



# What's Growing On?

BASTROP COUNTY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION

March 2019

## Tomatoes

Don't Miss the Best Tomato Season!



by Howard Nemerov

Tomatoes are a Goldilocks plant: Not too cold; not too hot; not too dry; not too wet; not too early; not too late. When everything is just right, you experience the best taste in the world: fresh, juicy, sweet tomatoes.

Collating Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA) temperature data 2000–2018, I calculated the median frost-free dates as shown in Table 1, for the cities of Bastrop, Elgin, and Smithville. (Median means 50% of the time, spring remained frost-free

Table 1—Median Frost-Free Dates for Cities in Bastrop County		
City	Median	90% Confidence
<b>Bastrop</b>	February 26	March 15
<b>Elgin</b>	February 28	March 26
<b>Smithville</b>	February 26	March 24

before the date listed, and 50% of the time spring  
(Continued on page 4)

Come shop with us for your spring planting needs. The plant sale will feature native and adapted plants. We'll have annuals, perennials, pollinators, herbs, vegetables and shrubs. And did I mention—Tomatoes! Just in time to take advantage of the best time to plant them.

Bastrop County Master Gardeners

## PLANT SALE



SATURDAY, MARCH 9 • 9 AM - 3 PM

BASTROP RODEO GROUNDS SHOW BARN

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# Plant of the Week

## Henry Duelberg Sage



**Botanical Name:** *Salvia farinacea* 'Henry Duelberg'

**Mature size:** 4' tall, 4' wide

**Low maintenance:** Heat and drought tolerant. Needs no supplemental watering once established. At home in the xeriscape as well as an accent plant for general landscaping. Can flower in summer, but best display in spring and fall.

This native Texas variety produces more, bluer flowers than the species *Salvia farinacea* (Mealy Blue Sage).

Attracts native bees, including bumblebees, and butterflies (American Snout, Swallowtails, Painted Lady).

Spreads slowly via rhizomes, but easy to divide, providing you with plants to share.

**YES, Henry Duelberg will be available at the plant sale on March 9th.**



## Upcoming Events

- Feb 23  
HEB Backyard Class @ 10:00 am-11:00am  
Ready, Set, Go... Composting and Veggies—  
presented by Gail Smith
- **March 9 @ 9:00 am-3:00 pm**  
**Bastrop County Master Gardeners Plant Sale**  
**At Bastrop County Show Barn at Mayfest**  
**Park off HWY 21E and Loop 150 across from**  
**Bastrop State Park,**
- Mar 11 @ 11:30 am—3:00 pm  
Lunch & Learn—Biointensive Gardening  
Gardening with limited space—presented by  
Chris Kirby  
Frontier Bank, Elgin Tx,
- Mar 16 @ 9:00 am -1:00 pm  
Gonzales MGA Plant Sale  
They grow a lot of their own plants. The varieties  
are recommended for this area. This sale is an  
easy drive so there is time to also take in this  
small town of friendly folks and pioneer history.
- Aug 3—Nov 2 (each Saturday) @9:00 am -1:00 pm  
Bastrop County 2019 Master Gardener Class  
At Bluebonnet Electric Headquarters—watch for  
additional details

# Spotlight

on

## Robin Schneider



In November 2017, Bastrop County Master Gardeners Association allocated several raised beds at the Community Garden site to grow food for the Senior Citizens program at the Bastrop

County Emergency Food Pantry. Since then, Master Gardener Robin Schneider has been on a mission. She's been planting and maintaining and harvesting and donating ever since.

In 2018 BCMGA was able to donate over 400 pounds of vegetables from these beds. Robin has been the steadfast, driving force to make it happen.

Robin says, "Feeding people is just a passion of mine—it always has been from cooking for my family and friends to organizing food drives for our 4-H club when our kids were young. My husband jokes that after I die, he is going to inscribe my headstone 'She Feeds Things.'"

