our  
Email List!](#)

Plant sales fund our mission to bring relevant, research based gardening information to the public in our County.

We cherish your trust and greatly appreciate your support. For more information please visit [txmg.org/hcmga](https://txmg.org/hcmga)



## Plants of the Bible

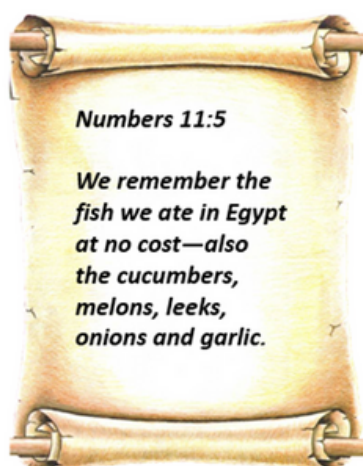
*Continued from Page 1*

Figs (*Ficus carica*) were in cultivation in the Middle East 6,000 years ago. In the Bible they were used to symbolize abundance, prosperity and well-being. Grapes are mentioned more than any other plant. They were grown for fresh and dried fruit, wine and vinegar. Grapes and muscadines have been grown in Texas for many years. They can be a good choice for the home gardener who needs to save space because they can grow vertically on an arbor or wall.

### Herbs

*Your plants are an orchard of pomegranates with choice fruits, with henna and nard, nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with every kind of incense tree, with myrrh and aloes and all the finest spices. -- Song of Solomon 4:13*

Herbs were used for cooking, healing and ceremonial social and religious rituals such as tithing and purification. Spices and resins were highly valued. Frankincense and myrrh are resins extracted from trees and were used as incense and perfume.



In addition to saffron and cinnamon, mint, coriander, anise, cumin, hyssop, and mustard are also found in Bible verses. Although not a traditional “herb,” aloe is also mentioned and probably referred to aloe vera which is still used today for soothing burns.

We can grow many of these plants in our area. For more information about growing herbs in Texas go to <https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2013/09/EHT-079.pdf>.

### Vegetables

Onions, leeks, garlic, squash, and melon were all mentioned in the Bible. Many grow well in Harris County. For a list of recommended varieties go to <https://harris.agrilife.org/files/2025/02/fruitnut-2025.pdf>.

### Grains

*Now when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very corners of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest. Nor shall you glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the needy and for the stranger. I am the Lord your God--Leviticus 19:9-10*

Humans ate wild grains long before they grew them. Staple crops like grains provided food security, helped populations grow, and shifted people from nomadic life to agriculture. The first domestication of grains in the Middle East was 9,000–12,000 years ago. Wild wheat had fewer and smaller grains and shattered easily making it difficult to harvest. Grains that had larger seeds that were held on the plant were selected over time.

Wheat (*Triticum aestivum*) and spelt (*Triticum spelta*) are mentioned many times in the Bible. Spelt is an older and less modified type of cereal grain while modern wheat has undergone thousands of years of breeding. Spelt has enjoyed a resurgence in interest and can be used like common wheat. Barley, one of the first domesticated grains, was used to make bread and beer. Millet and rye were also mentioned although some scholars believe the word “rye” referred to spelt.





## Plants of the Bible

*Continued*

Grains were the “bread of life” that provided important calories and nutrients. In the Bible they often symbolize abundance, nourishment and growth. The average home gardener probably won’t devote space to growing grains, but we can enjoy trying some of the ancient grains in our diet.

## Flowers

*Song of Solomon 2:1 “I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valley.”*

Many flowers are mentioned in the Bible, but several of the types referenced probably didn’t grow in the Middle East. For example, the rose of Sharon depicted in the Song of Solomon was a type of bulbous plant. The words have been translated as crocus, tulip or lily. Some Biblical scholars think it was most likely a sea daffodil (*Pancratium maritimum*) that grows in coastal areas along the Mediterranean Sea.

We find “lilies” and “lily of the valley” in several Bible passages. Some scholars think that the word referred to the Madonna Lily, *Lilium candidum*, which still grows in a few mountainous parts of Israel. “Easter lilies” originated from the wildflower. Madonna lilies can be grown in Zone 9. They need full to part sun and well-drained soil. In theory, these Biblical plants could be grown in our area because they thrive in hot climates, but we would need to provide well-draining soil. Both might struggle in our high humidity.

*And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin. Matthew 6:28*

The “lilies of the field” may have referred to anemones that still grow near the Sea of Galilee. The red crown anemone (*Anemone coronaria*) is Israel’s national flower. It continues to grow wild in fields along the Gaza border. For more information about plants mentioned in the Bible read Jean Fefer’s excellent article: <https://www.natureswayresources.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/BiblePlants.pdf>. The Bible Garden at Charles Stuart University in Australia has a list of plants with descriptions and photos: [Plants Of The Garden - The Bible Garden](#).



Sea daffodil. CC Attribution ShareAlike

We have just scratched the surface of this fascinating topic. To learn more, please join us for our GreenThumb presentation on Plants of the Bible through the Houston Community College on August 11 at 10 a.m.

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



You can also view the presentation on Harris County Public Library Facebook page on August 19 at 11 a.m.

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



# Herbs of the Bible

## Mint

Article by Terri Carpenter Simon, Master Gardener



*Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the Law” - Matthew 23:23*

"In the first chapter of first book of the Bible, plants are mentioned. Many plants are considered holy in the scriptures. They were served at feasts and used in ceremonial rites. Mint was used extensively in biblical times. It grows wild in Palestine and has multiple uses.

One use of mint was as currency for paying tithes. It was also used for cooking, to make scented oils, in religious rituals and for medicinal needs. It represents purity. Commonly called horsemint, *Mentha longifolia* is believed to be the mint variety mentioned in the Bible. Mint was a bitter herb consumed at the paschal meal.

Mint and I have been friends for many years. In a past issue I mentioned how I would sneak outside sometimes when I was supposed to be napping. We had a patch of wild mint in our back yard and I would take my nap there with my head in the mint. Perhaps I invented aromatherapy!

If you are considering a biblical garden, consider putting mint in it. While I don't have one, I could picture myself relaxed in a chair, surrounded by some pots of mint, sipping a mint julep. My drink, of course, would be topped off by a perky sprig of mint snagged from one of my pots. Why are they in pots, you ask? Well, because mint can be invasive as well as aggressive. It can spread rapidly by runners if it's in a cozy spot. It can also cross-pollinate with other mints and then you wind up with a Heinz 57 mint that might not taste good. If you insist on putting it in the ground, place it in a pot without a bottom. The roots will grow out the bottom of the pot. The mint runners tend to peek out from the ground surface so they can be snipped. You should still put some distance between the mint varieties in the ground to further discourage cross pollination.

Depending on which source you use, there are between 30 to 40 types of mint. There are thousands more if you include the entire mint family. Mint plants have square stems. Corsican mint is the smallest variety while licorice mint is the largest and can reach four feet tall. Bergamot mint oil has a strong scent so it is favored for making perfumes. Strawberry mint is rare and does not taste like mint. Naturally, it tastes like strawberries. Some mint varieties are commonly used in chewing gum and scented candles. Mint tea is supposed to help with digestive problems. Mint leaves can be eaten either raw or cooked.



# Herbs of the Bible

## Mint

*Continued*



Mint is easy to grow. It will take full sun and partial shade. One warning—"full sun" does not necessarily mean full Texas sun on the south side of your garden. I have learned that it does not care for that. Most of my mint does better with some protection from the afternoon sun. Mint is a perennial and can handle cold temps down to -20 degrees. The variegated varieties do not care for full sun. It likes moist, rich, slightly acidic soils. It can be grown from seed, divided or rooted from cuttings in water. A slow-release fertilizer in the spring makes it happy.

When it's time to harvest, choose the youngest leaves and stems since they have the best flavor. Trim the stems down to one inch above the soil. The cuttings will last up to one week if placed in water in the refrigerator. Mint can also be dried if hung upside until crisp. If placed in an airtight jar it can last up to a year. It doesn't freeze well, but you can place chopped leaves in an ice tray and freeze. You can also drop those ice cubes in lemonade, water or other drinks. Dried mint has the most nutritional value. Mint has fiber, vitamin B6 and A, manganese, folate, iron and calcium. That's a lot of nutrition packed into one plant. Try growing some.



Spearmint on the left and curled mint on the right are still recovering from the winter snow.



### Mint and Cucumber Dipping Sauce

- 1 English cucumber
- 1 cup Greek yogurt
- 2/3 cup fresh mint leaves, finely chopped
- 1 tsp lime juice
- Pinch of hot chili powder (optional)

This easy to make sauce is refreshing. I eat it with Naan bread or lamb /beef kabobs or serve it on the side to cool down a spicy food like curry.

Grate half of the cucumber and finely chop the other half. Mix cucumber, yogurt, mint and lime juice together. If desired, season to taste with salt and pepper. Top with small amount of chili powder.

