# The Wood Works

learn about
**WILDFLOWERS**
**FALL PLANTING**
**FOR SPRING BLOOMS**

from essentials to wish list:
**Master Gardener's top pick for garden tools**

TEXAS MASTER GARDENER
TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION
Wood County

Fall Issue 2026



**Greeting Fellow Gardeners,**

Wow, we have survived a challenging summer and are heading into the fall planting season. Inventorying what handled the heat and drought is part of the process. Figuring out if the temperatures cooperated enough to get those fall vegetables in the soil in time to establish their root systems is part of preparing them to thrive through the next phase of our weather. It's a constant cycle of life with many surprises along the way.

Those same principles can be mirrored in our daily lives. We move through challenges, check to see what worked, adjust our plans accordingly and stand ready for the next steps in our lives. That's where having the strong support system of Master Gardeners is like having an ace in your back pocket. We can share knowledge back and forth to support one another through life's victories and challenges. We are the team and the cheerleaders. Together, we are stronger. Here's to a successful fall gardening experience!

Valerie Wilcox President



Red spider lilies *(Lycoris radiata)*

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WRITTEN BY WOOD COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS IN COOPERATION WITH THE WOOD COUNTY OFFICE OF TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION SERVICE

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Goldenrod (*Solidago) and beauty berry (Callicarpa) photo by: Linda Timmons*

All photos are taken by Master Gardners unless noted



The extreme heat seems to be behind us and cooler weather is ahead. Now is the time to examine your garden. Which plants tolerated the hot and dry conditions the best. You can help prepare your garden for next year's heat by plant selection, adding more compost and mulch and possibly installing a watering system. The time to plan for next year's heat is now, because in Texas we all know it will come again.

With the cooler temperatures comes time to plan for next year's wildflowers. Learn the process in "Wildflowers Fall Sowing for Spring Blooms." Also, the cooler temperatures means the holiday season is rapidly approaching. "From Essentials to Wish List: A Master Gardener's Top Picks" will give you ideas for tools to make gardening easier for the gardener in your life, even if that gardener happens to be you.

Finally, you may want to fill your house with the aroma of fall by cooking "Crock Pot Apple Butter" and then enjoying it on biscuits, toast, or hot cereal. Enjoy this cooler weather.

Pam Bruner, editor

**Links**

**WCMGA Facebook Page**
**https://www.facebook.com/WoodCountyMasterGardeners**

**Website**
**https://txmg.org/woodcounty/**




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# Wildflowers
# Fall Sowing for Spring Blooms



Jocinda Shwadlenak

Did you know that in Texas approximately 2,700 species of native plants can be considered wildflowers? (https://www.wildflower.org/learn/wildflower-facts)

Multiple sources define a Texas wildflower as “any uncultivated, herbaceous flowering plant that grows naturally in the wild across the state's diverse landscapes without intentional human planting or breeding”. But the good news is that you can incorporate an intentional wildflower garden into your own landscape for beautiful blooms starting late winter and carrying all through summer. Fall is the time to get started!

**When to plant:**

- Follow nature’s cycle for your guide. In the wild, flowers drop their seeds over the course of late spring and summer before fall rain arrives. Plant wildflower seeds in the fall to take advantage of fall rains. This allows the seeds to germinate and get a good start before the cooler dormant winter season and readies them for late winter to early spring blooms.

**Site selection and preparation:**

- Choose an area that gets a minimum of 6 hours of sunlight and is well-drained.
- Remove turf grass (Bermuda or St. Augustine) if present. Native grasses don’t need to be removed but should be mowed to a height of 6” to 8”.
- Remove any existing weeds to reduce competition for the newly germinated seeds.
- Consider planting wildflower borders along garden edges to attract beneficial pollinators.
- Prepare the soil by lightly raking to help aid in seed to soil contact. Don’t go too deep though - more weed seeds may be exposed to sunlight.
- If possible, plant in an area that can be naturalized with less mowing.

