

## 2024 VCMGA FALL SMART GARDENING SYMPOSIUM PRESENTERS



### **MICHAEL POTTER**

#### **PRESENTATION:** *Having A Stress-Free Lawn*

A lawn's appearance is important to many homeowners. Learn how to have a great lawn without breaking the bank. Michael Potter will be able to help you reduce water consumption and minimize the use of unnecessary products in your lawn.

**BIO:** Michael Potter was born and raised in Corpus Christi. Currently he serves as the Horticulture Extension Agent for Montgomery County (September 2012). Prior to his Extension career, he worked with the U.S. Department of Agriculture on the Big Island of Hawaii as a Plant Protection and Quarantine technician from '91-'97. He relocated back to Corpus Christi where he worked in the retail and wholesale nursery industry in '97-'98. From '98-'99 he worked as a Field Technician in the Horticulture Lab at Texas A&M University Kingsville while pursuing his B.S. Degree. During that time he also moonlighted as a landscape designer/landscaper from '97-2005. From 2001-2006 he served as the Demonstration Assistant for Nueces County working with local farmers and ranchers. In 2006 he became the Extension Agent for Horticulture in Nueces County. His expertise lies in environmental education, landscape water conservation, plant pathology, turfgrass management and landscape design. Potter holds a B.S. in Plant and Soil Science from Texas A&M University Kingsville and a M.S. in Agriculture Science, also from Texas A&M Kingsville. He is also a Certified Professional Turf Manager with the Texas Turfgrass Association.



**WIZZIE BROWN**

**PRESENTATION:** *How To Identify Common Pests in the Garden*

Wizzie will help us learn to ID common culprits that can cause damage to plants and give us ideas on how to avoid and/or manage them.

**BIO:** Wizzie Brown is a Senior Extension Program Specialist- IPM with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. She received her Bachelor of Science in Entomology from Ohio State University and a Master of Science in Entomology from Texas A&M University. After leaving Texas A&M, Wizzie worked in structural pest control before taking a job with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service in Austin. She is a Board Certified Entomologist with a specialty in Urban Entomology and holds a non-commercial license from the Texas Structural Pest Control Service. Her research interests include red imported fire ants, bed bugs, and termites.



**CHERIE FOSTER COLBURN**

**PRESENTATION:** *7 Easy Steps To A Knock-out Landscape*

Learn the tricks of the trade from an award-winning garden book author and landscape designer to start new, update, fill-in or fill-out your home's landscape the way the pros do it!

**BIO:** While creating hundreds of low-maintenance commercial and residential landscape designs and schoolyard habitats throughout Texas and beyond over the last 30 plus years, native Texan, Cherie, has authored books for both children and adults and contributed more than 100 magazine and newspaper articles on gardening and design. She shares her passion for creation and its Creator at conferences, churches, and schools across the nation, as well as on television and podcasts. Cherie's books include, *OUR SHADOW GARDEN* - illustrated by and benefitting children in treatment at MD Anderson Cancer Center (winner of the *GROWING GOOD KIDS: Excellence in Children's Literature Award* from the American Horticulture Society and Jr. Master Gardeners; winner of The Southern Writers Literary Award), *HEIRLOOM BULBS FOR TODAY* - co-authored with Chris Wiesinger, *BLOOMIN' TALES OF TEXAS* - illustrated Joy Fisher Hein (nominated for the *GROWING GOOD KIDS AWARD* and the Texas State Historical Association's *RON TYLER AWARD*), and *BLOOMIN' TALES: SEVEN FAVORITE WILDFLOWER LEGENDS* – North American edition.



**STEPHEN JANAK**

**PRESENTATION:** *Traditional, Unique, Lesser-known and Native Fruits for Landscapes and Commercial Farms*

Stephen will share the preliminary findings of The Sustainable Fruit Project, which evaluates perennial fruit crop viability in the Golden Crescent area and beyond to Houston, Austin, and Corpus Christi. Through the results and experiences of numerous on-farm and on-going fruit trials he has established in this area, Stephen will provide a thought-provoking discussion on successful backyard fruit production for Victoria area residents. In addition to traditional fruits like peach, pear, and blackberry, Stephen will review unique, lesser-known, and native fruits which can be a successful addition in home landscapes and commercial farms alike.

**BIO:** Mr. Janak grew up in Victoria, Texas on a small farm that grew a large fruit and vegetable garden and produced hay for sale. He received his Bachelor of Science degree in Renewable Natural Resources in 2013 from Texas A&M University. He has diverse prior experience working on farms and ranches in Texas and Colorado and served as the County Extension Agent, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, Ag & NR in Colorado County, Texas from 2014 to 2018. Since then, he has been employed as an Extension Program Specialist in the Department of Horticultural Sciences at Texas A&M University. In this position, Mr. Janak studies and assists farmers in the area of perennial fruit production in the greater mid-coastal region of Texas, with an emphasis on olives for the production of extra-virgin olive oil. He began his pursuit of a PhD in Horticulture in January of 2021 at Texas A&M University. His PhD research projects will focus on studies that may improve the productivity and sustainability of commercial blackberry production in Texas. Specifically, he plans to study the utilization of primocane-bearing blackberries to reduce labor requirements, lessen disease pressure, and increase the success of farmers by producing fresh blackberries outside of the typical fresh market blackberry season in Texas and the US. Mr. Janak is 34 years old and lives with his wife of nine years and their 10 dogs and one cat near Sheridan, Texas.