### References:

[What Are the Herbs Mentioned in the Bible? - Biblical Botany Unveiled - GardenerBible](#)  
[Biblical Herbs: Mints in the Bible | The Herb Exchange](#)  
<https://ownyardlife.com/types-of-mint-plants/>  
[How to Grow Mint in Your Garden | USU](#)





# Youth Empowerment Activities

Article and photos by Nerandra Cordova, Master Gardener



## Sunflowers

### A life cycle story



**Purpose:** Help students understand the different life cycles of a plant from germination to adult plant and into seed again.

**What is a life cycle:** the series of stages a plant goes through from seed to seed, including germination, growth, reproduction and ultimately seed dispersal. It involves the development of a new plant from seed, its new growth into an adult plant, the production of flowers and fruits, and the creation of new seeds to continue the cycle.

#### **Materials:**

1. Sunflower seeds
2. Ziploc plastic bags
3. A paper napkin
4. Water
5. Soil and pot



#### **Activity:**

1. Place a paper napkin in a Ziploc bag.
2. Add three sunflower seeds.
3. Add enough water to make the napkin moist, but not damp. Do not over water.
4. Fold the napkin in half and place in a sunny spot.
5. In a few days, observe the plant emerge from the seed.
6. When the plant reaches 2 inches in height, transfer it into the soil or a pot.
7. Observe your sunflower complete the life cycle by watering it as needed and tending to it.

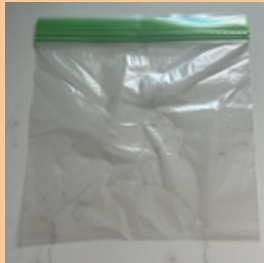


# Youth Empowerment Activities

Article and photos by Nerandra Cordova, Master Gardener



## Sunflowers Instructions



1. Choose a Ziplock bag



2. Choose a paper napkin



3. Put the paper napkin inside the Ziplock bag



4. Add enough water to dampen the napkin but do not over water.



5. Add three sunflower seeds



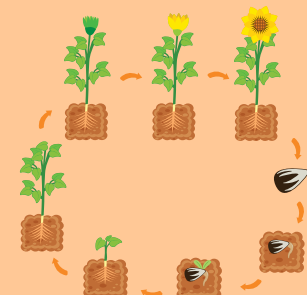
6. Add water as needed and place the bag in a sunny area



7. Watch your seeds sprout.



8. When your seed is two inches long, transplant it in the soil or a pot.



9. Observe your plant grow, and tend to it by watering it.



## Native Plant Spotlight

### Texas Sage, *Leucophyllum frutescens*

Article and photos by Robin Kendrick-Yates,  
Advanced Master Gardener: Composting & Entomology

I love Texas. I wasn't born here, but I got here as soon as I could! And I stayed. My family and I have lived in the greater Houston area for almost forty years. Having grown up in Iowa, most of the flora was new to me. As I tended to the lawns and flower beds of our homes, I slowly became familiar with the plants that do well here. It wasn't until I retired and volunteered at Armand Bayou Nature Center that I began to learn about and admire native plants and all the benefits they provide (<https://txmg.org/hcmga/files/2022/04/2022-04-hcmga-urban-dirt.pdf> page 21).



Texas sage in bloom

The spotlight this issue of our newsletter is on Texas Sage, *Leucophyllum frutescens*, a perennial shrub I have been growing for the last eight years. Purchased from Buchanan's Native Nursery, I have grown it in my back yard, and more recently moved it to a place of honor in the front.

Cenizo, Texas Barometer Bush, and Silverleaf are other common names for this native to south Texas. Although we call it a sage, it is in the figwort family, not in the mint family as are most of our salvias. Strictly speaking, it is not native to the Gulf Coast, yet it will thrive here if given good drainage. For this reason, it is a great addition to a xeriscape bed. It does well in full sun to part shade, typically growing to 2–5 feet, but may reach 10 feet in height. Once it is established it does well in drought and even tolerates a freeze. Mine cruised right on though winter storm Uri and our recent snow.



Texas Sage in the front yard

Its coloring, silver to grey, is due to the multitude of very fine hairs on its leaves. It is this coloring that makes it stand out amongst the array of various shades of green from other prairie plants. The name Barometer Bush comes from its tendency to bloom after a rain. The pink to lavender blooms, up to 1 inch long, shine radiantly from the silvery backdrop. I have placed several on each corner of my front yard as accents to frame the house.



Texas Sage on the other side of Robin's front yard, with Inland Sea Oats and Texas Star Hibiscus all as a screen for the A/C unit





## Native Plant Spotlight

Texas Sage, *Leucophyllum frutescens*  
Continued



In addition to not requiring any of the biocides, *L. frutescens* is a welcome sight for the ecosystem. Wildlife adore it, and it is the larval host plant for the Theona Checkerspot (<https://www.butterfliesandmoths.org/species/Chlosyne-theona>) and the Calleta Silkmoth (<https://www.butterfliesandmoths.org/species/Eupackardia-calleta>). Other pollinators use it for a nectar source or nesting site. It provides a beautiful native replacement for other introduced shrubs. Planting several in a row can make a nice hedge. At each corner of my yard, you will find it in front of a rain barrel on one side and our A/C unit on the other.

At Genoa Friendship Gardens, we have an example of Texas Sage in the remnant of the old native plant bed, just across from the Xeriscape bed. It was in bloom during the recent rains. It will do that throughout the growing season, blooming on and off all year, giving a nice touch of graceful silver and pink to your landscape! I hope you will consider adding it to your yard.



Although you can look for it in your local nursery, I suggest you check with one of my favorite non-profits, Trees For Houston, before purchasing any tree or shrub. My friends at Trees For Houston have donated many of these and I have distributed them to some of you and many of my neighbors. You can request a tree or shrub at the following link-  
<https://www.treesforhouston.org/request>. Give them enough time and they will do their best to help you with your project!



### References:

[https://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id\\_plant=LEFR3](https://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=LEFR3)

<https://www.butterfliesandmoths.org/>

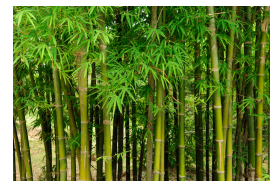
<https://www.treesforhouston.org/>





# Bamboo, Reconsidered

Article by Brian Knoll, Ph.D., Master Gardener Intern



Bamboos are large grasses native to many parts of Asia. The characteristic individual stalks are called “culms,” and are largely hollow except for the nodal regions, from where the leaves arise. Bamboos come in a wide array of colors and sizes and growth behavior. Besides ornamental uses and as food for pandas (and many other animal species), bamboos have numerous commercial functions. They are used for lumber in building construction, flooring and furniture, as well as in textiles and handicrafts. Bamboo shoots are a widely consumed food item. Interestingly, bamboo slips were an essential medium of writing in ancient China prior to the introduction of paper in ~1st century CE.

Bamboos have a very bad reputation for their uncontrollability, deservedly so for many varieties. In Texas, it is illegal to plant the running bamboo, *Phyllostachys aurea*, due to its ability to become invasive and to damage ecosystems. However, there are some bamboos that are useful, controllable and beautiful, and should be considered for some purposes in an urban landscape. Though there are many, many bamboo species, they can be divided into two general types: running and clumping.

Running bamboo, the problematic kind, grow via 12” deep rhizomes that rapidly spread far and wide, eventually covering your property (and sometimes your neighbor's). Clumping bamboo, in contrast, spreads outward from the center, gradually getting wider and wider. While this could be an issue in confined spaces, or when planted directly adjacent to a structure, generally it is not a problem. Then why plant running bamboo? Possibly you have an extra-large space (say, acres) to fill up with greenery (and don't give much thought to damaging the local ecosystem). Or you have a very large container, or an area surrounded by concrete (but beware, bamboo can push up through concrete). Without such confinements, control can be attempted by blocking the rhizomes with a hard barrier set at 12” deep and angled upward to deflect the rhizome above ground where it can be snipped off. Such a barrier requires constant maintenance and can't be guaranteed if your property changes hands.

In general, running bamboo is more cold hardy than clumping bamboo, and there are many more varieties to select from, some with special ornamental features (e.g. black bamboo *Phyllostachys nigra*). But be aware that running bamboo is really hard to get rid of (there is an apocryphal story about running bamboo in Hiroshima surviving the atomic bomb). For a description of how to get rid of a running bamboo, see reference 4. It makes for grim reading.





# Bamboo, Reconsidered

*Continued*



A slight limitation of clumping bamboo is that there are only a few species both cold hardy and heat tolerant enough for the Houston area, mainly *Bambusa multiplex* varieties. Fortunately, there are many cultivars, such as 'Alphonse Karr' and 'Golden Goddess' (others are listed below). The former can get up to 25 feet tall, while the latter is considered dwarf and tops out at around 10 feet. These evergreen bamboos are often used as privacy hedges (and in fact are often called hedge bamboos) and depending on the location and the desired aesthetic, trimmed close to the culms (stems) (Fig 1) or allowed to arch gracefully over (Fig 2).