My husband jokes that after I die, he is going to inscribe my headstone "She Feeds Things."

At this time, the Bastrop High School PALS (Peer Assistance & Leadership) group and the Heritage Girls are owners of 2 beds. Members of the community have seven beds and the Bastrop County Emergency Food Pantry has 4 beds.

To quote Robin, "This garden would not be possible at all without the generous financial support of the Bastrop County YMCA and the property owner that leases

Save the Dates!	
Feb 23:	HEB Classes
Feb 4:	Lunch and Learn
Feb 19:	BCMGA meeting
March 9:	Spring Plant Sale
Aug 3:	Master Gardener

Please check out website for full details.  
<https://txmg.org/bastropcounty/>  
 And like us on [Facebook](#)

the space to them for a nominal fee. I feel blessed to be able to work these beds for the benefit of so many needy citizens in our community."

If you want to be a part of Robin's plan to feed the needy, then bring your garden tools and come help. The beds are located on Main Street between Farm Street and Spring Street close to the Post Office. You'll find Robin and probably Master Gardeners Marcia Erickson and Gail Smith there working in the beds most Thursday mornings.



remained frost-free after that date.)



*Continued on page 1—Tomatoes)*

A 50-50 chance of losing your tomatoes to frost is too chancy, and therefore the median frost-free date is too early to plant. The “90% Confidence” column lists the date after which it remained frost-free 90% of the time in that location. For example, if you plant tomatoes on March 15 in Bastrop, 90% of the time it remained frost-free until fall. The 90% date is worth considering, because the optimum growing season between winter and summer is brief.

Mid-March is the best time to plant for many reasons. Skip Richter says: “Once daytime temperatures reach the 90s and nights the mid-70s, tomatoes will start to abort their blooms.” Planting in April means that just as tomatoes are maturing, summer heat arrives to shut them down.

Table 2—March Temperatures, Bastrop Cty				
City	Average Low		Average High	
	3/1-15	3/16-31	3/1-15	3/16-31
<b>Bastrop</b>	50.0°	56.1°	72.3°	77.1°
<b>Elgin</b>	47.1°	53.1°	69.8°	74.6°
<b>Smithville</b>	48.8°	54.3°	71.0°	75.0°

Texas A&M says tomatoes can be hardened off outside when nighttime temperatures remain above 50° F, and you can plant them after the nighttime air warms to 55° F. The last half of March generally sees low temperatures of 55° F or higher.

Table 2 shows March bimonthly lows and highs for Bastrop, Elgin, and Smithville. The second half of March usually sees about 6° higher nighttime temperatures, with daytime temperatures warming about 4–5° into the mid-70s. This two-week window in March allows tomatoes to grow a healthy root system necessary to increasing temperature stresses as spring warms to summer. This gives tomatoes an opportunity to make the most of April and May, arguably the best tomato growing season in Central Texas. At all locations, nighttime temperatures generally remain above the 50° hardening-off minimum, and hover close to the 55° planting minimum.

#### References:

- Skip Richter, Growing Tomatoes Organically, *Texas Gardener Magazine*
- Tomatoes Are America’s #1 Garden Crop, Texas A&M. <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/newsletters/hortupdate/2011/mar/tomatoes.html>