**Planting:**

- Review specific planting and care guidelines on your seed packet/mix.
- A simple sowing method is to broadcast by hand. Mix the seeds with fine sand at a ratio of 4 parts sand to 1 part seed. Broadcast evenly over the prepared area.
- Lightly rake or stamp the area to aid with seed-to-soil contact but no more than 1/8” deep. Seeds need sunlight to germinate.
- Water lightly to keep moist (unless rain is expected). Don’t saturate the area.

*“Wildflowers are the stuff of my heart”*
*Lady Bird Johnson*

**Maintenance:**

- If you used a seed mix, as opposed to a single species, expect your seeds to germinate at different times. Be patient as the seeds germinate – don't mistake a newly germinated wildflower for a weed! The Wildflower Center Native Database is a useful identification reference (http://www.wildflower.org/plants/).
- Water as needed to keep the soil moist if there are prolonged dry periods over the winter. Be careful not to overwater.
- Allow the flowers to bloom and dry naturally before mowing the area (usually late summer). This ensures that you'll have a good seed bank from the natural seed drop in preparation for next year's blooms.
- Consider allowing the area to remain completely un-mowed after blooms have subsided and the plants have dried. This can provide a winter nesting habitat for beneficial pollinators.

If all goes well, you'll have a beautiful wildflower garden come spring. Happy Sowing!

Sources:
https://www.wildflower.org/learn/plant-wildflower-meadow

http://www.wildflower.org/plants/

https://www.wildflower.org/magazine/native-plants/meet-your-seeds

https://www.dcmga.com/wp-content/uploads/docs/garden-basics-prepare/gb-growing-wildflower-seeds.pdf

https://agrilifetoday.tamu.edu/2021/09/02/time-to-plant-your-wildflowers/

https://thedallasgarden.com/now-is-the-time-to-plant-wildflowers-in-north-texas/



Photo of wildflowers (truly wild, not planted by me) in our pasture.
Indian paintbrush now known as Texas paintbrush (Castilleja indivisa) in a field of red crimson clover (Trifolium incarnatum).

# From Essentials to Wish List: A Master Gardener's Top Picks


Lynette Walker

Whether you are just getting started or have been gardening for years, having the right tools can make every garden task a little easier and more enjoyable.

This checklist offers practical recommendations and wish-list ideas from master gardeners that are geared towards helping our fellow gardeners plant, prune, water, maintain, and beautify garden spaces with greater comfort and confidence.

## Recommended Hand Tools

- Pruners — For trimming small stems, deadheading flowers, and making clean cuts on plants.
- Trimmers — Useful for shaping shrubs, edging plants, and cutting back light growth.
- Hori Hori knife — A multipurpose garden knife for digging, weeding, cutting roots, separating clumps of plants, and transplanting.
- Hand trowel — For planting, digging small holes, moving soil, and transplanting seedlings.
- Sharpshooter shovel — A narrow shovel for digging deep holes, planting bulbs, and working in tight spaces.
- Auger drill bits — Attach to a drill to make quick planting holes for bulbs, plugs, or small plants.
- Hoe — For weeding, cultivating soil, and shaping garden rows or beds.

## Other Recommended Items

- Mulch — Helps conserve moisture, reduce weeds, protect roots, and improve garden appearance.
- Rolling chair — Provides seated support while working in beds and helps reduce bending or kneeling.
- Automatic watering system with timer — Delivers consistent watering on a schedule and helps reduce manual watering time.
- Tool belt — Keeps small tools, gloves, labels, and supplies within easy reach while gardening.
- Gloves — Protect hands from thorns, splinters, soil, blisters, and minor cuts.
- Cart or wheelbarrow — Makes it easier to move soil, mulch, plants, tools, and garden debris.
- Water hose with nozzle — Provides controlled watering for beds, containers, and newly planted areas.
- Knee pad — Cushions knees and improves comfort while planting, weeding, or working close to the ground
- Grandchildren — Wonderful helpers for planting, watering, harvesting, and making garden time more fun and memorable. Grands are also a wonderful way to ensure that gardening traditions continue in future generations.