Another use, particularly in a large open area, is as a large specimen (Fig 3). There is an especially fine example near the entrance to the Japanese garden at Hermann Park. Figure 4 shows an example of 'Golden Goddess' used as a privacy screen, about two years after planting. Clumping bamboo is a beautiful option for a fast-growing privacy screen, and a superb specimen for larger areas.

Cultivars of the *Bambusa multiplex* species include: 'Alphonse Karr' with stripes of yellow and green (25 ft); 'Fernleaf' with delicate foliage (10 ft); 'Fernleaf stripestem' with multicolored culms (10-15 ft); 'Golden Goddess' the dwarf cultivar (up to 10 ft) and not to be confused with the running variety, 'Golden bamboo!'; 'Silverstripe' with stripes of different shades of green (25 ft); 'Tiny Fern' is also a dwarf cultivar (up to 3 ft); and 'Willowly' with an arching aspect (10-15 ft).



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3





# Bamboo, Reconsidered

*Continued*



Spring is the best time to plant, and no unusual measures are needed to ensure success. Generally, bamboo should be planted in well-draining soil at 4–6 ft spacing for the larger varieties. *Bambusa multiplex* cultivars can reach mature height in less than four years, or faster depending on growth conditions, and are drought tolerant once established. Bamboo enjoys full to part sun.

Most nurseries sell bamboo, but it is advisable to seek out specialists who label their plants correctly. Moreover, these folks can advise on your particular use case, an important factor given the cost of new bamboo plants. A visit to any nursery will reveal that bamboo plants are expensive. If someone will allow you access to their plant, a procedure for clumping bamboo is described in ref. 6. It is similar to that of other common shrubs.



Figure 4

## References

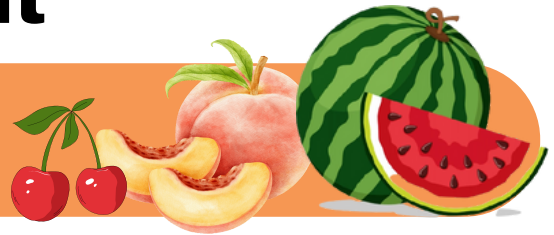
1. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bamboo\\_and\\_woden\\_slips](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bamboo_and_woden_slips)
2. <https://bexartx.tamu.edu/homehort/archives-of-weekly-articles-davids-plant-of-the-week/bamboo-is-usually-damn-boo/>
3. <https://www.star-telegram.com/news/state/texas/article288476647.html>
4. [https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/pdf/controlling-bamboo-in-landscape-/2021-0430/Bamcontrol\\_2021\\_Hs0nhxF.pdf](https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/pdf/controlling-bamboo-in-landscape-/2021-0430/Bamcontrol_2021_Hs0nhxF.pdf)
5. <https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/bambusa-multiplex/>
6. <https://www.bamboo-inspiration.com/dividing-clumping-bamboo.html>



# Recipe Spotlight

## Peach Berry Caprese Salad

Article and photo by Jo Ann Stevenson, Master Gardener



Ah, summertime!! I love the seasonal fruits of summer: fresh Texas peaches, Oregon cherries, South Texas watermelon, Pecos cantaloupe, and much more! I think it is fascinating that the time of year when we need hydration the most, we have the juiciest, most refreshing fruits bursting with water and vitamins. Coincidence? I think not.

Here is a salad that combines peaches and berries with a lemon-honey-balsamic dressing. The addition of basil is a great way to use your garden's bounty, and mozzarella balls help turn this salad into a caprese style dish great for potlucks and family get togethers. We added extra raspberries we had on hand, and I think those sweet cherries from Oregon would go nicely in this salad, too.

It serves 8 and, aside from chopping the fruit, only takes about 5 minutes to make. Our cooking group loved this, and we will be making it on repeat!! Enjoy!

### Ingredients

- 4 peaches, ripe, thinly sliced
- 4 cups strawberries, hulled and thinly sliced
- 1 cup blueberries
- 8 ounces ciliegine mozzarella cheese balls
- 1/4 cup fresh basil, chiffonade

### Balsamic Dressing

- 1/4 cup white balsamic vinegar
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/4 teaspoon coarse ground black pepper
- 1/3 cup olive oil

### Instructions

1. Add the peaches, strawberries, blueberries, mozzarella balls and basil to a large bowl.
2. In a medium bowl, whisk the balsamic vinegar, honey, lemon juice, salt and black pepper.
3. Slowly pour in the olive oil while whisking vigorously.
4. Pour the dressing over the salad and very gently toss to coat.



### Nutrition

Calories: 231 kcal · Carbohydrates: 19 g · Protein: 6 g · Fat: 16 g · Saturated Fat: 3 g · Polyunsaturated Fat: 1 g · Monounsaturated Fat: 7 g · Cholesterol: 10 mg · Sodium: 106 mg · Potassium: 231 mg · Fiber: 3 g · Sugar: 15 g · Vitamin A: 303 IU · Vitamin C: 48 mg · Calcium: 121 mg · Iron: 1 mg

The original recipe can be found at <https://dinnerthendessert.com/peach-berry-caprese-salad/>.



## Bug Spotlight

### Asian Needle Ants

Article by Debra Caldwell, Advanced Master Gardener: Entomology

Be on the lookout for a new invasive ant species, Asian Needle Ants *Brachyponera chinensis*, (*Pachychondyla chinensis*). The species has been in the United States since the 1930's but has spread in recent years and is now found in at least twenty states including Texas. [https://antmaps.org/\\_mode=species&species=Brachyponera.chinensis](https://antmaps.org/_mode=species&species=Brachyponera.chinensis). Asian needle ants are relatively small, measuring about 1/5 of an inch in length. The shiny, dark brown or black ants have lighter brown mandibles and legs. North Carolina State Extension <https://entomology.ces.ncsu.edu/asian-needle-ant/> gives a sure way to identify the little beasts explaining that unlike other ants, they can't cling to smooth surfaces. If you capture some, put them in a glass jar. They won't be able to climb the glass and will stay on the bottom.

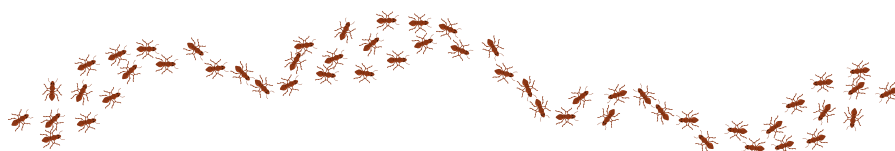
Unfortunately, gardeners may be the first to encounter the Asian needle ants because they live in leaf litter and mulch and moist places under wood piles, pavers and stones. You may find them in containers and lawns. They also forage in homes and buildings. In natural settings they feed on other arthropods including termites, but they are happy to scavenge food from kitchens, cafeterias and garbage in urban areas.

Photo by April Nobile

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



Asian needle ants pose a major concern for three reasons. Their stings are quite painful and can cause anaphylaxis. In Dr. Eleanor's Book of Common Ants, Eleanor Spicer Rice describes an Asian needle ant sting:







## Asian Needle Ants

*Continued*

*"At first, I felt a slight burning sensation right where she stung me. About an hour later, the burn spread out to an area about the size of a quarter around the sting, and it began to feel a little like being stabbed with pins. This flash of sharp pain followed by a dull nerve ache continued for the next two weeks every time I touched the area around the sting. For those of us not allergic to Asian needle ants, that's the worst part of Asian needle ant stings."*

They aren't as aggressive as fire ants but will sting when they feel threatened. You can quickly flick them off if you notice them, but the danger is that they may get trapped and sting. Gloves, close-toed shoes and long sleeves are recommended if you're working with damp mulch, moving stones or working in areas where the ants might live.

Unlike fire ants, needle ants may infest homes. They also pose a threat to ecosystems because they displace native species. Studies indicate that they may be able to push out fire ants! They can tolerate cooler temperatures and become active earlier in the year. By getting a jump on the competition they can exploit food resources and nesting spaces.

Workers of most ant species produce chemical trails that other workers follow. Asian needle ants carry another worker to the food source. Prevention is your first line of defense. Block access by sealing cracks and crevices and eliminating food and water sources. Cleaning up crumbs, repairing water leaks and taking up pet food removes the incentive for ants to enter your home.

When we deal with any pest, the first step is positive identification. Because they eat other invertebrates, protein-based insecticide baits are somewhat effective in managing needle ants. Fire ant treatments can be used. North Carolina State Extension recommends the following steps:

- *Set up treatment zones where ants are foraging.*
- *Carefully read and follow the directions on the label of the bait to treat the zone.*
- *Observe whether the ants visit and collect the bait.*
- *You may need to check the area for continued needle ant activity in 3–4 weeks and re-treat if necessary. (Follow the directions on the label about the number of applications per season).*

Let's hope that we never encounter Asian needle ants in our area both for our own well-being as well as the health of our local habitats and species. As gardeners, we are on the front line and may be the first to notice these tiny invaders. Researchers at Rice University are monitoring the species in Texas. You can learn more about threats from other invasive species at <https://www.texasinvasives.org/i101/>.





