

# The Blooming Bell

NEWS . EVENTS . GARDENING TIPS. EDUCATIONAL ARTICLES

BELL COUNTY MASTER GARDENER FALL 2023

## BULB SALE

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Have Gardening Questions? Submit your questions and photos at: [bell.mg@agnet.tamu.edu](mailto:bell.mg@agnet.tamu.edu)

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By Kathy Love

The Bell County Master Gardener Association grounds focus group that has been studying the issue of whether or not to keep the AgriLife Extension grounds as an approved project has conducted an intensive study of the issue, and it has been determined by the group that the Association should keep the grounds as a project with updates and improvements. Following the presentation by the Killeen Rotary Club at the September general membership meeting, Teri is working with that group to see if we can secure additional funding for the project. It seems quite promising. However, we are still in need of a Facilities Director to take office in January for a two-year term, so please consider taking on this important director role on behalf of BCMGA.

The nominating committee has submitted the slate of nominations for the next two-year term as follows:

President: Teri Marceau

2nd Vice President: Barbara Ishikawa

Recording Secretary: Sophia Gomez

New Class Director: Dave Slaughter

Facilities Director: Open

Projects Director: Jan George

KMCCG Director: Monique Armas

The general membership votes on this slate at our October general membership meeting on the 11th, so please be sure to attend and vote. Installation will be at the November general membership meeting on November 8th.

In lieu of a fall plant sale, the decision was made by the plant sale committee to hold a fall bulb sale. The bulbs have been selected and ordered, and photos and prices are available to look over on the BCMGA website. Please check it out and place your orders between now and October 21st. There will be an excellent opportunity to earn service hours when the bulbs are delivered to help sort and package them for our customers prior to pick-up on November 4th. There is plenty more bulb information in this month's All Things Bulb Blooming Bell.

The next big event for our group will be our annual Christmas party on November 30th at the Harris Center. The Christmas party committee voted to move the event to a lunch rather than an evening event as more and more of us are finding night driving to be more of a challenge. We will assess that change after the event and, of course, will welcome input from all of you. Social hour will start at 12:00 p.m., with lunch being served at 1:00 p.m. The meal is being catered by That Chicken Place which will consist of grilled chicken breast, corn souffle, and roasted veggies. Our members will furnish desserts. We will also have a silent auction. Please contact Jeanne Richards if you would like to contribute to the auction. The cost of the party is \$20 per person. You may register by dropping your payment off at our office, open 9-12 & 1-4 on Mon-Thurs, or paying at the Oct & Nov membership meetings. Registration is open until November 9, 2023. We hope to see everyone there!

One other change for November will be the date of the Board of Directors meeting. Of course, it is always the 4th Wednesday of each month, but as that date falls the day before Thanksgiving, the Board voted to move that meeting to the 5th Wednesday, November 29th. As always, it will be at 10:00 a.m. in the Education Center.

With the recent rain event, gardening may finally be coming back into vogue for some of us, at least so Happy Fall Gardening, everyone!



Texas AgriLife Extension Service  
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County

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Master Gardener Program

Coordinator: Floyd Ingram



## Executive Board

President	Kathy Love
1 <sup>st</sup> Vice President	Anna Sartin
2 <sup>nd</sup> Vice President	Louann Hight
Recording Secretary	Sophia Gomez
Treasurer	Jackie McLaughlin

## Directors

Communications	Teri Marceau
Facilities	April Marek
Membership	Sherry Oermann
KMCCG	Dave Slaughter
New Class	Pat Johnson
Projects	Wayne Schirner
Youth	Susan Fogleman & Joyce Lauer
Outreach/Speakers Bureau	Debra Thompson

Opportunities to Learn and Serve**Speakers Bureau: Monthly Outreach Seminar & Workshops**

Here is a tentative schedule for upcoming seminars. Please note the bureau will be adding hands-on classes on Saturdays and working in classes on the West side of the county.

**BULB EXPO: Thursday, Oct 5th from 3:00-7:00 pm in the Learning Center. This is an open house event to help teach us and our community about growing bulbs and rhizomes in Central TX.**

**Photography Workshops:** Saturday, Oct 14th & Nov 4th in the Learning Center. These workshops are put on by BCMGA for 4H participants who want to submit photography pieces in the 2024 Youth Fair.