## Wish List

- Seed box — Provides organized storage for seed packets and helps keep varieties easy to find. This is also an economical way to acquire new plants every season.
- Greenhouse — Extends the growing season and offers protected space for seedlings and tender plants.
- Raised beds with SIPS — Self-irrigating planter systems improve drainage, reduce watering frequency, and make garden beds easier to manage. Raised beds are also easier to maintain because of their height, making gardening easier on your body.
- Pots and saucers — Useful for container gardening, plant starts, herbs, and patio or demonstration displays. Saucers with wheels are an exceptional idea for moving plants in and out of our hot Texas sun, or into a sheltered area during colder weather.

From Essentials to Wish List: (cont'd)

- Hardscapes — Includes paths, edging, seating areas, or decorative garden features (kinetic art that deters unwanted critter activity, statues, water features) that improve access and appearance.
- Edging — Helps define garden beds, keep mulch in place, and create a neat border between planting areas and paths or lawn.
- Tool sharpener — Keeps pruners, knives, hoes, and other cutting tools sharp for safer and cleaner garden work, and instructions on how to use the sharpener correctly and efficiently.
- Money — In a perfect world, everyone would have all the money their heart desired to beautify their yards and gardens.....if only!!!!

Gardening is always more enjoyable when the right tools are close at hand. Whether it is a sturdy pair of gloves, a helpful cart, a sharp tool, or a little extra support for future projects, each item on this list can make time in the garden easier, more comfortable, and more enjoyable.

"Tools of many kinds and well chosen,
are one of the joys of a garden."
Laurie Halse Anderson

# Mineola Nature Preserve



Nicole Jenkins

## The Volunteer Vision

Imagine walking into the Wildscape a few years from now. A child is watching a monarch butterfly move from flower to flower.

A homeowner is standing beside a native plant sign thinking, “I could do this in my own yard.” A Master Gardener is teaching someone why a particular plant belongs in Texas. And a family is walking the trail and discovering that a beautiful landscape can also provide food and shelter for wildlife.

### That is what we're building

This isn't simply a collection of flower beds, and it isn't just another landscaping project. We're creating a living classroom where people can see, touch, observe, and learn how Texas native plants can be used in real residential landscapes. Every garden bed has a purpose and a story.

- **Little Prairie Haven** will show what a wildlife-friendly yard can look like.
- **Rainkeeper Garden** will demonstrate water conservation.
- **Whispering Elm Haven** will show homeowners that beautiful, native gardens are possible even in shady spaces.
- **Kindred Flame Garden** will demonstrate how we can intentionally design for wildlife.

But here’s where you as a Wood County Master Gardener come in. Volunteers are not simply maintaining these gardens. You're helping teach. You're helping create habitat. You're helping change the way people see landscaping.

### Think of this project as a ripple

One garden inspires one homeowner.
One homeowner changes one yard.
One yard becomes a habitat.
And hundreds of yards begin to change an entire community.

### That's the Wildscape we're building

- Every bed is a lesson.
- Every plant has a purpose.
- Every volunteer is part of the story.

You don't have to be an expert to make a difference. You just have to be willing to learn, get your hands in the soil, and help us show others what is possible.

We invite you to join us as we tell the story one chapter at a time.

