



NEWS . EVENTS . GARDENING TIPS . EDUCATIONAL ARTICLES

# GARDENING AROUND

**By Dave Slaughter**

Vegetable gardening is both rewarding and challenging, and planting a vegetable garden in central Texas is no different than planting a vegetable garden in any other state, except for the date on the calendar. For example, if you are planting potatoes, you either cut your potatoes so you have at least one eye on every piece; allow them to dry for a week to harden off; or if you are in a hurry, treat your cut potatoes with a wettable sulfur fungicide. Once your potatoes are cut and dried or treated, dig a furrow six to eight inches deep; space your potatoes in the furrow about twelve inches apart and cover them with soil. Another example is bush beans or corn, you dig a furrow about one and half inches deep, place your seeds in the furrow about six inches apart, cover with soil and thin as necessary once your seedlings emerge.

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## Monthly Meetings

### WEDNESDAY SERVICE DAYS:

First & Third Wednesdays, 8:30-11:30 am, is a Master Gardener workday at the Extension Office. (2nd & 4th Wednesdays, prior to meetings). We have demonstration beds all around the facility. The Grounds Focus group will continue guiding the grounds until there is a director and associate director installed.

### General Membership Business Education Meeting:

Meets Wednesday, August 14th.

Fellowship time is 9:00- 9:30 a.m.



We will be hosting the business portion of the meeting on Google Meets for those who cannot make it for personal reasons (this will not include the educational portion of the meeting). Look for the online meeting link in the weekly events email from Monique Armas. We will meet in person at the Harris Community Center, 401 N. Alexander St., Belton.

### Board of Directors Meeting:

Board of Directors meetings are held as a hybrid meeting. Look for the link in the weekly events email from Monique Armas. All of our meetings will be held in the extension office and will begin promptly at 10:00 a.m.

**Next Board Meeting: September 25**

### Herb Study Group

Evening Meeting: Thursday, August 8th at 6:00 p.m.

Morning Meeting: Wednesday, August 21 at 10:30 a.m.

Please contact Tracy Brown for further information:

bcmgtabrown@gmail.com.



### Killeen Municipal Court Community Garden Workdays

Every Saturday at 8:30 a.m.

Please contact Monique Armas at justasimpleplantlover@yahoo.com

### HELP DESK

Monday through Thursday, 9:00 am to Noon & 1:00 to 4:00 pm. If interested in earning education & volunteer hours, please contact Kathy Love lkathy021@gmail.com.

All photos contributed by Randy Brown, Stephanie Preciado, Jessica Dunmire, Dave Slaughter, Ann Munroe, Alfred Stall, and April Marek, unless otherwise noted.



Texas AgriLife Extension Service  
Horticulture Program in Bell County

1605 N Main St Ste 102 Belton, TX  
76513

Email: bell-tx@tamu.edu

Phone: 254.933.5305

Fax: 254.933.5312



### Executive Directors

President	Teri Marceau
1st Vice President	Anna Sartin
2nd Vice President	Barbara Ishikawa
Recording Secretary	Sophia Gomez
Treasurer	Jackie McLaughlin

### Directors

Communications	April Marek
Facilities	Grounds Focus Group
Membership	Sherry Oermann
KMCCG	Monique Armas
New Class	Dave Slaughter
Projects	Jan George
Youth	Susan Fogleman & Joyce Lauer
Outreach/Speakers Bureau	Debra Thompson



## President's Perspective: By Teri Marceau



Have you taken your “volunteer temperature” lately? What do I mean, you ask? I believe we should evaluate ourselves daily, monthly, and yearly as individuals and as an association. The BCMGA board of directors did just that by having an off-site one-day retreat during our sixth month of service in office. On July 31st, the board held a brainstorming meeting at Clearwater Underground Water Conservation District’s new conference/board room. I am encouraged by this board’s ability to inspire one another, work through varied ideas, and make decisions for the future of BCMGA.

Before we get started, let me recap for just a moment. After the association elections and before taking office, we met as a board to discuss our goals for 2024. Together, we decided to focus on Member and Community engagement as well as the association's Finances. The board continues to work toward aligning itself with the BCMGA Strategic Plan (found on the BCMGA member page) and TXMG. And dare I say it, “look to the future.”

Below are some of the notes I started the meeting with:

The board has hit the road running with some of our goals, achieving and exceeding some.