**Onions & Garlic: Oct 19th** Thursday, 6:00-7:30 pm in the Learning Center. Bill Walker will be the presenter.

**Water Conservation with Rainwater Harvesting: Oct 24th** Tuesday, 6:00-7:30 pm at Harker Heights Library & Activity Center. Teri Marceau will be presenting creative ways to harvest rainwater and conserve water.

**Holiday Workshop Herb Compound Butter & Cream Cheese Spreads: Saturday, October 28**, 9:00 am to noon, presented by Jeanne Richard and Charlotte Nunnery. This workshop is a **fee-based workshop** and open to the public first. An email will be sent to the membership if spots are available one week prior.

For more information please email: [BCMGA Speakers@gmail.com](mailto:BCMGA Speakers@gmail.com).

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**WEDNESDAY SERVICE DAYS: First & Third Wednesdays, 8:00-11:00 am**, is a Master Gardner Service Day at the Extension Office. We have demonstration beds all around the facility. Bring a friend who may be interested in becoming a MG or just a friend of the BCMGS. Come for an hour or two or four. *Check with April for what needs to be done.*

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**General Membership Business Education Meeting:** Meets on **Oct 11th**. Fellowship time 9:00-9:30 a.m., followed by the educational portion with the **Gil Eckrich** at 9:30 am, he will be speaking on native plants and birds. Then on to our business meeting. NEW! For folks who are unable to attend the meeting in person, please join us on Google Meets at 10:30 am for the Business Meeting. Look for the Link in your email. **We will meet at the Harris Community Center, 401 N. Alexander St., Belton.**

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**Board of Directors Meeting:** Meets on **Oct 25th at 10:00 a.m.**, in the Education Center (which is in the AgriLife Building).

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**Herb Study Group:** Meets on the **3rd** Wednesday of the month, **10:00-11:30 AM**. See the Calendar of Events for location as it may fluctuate between the learning center and the extension classroom.

Please contact Tracy Brown for further information: [bcmgtabrown@gmail.com](mailto:bcmgtabrown@gmail.com).

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**Killeen Municipal Court Garden:** Meets every Saturday at 9:00. It is harvest season as well and fall garden preparation time, see Calendar of Events.

Please contact Dave Slaughter [slaught915@gmail.com](mailto:slaught915@gmail.com). See VMS for additional Harvest Days to earn extra service hours.

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**HELP DESK:** Monday through Thursday, 9:00 am to Noon & 1:00 to 4:00 pm. The help desk **needs a lead volunteer for Tuesday mornings**.

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**Blooming Bell Newsletter:** You can find the newsletter on the Home Page of our Website at [txmg.org/bell](http://txmg.org/bell). The deadline for articles is the 1st of each month. Publication will be on the 5th.



## Growing Irises in Central Texas By Lyndell Small

The purpose of this article is to provide Q's & A's that will aid gardeners in growing Tall Bearded, Louisiana, and Dutch Iris in Central Texas. This is intended primarily for gardeners just beginning to grow iris but it will also aid in renewing some concepts for the more experienced iris growers. Information for this article was obtained from multiple sources. The Tall Bearded Iris was obtained from the **American Iris Society** website ([www.Irises.org/](http://www.Irises.org/)). The Dutch Iris information was obtained from an article published in **The Spruce** by David Beaulieu (Updated on 07/13/21). The article was entitled '**How to Grow Dutch Irises**'.

### Tall Bearded (TB) Iris

Q: What is a tall bearded iris (TB)?

A: Figure 1 shows the structure and parts of a tall bearded iris. Figure 2 is a color photo of one of the varieties of a TB.

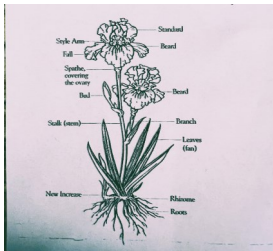


Figure 1—Bearded  
Iris Structure/parts



Figure 2—Tall Bearded  
Iris Blossom

Q: When should TB irises be planted?