## Getting Down to Earth News from Genoa Friendship Gardens – Houston, 77034

*Article and Photos by Pam Longley, Master Gardener*

Over 20 years ago, GFG was a gravel parking lot between two adjacent Harris County Precinct 2 properties. Most of the master gardeners who founded GFG and employees who were at Harris County Extension Service at the time have retired or moved on. With no one to ask, there has been a question as to who is responsible for the upkeep of the buildings at GFG—the County or Harris County Master Gardeners Association. This became very important when we lost the roof of one of our buildings in Hurricane Beryl. We are thrilled that the paperwork has been found that shows Harris County is responsible so we can finish our claim with F.E.M.A. The county has agreed to pay whatever the claim doesn't cover!



*Volunteers from Angela House came out again to lend a hand.*

Stephanie Gray, County Agent and Acting MG Coordinator, is planning for GFG to host some of the fall classes for MG interns! This will give us a great opportunity to show off our garden and, hopefully, gain some new volunteers. Karrie Calloway, Community Engagement Coordinator, has secured a grant from the United Way to be used for a facelift for our education building and for paths into the gardens that are ADA compliant.



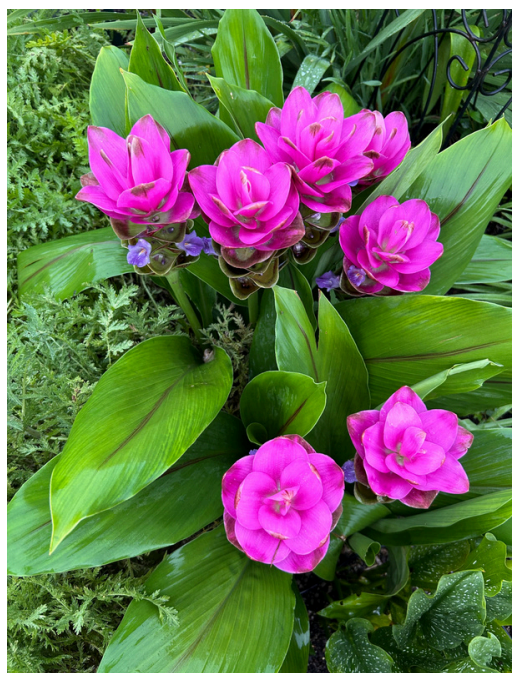


## Getting Down to Earth

### *Continued*

Peaches are back! We have not had a crop of peaches like this in several years. I pulled one off the tree and savored it, feeling like it was the most heavenly thing I had ever tasted.

Many existing opportunities are popping up to serve our community and supporters as well. Nearby Carter Lomax Middle School is interested in a fall after-school program. We will tour Extension employees (date to be announced).



*Curcumina Longa*



*Orange day lilies*

And more exciting news, Janice Muhm became a grandmother (again). Baby Pippa was born 5/21/25.







## Spring Branch Elementary Garden - 77080

*Photos and article by Deb Stutsman*

---

Spring Branch Elementary Garden had a beautiful and bountiful Spring semester!

In January, 3rd grade students harvested their cauliflower to take home to share with their families, while 2nd graders and Lifeskills students planted their 1015Y onion sets. We made some new PVC pipe supports that worked well with our row cover, which protected the veggie beds and our new herb garden through two hard freezes in the new year.



Second grade 1015Y onion harvest



Spring garden beds

February was an exciting month as we held our school-wide “Pennies for Plants” garden fundraiser. Classes collected coins and dollars to support the garden, and we raised an amazing \$2,200 in just 3 weeks! As it warmed up a bit, we were able to restart our optional “Recess Gardening” days, in which students can help volunteers in the garden during their recess time. We average about 100 students that choose to help with garden maintenance, weeding and sweeping up. They are a huge help and enjoy having extra time in the garden! Garden volunteers also assisted the kindergarten classes with their study of plant parts and structures.





## Spring Branch Elementary Garden – 77080

### Continued



Filling buckets of weeds during Recess Gardening.



Kindergartners harvest their green beans.



Veggie planting lessons include life cycles, plant growth, health benefits, and recipes to try at home.



4th graders plant sweet and hot peppers.



In March, our Lifeskills classes harvested the last of their lettuce and spinach to take home, our 4th graders planted their sweet and hot pepper plants, 5th graders planted their cherry tomatoes, and Kindergardeners planted their Contender green bean seeds. They also planted seeds for purple and yellow snap beans, and some long Asian beans on a teepee structure for a fun experiment. The snap beans were good producers. “Recess Gardening” was held again and met with a great response from students excited to be in the garden.





## Spring Branch Elementary Garden - 77080

### Continued

April was a very beautiful and busy month! We didn't lose any plants to the freezes, and everything was starting to bloom again. We were able to add a lot of new native plants donated by fellow Master Gardeners and our own garden volunteers. In addition to "Recess Gardening," volunteers hosted a Family Garden Day for our school community. Sixty students and parents helped spread mulch and enjoyed watermelon snacks. The kids learned about succulents and got to plant one to take home.

Garden volunteers also hosted our 3rd Annual Ladybug Release as a "thank you" to the students and staff for supporting the garden fundraiser. Each student received a live ladybug to release anywhere in our garden. Adults and students loved this event!



Releasing ladybugs in our garden— petunias and verbena were favorite places.



Mulching beds on Family Garden Day.



Making smoothies at the school Health Fair.

In addition to teaching gardening skills to students and providing curriculum support, part of our mission is to help encourage healthful eating habits and improve nutritional choices. We were excited to participate in the school Health Fair. Thanks to the loan of the AgriLife "Smoothie Bike," our garden station was the most popular (and delicious) booth at the fair! After the families tried out the bike and enjoyed their smoothies, they took a walk through our garden. It was so much fun to see the students showing their parents around and see parents taking pictures of their kids in the garden!





## Spring Branch Elementary Garden - 77080

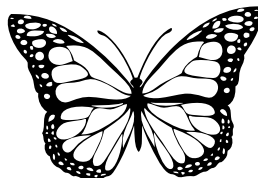
### *Continued*

In May, we finished up the activities and purchases to complete requirements for the \$3,000 WholeKids grant we received this year. We were able to allocate \$1,500 to our new shed fund and purchase all of the plants and supplies for Spring student vegetable planting, Family Garden Day, and Health Fair Smoothies. We were also able to purchase a wagon, outdoor sink table, outdoor cabinet for the garden library and observation tools, and a foldable table that we can use in the garden year after year.

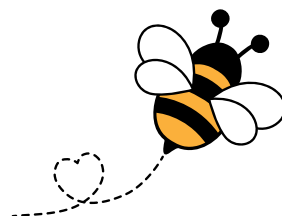
We continued “Recess Gardening” and added days of harvesting veggies for Lifeskills, Kindergarten beans (21 lbs), 1st grade carrots (43 lbs), 2nd grade onions (84 lbs), 4th grade peppers (75 lbs), and 5th grade tomatoes (65 lbs). The peppers and tomatoes are still producing this summer.



Cilantro and iris blooming together make great companions in the Peter Rabbit garden.



We have worked to add more natives and plants that support our pollinators this year.



In early June, we planted zinnia and purple coneflower seed, sweet potato slips and watermelon in the empty veggie beds for the summer. We are also experimenting with planting pumpkins for the first time this summer.

Our volunteers maintain the garden as a group throughout the summer on Thursday mornings 7:30-9:30. We welcome new volunteers of any experience level at any time throughout the year. Whether you like working with plants or kids or both—we have a place for you! Just contact Deb ([dstutsman7@gmail.com](mailto:dstutsman7@gmail.com)) for more information.



# Plant Spotlight

## Purple Coneflower

*Echinacea purpurea*

Article and photos by Jennifer Elfert, Master Gardener



### Overview

Purple Coneflower is a hardy, drought-tolerant perennial native to Texas. It is in the Asteraceae family labeled ideal for zones 3–8. However, it grows very well in Harris County and throughout all of zone 9. It's ideal for naturalizing, tolerates poor soils along with drought and is deer-resistant. This low-maintenance plant features long-lasting blooms, making it even more of a joy to cultivate in your garden. Additionally, it serves as an exceptional cut flower, remaining fresh for well over a week.

### Growth Habit

Purple Coneflower grows 2 feet wide and 2–5 feet tall blooming with purplish-pink flowers from early summer to early fall. Blooms sit top of long stiff upright stems that tower over the leafy mounds of foliage below. Flowers are highly attractive to pollinators including bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds. Over the winter, if left on, the seed heads turn to dark cones that attract goldfinches and other birds to feed on.