- Certificate of deposit
- Changing up our BOD meetings to bi-monthly
- New class success
  - increased service hours
  - 16 of 17 meeting their certification by graduation day (the 17th is just shy of full certification)
- Redirecting our focus at the general membership meetings from stats to engagements.
- Strong partnerships with
  - Harker Heights, Elevate Troy, & Temple Library
  - Grizzlies Hidden Falls Nursery & 93 Nursery (continuing our relationship with Belton Feed & Supply)
- Youth Program – hitting all-time high demand
- Migration of BB to a new graphic design platform (Canva) – more modern results & Beautiful.
  - Increase in contributors
- GM meeting content in Google Drive and available on demand.
  - Streaming live on Google Meets.





## President's Perspective (continued)

We certainly are not perfect, but we will continue to strive to be the best we can be. While we are seeing success in many of our goals, there are challenges that we still face.

- How and when to report past accomplishments
- Member engagement and moving away from the same old ways and/or improving on them
- Finding the “right” projects that energize members and encourage engagement by both members and the community while meeting our mission statement.
- Having a mindset different from “we have always done it that way.”

Some challenges in the future transitions I see:

- Technology? e.g., FB live forum in a private group during the growing season to show successes and failures and answer questions.
- The internet is our competition (is everything on the internet true?)
- Free (YouTube) vs Fee Based education opportunities.
- Changing written material to online and less wordy.
- Looking at pivoting In-person education to “on demand”.
- Breaking up longer intensive training to shorter snippets (just answer my question).
- Volunteer demographics changing from “retirees” to working (time availability).
- Old ways vs New ideas.



I am a demographic nerd if you will. I like to look at past and future trends, especially in the volunteer world. I may not say it enough, but I don't believe everything needs to change. However, I am of the mindset that everything (including people) can be improved. As we look to the future, we will all see a change in our volunteer demographics. My peers (60ish) typically waited until retirement to volunteer, yet as we look to the future, we will see younger volunteers incorporate service into their work life, meaning they will consider their time a valuable and limited resource. We are already seeing this trend in our association. If our volunteers are evolving, so is our community, which causes me to think about what kind of transitions will be needed. Are we proactive, or are we reactive? I think we are a little in between. These are just a few things we addressed in our meeting, and I look forward to sharing these exciting goals during the next few General Membership meetings.



# Announcements

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### August 8

Meets from 6pm-7:30pm, there will be an Herb Study Group. At the Learning Center, at Agrilife Extension Office, 1605 N Main Street, Belton. All Master Gardeners and Community are welcome. This Night's class will be an introduction to Herbs. Suggestion and Comments, input will all be appreciated and encouraged.

Contact Tracy Brown at [bcmgtabrown@gmail.com](mailto:bcmgtabrown@gmail.com). for more information.

### August 10

The Bell County Master Gardener Association and the Temple Public Library Garden Club presents a Special Event Seminar/Demonstration "Succulents" on Saturday, Aug 10 at 2 P.M. at the Temple Public Library, McLane Room, 100 W. Adams, Temple. Certified Master Gardener's Jan George, Carol Morisette and Annette Shubert will be discussing how to use succulents in your landscape to conserve water. You will even get a chance to plant a succulent to take home.

Class Limit: 30

Register at [bcmgaspeakers@gmail.com](mailto:bcmgaspeakers@gmail.com)

### August 15

The Bell County Master Gardener Association is hosting a free monthly seminar "Vegetable Gardening in Central Texas" from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at the Texas Agrilife Extension Office, BCMGA Learning Center, 1605 N. Main St., Belton. Certified Master Gardener, Dave Slaughter will discuss the challenges and opportunities of vegetable gardening in Central Texas plus a discussion about the differences between spring and fall vegetable gardening.

Register at [bcmgaspeakers@gmail.com](mailto:bcmgaspeakers@gmail.com) to attend.

### August 16

The Bell County Master Gardener Association and the Troy Chamber of Commerce Lunch and Learn is hosting "Vegetable Gardening in Central Texas" on Friday, August 16, from 12-1 p.m. at Troy Community Center, 201 E. Main St., Troy. Certified Master Gardener, Dave Slaughter will discuss the challenges and opportunities of gardening in Central Texas plus a discussion about the differences between spring and fall vegetable gardening.

Register at [hello@elevatetroy.org](mailto:hello@elevatetroy.org).

Or call Gaby Warlick at 254-400-7345 to register

### August 21

Meets from 10am-11:30am, there will be an Herb Study Group. At the Agrilife Extension Office - Kitchen Classroom, 1605 N Main Street, Belton. All Master Gardeners and Community are welcome.

