TEXAS MASTER GARDENER
TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION
Johnson County

Johnson County Master Gardeners

NEWSLETTER

September 2026 | Volume 2





Photos: J. Petr, D. Goulding

Fall Gardening, The 2nd Season

Spring isn't the only time to plant a garden in Texas. Here's why fall – September, October and November - is my favorite time to garden: 1) there are fewer insects and diseases; 2) the growth rate of vegetables is slower; 3) vegetables don't suffer from sun scalding; 4) the ground is warm so roots grow well; 5) watering needs are reduced; and, 6) root vegetables get sweeter.

I grow vegetables in raised beds, because it allows me to easily control the soil. You can mix bags of top soil with an organic compost then add some organic vegetable granular fertilizer to get the raised bed soil started. If you already have established raised beds, clean the bed of old plants, add another 1-2 inch layer of compost and a sprinkle of organic fertilizer before planting.

You can also plant directly in your ground once the soil is prepared. Johnson County is in the Cross Timbers region and has several soil types. The soil may be acidic, sandy, and loamy or it may be clay in the central and eastern uplands and stream floodplains. You can get information about a soil test by calling the Agrilife Extension Office.

Once the soil is prepared, seeds you can sow directly in the ground in September are: arugula, fava beans, lettuce, radishes, overwintering peas, beets, carrots, turnips, Swiss chard, and spinach. Fall is absolutely the best time to grow cilantro in Texas! I get my seeds from seed catalogs online or in hardware or other general stores. Transplants you can set out in September are: mustard greens, bunching onions, leeks, cabbage, kale, and broccoli. This is also the time to purchase your garlic bulbs which can be planted at the end of September through December.

If your tomatoes, peppers, eggplants, and okra survived the heat of summer, they will begin to thrive again and produce a second crop for you as will everbearing strawberries and some blackberries. Cut back your herbs by two thirds and they will grow back beautifully as fall progresses.

Dress up your fall garden with perennial flowers like Rudbeckias, fall asters, autumn sage, Mexican bush sage, and chrysanthemums. And don't forget annual flowers such as pansies, violas, snapdragons, ornamental cabbage, and kale that bring color and beauty to your garden through most of the winter.
Happy Gardening!

--Debbie Goulding, President

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Photo: A. Nichols

Landscaping with Native Texas Plants

Why add native plants to your landscape? Native plants provide vital food sources for butterflies, native bees and hummingbirds. Landscaping with native plants restores local ecosystems and sustains the local food webs. Many insects and butterflies are "specialists" that require a specific host plant to survive, such as the Monarch butterfly which requires milkweed for its caterpillars. Because birds rely on insects to feed their nestlings, native plants and trees are essential in supporting bird populations. Native plants also supply needed pollen and nectar to butterflies, bees and other pollinators.

Additionally, native plants are adapted to our regional climate and once established generally eliminate the need for soil amendment and additional water. And finally, native plants help Texas look like Texas thus preserving our regional identity.

Here are a few recommended plants for Johnson County that will also bring beauty to your garden:

- Shrubs: Agarita, American Beautyberry, Autumn Sage, Flame Acanthus, Red Yucca, Texas Sage, Turk's Cap
- Small Trees: Desert Willow, Eve's Necklace, Mexican Buckeye, Mexican Plum, Possumhaw, Redbuds
- Shade Trees: American Elm, Cedar Elm, Bur Oak, Chinquapin Oak, Lacey Oak, Live Oak, Pecan, Red Oak
- Vines: Coral Honeysuckle, Crossvine, Maypop Passionvine
- Perennials: Beebalm, Black-eyed Susan, Engelmann Daisy, Fall Aster, Gregg's Mistflower, Mealy Blue Sage, Mexican Hat, Milkweed, Purple Coneflower, Prairie Phlox, Spineless Prickly Pear, Scarlet Sage, Spiderwort, Winecup, Zexmenia
- Grasses: Gulf Muhly, Inland Seaoats, Lindheimer Muhly, Little Bluestem
- Groundcovers: Cedar Sage, Frogfruit, Heartleaf Skullcap, Horseherb, Lyreleaf Sage, Missouri Violet, White Yarrow.

More detailed plant lists can be found at Native Plants Finder: Home and Native Plant Database - Native Plant Society of Texas

--Amy Nichols, Member

Upcoming Events

JCMG Hours Due – September 4, All volunteer hours due in VMS

4H Open House – September 10, 6:00 pm, Johnson County Civic Center

JCMG Meeting – September 21, 4:00 pm, Johnson County Extension Conference Room

HEB Cleburne Store Native Plant Sale

October 17 11:00 am – 3:00 pm

October 18 12:00 noon – 4:00 pm

October 24 11:00 am – 3:00 pm

October 25 12:00 noon – 4:00 pm

Johnson County Extension Office

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Johnson County Master Gardener Association is under the direction of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service to provide research based, non-biased horticulture information to the county. Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service is an equal opportunity employer and program provider.