*Black Swallowtail butterfly visiting purple coneflower*

### Growing Conditions

Preferring full sun for best blooms, purple coneflower thrives in well-drained soil. Once established it easily tolerates drought, heat, humidity, and is not picky about soil quality.

### Care & Maintenance

Coneflower is a low-maintenance plant that will usually rebloom without deadheading, but removing faded flowers will greatly enhance appearance as well as encourage more blooms. They will self-seed if heads are not removed, and clumps should be divided about every 3–4 years.

Coneflowers don't just look great—they're practical and an absolute must for any wildlife friendly garden. They rarely need watering, don't require constant care, and contribute to the ecosystem for a variety of pollinators. No matter what type of gardener you are, coneflowers provide significant benefits with minimal effort. Plant them once and you will enjoy their beauty for years to come.

References: <https://txmg.org/hendersonmg/plant-library/coneflower-purple-echinacea/>, <https://dallascountymastergardeners.org/echinacea-purpurea-purple-coneflower/>, <https://www.npsot.org/posts/native-plant/echinacea-purpurea/>





## Herb Spotlight

### Borage

Article by Jennifer Bennett, Master Gardener  
Intern



Photos by rawpixel.com/Freepik

Nothing beats an ice-cold drink during the summertime, and adding an herb to it gives it some panache. While obvious choices like mint, rosemary, basil, lemon grass or dill are lovely options, another choice is borage, or *Borago officinalis*. With its classically “herby” look, borage is one of the most photographed herbs as well as the culinary herb most used in needlepoint and tapestries. With velvety green, wrinkled foliage covered in thistle-like hairs and blue star-shaped flowers, borage grows to 3 feet tall and 3 feet wide. Pink or white flowers pop up occasionally amongst the blue, all of which are loved by bees. Borage enjoys full sun or part shade in well-drained soil. It’s an excellent plant for containers but will spread by self-sowing if established and allowed to flourish, when it will be drought tolerant.

Borage is a companion plant for squash, cabbage, strawberries and tomatoes, helping to reduce worm damage. It attracts beneficial insects like wasps and lacewings. And when borage is ready for the compost, the leaves, rich in potassium, calcium and Vitamin C, make nice mulch for the garden.

Native to the Middle East and southern Europe, borage was taken to England by the Romans. Today, the herb grows in large expanses in southern England, the Mediterranean, New Zealand, and North and South America. This “herb of gladness” was thought to drive away sadness and raise spirits. It was given to Crusaders before long journeys and to gladiators before battle. These days, the leaves, with their cucumber-like taste, make a great addition to salads. Chopped into tiny pieces and added to cream cheese, borage makes a tasty sandwich too. If you dry the flowers, you can make gol gav zaban, a soothing tea made in Iran. Because of the color of its flowers, borage was thought to be a cooling plant and used to treat fevers or calm a broken heart or mind. But now, we can use it in a cold borage-leaf tea infused with honey and lemon, garnished with the blue flowers, to alleviate the heat of summer. Put some leaves or flowers into ice cubes and add those as well. And if you crush the leaves, you can make a poultice for inflammation caused by those mosquito bites.

Do you take daily vitamins or supplements? Borage oil is prized for its high gamma linolenic acid (GLA) content. GLA is an essential fatty acid. Studies are being conducted to see if GLA helps diseases that involve inflammation, like rheumatoid arthritis.

Convinced to grow some borage in your garden? Seeds germinate easily and are best sown under ½ inch of soil in full or partial sun. Water well until established and then only when dry. With borage in your garden, not only will the bees and other pollinators come, but your vegetables will have their own gladiator to fight off pests.

References: Herbs for Texas Landscapes-Aggie Horticulture. [Aggie.horticulture.tamu.edu](http://Aggie.horticulture.tamu.edu); Marvelous Magical Borage. University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources. [Ucanr.edu](http://Ucanr.edu); The Spice and Herb Bible. Third Edition. Ian Hemphill. Robert Rose Inc. 2014; The Complete Vegetable and Herb Gardener. Karan Davis Cutler. Wiley Publishing, Inc. 1997; The Encyclopedia of Spices & Herbs. Padma Lakshmi. 2016.





# Coffee Grounds, Eggshells and Epsom Salts: A New Perspective

Article by Terri Carpenter Simon, Master Gardener



Over and over we've heard the same mantras: coffee grounds are good for your garden; eggshells and Epsom salts can stop blossom end rot in tomatoes; Epsom salts can help increase your peppers and tomatoes yield. Are the above statements true or have they just managed to persist over time?

Two-thirds of adult Americans drink coffee every day. That's a lot of coffee grounds. Some gardeners believe the grounds benefit your garden. You can recycle those coffee grounds in your garden, but there are certain steps to follow. Don't toss the grounds directly into your garden. While coffee grounds do contain nitrogen, they also have tannins and caffeine which can hurt your plants. Instead, mix the cooled coffee grounds 1:1 with organic matter to dilute them. That piled mixture can be composted, kept moist and turned for several months to break down the toxins. Then use it to replace up to ten percent of your garden soil. Coffee grounds can lower soil pH, but the pH can fluctuate. Adding elemental sulfur works just as well. Always have your soil tested beforehand to see if it is alkaline or acidic. It's possible you may not need any additives.

The most comprehensive study I found about coffee grounds comes from Washington State University. It is the first link listed below under the references. Many stories circulate about the numerous advantages regarding using coffee grounds in your garden: the grounds can add nitrogen, draw earthworms, acidify your soil, deter cats, etc. The biggest component present in coffee grounds is potassium, trailed by calcium, phosphorus and magnesium. Coffee grounds can help your garden, but remember that it works best if composted. Spread it in a thin layer, then cover the grounds with mulch. Don't use it in sections where you plant seeds because studies show it can lower seed germination rates. It is not established that coffee grounds will deter garden pests. The bacteria and fungi in coffee grounds can stop some harmful fungi from developing in beans, tomatoes, spinach and melons. Coffee grounds should not be added to vermicomposting tubs. Earthworms like coffee grounds, but they will pull it below the soil and that hurts the soil structure in open areas. It has not been determined if coffee grounds repel animals.





## Coffee Grounds, Eggshells and Epsom Salts: A New Perspective Continued

Article by Terri Carpenter Simon, Master Gardener



Can eggshells be beneficial in your garden? Do they stop blossom end rot in tomatoes? Eggshells contain calcium and calcium intake can cause blossom end rot in tomatoes. The problem is that the eggshells don't break down quickly enough to benefit the tomatoes. Water your tomatoes evenly and mulch them. Increased levels of other beneficial minerals like magnesium or ammonium can inhibit calcium uptake. Again, have your soil tested to see if any valuable nutrients are missing or need to be added. If a calcium deficiency is the culprit, use agricultural lime or gypsum. One thing I did use crushed eggshells for successfully was to spread them on top of my soil evenly to help with slug and snail problems.



What about Epsom salts? Are they beneficial in your garden? Well, they are not recommended as a cure for blossom end rot in tomatoes, if you read the above paragraph. Epsom salts have magnesium sulfate. In fact, they can aggravate the blossom end rot problem even more. Too much magnesium can stop the calcium intake in your plants. They will only help your pepper and tomato output if your soil lacks magnesium to begin with, so again, have your soil tested. As for me, I will add my Epsom salt to my bath water after a hard day of gardening.

### References:

[Using Coffee Grounds in Gardens and Landscapes](#)

[Spent Coffee Grounds: Fertilizer or Not?](#)

[Coffee grounds, eggshells and Epsom salts in the home garden | UMN Extension](#)



Need to test your soil? Texas Agrilife can help.  
Check out <https://soiltesting.tamu.edu/soil-testing/>



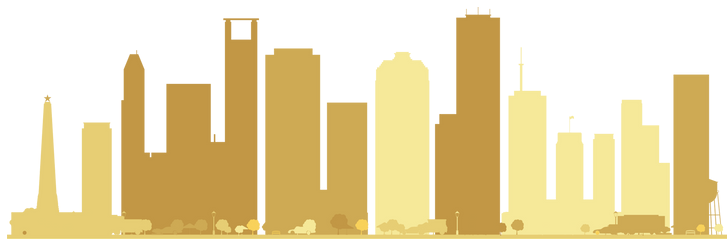
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension  
in partnership with  
Hermann Park Conservancy  
are pleased to present

## 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.



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

## Ask a Master Gardener at McGovern Centennial Gardens





## Ask A Master Gardener In-Person Events



**Saturday, July 5, 2025, 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.**  
Urban Harvest Farmers Market  
2752 Buffalo Speedway, Houston, 77027

**Saturday, July 5, 2025, 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.**  
McGovern Centennial Gardens - Family Gardens  
1500 Hermann Dr, Houston, 77004

**Saturday, July 5, 2025, 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.**  
Mercer Botanic Gardens  
22306 Aldine Westfield Rd, Humble, 77338

**Saturday, July 12, 2025, 8:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.**  
Tomball Farmers Market  
205 West Main St, Tomball, 77375