A: For best results TB irises rhizomes are best planted in late July, August, or September. They are typically dormant during these hot months. This is also the period that is best for digging and dividing the plants while they are dormant. Digging and dividing will be covered in a late Q&A. Generally, irises are best ordered in the spring. They are dug and shipped in the July/August timeframe. When they arrive they should be unwrapped and placed in a bucket of water overnight to replenish water lost in transit.

Q: How are TB's planted?

A; Figures 3, 4, & 5 show how to best plant TB rhizomes. First, a hole Figure 3 is dug large enough for the rhizome and its roots and a mound is built in the center of the hole. On the mound the rhizome is placed with the roots spread out around the mound (Figure 4). Finally, the dirt is filled in and firmed in (not compacted) around the roots. The rhizome needs to remain lightly covered with the top of the rhizome visible at surface level (figure 5). If in light soil or extremely hot the rhizome can be covered with up to one inch of soil. Water in the plant and a light fertilizer can be added around the plant (stir into soil being careful to not get on the rhizomes).



Figure 3 - Rhizome  
Planting Hole and  
Mound



Figure 4—Rhizome  
Placement on  
Mound



Figure 5—Covering Iris  
Roots

## Growing Irises in Central Texas (Continued)

Figure 6 below provides examples of plant spacing for planting the rhizomes.

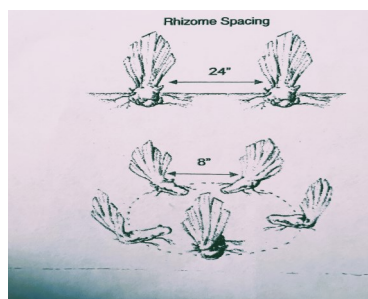


Figure 6 – Plant Spacing

Q: Where do I plant?

A: Irises require 6-8 hours of direct sunlight per day for best performance. If possible, it is preferred this be morning sun as afternoon shade is beneficial to plants in Central Texas' extreme afternoon heat. Irises will grow in shady areas but their blooming is not robust and in some cases they will not flower.



Figure 7 – Digging  
Iris Plants



Figure 8– Remove  
Excess Dirt



Figure 9 – Separate  
Individual Rhizomes  
from the Old Center and  
Discard Center.

### Propagation of Garlic in the Home Garden

By Wayne Schirner

As I searched for information about growing garlic in the home garden, the main thing I learned is that conflicting recommendations are common, even with articles written by different MG county associations. On the issue of when to plant, I found recommendations for planting one month prior to the average first frost date all the way to two weeks after the first fall frost. The Vegetable Gardening Planting Guide created by Patty Leander from the Travis County MGA indicates that in our zone, garlic can be planted between the last week in September and the third week in November, so that's what I am recommending for our location. It's always easier if a range of dates can be provided.

Garlic doesn't have to be planted in a garden space. While it can be planted in the garden, garlic is also a good choice for container gardening. Garlic grows best in a location that gets at least 6 hours of sunlight daily and in a well-drained, moisture retentive soil with a pH between 6.0-7.0. That's not what most of us get from our native soil in Bell County. I have found that a soilless mix made from equal portions of peat moss, course vermiculite, and compost provides an excellent growing medium for garlic.

Garlic can be grown from seed, but that takes two years. The first year, you only get a "bulblet", which looks more like a small onion. If you harvest that bulblet and replant the following fall, the second year you will get a bulb with multiple cloves, which is what most of us think of as garlic. Each clove in a garlic bulb can be planted, and this is what is referred to as "seed garlic." A garlic clove that is planted will produce an exact clone of the garlic bulb the clove came from.

Garlic is susceptible to several diseases and insect pests, so planting cloves obtained from a bulb purchased from a grocery store may not be a good option. The diseases and insect pests that affect garlic growth don't affect humans, so there is no requirement to state that the garlic sold for human consumption is disease or pest free. Grocery store garlic may be a variety that doesn't grow as well in our location and may also have been treated with a sprout inhibitor to prolong shelf life, making it harder to grow. It is recommended to only plant seed garlic that is certified free of disease and insect pests. It has not been easy to find certified garlic for planting in Bell County, which is one of the reasons that the BCMGA will be offering certified garlic at our first ever Fall Bulb Sale in October.

