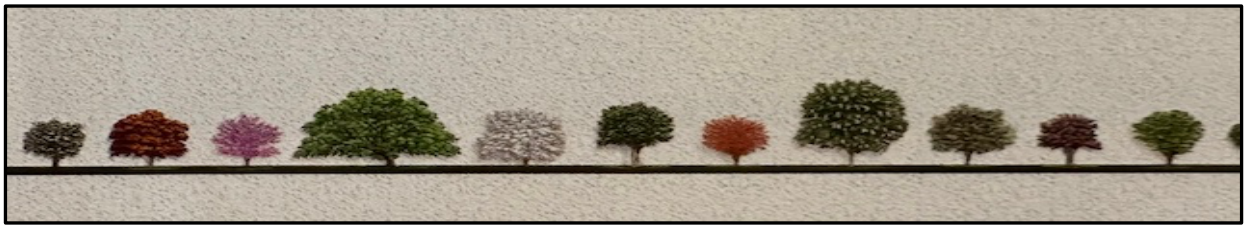
Johnson County Master Gardeners

NEWSLETTER

November 2026 | Volume 4



From Texas A&M Johnson County Tree Brochure

Arbor Day – A Celebration of Trees

Arbor Day was originally created by the Nebraska Legislature to encourage planting trees on the plains of Nebraska and was celebrated on April 10, 1872. Over the next century, the idea of a day to celebrate and plant trees, supporting re-forestation, spread across the United States and in 1970 Arbor Day became a national holiday.

Arbor Day was initially celebrated in the spring in much of the country including Texas which first set aside February 22 as Arbor Day. However, since autumn is the best time for planting trees in Texas, Arbor Day is now officially celebrated on the first Friday in November which falls on November 6, 2026.

So why plant trees? Trees provide many benefits to our environment including cleaning the air, regulating temperatures, slowing stormwater runoff and providing food and shelter for humans, animals, birds and insects.

Trees clean our air by absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and storing these gasses in their trunks and leaves, causing trees to sometimes be called “carbon sinks.”

The shade which trees provide helps to regulate our temperatures especially in urban areas where large swaths of development have removed trees creating urban heat islands. The water vapor released to the atmosphere by trees can substantially reduce this buildup of heat, lowering the need for use of air conditioning, and reducing the demand for electricity.

Trees also provide a natural way to catch rain for storage in the soil by helping to slow and regulate stormwater runoff, refilling groundwater aquifers and reducing the potential for flooding.

People and wildlife also benefit from trees which provide fruit and nuts, nesting for birds, and hollow cavities for animals. Additionally, trees are keystone plants for insects.

Many cities and towns celebrate Arbor Day and some give away tree seedlings. According to an article issued by Texas A&M dated November 7, 2025, “Texas A&M Forest Service presented over 7,400 seedlings grown by Texas A&M Forest Service to students, organizations and communities to celebrate the tree planting holiday.” For further information about Arbor Day celebrations and how to plant and care for trees, see the Texas Agrilife Forestry website at https://tfsweb.tamu.edu and https://texastreeplanting.tamu.edu.

Trees are very much a gift. For their beauty and all the benefits they give to our land, our homes, our lives, and the ecosystem, they are celebrated on Arbor Day.

--Roberta Frizell, Member

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Photo: J. Petr

Leaf Mold or Compost? What Shall I Add to My Garden Beds?

In November, the leaves from our trees begin to cover the ground. It happens every year, without exception. There is wisdom in this naturally occurring phenomenon. The earth is being covered with a blanket that will keep roots protected from harsh winters and provide places of refuge for insects and small animals. These leaves also feed the earthworms that benefit our soil. Gardeners must learn from this natural rhythm. Fall is not the time to cover our empty garden beds with nutrient rich compost that will lie unused by plants and slowly become less fertile as the nutrients are washed away in winter rains. Instead, it is time to cover our empty, resting garden beds with leaf mold.

Leaf mold builds soil, compost feeds plants. Leaf mold has only trace minerals, is fungi-dominated, and is slightly acidic. Compost is nutritionally diverse, bacteria-dominated, and more pH neutral. Our garden beds need a leaf mold cover in winter. You can easily make leaf mold by raking up healthy leaves, piling them up in an out of the way place in your yard, and keeping them moist. They will become great leaf mold within 3 years' time. This process can be sped up if you chop the leaves up with a lawn mower or leaf shredder first. When creating leaf mold avoid walnut, eucalyptus, cherry laurel, and diseased or contaminated leaves.

Another method is to add the chopped up leaves directly on the top of your beds. You may need to hold them in place with a metal grate or chicken wire. Magic will happen to your beds over winter. The earthworms will be drawn in; they love decaying leaves. Those beloved lady bugs will overwinter in your yard along with other insect garden warriors. Come spring, you can pull back the leaves that are still recognizable and add them to your compost as a brown ingredient. Many of the leaves will have been incorporated into the soil by earthworms, making your soil fluffier, and ready to grow straight carrots. My November gardening advice is to make use of the free, natural resource already at your feet in your garden.

--Debbie Goulding, President

Upcoming Events

Joshua Park Time Capsule and Monarch Waystation Celebration
November 7 10:00 am
813 N. Main Street, Joshua

JCMG Monthly Meeting
November 16 4:00 pm – Landscape Design
Johnson County Extension Office Conference Room

Tri-County Master Gardener Intern Class
(Apply through Johnson County Extension Office)
March 29 to June 1, 2007 – Every Tuesday
9:00 am to 4:00 pm – Various locations

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.