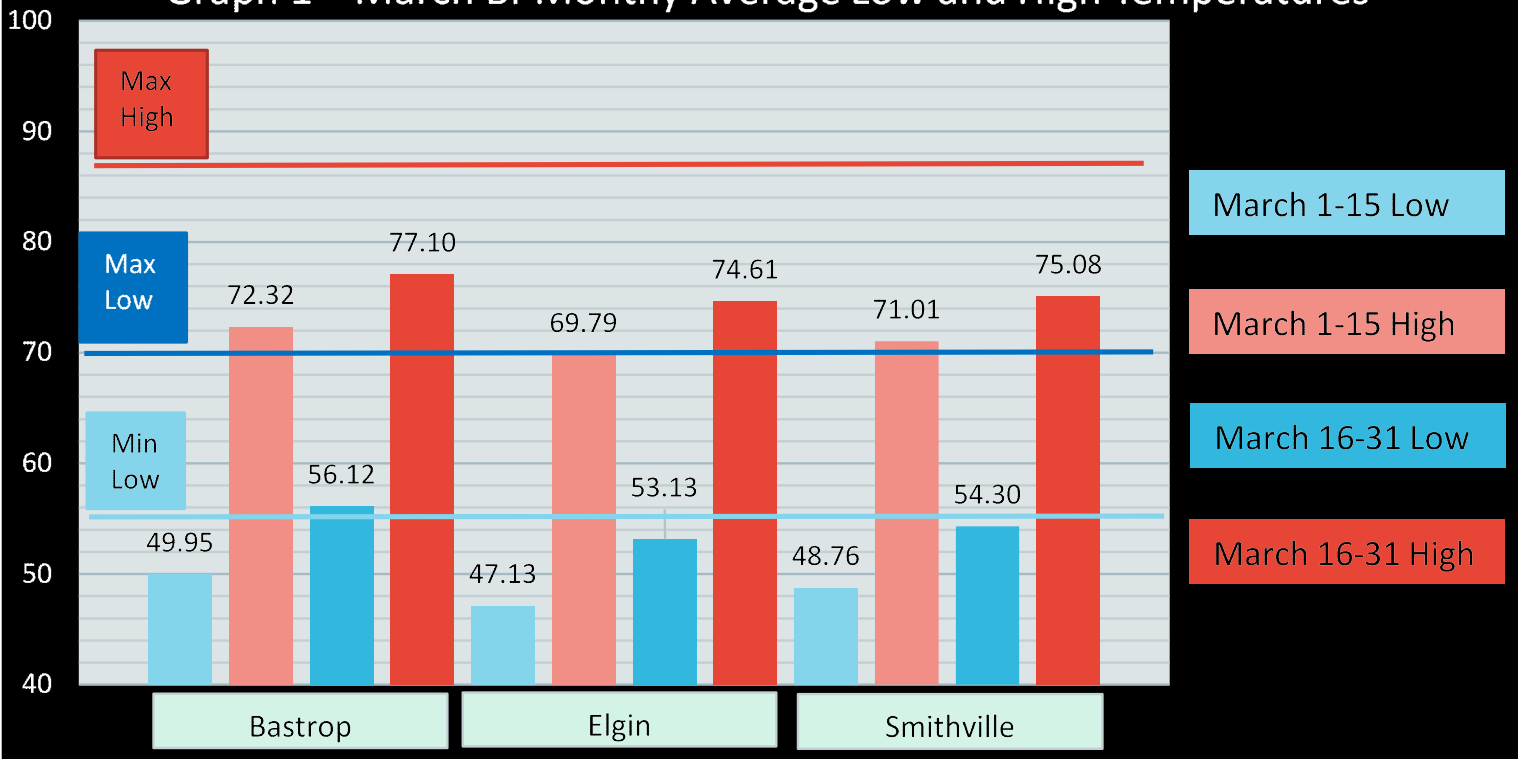
**Note:** More visual learners will find graphs on the following page, displaying average bimonthly temperatures along with minimum and maximum growing ranges.