**Saturday, July 12, 2025, 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.**  
Grand Parkway Farmers Market  
Church of the Holy Apostles  
1225 Grand Parkway South, Katy, 77494

**Saturday, July 12, 2025, 4:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.**  
Houston Botanic Gardens  
One Botanic Lane, Houston, 77017

**Saturday, July 19, 2025, 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.**  
Mercer Botanic Gardens  
22306 Aldine Westfield Rd, Humble, 77338

**Saturday, July 19, 2025, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.**  
Bayou Preservation 2025 Summer Resiliency  
Workshop Series, Yard Waste  
Magnolia Multi-Service Center  
7037 Capitol St., Houston, 77011

**Monday, July 21, 2025, 8:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.**  
GFG Open Garden Day  
1202 Genoa Red Bluff Rd, Houston, 77034

**Saturday, July 26, 2025, 9:00 – 1:00 p.m.**  
Memorial Villages Farmers Market  
10840 Beinhorn Rd., Houston, 77024

**Saturday, July 26, 2025, 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.**  
Freed Park Community Center  
Summer 2025 Tour P4 Milkshake & Friends  
6818 Shadyvilla Lane, Houston, 77055

**Saturday, August 2, 2025, 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 a.m.**  
Urban Harvest Farmers Market  
2752 Buffalo Speedway, Houston, 77027

**Saturday, August 2, 2025, 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.**  
McGovern Centennial Gardens - Family Gardens  
1500 Hermann Dr, Houston, 77004

**Saturday, August 2, 2025, 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.**  
Mercer Botanic Gardens  
22306 Aldine Westfield Rd, Humble, 77338

**Saturday, August 9, 2025, 8:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.**  
Tomball Farmers Market  
205 West Main St, Tomball, 77375

**Saturday, August 9, 2025, 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.**  
Grand Parkway Farmers Market  
Church of the Holy Apostles  
1225 Grand Parkway South, Katy, 77494

**Saturday, August 9, 2025, 4:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.**  
Houston Botanic Gardens  
One Botanic Lane, Houston, 77017

**Saturday, August 16, 2025, 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.**  
Mercer Botanic Gardens  
22306 Aldine Westfield Rd, Humble, 77338

**Saturday, August 16, 2025, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.**  
Bayou Preservation 2025 Summer Resiliency  
Workshop Series, Rainwater Harvesting  
Magnolia Multi-Service Center  
7037 Capitol St, Houston 77011

**Saturday, August 18, 2025, 8:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.**  
GFG Open Garden Day  
1202 Genoa Red Bluff Rd, Houston, 77034

**Saturday, August 23, 2025, 8:30 a.m. – 1:00 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 individual tours of the  
garden! If interested in a tour, please email the HCMGA Program Coordinator at  
[coordinator.harrishort@gmail.com](mailto: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. 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 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 article in early June, rainfall is lower and temperatures higher than historic averages. So far June rainfall is very low so I hope this weeks' forecasts for rain come true. These hot summer months call for vigilance. Watering guidelines typically have advice about depth of watering for specific plants (6 inches for the lawn, 12 inches for established trees). One test is to use a long handled, flathead screwdriver. It will push through wet soil easily but become more difficult to push when you reach dry soil. Push down until you meet resistance, grab at the soil surface to pull out and check depth. On your daily walk through your neighborhoods and gardens, look for plants that still look good in the heat and consider using them in your garden.

Keep your beds mulched to help retain moisture and keep roots cooler.

July and August are good months to make plans for fall and spring gardens (in air-conditioned comfort).

## Perennials and Ornamental Grasses

- While some sources recommend scattering bluebonnet seeds in the fall, others say follow nature where seed pods have been popping open since May. I think July is a good time to gather (or purchase) this year's seeds, scatter and rake in lightly.
- 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.
- Cutback old or spent flower stems on native wildflowers like Indian blanket and black-eyed Susan (unless you want them to go to seed).
- There are some perennials that can provide midsummer blooms. For example, consider some of the salvias to provide summer color. Planting in July is possible if you take care to keep the root ball and surrounding soil moist. For existing plants, cut summer blooming salvia bloom stalks back to the first or second set of leaves, then fertilize and water to keep them blooming.

## Annuals

- Some annuals (Amaranthus, cosmos, marigold, etc.) can be direct seeded in July and you can transplant some summer color plants if you maintain moisture in the root ball and soil to help get roots established. Consider foliage plants as an alternative.
- Sow seeds of snapdragons, dianthus, pansy in flats for transplanting in late August into September.
- Keep flowers deadheaded. Cut back when blooms decline to encourage new growth. Fertilize as needed, usually every 4–6 weeks.
- Fertilize and water but remember that even heat tolerant plants may not bloom as heavily in the hottest parts of summer.



## Gardening Calendar

Continued



### Roses

- Keep up with pest and fungus controls (every 7–10 days) and feeding (every 4–8 weeks). Keep any yellow, dropped leaves cleaned out of the bed.
- Late August is time for summer pruning of roses (other than once blooming). Reduce size by 1/3 (or to desired height) making cuts just above a bud. Remove dead wood, diseased canes and twiggy growth. Fertilize and water after pruning.

### Shrubs

- Water shallow rooted azaleas regularly and well. They are drought vulnerable and are setting buds for spring bloom.
- Check and adjust as needed the soil acidity for azaleas and camellias.
- If needed visually, prune out dead, diseased wood, but wait until mid-winter for serious pruning. Do not prune camellias. Their flower buds for fall blooms are already set.

### Lawns

- Frequent mowing at proper height for your type of lawn is a good way to increase lawn density and help choke out weeds. Make sure you only remove 1/3 of height each mowing.
- August is time for the third and final fertilizer application this year. Note if you return grass clippings to the yard, you may not need this application.
- The largest population of chinch bugs is typically late summer to early fall. If you see irregular patches of dead or stunted grass particularly in sunny areas near driveways or curbs, check for chinch bugs.

### Edibles (vegetables, herbs, berries, fruits)

- There are a few options for ideal planting times in July and August. July is generally a quiet time in the vegetable garden and a good time to start preparing the soil and planning your fall garden.
- Take tomato cuttings in early July to root and provide transplants for your fall garden.
- If you want to grow your Halloween pumpkin, August is a good time to plant the seed.
- See the following link for recommended planting times: [Harris County Veg Planting Guide](#)

### Groundcovers and Vines

- If your groundcovers are looking sad, cut back in July with lawn mower or string trimmer. Water well.
- Complete any minor pruning needed to spring blooming vines to allow time to set buds between now and mid to late fall.

### Trees

- Plant palms in summer's warm and wet months.
- Extend crape myrtle blooming time by keeping old blooms and seed pods picked.
- Young trees, trees in stress or in low vigor may benefit from a fertilizer application in July. Use the same rate as applied in Jan/Feb.

Works Cited: 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; [Weather.gov/wrh/climate](http://Weather.gov/wrh/climate)



# **REEN THUMB 2025 ARDENING SERIES**



THE TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION SERVICE AND THE HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS ARE PLEASED TO OFFER THE GREEN THUMB GARDENING SERIES OF LECTURES FREE ONLINE.

## **SECOND MONDAY, 10AM – 11:30AM HOUSTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE @HOME GARDENING SERIES**

Register in advance to receive the link:  
[hcc.idloom.events/gardening-series/register](https://hcc.idloom.events/gardening-series/register)

**Online the Second Monday of each month**

## **THIRD TUESDAY, 11AM – NOON HARRIS COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY ON FACEBOOK LIVE**

No reservation required –  
[facebook.com/harriscountypbl/events/](https://facebook.com/harriscountypbl/events/)

**Online the Third Tuesday of each month**

### **History of Genoa Friendship Gardens** Monday January 13 & Tuesday January 21

Unpaving a Parking Lot – A look at history, photos and purpose of GFG Demonstration Gardens.

### **Spring Vegetable Gardening** Monday February 10 & Tuesday February 18

Choose the best veggies, prepare soil, start seeds and use natural pest control for homegrown produce.

### **Seasonal Tree Care** Monday March 17 & Tuesday March 18

Assess how your trees recovered from the winter storms and prune before summer's heat.

### **Sustainable Gardening** Monday April 14 & Tuesday April 15

Learn resources and methods to promote biodiversity and a balanced ecosystem in our gardens.

### **Some Like It Hot / Xeriscaping** Monday May 12 & Tuesday May 20

Grow and care for drought tolerant plants and better manage our urban water resources.

### **Cover Crops and Living Mulches** Monday June 9 & Tuesday June 17

Low-maintenance ground covers will save on next season's fertilizer needs and manage pests better.

### **Fall Vegetable Gardening** Monday July 14 & Tuesday July 15

Prepare your backyard garden and discover which vegetables are best to grow for the fall season.

### **Plants of the Bible** Monday August 11 & Tuesday August 19

The cultural significance and spiritual meaning of plants in the Bible and similar ones we can grow.

