



What's Growing On?

BASTROP COUNTY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION

History of the Texas Master Gardener Program

When the term “Master Gardener” was first coined in the early 1970s to describe a new Extension program in Washington State, few could have predicted it would spread into Texas and blossom into one of the most effective volunteer organizations in the State.

The Texas Master Gardener program had its beginnings in 1978 in an Extension horticulture training at A&M University when Dr. Sam Cotner (Extension vegetable specialist) described the success of the movement in Washington state. At that time, county agents in the Texas Cooperative Extension were experiencing overwhelming demands for horticulture information, much like their colleagues in the Pacific Northwest.

The first Master Gardener class was held in 1979 in Montgomery County and drew about 25 people. The 50-hour course was held in the

evenings and taught by Extension agents and



specialists from Texas A&M using a manual compiled from Extension publications and news articles. Volunteer service was optional, but class members were encouraged to work on Extension projects.

The Texas Agricultural Extension Service made an official commitment to a Texas Master Gardener program in 1987 with the hiring of a statewide coordinator. At that time, guidelines were developed for the program, including a minimum of 50 hours of formal training and 50 hours of volunteer service to become a certified Texas Master Gardener. The 500-page training handbook also was completed then. Many projects that Master Gardeners are involved in directly reflect their communities. Examples are the Big Tree Contest (Orange), Wetlands

Reclamation (Galveston), state historical part landscaping (Paris, Grayson) and State Capitol landscaping (Travis).

A love of gardening and search for knowledge is central to why Master Gardeners join the program. They remain Master Gardeners to enjoy the camaraderie and friendship of others who share their interests, to gain and share horticulture knowledge, and to give back to the community.

Though Texas Master Gardeners are united in name, the program's strength lies in its ability to meet the diverse needs of the individual communities it serves. By combining statewide guidelines with local direction and administration, the program offers the flexibility necessary to keep it a vital and responsive organization that serves all of Texas.
-Texas Master Gardener website

About Invasiveness – Earth-Kind Landscaping (Texas A&M)

The Earth Kind Plant Selector rates plants STRICTLY on the basis of resource efficiency (drought tolerance, heat tolerance, pest tolerance, soil requirement, fertility requirement). It DOES NOT provide information concerning the potential invasiveness of landscape plant materials. It is likely that plants with a high Earth-Kind Index value will be more “aggressive” in their growth habit than plants with a lower value.

None of the plants included in the Earth-Kind Plant Selector database currently appear on the [Texas Department of Agriculture’s list of invasive and noxious plants](#).

For additional information on plant invasiveness we invite you to visit the [TexasInvasives.org](#) web site. TexasInvasives.org maintains an online database devoted to plants known to occur in or around Texas that are suspected of causing invasive problems. The purpose of this site is informational and educational and it is not intended to be a regulatory tool. Many of the species on this list are economically important horticultural plants but sometimes cause problems when they escape and establish in natural areas. – **TAMU AgriLife**

Gardening Tips for September:

It’s that time - Fall gardening begins. Did you know that you can plant some cool season annuals now (maybe the SuperStar® Tidal Wave petunias...)? Don’t plant pansies yet - wait until the temperatures cool. Plant cool season vegetables as the weather begins to cool off.

Plant wildflower seeds this month (Bluebonnets!!!!). When it gets cooler, you can plant shrubs and perennials - plus you can also plant herbs. Perennials and shrubs have a chance to establish strong root systems giving the opportunity for stronger, showier flowers/plants in the spring if you plant them now.

If you like springtime color from bulbs, order early to get your favorite spring blooming bulbs to plant in late fall or winter.

Texas A&M AgriLife offers Publication EHT-056.pdf – *FALL GARDENING GUIDE* by Dr. Larry Stein & Dr. Joe Masabni offers great information:

- Average planting dates for fall vegetables in various growing regions of Texas
- Texas varieties
- Seed Saving recommendations
- Garden Problem Guides
- Link to the publication:

<http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/vegetable/files/2013/09/EHT-056.pdf>

Children's Gardening Corner:

Fatty Feeders

Birds are very welcome visitors to gardens. Over the winter you can get them to come in really close to a window by hanging up one of these fatty feeders. Just make sure it is somewhere that you can spot the visitors. All kinds of birds that already live in or near your garden are just longing to get to know you better.

You will need: a small bowl, selection of birdseed, nuts and fruit, lard (shortening), small saucepan, small plastic pot, scissors, string and a small stick.

1. Fill a small bowl full of peanuts, birdseed, apples and anything else you think the birds might fancy. Mix everything together thoroughly.
2. Melt about $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of lard (shortening) in a small sauce pan, then pour it over the nut mixture (this is probably enough to make two feeders).
3. Make a small hole in the bottom of the plastic pot and thread through one end of a long piece of string. Tie a small stick or piece of bamboo cane to the other end of the string.
4. Fill the pot with the fatty mixture. Pull the string through so the stick rests against the open end to make a perch. Leave it in a cool place to set.
5. When the fat has hardened, carefully pull off the plastic pot, and your feeder is ready to hang on a tree branch, bird table or window.



ARE THESE THE TOP 10 TOOLS FOR GARDENING?

1. **Trowel.** A well-made trowel is your most important tool. From container gardening to large beds, a trowel will help you get your plants into the soil. Essential to everyone.
2. **Hand fork or Claw or Cultivator.** A hand fork helps cultivate soil, chop up clumps, and work amendments into the soil. A hand fork is necessary for cultivating in closely planted beds.
3. **Hoe.** A long-handled hoe is a gardener's best friend. Keeping weeds at bay is the purpose of this useful tool.
4. **Secateurs (aka Hand pruners).** Invest in a pair of quality pruners, such as Felco or Corona. There are different types and sizes depending upon the type and size of the job.
5. **Watering can.** A watering can creates a fine even stream of water that delivers with a gentleness that won't wash seedling or sprouting seeds out of their soil.
6. **Shovels & Spades.** There are several different types and shapes of shovels and spades, each with their own purpose. There are different types of handholds for "D" shape, a "T" shape, or none at all. The sharper the blade, the better.
7. **Wheelbarrow.** Wheelbarrows come in all different sizes (and prices). They are indispensable for hauling soil, compost, plants, mulch, hoses, tools...everything you'll need to garden.
8. **Fork.** You can't dig and divide perennials without a heavy-duty fork (and some dividing methods even suggest you own two).
9. **Gloves.** Unless you want to wear your favorite hobby under your nails, use gloves. Leather gloves hold up best. If you have roses, get a pair that resist thorn pricks
10. **Hose.** This is the fastest way to transport lots of water. Consider drip irrigation or tape.