This day's meeting: Succulents as Herbs - by Jan George

### September 7

The Bell County Master Gardener Association presents a Hands-on "Rainwater Harvesting Barrel Workshop" on Saturday, September 7 from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. at the Texas Agrilife Extension Office, BCMGA Learning Center, 1605 N. Main St., Belton. Certified Master Gardener's Teri Marceau and Randy Thompson will be providing educational information on Rainwater Harvesting followed by a class on how to build your own rain barrel to take home after workshop.

Class Limit: Rain Barrels (food grade) included with cost of class: 15 available (one barrel per family, 2 family members, age 10 and up.

Fee: \$60

Register at [bcmgaspeakers@gmail.com](mailto:bcmgaspeakers@gmail.com)

Registration closes Friday, August 30 or when sold out.

### September 14

The Bell County Master Gardener Association presents a Hands-on Workshop "Propagation-Creating New Plants" on Saturday, September 14 from 9 A.M. to 12 P.M. at the Texas Agrilife Extension Office, BCMGA Learning Center, 1605 N. Main St., Belton. Certified Master Gardener Dave Slaughter will provide you with an understanding of how plants grow and reproduce and using that information to create new plants. The educational class will focus on multiple propagation techniques such as stem and leaf cutting, layering, division, and much more.

Fee: \$25

Register at [bcmgaspeakers@gmail.com](mailto:bcmgaspeakers@gmail.com)

Registration closes Friday, September 6 or when sold out.



# Announcements

## *September 17 Iris Swap*

**By Lindell Small**

The inaugural Bell County Iris Swap is scheduled for Tuesday, September 17, from 11:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. and is open to the public. The event will be held at the Bell County Master Gardener Education Center. The hours are set to allow working parties to participate on their lunch break. All participants are encouraged to bring their favorite irises to share and exchange with other enthusiasts. Even if you don't have an iris to exchange, you are welcome and may find a new one you would like to acquire.

For planning purposes, Crystal Mears and I recommend doing the digging and preparations in late August/early September. For those who may need help digging and preparing their irises, please request help via email at [bell.mg@agnet.tamu.edu](mailto:bell.mg@agnet.tamu.edu) or by phone at (254) 933-5304, providing your contact information. We will solicit some volunteers to assist you.

### **Iris Swap Preparation Video**

A video has been prepared to aid swappers in their digging and preparation for the swap. Check out the video on the BCMGA Facebook page here: <https://www.facebook.com/BCMGA>





# KILLEEN MUNICIPAL COURT COMMUNITY GARDEN REPORT



This month, the team completed a lot of general maintenance, pruning, mulching, weeding, fertilizing, cutting grass, and cleaning up spent plants. Watermelon, cantaloupe, swiss chard, eggplant, multiple squash varieties, okra, cucumbers, beans, peppers, tomatoes, and pumpkins are currently planted. The Killeen Rotary Club donated and coordinated the installation of a new driveway to the garden - a much appreciated improvement!





As I mentioned above, planting a vegetable garden in Texas is the same as everywhere else, but the difference is timing. In Texas, we traditionally plant our spring potatoes in February and normally harvest them in May. Whereas in Michigan, we normally plant our potatoes in early May and begin harvesting in August. In Texas, we normally plant our second crop of potatoes in August; I always save my golf ball-sized potatoes from my spring crop for my fall planting. I store them in a refrigerator crisper throughout the summer until about two weeks before planting, then move them to a well-lighted area to hasten eye development. I do not cut my fall potatoes, leaving them whole to hopefully battle the heat, insects, and diseases. I do add plenty of organic material; my current favorite is Bob's freshly manufactured bunny-hunny; it is readily available and does not burn.



Plus, I mulch heavily to reduce ground temperatures and provide plenty of consistent water via a drip system.

Typically, it is not recommended to store potatoes in the refrigerator because the starch in potatoes begins to turn to sugar, but if you are using your potatoes for planting, it does not make a difference. As previously stated, the mechanics of vegetable gardening are relatively the same, regardless of where you garden, only the timing is different. There are also some varieties of vegetables not conducive to every geographical location and climate, such as short-day onions versus long-day onions and hard-neck garlic versus soft neck garlic. For instance, you would not typically plant sweet potatoes in western Washington since the traditional growing season is too short and the sun never generates enough heat to fully develop sweet potatoes and garner a harvest; however, you can plant lettuce and broccoli in July, and it never bolts.