### **Powerful Perennials** Monday September 8 & Tuesday September 16

"Plant once, enjoy for years" garden stalwarts provide beauty, pollinator value and easy care.

### **Composting** Monday October 13 & Tuesday October 21

Why buy compost when you have everything at home to make your own, and it's easier than you think.



VIEW PAST RECORDINGS AT  
[TXMG.ORG/HCMGA/  
GREEN-THUMB-SERIES](https://txmg.org/hcmga/green-thumb-series)

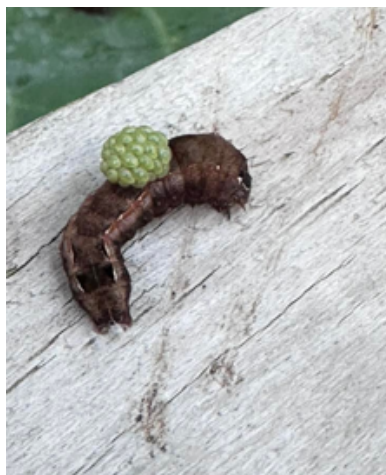


## Ask A Master Gardener Online

by the AAMGO Committee



**Q:** Question: I attached a photo of a caterpillar/worm (?) with some type of eggs on it. A member of our gardening group here in Houston found it in his garden. Can you please ID these? Thank you.



**A:** Thank you for your question and very interesting photo! As far as I can tell (because I can't see the head in the photo, the caterpillar is a yellowstriped armyworm, *Spodoptera ornithogalli*, which has some color variation and the younger instars are usually darker. I see them from time to time in my yard and they tend to be generalist feeders in the landscape and garden. Here are two articles about them:

[Yellowstriped Armyworm](#) - Texas A&M, Field Guide to Common Texas Insects

[Yellowstriped Armyworm, \*Spodoptera ornithogalli\*](#) - University of Florida

The green ball on the caterpillar is the odd part...it could be eggs or larvae, and unfortunately, I couldn't find a specific identification for them in my initial research. It appears that the caterpillar is being parasitized by a wasp or fly species and as you'll see in the University of Florida publication above, there are quite a few species that will parasitize yellowstriped armyworms. The appearance and distribution of the green cluster on the caterpillar is a little different than what you would normally see with the larvae of some of our more well-known parasitoid species, such as Braconid wasps.

When you find parasitized caterpillars, it's always best to let them continue to live in your garden, to hatch out a new generation of beneficial insects that can keep caterpillar populations in check. If your friend still has the caterpillar, it can be an interesting science experiment to find a way to keep an eye on it to see what happens. The caterpillar can be left in the garden and checked on regularly, or it can be kept in a "critter keeper" container with a supply of the type of leaves that it was found on to see what develops.

Thanks again for a unique photo. I'm intrigued by it and will send the photo to one of our Extension Entomologists to see if they recognize what is on the caterpillar. If I receive conclusive information, then I will email you back.

**Have Garden Questions?**

Submit your questions  
to:

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





## Ask A Master Gardener Online

*Continued*

**Follow Up Answer, A Few Days Later:** Hi again: I sent your photo to a professor at Texas A&M yesterday and he shared it with 9 of his fellow entomologists to get an identification—several had not seen anything quite like the green mass in your photo. An entomologist at a museum in England was able to identify the green mass, and then we had two other confirmations.

It turns out that the green ball was made up of larvae rather than eggs, and they are the larvae of a species of parasitoid wasps in the genus *Euplectrus*, in the family Eulophidae. The larvae aren't able to be identified to their species from a photo, but I'm thrilled that we have the name of the genus. Our professor referenced this link in Wikipedia for more information: [Euplectrus](#). If you google *Euplectrus* and look at "Images," you'll see other photos of the tiny wasps and of caterpillars with similar green larvae on their backs.

Thank you again for sending the photo. I've enjoyed learning about a species that was new to me, and I hope your gardening group has enjoyed learning something new too. Again, if you see parasitized caterpillars in your garden, you can leave them alone, knowing that the beneficial wasp population is at work, and you're helping new generations of beneficial insects continue to keep caterpillar populations under control. Happy gardening!



**An Additional Follow Up:** our helpline client sent another photo the day after we had an identification. This photo shows the same caterpillar in the garden, a day or two after the original photo was taken.

Our helpline team was very interested to see this follow up photo, and it was also forwarded to the entomology professor, with our appreciation for helping us with the identification. He commented, "Thanks for sending the follow up photo. It's interesting to see how the larvae have dispersed from the initial aggregation, and how much the caterpillar has degraded in just a few days. That's biological control in action!"



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](#)



## Ask A Master Gardener Online Continued



**Q:** Is it best to harvest produce in the morning, and why? Thank you.

**A:** Thank you for a great question! For backyard gardeners, vegetables and fruit should be harvested at the peak of their maturity, which can vary with each type of vegetable and fruit. When produce is ready to pick, it is generally best to harvest early in the morning, and if you can time it just right, the recommended window is right after the morning dew has dried and the temperatures are still cooler.

There are several reasons for harvesting in the morning, including maintaining moisture content in the produce (moisture content can lessen during the heat of the day), keeping the produce's internal temperature lower to slow quality decline, and preserving sugar content that might otherwise convert to starch. As the Clemson publication (linked below) mentions, "morning harvested produce is crisper, juicier, and sweeter." Herbs should also be harvested early in the morning because that is when the essential oil concentration is at its highest—oils can dissipate as the day heats up and plants start to wilt a little bit.

It's also important to take care of your produce properly and promptly after harvest for maximum flavor and storage time. Here are a couple of good publications to explain how to handle a variety of produce:

[Easy Gardening - Harvesting, Handling, Storing Vegetables](#) - Texas A&M University  
[Harvesting Vegetables](#) - Clemson University

[When to Harvest Vegetables](#) - University of Georgia. This publication has an interesting chart with descriptions for judging when vegetables are ready to be picked, when they're not, and when they are "past their prime."

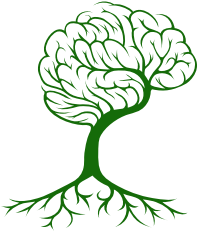
If you're interested in knowing the right time to harvest fruit, [HERE](#) are some good general guidelines from the University of California, based on whether or not the fruit is a type that continues to ripen after harvest. Tasting one of the fruits you're growing is often the best way to know when it's ready. I didn't see any handy general charts for fruit like there were for vegetables because there is a lot of variation among types of fruit, cultivars, and growing regions. If you are interested in knowing more about when specific fruit is ready to be picked, just let us know and we can send you information for that fruit. Also be sure and let us know what cultivar you have. I hope this is the information you were looking for, and happy gardening!

**Have Garden Questions?**

Submit your questions  
to:

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





## Want to Know More?

Check out the Harris County Library Blog

*Regenerative Gardening: Cover Crops & Living Mulch*

<https://hcpl.net/blogs/post/regenerative-gardening-cover-crops-living-mulch/>

*What exactly is Regenerative Gardening? Regenerative gardening is an environmentally conscientious approach to managing and planting gardens. Simply put, it means growing plants with the environment in mind, vs solely on your consumption needs.*

[hcpl.net](https://hcpl.net)



## UD Quiz

1. *Where do sea lillies grow?*
2. *The Texas Sage is a host plant for what pollinator?*
3. *Genoa Friendship Gardens currently has an amazing crop of which fruit?*
4. *In biblical times, which herb was used for paying tithes?*
5. *What is the subject of July's Green Thumb Gardening Series?*



1. *Along the Mediterranean coast*
2. *Theona Checkerspot and Calleta Silkmoth*
3. *Peaches*
4. *Mint*
5. *Fall Vegetable Gardening*

**Be the first to know:**

Click **HERE**

to receive the latest editions of the Urban Dirt Newsletter.



# Leaves of Change – Master Gardener Tributes

*Article by Jo Ann Stevenson, Master Gardener*

I have the unique privilege of writing about three women I am a huge fan of. Dr. Jean A. Fefer, Karen M. Breneman and Jeanie T. Dunnihoo have a combined total of 95 years of service to the Harris County Master Gardener Association. All three have recently retired from the organization, and two have moved out of state. Their service and dedication have impacted countless individuals in our county, and it is fitting that we celebrate each of them.

## Dr. Jean A. Fefer



Jean Fefer in the garden at The Branch School (photo provided by Jean)

Jean became a Master Gardener in 1997 and was active for 27 years until she retired in 2024. She found out about the master gardener program through an article in the Houston Chronicle. She had retired from a chemistry career (laboratory and academic) and was looking for a new volunteer opportunity after serving as a Texas state ombudsman with her husband, Mort, for 5 years. Jean and Mort led the gardening program at Turning Point homeless shelter from 2005–2014 and volunteered in that garden 2–3 days each week. For the last 10 years, Jean has volunteered at The Branch School, teaching gardening lessons to kids in grades K–8 three days each week.