## New Website Features

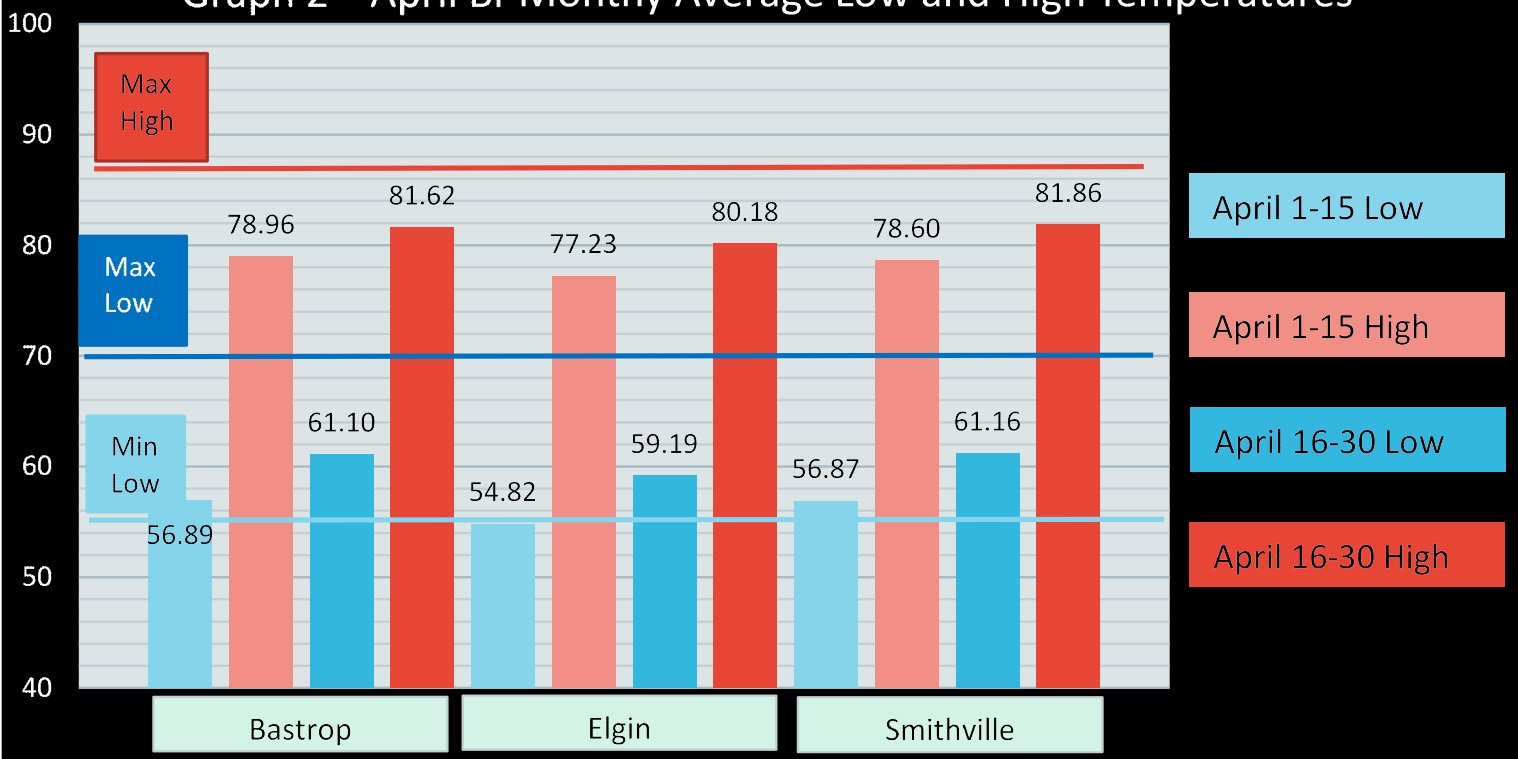
Our website has been undergoing a transformation. If you haven't visited recently, check us out. There's now project slideshows featuring workdays and activities and a new photo gallery section. There is an events calendar to check out upcoming activities. Find news articles and our newsletters. Thanks to Dave Posh for keeping the info timely for us <https://txmg.org/bastropcounty/>