# GROWING THE LOVE OF GARDENING



Mimi Turbervile

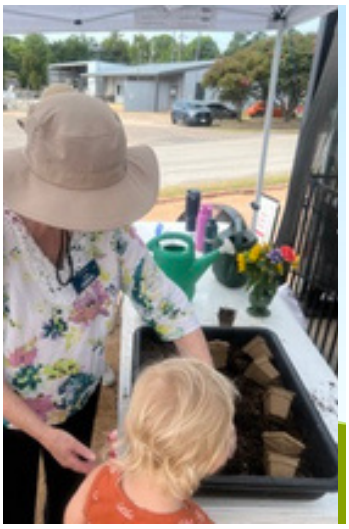
**All aboard the Little Sprouts Train!** That was the call young children heard in Mineola on Saturday, August 1. Wood County Master Gardeners partnered with the Wood County Arboretum to host the Mineola Mini Train.

The train runs on the first Saturday of the month. Different organizations sponsor the train each month by setting up a booth near the train station and teaching a skill or promoting their place of business. August was the Arboretum's turn, and propagation was the skill to be taught.



All aboard! The volunteers took a turn on the mini train before the young gardeners arrived.

Several of our very own Wood County Master Gardeners joined Arboretum volunteers to teach little ones how to have some fun in the dirt (excuse me, soil) and plant a seed!







Each visitor to our booth got to fill a biodegradable peat pot with soil, plant a few seeds, and finish it with a good drink of water.







Children waiting their turn to plant got to use their creativity to make a picture with their fingerprints. Everything from critters to flowers to rainbows and even a monster truck was designed out of finger and thumb prints! Their imagination was endless!

Children left with both their artwork and the anticipation of a beautiful flower! What fun to interact with young members of our community!

# Spotlight on Red Spider Lilies


Martha Hahn

As summer blooms fade, red spider lilies (*Lycoris radiata*) make their appearance in early fall after a soaking rain. These showy flowers take center stage and attract hummingbirds, bees, and butterflies.

Red spider lilies are known by several other common names, including surprise lilies, resurrection flowers, naked ladies, and magic lilies.

This unique perennial emerges as a naked stalk up to 18 inches tall topped with a crimson red flower with long stamens resembling a spider. When the red flowers fade, dark green foliage appears and lasts through winter. Then in late spring the foliage disappears, and the plant goes dormant. They are not visible again until early fall when the flowers emerge.

Red spider lilies are part of the Amaryllidacae family and originated in China or Japan. For generations, southern gardeners shared them with family and neighbors as “pass along” plants. Their popularity and easy care explain why they are often seen near abandoned farmhouses and in cemeteries. Today, the bulbs are sold in nurseries in late summer.

These plants are rated for USDA zones 6-10. Plant the bulbs in late summer approximately 8 inches apart, 3-4 inches deep, leaving ¼ inch of the neck exposed. Red spider lilies require partial sun but prefer afternoon shade and well-drained soil. Place the bulbs where they will not be disturbed. Bulb groupings are more visually appealing than single bulbs in a straight line. Mark the location of the bulbs since they will not be visible until the flowers emerge in the fall.

The red spider lily naturalizes by bulb offsets and spreads slowly. They require little supplemental watering or fertilization. There are no serious insect or disease problems reported.



Sources:

“Spider Lily Red,” Henderson County Master Gardeners (Texas Master Gardeners), https://txmg.org/hendersonmg/plant-library/spider-lily-red/

Neil Sperry, “Spider Lily Time is Near,” Neil Sperry’s Gardens, August 2017, https://neilsperry.com/2017/08/spider-lily-time-near/

# OUT AND ABOUT



June Sims

**Horticulture Field Day 2026**
The Horticulture Field Day and presentations were held at the Texas A&M Agrilife Research and Extension Center in Overton on June 25, 2026.



Several members, including myself, from Wood County Master Gardener Association (WCMGA) attended the daylong session. Those attending were, back row: Kathleen Augustine, June Sims, Patsy Pryor, Debbie Thompson,
Donna Thomas. Front row: Martha Hahn, Jocinda,Shwadlenak, Kat Sillick



During the morning session, we toured the field viewing an impressive collection of colorful plants.



We were asked to evaluate and vote on our top three contenders for their beauty, hardiness, and plant growth.