There are three main types of garlic to consider, softneck, hardneck, and so-called elephant garlic. Elephant garlic is not a true garlic, and it is more closely related to the garden leek. It has a milder flavor than true garlic and is not as hardy. I'm not going to discuss this variety any further.

The garlic cloves of hardneck varieties surround a stiff central stem, called a scape, and there are fewer cloves in a hardneck bulb (8-12) compared to a softneck bulb (10-20.) Hardneck varieties are more cold hardy than softneck varieties, which makes them a preferred choice for climate zones colder than ours. Hardneck varieties have a milder flavor than softneck varieties but hardneck garlic does not store as well as a softneck garlic. Softneck garlics can be used to make garlic braids because they have more flexible leaves and softer stems than hardneck garlic. Softneck garlic is the most adaptable garlic and will grow in a variety of climates. Two softneck varieties, Early Italian Purple and Incheillium Red, will be available from the BCMGA Fall Bulb Sale.

Separate a garlic bulb into its individual cloves on the day of planting. Do not remove the papery material around each clove. If you aren't planting all the cloves, plant the largest ones and keep the smaller cloves for cooking. Some people recommend soaking the cloves before planting, but I can't find any scientific evidence to support this recommendation. Plant the cloves so that the tops are about 2 inches below the soil line and place the clove flat side down and pointed side up in the hole. Plant cloves with 3-6 inch spacing in a row with rows spaced 12-24 inches apart. Why does a plant need 3-6 inch spacing in one direction but 12-24 inch spacing in the other direction? If you are doing row gardening, make your row about 12 inches wide, and place 3 cloves across the width of the row with 4 inch spacing long the length of the row. That allows you to plant more densely and not have so much wasted space between rows. If you are following the Square Foot Gardening method, plant 9 cloves in a square.

**Propagation of Garlic in the Home Garden**

Continued

Garlic competes poorly with other plants, so keep your garlic bed as weed free as possible. Mulch is an excellent way to keep weeds from taking over. Weed-free straw or shredded leaves are good choices for mulch. A 4-inch layer of mulch will also protect the young plants from damage due to freezing weather. In late March to early April, pull the mulch back and side dress the garlic plants with compost then replace the mulch. Garlic rooting depth is shallow, so during the spring and early summer, provide enough irrigation to keep the soil from drying out, about 1 inch per week. Mulch will also help keep the soil from drying out. Stop watering when the leaves start to turn yellow. Excess water as the crop matures delays curing and causes storage problems.

The best way to deal with pests in the garlic bed is to avoid them by only planting certified seed garlic. Garlic is susceptible to many of the same pests as onions, so don't plant garlic in the same location that onions have been grown in the previous three years. If you have a year when pests are seen, don't plant garlic (or onions) in that location again for three years. Some of the insect pests that affect garlic thrive on weeds, providing another reason to keep your garlic bed weed free.

After the leaves on the lower third of the plant have turned yellow, garlic is ready to harvest. In Bell County, that usually occurs in June or July. Don't wait until all the leaves have turned brown or the bulbs will not store as well. Be careful not to damage the bulbs when harvesting. Gently remove any soil from the bulbs and roots, but don't wash them. Then place the garlic in a dry, shady, well-ventilated place to cure for two weeks. Bulbs are cured and ready to store when the garlic skins are dry and papery, and the roots are dry. After garlic is cured, store in it mesh bags, braided, or in hanging bunches in a cool, dark, dry place. If you plan to grow garlic again next year, save some of your biggest bulbs to plant again in the fall.

Garlic is one of the easiest vegetables to grow in a home garden. If you haven't tried it before, this would be a great year to try it. Happy Gardening.



## Ginger

by: Tracy Brown

It is said Ginger has been around since the Chinese Philosopher Confucius, who insisted on having it with each meal. He used it as a digestive aid, more than 2500 years ago. Ginger is aromatic, pungent and spicy. Used even in modern times for a digestive aid. Is very safe for pregnant women, to alleviate nausea and vomiting. of course, culinary spicing!