# Bimonthly Temperature Graphs

## Graph 1—March Bi-Monthly Average Low and High Temperatures

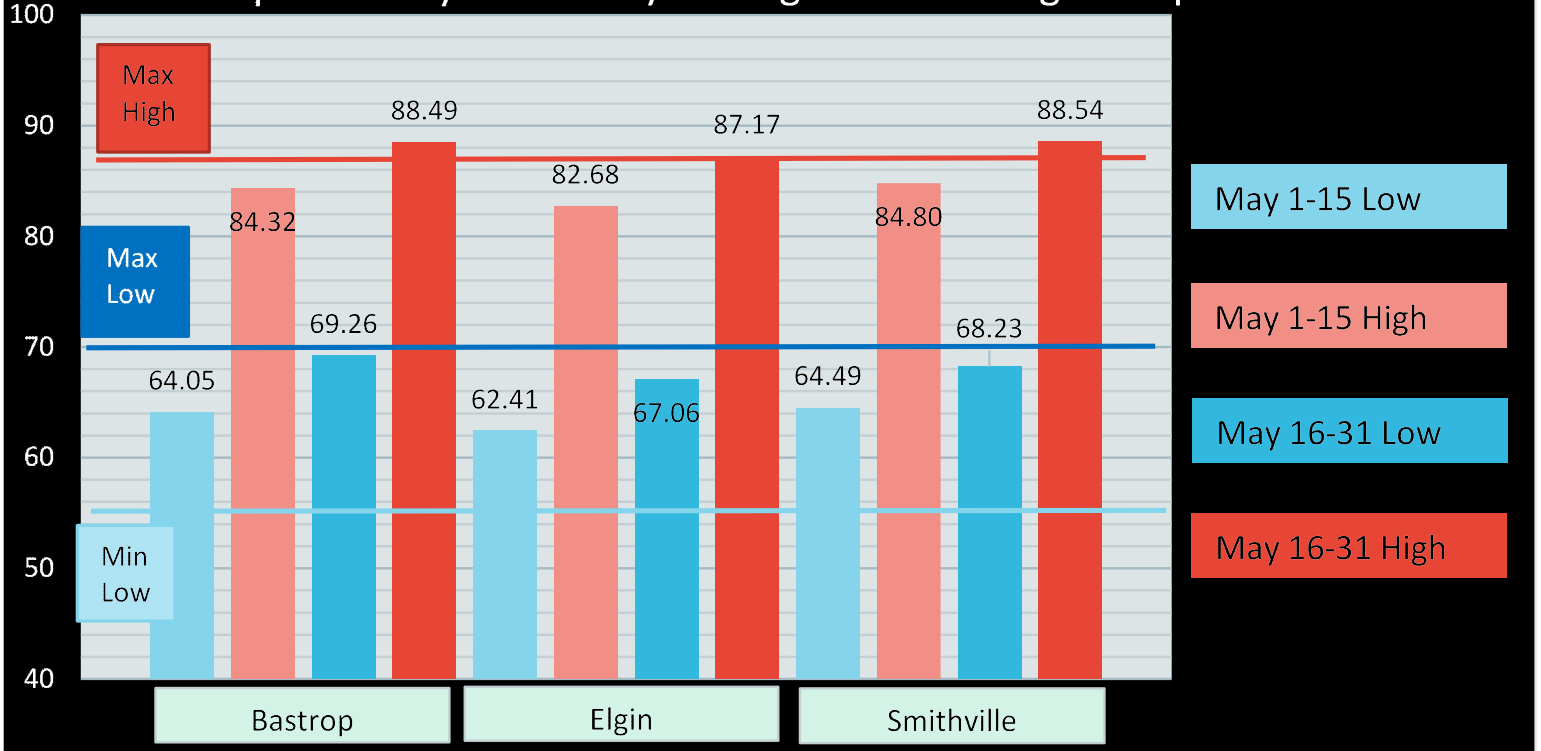


## Graph 2—April Bi-Monthly Average Low and High Temperatures

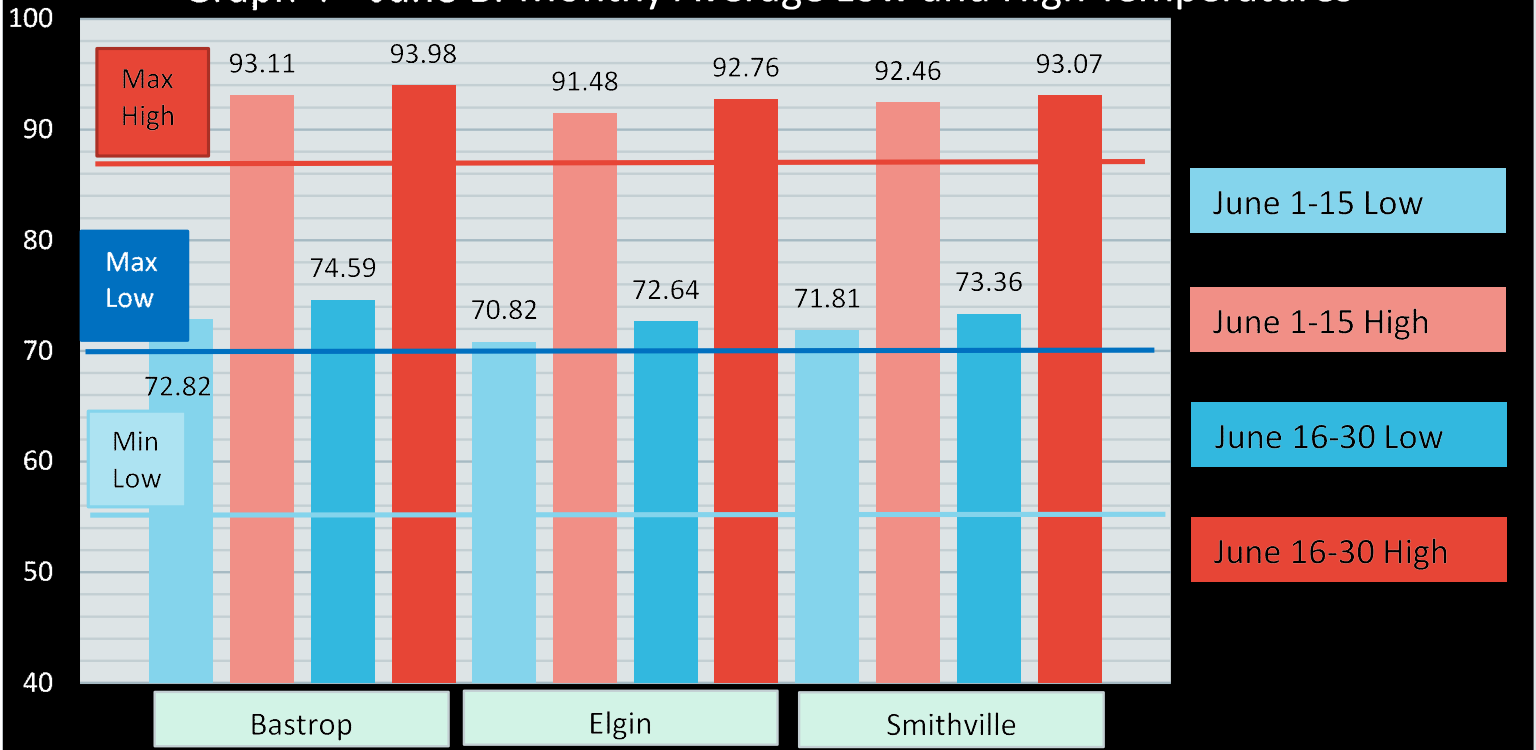


# Bimonthly Temperature Graphs (continued)

## Graph 3—May Bi-Monthly Average Low and High Temperatures



## Graph 4—June Bi-Monthly Average Low and High Temperatures



"Come Grow With Us"