Jean served the HCMGA as Director and President. She took advanced training in propagation and irrigation, and managed the Bear Creek greenhouse for seven years, propagating most of the plants for sales. She also led the Education committee for several years, was plant sales co-chair, and participated in open garden day. Jean enjoyed Speakers Bureau and never refused to give a talk if available. I didn't specifically ask Jean this question, but I think, perhaps, her love of giving lectures to the public stemmed from her years as a college professor, the joy of teaching people of all ages, as well as being a life-long learner. Her favorite topics were Olla (clay pot irrigation) and Plants of the Bible. She developed quite a following and was requested by many groups. Recognition and knowing that people enjoyed learning about her topics gave her joy.



## Leaves of Change – Master Gardener Tributes

### *Continued*

Jean took the organic gardening course from Bob Randall at Urban Harvest, the organization that Bob co-founded. At that time, you had to be a master gardener to take the course. She is happy to see how far organic gardening has come over the years. She served on the Urban Harvest community gardening committee, fruit tree sale committee, farmers market committee, and as Vice President for two years. In fact, Jean volunteered at the Urban Harvest farmers market the first day it opened.

In addition to Jean's gardening activities, she was a faithful volunteer at her temple. She served on the Board of Directors and as Treasurer.

Jean's biggest challenge was learning to work with volunteers. It was an adjustment coming from the corporate and academic worlds, but Jean learned how to delegate and get through the learning curve.

Jean has a funny story from the phone room. A woman called and said she was doing some digging in her garden and had "all these worms—what should I do?" Jean replied, "First, thank God, and then go plant something!"

Jean's advice to interns and new master gardeners is, "Find a niche. If you love what you are doing, then you will have no problem doing it. Choose something that makes you happy. Enjoy learning. New things come along and it's a good idea to try them."

Jean has just moved from Houston to Florida to be near her daughter. She will be starting all over with her succulents and other plants that she took with her. Condo living won't allow much room for gardening, but I have it on good authority that she already has her eye on any available space where she can put her green thumb to use. Jean will investigate native plants of Florida and how many can be propagated (of course, she took her propagation shelves and grow lights with her!) and she will look for places to volunteer.

I personally want to thank Jean for the years she mentored and guided me on the Education committee, and for her friendship.

#### **Links to some of Jean's videos on YouTube:**

[Part 1: Low Tech Irrigation \(Olla Clay Pots\) with Jean Fefer - YouTube](#)

[Part 2: How to Build Clay Pot Irrigation \(Ollas!\)](#)

Propagation video: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2235336453460984>

## Leaves of Change – Master Gardener Tributes

### *Continued*

#### Karen M. Breneman



Photo by Jo Ann  
Stevenson

Karen became a Master Gardener in 1992 and retired at the end of 2024. A friend invited her to some meetings, and she thought it would be very interesting to get involved. Thankfully, she did. Most of us will recognize Karen as the face of the Membership Committee. Karen started the Membership Committee with then Extension Agent Carol Brouwer during the last years at Bear Creek. They worked together to set up rules, define acceptable service hours and other important MG criteria.

Karen started the Speakers Bureau around the year 2000. She remained very active “until PowerPoint came into play.” For several years, Karen, Jean Fefer and Teresa See were giving most of the Speakers Bureau talks around the county.

She served on the Plant Sales committee and as a director for two terms. She also helped start the Gulf Coast chapter of the Master Naturalists, even serving as President of that organization. After a few years, it was too much to try to keep up with volunteer hours as both a Master Naturalist and a Master Gardener, and we are thankful Karen chose to stay a Master Gardener.

Karen served on the Education Committee, initially providing education at plant sales. We first saw Karen at Bear Creek plant sales where she would describe the plants for sale that day, and then tell adults lining up at the back door to “be nice to each other.” Overanxious shoppers (especially at tomato sales) could get a little unruly.

Karen’s funny story also involved a true question in the phone room: “My name is Candy and I want to get rid of bar flies.” After some discussion, it was discovered that Candy did work in a bar and, when Karen realized Candy was asking about fruit flies, she deferred the question to an Extension Agent because it was more of a commercial issue than a home gardening question.

What kept Karen interested all these years were the people, activities, and there was “always something new to do.” There was a lesson there, though. Karen, when looking for something to do, was handed a folder of all the questions received in the phone room, and given the task of putting them together in an FAQ book which was self-published by Extension and sold. She said she learned not to ask again!

Karen also contributed her writing skills to some Extension handouts on native plants and butterflies, but her biggest effort to date was her book, *Gardening With Nature In Texas*, published in 2002. The book is still available for purchase at several online sites.



## Leaves of Change – Master Gardener Tributes

### *Continued*

Next steps for Karen are to “putter in the yard, sew, and make quilts for charity.” Karen was a charter member of the West Houston Quilters Guild 30 years ago and has been sewing and quilting on and off since then.

Her advice to interns and other MGs is, “Be environmentally conscious, more than we have been. Global warming is real and we need to do what we can to save the planet. Fight the politicians, make our voices heard.” Karen still attends our First Tuesday meetings, so look for her at one coming up and thank her for her years of service.

### Jeanie T. Dunnihoo



Photo by Jo Ann Stevenson

Jeanie became a Master Gardener in 1989. She and her husband moved to Houston in 1981 and started a family. Jeanie was looking to continue her education and raise her two kids. The Master Gardener program gave Jeanie the opportunity to learn and volunteer while her kids were in school. She volunteered in schools in the beginnings of the cylinder gardening program, specifically at Cy-Fair’s Jowell Elementary and Sheriden Elementary.

Herbs became a passion for Jeanie and she became the lead herb gardener at the Bear Creek demonstration gardens. Jeanie was also involved in Urban Harvest and served 18 years in the Herb Society of America, South Texas Unit. I witnessed Jeanie’s love of herbs at plant sales and in her “Herbs 101” Green Thumb presentation in 2022. Jeanie took advanced training in Greenhouse Management and continued learning how to propagate herbs through cuttings with Lucia Batler and Lois Sutton at the Herb Society.

Jeanie was the greenhouse coordinator and horticulturist for 10 years at a Houston substance recovery center. What began as a six month volunteer stint in the new greenhouse turned into management of 11 raised beds and a gardening education program with patients. Her proudest accomplishment is having to learn the research material and the right place to find information. Her challenge over the years was having enough able bodied people to do the work—every Tuesday at Bear Creek and also at the recovery center where she worked.

Jeanie’s funny phone room story is when a caller asked “what kind of wood to burn my steaks over?” He was seriously considering grilling meat over oleander or wisteria cuttings. Jeanie was able to convince the caller that pecan, mesquite or even orange/fruit tree wood would be much safer to use.

## Leaves of Change – Master Gardener Tributes

### *Continued*

Interesting fact: Jeanie met her husband in college geology class. They fossil hunted on their honeymoon and have spent many years collecting arrow heads, rocks and especially bowling ball shaped rocks from Bowling Ball Beach in California. I sure hope she can get all those rocks moved safely to her new place.


Jeanie and her family have purchased property in Missouri and she has transferred her membership to the Stone County Master Gardeners. She will miss Houston's various grocery stores and ethnic food choices. She won't miss the heat or traffic. It will be an adjustment learning to garden in Zone 7, but she has already found an herb society to get involved with in addition to the master gardeners. Jeanie is glad to see the swing toward organics, as she is very select about any chemicals she uses, and only uses neem oil and pyrethrins when needed.

What kept Jeanie going through 36 years as a master gardener was the camaraderie, always learning from others, knowing where to get answers and sharing information. Her advice for us is, "Don't do it for the hours, do it because you love it. Keep digging for answers and for creatures under the soil. Learn about soil. If you have good soil, you can grow anything."



I am not a big fan of change. I once gave my boss a Dilbert cartoon cutout that said "Change is good. You go first." And he did. We were both in the process of leaving behind a company that we once loved for a new business venture, which turned out to be very much the positive move, but it was still a big change, and scary. I think the phone room stories show us how important research-based education still is (especially with all the misinformation on the internet) and why we have a mission to keep educating the public.

I have a tremendous amount of respect for Jean, Karen and Jeanie. They are embracing and choosing the changes that are in front of them. Our gratitude and best wishes go out to these wonderful ladies!!

		<b>Vegetable Garden Planting Dates</b> for Harris County											Texas AgriLIFE Extension Service Harris County Office 713-274-0950 <a href="https://harris.agrilife.org/hort/">https://harris.agrilife.org/hort/</a>
Planting times are for seeds unless otherwise noted		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
		Ideal Planting Time			Marginal Planting Time								
Artichoke	Dormant Crowns									Transplants			
Asparagus (dormant crowns)													
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										Seeds		
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.

Weather

Insects

Natives

Vegetables

Soil

Fruits & Nuts

Lawn

Shrubs

Recipes

Trees

Flowers

Herbs

URBAN DIRT INDEX

Our bi-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.

Thank you for your support!

Help Harris County Master Gardeners to continue providing gardening education with a donation

Scan here