The active ingredient in Ginger is gingerols, which is responsible for the flavor and smell. Gingerols are a powerful anti-inflammatory. Some studies have shown several reasons to add Ginger to your diet. Immune System boost, induces cell death in ovarian cancer and protects against colorectal cancers.

Ginger is also good for mineral intake. Copper, Magnesium, Potassium and B6

Brown from a bulb like a root, called a rhizome. Ginger is so easy to grow and separate the 'knuckles'. Be sure to leave on your counter a few days for the cut to dry over before planting. (Keep the rhizome from rotting.) Plant 6-8 inches apart, within 2-4 inches deep. Sandy/loam and or rich organic soils ginger will thrive. This is one of the reasons both ginger and turmeric do so well in containers.

Plant late May, early June (is best). Full sun and deep water 2-3 times a week depending on the heat of the summer. Which they actually do well in our heated summers. Be sure to put a thicker mulch over the top, to keep moisture, but not waterlogged. Good growing Zones are from 9-12. Fertilize with a slow release, preferable. However, fertilizer rich in Phosphate in liquid form works well too. (Be sure to have your soil tested.) You just have to apply more often. And remember, in containers, weekly fertilization is recommended.

Ginger comes from the tropical regions. So hot and humid is lovely. For Texas, allow 4-6 hours of full sun, then shade during our gosh awful burning summers.

You can harvest anytime the plant has matured, but it is best to wait 8-10 months. I usually harvest late December early January, before it gets too cold. It is very easy, just pop your shovel or fork, down 3-4 inches and pry up, the entire rooting/rhizomes come up. Hose off, break apart and choose some 'knuckles' for the next year's planting.

Since this is considered a Root, it keeps for several weeks on your counter or refrigerator. You can even freeze! Personally I slice thinly and dehydrate. Into a sterile Mason Style jar and keep in my spice cabinet. It easily re-hydrates, or just dice and add to your culinary dishes, or teas.

Best information is Turmeric is grown the exact same way. So, plant both these next year!

For more information: <https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2010/10/EHT-014-Easy-Gardening-Ginger.pdf>



**OXBLOOD LILY**

By Gail Christian

In my yard I have some Oxblood Lilies (*Rhodophiala bifida*). They are also called School Lilies because they bloom in the fall about the same time school used to start. Oxblood Lily is a fall blooming plant that goes dormant in the winter. Each bloom is open only two to three days, but each flowering clump can produce flowers up to a month. They like full sun to partial shade. They will attract bees, butterflies and hummingbirds. Bloom height is 10 to 12 inches. Leaves are glossy, dark green and grass-like. Leaves appear in winter after blooms die and will fade away in late spring. Plant in spring or early autumn, sowing three inches deep with the neck facing up, about eight inches apart. If it does not rain, water consistently during the first year of growth.

Oxblood lilies are extremely adaptable to a wide range of soils. They can even thrive in heavy clay, but as with most bulbs, they will not grow in boggy soils. They tolerate alkaline to acidic soil. The plants are heat and drought tolerant but do require spring rains to form foliage and flowers. The bulbs naturalize readily and should be separated every couple of years. Mine grows under a Hackberry tree. They get some morning sun and shade in the afternoon heat. When the leaves fall from the tree they



get sun to grow the bulbs bigger and better for next spring.

The bulbs are not common in many parts of the United States but the deep red oxblood form is common in certain areas of Texas. Peter Henry Oberwetter, a German native, migrated to Texas in 1849 and traveled through the Hill Country area before settling in Austin. A noted botanist, he collected and crossbred these bulbs. The presence of the Oxblood Lily correlates to the areas where he had his nursery beds.

Oxblood Lily is available in some garden nurseries, but is generally hard to find. Gardeners would recognize it as a pass-along plant. Pass-alongs are plants that have survived in gardens for decades by being loved and handed down one generation to another.

## KILLEEN MUNICIPAL COURT COMMUNITY GARDEN REPORT

*By April Marek and Randy Brown*



The Killeen Municipal Court Community Garden appreciated the cooler temperatures and much-needed rain in September. There were five Saturday workdays. The harvest total for September was 346 pounds of okra, tomatoes, peppers, and various squash varieties. Okra and squash currently make up the majority of the harvest right now. One of the cucumber beds became infested with aphids and was removed and prepared for carrots and radishes. Lots of maintenance and preparation for fall continued throughout the month. The temperatures finally dropped to a tolerable level where we could plant the fall squash crops.