Ruby Crush Tomato  
Determinate grape style  
Designated Texas Super Star 2023  
Photo taken July 29, 2024



## Gardening Around (continued)

Sufficient and sustained sunshine was always a luxury in western Washington, but in Colorado, we had plenty of sunshine. The problem in Colorado was intense sunshine since we were gardening at elevations above 6000 feet. Another challenge of gardening over a mile high was the occasional afternoon snowstorm coming in from the Rockies, often as late as May and as early September, so the growing season was often short and always unpredictable. The soil was alkaline, just like our soil in Texas, but the texture was predominately sand and lacked structure.

In Virginia, the soil was a little better and consisted of a blend of sand, silt, and clay, just a bit heavy on the clay side. You needed to time your planting perfectly to miss the early and often rains of spring, otherwise your seeds and transplants rotted in the ground. Raised beds worked perfectly in Virginia, eliminating the wet and heavy soil conditions of early spring while still beating the heat of summer. Gardening in Pennsylvania was a lot like gardening in western Bell County; the difference is here, we fight with caliche; in Pennsylvania, granite was the fight. Central Pennsylvania was another great raised bed state, but we called it mound gardening since the beds were not supported on the perimeters. I assume it was based on the hügelkultur method of planting due to the heavy German influence in central Pennsylvania. Regardless of where you garden, there are always challenges, but when it works, the rewards are phenomenal. Besides, who has not had friends quickly close their blinds and lock their doors when they see you walking up their driveway with two overstuffed shopping bags filled with summer squash? I have gardened in many places, but my favorite has always been central Texas, despite the hail, heat, early and late frost, lack of rain, and insects. The reward and taste of homegrown vegetables are worth the many challenges and other minor inconveniences.