We walked among 19 rows of new varieties of warm season favorites, such as vinca, petunias, pentas, lantana, and geraniums, along with a strong lineup of perennials. The salvia and black-eyed Susan were well represented with a beautiful array of colors. The trials bring together dozens of plant varieties, all grown side by side under the same conditions we face when growing them at home. Our feedback in voting help guide future recommendations for our region for growing plants that can thrive in the conditions.

After the tour we were treated to a nice lunch at the research center. We were glad to be inside for the remainder of the day since the temperature was in the mid 90's. There were many people in attendance from East Texas. The Rusk County and Smith County Master Gardeners help maintain the demonstration gardens at the facility and the field area.

Overall, the field day was very informative and educational. The group from WCMGA enjoyed touring the field since we had heard about it during our time as interns. We know that growing plants is a trial-and-error experience. As Dr. Andrew King said, "its about picking the right plant" to grow in our region.

After lunch we gathered in the auditorium for presentations by seed companies who apprised us of new varieties of plants they had developed and were in the field trial. This was very informative to hear about new varieties and the best conditions for growing. Dr. Greg Grant spoke about perennials in Texas. There are short-lived perennials, aggressive perennials, and tender perennials that can survive in marginally cold hardy areas, such as lantana. He spoke of his love for growing perennials. They are Earth-Kind®, low maintenance, and can be propagated by cuttings or division.

**'Dr. Andrew King said,' "It's about picking the right plant."**



Linda Timmons in her garden with black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta)*

# Crock Pot Apple Butter
# From the Kitchen of Martha Hahan



**Martha Hahan**

My mom made delicious apple butter every autumn, and it appeared regularly on our table from early fall through Christmas. Years later, I found this hands-off method for making this seasonal spread for biscuits, muffins, toast, rolls, and even pancakes. Apple butter is thicker than applesauce, dark in color, and spiced with fall flavor. Despite its name, it contains no butter. It keeps in the refrigerator for about two weeks, but I like to freeze smaller containers and thaw them overnight in the refrigerator as needed.



Prep: 20 minutes
Cooking time: 10-12 hours

Ingredients

5 to 6 pounds of apples (I mix several varieties rather than just one type)
2 cups sugar (original recipe calls for 4 cups, but I find that too sweet unless using tart apples)
2 to 3 teaspoons cinnamon
¼ teaspoon cloves
¼ teaspoon salt

Peel, core, and chop the apples into a large bowl. In a separate bowl, combine the sugar, cinnamon, cloves, and salt. Pour the spice mixture over the apples and stir until evenly coated.

Pour the apples in the crock pot, cover, and cook on high for 1 hour. Reduce the heat to low and cook, stirring occasionally, until the apples break down and the mixture turns dark brown. This can take 8-10 hours, but your house will smell delicious! Adjust the cooking time as needed for your crock pot.

Remove the cover and continue to cook for another hour to reduce liquid and thicken. Smooth the apple butter using a whisk or an immersion blender.

Once cooled, divide the apple butter into jars or freezer safe containers and seal tightly. Recipe makes about 4 pints. Store in the refrigerator for 2 weeks or freeze for up to 6 months. If freezing, leave space at the top of the container for expansion.

Yield: about 4 pints

# Monthly Programs and Honors

## July

### Meeting Program



WCMGA played BINGO during the monthly meeting. Each member brought a gardening theme prize. Diane Schrage was the final one to bingo. Everyone cheered for her. The members had such fun; it was determined this would be an annual event.

### WCMG of the Month




July Master Gardener of the Month is Pam Bruner. Drs. Derek and Rebekah Bruner donated a sign to the WCMGA in honor of Pam. Rebekah designed the sign. They have suggested each Master Gardener of the Month sign their name with the month and year. Thank you, Derek and Rebekah.

## August

### Meeting Program




WCMG, Lynette Walker presented "Mastering Houseplant Propagation, Methods, Choices, Expert Tips." Lynette explained two ways to propagate houseplants and how to choose which method to use with which plant.

