

What's Growing On?

BASTROP COUNTY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION

October 2021

Connection

By Wizzie Brown

I remember way back when I was in college and I called my mom, excited to share with her that I decided to change my major. It went a bit like this.....

Me: “Mom, I decided to change my major. I’m going into entomology!”

Mom: “What?”

Me: “Entomology. It’s the study of insects.”

Mom: “What are you going to do with that? Do you plan on spending your life spraying bugs?”

Me: “I have no idea, but it will be fantastic!”

While at the time, my mom could not see exactly what I was going to do with a career in entomology, fortunately, for me I found an amazing job with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension where I have the opportunity to educate people on insects. Fortunately for my parents, they now have someone to identify all their insects.

So why the story? Well, you all have the same opportunity as my parents to become educated on various insects. There are a variety of ways to do this, and all are resources that I directly post or am involved with in some way. If you want to learn more about insects, you can connect with me (or my colleagues in some cases) through:

Instagram: [urbanipm](#)

Facebook: www.facebook.com/UrbanIPM

YouTube channel: Wizzie Brown

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2022 Bastrop County Master Gardener Class



When: Feb. 5, 2022 - May 14, 2022
 Saturdays, 9am - 1pm

Where: In-person classes in Bastrop

Cost: \$185 (before Dec 1st)
 \$200 (after Dec 1st)

Registration is limited, sign up early

Download an application at txmg.org/bastropcounty or pick one up at:

Bastrop Agrilife Extension
 901 Pecan St in Bastrop

Email class@bcmga78602.org for more info

Learn about:

- Vegetables and herbs
- Flowers and trees
- Plant propagation
- Rainwater/irrigation systems
- Landscape design
- Pollinator gardens
- And more!

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Podcasts: I am involved in two different podcasts.

Bugs by the Yard- this one covers insects in the landscape

Unwanted Guests- this one covers structural pests

Insect ID requests-

Email me at ebrown@ag.tamu.edu

Submit images to <http://texashighplainsinsects.net/>

Educational webinars on various insect topics- email me to get onto the list for sign up links

For more information or help with identification, contact Wizzie Brown, Texas AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist at 512.854.9600. Check out my blog at www.urban-ipm.blogspot.com

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New Website Features

Check out our website, which features project slideshows, a new photo gallery section, and 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/>

Volunteering

Master Gardeners volunteer in the community to teach others about horticulture. We follow the research-based recommendations of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension. Members who complete 50 hours of volunteer service in the year after training earn the designation "Texas Master Gardener." We use our title only when engaged in Texas A&M AgriLife Extension activities.

2021 Rodeo Tomato for 2021—Ruby Crush

By Larry A. Stein and David Rodriguez,
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service



Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service led by horticulturists David Rodriguez and Larry Stein Ph.D. and assisted by the Bexar Master Gardeners and Dr Jerry Parsons have again named a rodeo tomato. This year's winner is **Ruby Crush**, a determinate grape tomato. Now before you hang your head in disgust over a grape tomato being given this honor, let us familiarize you with this plant and its qualities.

This year the selection is the **Ruby Crush**. **Ruby Crush** is a widely adapted, mid-early maturing grape tomato, on mid-compact, determinate plants with good vigor and foliage cover. Setting and size is very good through the plant with final yield potential being quite high. Limited to no pruning is appropriate for this variety, with caging being ideal. **Ruby Crush** has deep red fruit that are very smooth, uniform and firm with a good flavor profile for a determinate grape tomato.

Ruby Crush has performed exceptionally well in field trials with less-than-ideal growing conditions. It produces a strong plant and if caged with adequate fertility will come out the top of a 4-foot cage. For several years it has been the best variety in the field even though it is a grape tomato. In addition, the variety will perform splendidly in a container. The fruit matures early, often 60 days from transplanting. Fruit weight ranges from 12 to 17 grams or about half an ounce.

The variety has a good disease package in that it has high resistance to fusarium wilt 1 & 2, fusarium crown rot and tomato mosaic virus. It is intermediate in resistance to gray leaf spot.

Seed is readily available from several online sources and transplants from local nurseries.



For ongoing educational opportunities, visit the
Bexar County AgriLife Extension Service website:

bexar-tx.tamu.edu

Getting a Head Start on Growing Your Own Tomatoes

By **Larry A. Stein and David Rodriguez,**
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service—Horticulture

Have you ever wondered how some gardeners always harvest the first tomatoes of the season?

In most cases these “early bird” winners are “potting-up” their plants in one-gallon containers prior to setting them out in the garden for spring, when the soil and air temperatures have warmed up enough to support tomato plant growth and fruit setting (early March through the first week of April).