### Awards Nomination By Dave Slaughter

Although October is better known for pumpkin bread and pumpkin oatmeal cookies, it's also the month you can submit nominations for Association awards. Any certified master gardener in the Association can submit a nomination for a fellow certified master gardener within the Association or a friend of the master gardeners. Awards include Green Thumb for service within the Association, Golden Trowel for service to the community, meritorious service award for outstanding service performing the same job for a period of five years or more, New Master Gardener of the Year for the class that began last January, and friends of the master gardeners for non-Association individuals, groups, or a business. The completion criteria for all awards are provided in the awards document posted in the members-only area of our website. Remember, there is only one nomination form, and it can be used for any award. The deadline for all award nominations is October 31, 2023.



### Horticultural Myths for October By Wayne Schirner

I'm taking a slightly different approach this month, since I wrote about the myths related to fertilizing bulbs last month. I want to share a link to a Joe Lamp'l podcast on "Gardening Products You Don't Need, and Why". It is based on an interview with Robert Pavlis who is a garden myth-busting expert.

The items discussed in this podcast are:

- Soil Test Kits
- Plant-specific Fertilizer
- Organic vs. Synthetic Fertilizer
- Fish-based Fertilizer
- Bone Meal
- Jiffy Peat Pellets
- Landscape Fabric
- Mycorrhiza
- Pruners

For each of these topics, he discusses the pros and cons, and gives reasons why they might or might not be useful in your garden. Everyone needs to make their own choices about the things they buy for use in their garden, but it always helps to have information to make an informed decision.

Here's the link:

<https://joegardener.com/podcast/gardening-products-you-dont-need/>

That's it for this month. Happy Gardening.

## YOUTH LGEG

Susan Fogleman and Joyce Lauer along with Better Living for Texans in the LGEG programs are keeping the BCMGA busy at our local schools. Our reach spans from Bartlett to Copperas Cove.

### Bartlett



### Kennedy Powell





## Vintage Christian Academy



**Hackberry trees, trash or treasure?**

by Gail Christian

Hackberry, love it or hate it. There seems to be no middle ground. The species of Hackberries has a large range and can be found across North America. There are nearly 70 species worldwide. They are members of the Elm family and are known as fast growers. They do not get diseases of the Elm family. Hackberries occur throughout Texas: five species are trees and one species is shrub like. The two most common species are *Celtis laevigata*, also called Sugarberry, and *C. laevigata*, var. *reticulata*, commonly known as Netleaf Hackberry. They are a good source of nectar and pollen for honeybees. The berries are eaten by a wide variety of birds, including quail, woodpeckers and waxwings. The leaves are eaten by the larval of butterflies and moths, including tawny emperors, question marks and American Snouts. These fast growing trees also stabilize banks of area streams, allowing slower growing species to mature.

As early as the 1300 Native Americans ate the dried seeds to provide protein, phosphorus, and calcium. They added them to corn porridge. The Comanche mixed them into meatballs. The wood is flexible and was used for making bowls and handles for tools. Native Americans in Arizona and Mexico used their species to make bark for sandals, the leaves were boiled to make dye for wool. Today the wood is used mainly for furniture, pallets, firewood, and sporting goods. The early pioneers used them also for food, firewood and fence posts. But: The wood can be brittle and break, mistletoe can spread throughout the canopy. They also have various problems such as Nipple Leaf Gall and Witches Broom. In spite of these problems it adapts well to a range of poor soil types. It is highly tolerant of heat and drought. Sugarberries and Hackberries are an important part of our diverse forest. They provide shade, filtration of air pollution control of storm water and flooding. They do spread seeds, but so do Oaks, Pecans, and other trees that you have in your yard.

Sugarberry and Hackberries can be an excellent neighbor and friend of wildlife if treated well.

<https://www.austintexas.gov/blog/species-spotlight-celtis-laevigata-sugarberry>

<https://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/coast/nature/images/hackberry.html>

<https://rangeplants.tamu.edu/plant/hackberry>