### WCMG of the Month



August Master Gardener, Terry Chaler, has definitely been a self-starter and someone who takes initiative. If he sees a need, he jumps right in and gets it done! He has stepped up and helped tremendously at the Mineola Nature Preserve. Truly a "jack-of-all-trades" and someone who is always willing to lend a hand! Congratulations Terry!

## September

### Meeting Program



WCMG, Nate Holden presented "Creating SIPs" at the WCMGA monthly meeting. Nate explained that a "SIP" is a sub-irrigation planter that feeds moisture to plant roots through a wicking process from a water reservoir at the bottom of the planter. He demonstrated how to build a SIP in various containers including buckets, cattle syrup tubs, a barrel, and a wooden planter.

### WCMG of the Month




September Master Gardener of the Month is Cindi Miller. Cindi became certified in 2022 and has been sharing her enthusiasm and talents ever since. She serves as co-coordinator of the Winnsboro garden and serves as Community Events Leader. She also holds an Advanced Training certification in herbs. Congratulations Cindi!

# Lunch and Learn

## July

### “Cool Down & Grow On Planning Your Fall Garden”



“Cool Down and Grow On Planning Your Fall Garden” was the theme of the July Lunch and Learn. Taylor Meason presented a program on fall gardening. She pointed out gardeners need to plant by the weather not by the calendar. Ms. Mason gave instructions on reading nature, a definition on what cool weather crops are and a list of cool weather vegetables. She pointed out one of the biggest mistakes gardeners make is trying to force a plant to grow in the wrong season. She gave some final words of wisdom for a gardener, “Gardening doesn’t have to be complicated. Nature already knows what to do. The more you understand nature the less you fight it.”

## August

### “Mastering Houseplant Propagation, Methods, Choices, Expert Tips”




WCMG, Lynette Walker presented “Mastering Houseplant Propagation, Methods, Choices, Expert Tips.” Lynette explained two ways to propagate houseplants, water propagation and sphagnum moss propagation. She presented examples for both methods and how to choose which method to use with which plant.

## September

### “Go Native Plants That Thrive Where We Live”



Wood County Master Gardener, Lin Grado presented a program at the September, Lunch and Learn. Major points covered in her presentation were; the definition of a native Texas plant, what are keystone plants, and why to use native plants. Ms. Grado also gave information on how to use native plants in a landscape and reliable sources for obtaining seeds and plants both locally and online. She also provided a handout of best choices of native plants she has personally had experence growing, including perennials, ferns, grasses, vines shrubs, and ornamental trees.




Terry Chaler, Gilda King, and Ann Behrends completed all requirements for their Master Gardener certification. They received their certificates during the July meeting. Pictured with them is their instructor, Gayle Mullinax, and WCMGA president, Valerie Wilcox. Congratulations on your accomplishment and welcome to the Wood County Master Gardener Association!



The Sunshine Committee held a “Beat the Heat” outing on August 25. Thirteen Master Gardeners headed to Winnsboro for a little retail therapy and lunch. The local shops warmly welcomed us, with one shop owner even opening especially for us after hearing we were coming! We topped off our shopping adventure with a delicious meal at The Haven restaurant. It was a wonderful day filled with good food, great company, and lots of fun!

# *In Memory of Terri Baker*



**November 23, 1959 - August 30, 2026**

Terri joined WCMGA by transfer in 2020. She received her 15 year Master Gardener service pin in 2025. She was instrumental in starting the mentor program and helped manage the education series for the intern class of 2022. Terri was the committee chair for the 2024 Spring Conference. Her encouragement, ready smile, and always thinking of others before herself will be greatly missed.

# 2026 WCMGA Leadership

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Scarlet Betterton, Phil Stephens
**Emory City Park/Sandy Creek**
Jennifer Knuckles, Lannette Beaver
**Phenology**
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