To “**pot up**” your transplants, fill your gallon black plastic nursery containers with a pre-moistened peat based potting mix. Enrich the potting mix with copious amounts of a slow-release fertilizer made especially for containers, such as an 18-6-12 Osmocote Plus analysis. If an organic fertilizer formulation is preferred, consider a 4-2-3 or similar analysis. The **key plant nutrient will be nitrogen**. If adequate plant fertility is not maintained, the tomato bush will be small, yellow in color and produce much less fruit.

Upgrade the transplants in the container. They can be planted deeply; tomatoes are one of the few plants that can tolerate deep planting. Adventitious roots will form along the whole stem. This is especially important if your transplants are leggy or top heavy. Start with healthy, dark green, well established transplants. They should **acclimatize to the wind and sun**.

The goal of the “potting-up” activity is to maintain the fast growth rate established at the nursery. Place the potted-up tomato in a full sun location out of the wind. The wind can injure foliage and reduce overall plant growth, so a small plant stake might be needed anchored to the main stem. A greenhouse is ideal, but many locations on the patio or the south side of the house also work well.

It is important to **keep the tomatoes adequately watered, BUT NOT OVER-WATERED**. That is why we start out with a Premium peat based potting mix. Watering frequency will depend on the water-holding capacity of the potting mix used and the plant size. Check the mix moisture by digging around in the pot—if you feel moisture—**DO NOT WATER**. Too much watering of young plants can cause roots to rot and you will have to get replacement plants. Also, you should apply a diluted water-soluble fertilizer, such as 20-20-20 or Hasta-Gro, at least once a week when watering. The high-quality potting mixes are very well drained so they usually will not become soggy. Reduce watering when the weather is overcast and/or cool. If the plant is subjected to more than a few hours of sub 40° F temperature it will stop growing. You will recognize this when the plant stops growing, and you see purplish coloring on the leaves. This condition often happens if you plant the tomatoes directly into the garden in early March and are not **covered with a plant cover like N-Sulate until mid to late April**.

To maintain the tomato transplant in a growing state, move it to **shelter** when temperatures below 40 degrees F. are forecasted, and winds are over 15 miles per hour. That may mean, moving the containers into the house on cold, windy evenings.

If you do everything as described above, your “potted up” plants will become quite large and may even begin blooming by **late March or early April**. The plants can then be **transplanted to the vegetable**

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garden or a much larger 20-inch diameter container. DO NOT let plants set fruit before moving to a permanent location. If fruit are allowed on transplants, the plants will be stunted when establishing them in the garden location. So, remove these early fruits for ample plant establishment! DO NOT apply organic **mulch around tomato plants** until **early May**, when soil temperatures have warmed. Then mulch two inches with an organic double shredded hardwood mulch that has some finished compost. If the plant is grown in a container, be sure to water and continue feeding every week with a water-soluble fertilizer as recommended on the label.

A tomato plant will **produce a higher quality fruit if caged**. Cages should be at least 4-5 feet tall with a 16-20-inch diameter. Anchoring the cages will minimize the wind from turning over the cages. Drip irrigation is the best method to water. In six-to-eight weeks, you should be potentially harvesting up to 20 plus pounds of tomatoes and you will be the talk of your neighborhood!

This information and more can be found at

bexarmg.org

Select Gardening Library

Email: info@bexarmg.org

Or call **210-631-0400**, ask to speak to a Master Gardener



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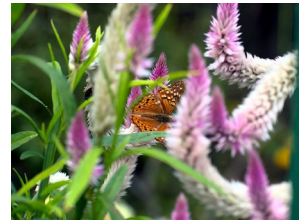


Celosias Are Pollinator Favorites

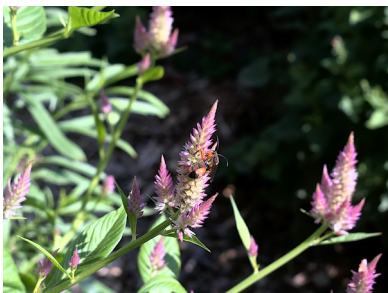
Text and Photos By Howard Nemerov



Though non-native, Celosias deserve consideration as a regular part of the pollinator garden. *Celosia spicata* 'Flamingo' puts out pale flower spikes that turn deep pink as they mature. Tawny Emperor butterfly was the latest visitor to drink nectar while I waited for the best shot possible. A shy creature, it only opened its wings before flitting to the next flower.



Celosia plumosa 'Texas Plume' is a solitary wasp magnet. Great Golden Digger Wasp (below left) hunts grasshoppers to feed its larvae, making it a desirable garden regular. Solitary wasps are generally not aggressive. I garden with them and we live and let live.



"Tawny Emperor (*Asterocampa clyton*).” Butterflies and Moths of North America. <https://www.butterfliesandmoths.org/species/Asterocampa-clyton>

"Great Golden Digger Wasp.” Aggie Horticulture. https://aggiehorticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/beneficials/beneficial-54_great_golden_digger_wasp.htm