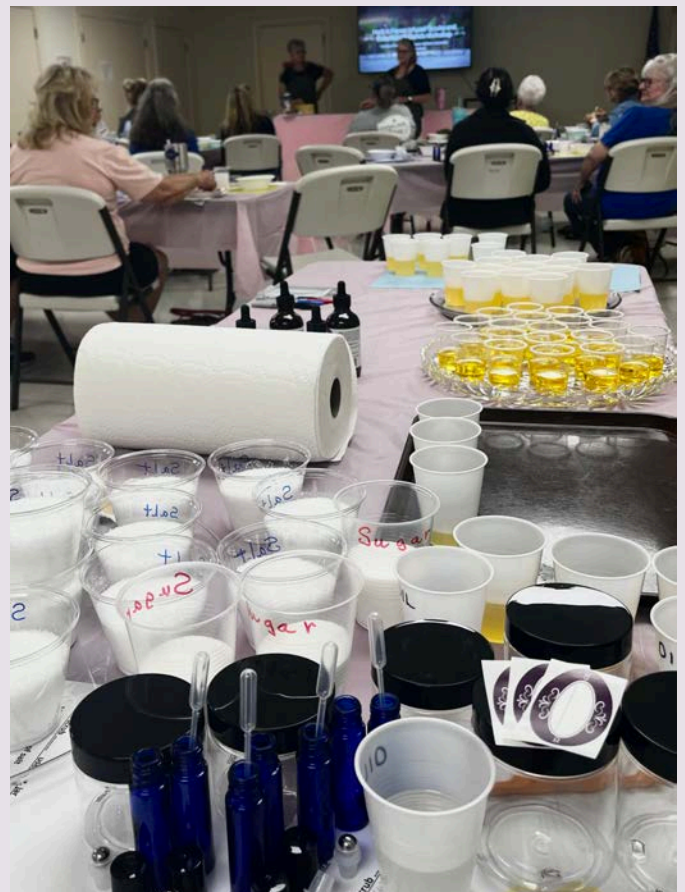




# Hands-on Herb Seminar and Workshop



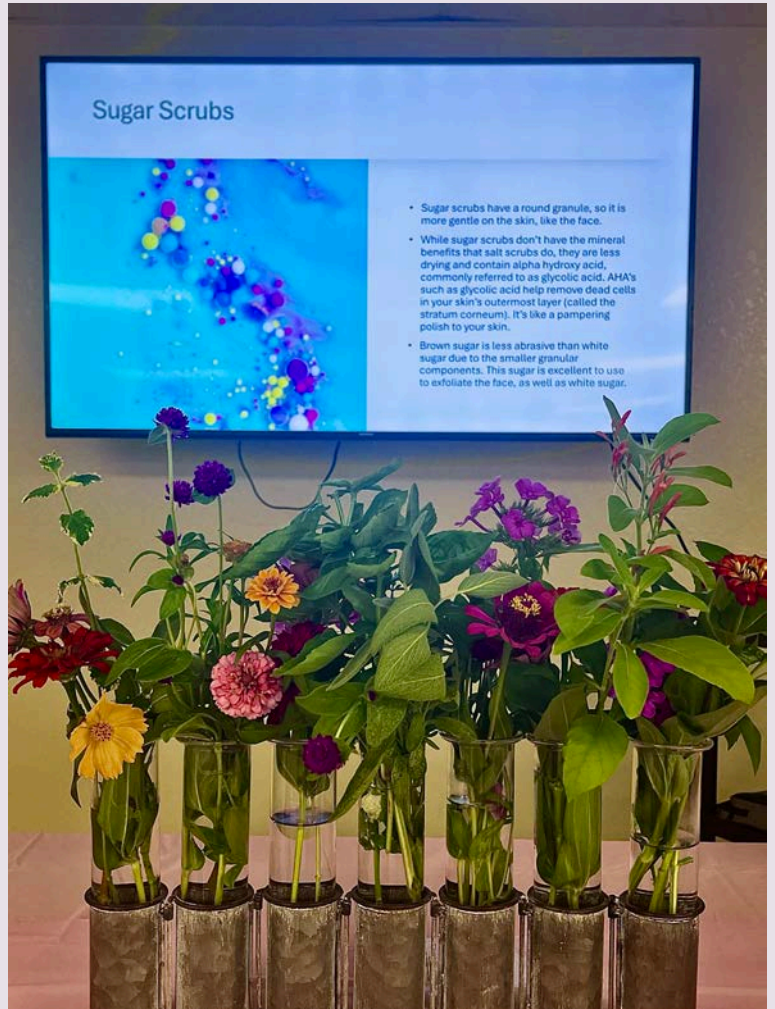
Presented by Master Gardeners Charlotte Nunnery and Jeanne Richard on Saturday, July 27th, this workshop featured a beautiful hands-on experience for attendees who learned how to create herbal and flower-infused scrubs and roll-on aromatherapy blends. There were delicious treats and eats during the workshop and a raffle with door prizes for winners.













# XERISCAPING

*it's about water*



*Written by Natalie Mcanarney*

Xeriscaping is not about a particular look or style. It is about creating a landscape that has low water demand. Sustainable irrigation is an important consideration in Texas gardening. In Texas urban areas, approximately 25% of water is used to irrigate landscapes and gardens. Xeriscape's principals include appropriate plant selection, landscape design for water conservation, and efficient irrigation. Many Xeriscape principals closely mirror Texas A&M's Earth-Kind landscaping principles.

A common misconception is that xeriscape means using only cacti. Appropriate plants for xeriscape include drought-tolerant and preferably native or well-adapted plants. These plants are naturally inclined to our local environment. Texas natives that will thrive in xeriscape include many colorful shrubs, ornamental grasses, and flowering trees. It is important to follow sun exposure and soil guidelines for these plants to perform their best.





Turfgrass is the most irrigated crop in the country. Landscape design for water conservation incorporates reasonable lawn size. Lawn size will differ based on the needs of the homeowner. Play areas for children, pets, and other recreational considerations will factor into determining the appropriate size. However, by limiting turf size and installing more drought tolerant natives, a homeowner not only saves water but also maintenance.

Designs that also incorporate rainwater capture decrease the demand for our water supply. Rain barrels and rain gardens are two methods of harvesting rainwater. Rain barrels store rain for later use. Rain gardens are artificial depressions that collect stormwater runoff until it can infiltrate the soil.

Efficient irrigation involves using appropriate water amounts delivered close to the soil. For lawns, this may mean performing a water audit to determine how much water is being applied in a given amount of time. Less frequent but deeper watering, using the cycle soak method, improves efficiency and decreases the chance of lawn disease. For other plants, efficient irrigation can be achieved by hydrozoning, which involves installing plants with similar watering needs together. Using drip irrigation or soaker hoses to apply water directly to the soil decreases evaporative water loss.

Xeriscaping transcends aesthetics and offers gardeners a way to better steward one of our most precious resources.

A wide variety of materials can be used in Xeriscaping landscapes. The photo to the right demonstrates a few of the natural material options for creating the look that is desired for each unique landscape.



Resources:

1)<https://aggie-hort.tamu.edu/extension/xeriscape/xeriscape.html>

2)Texas Master Gardener Handbook 7th edition



# HOYA

Written By Jessica Dunmire



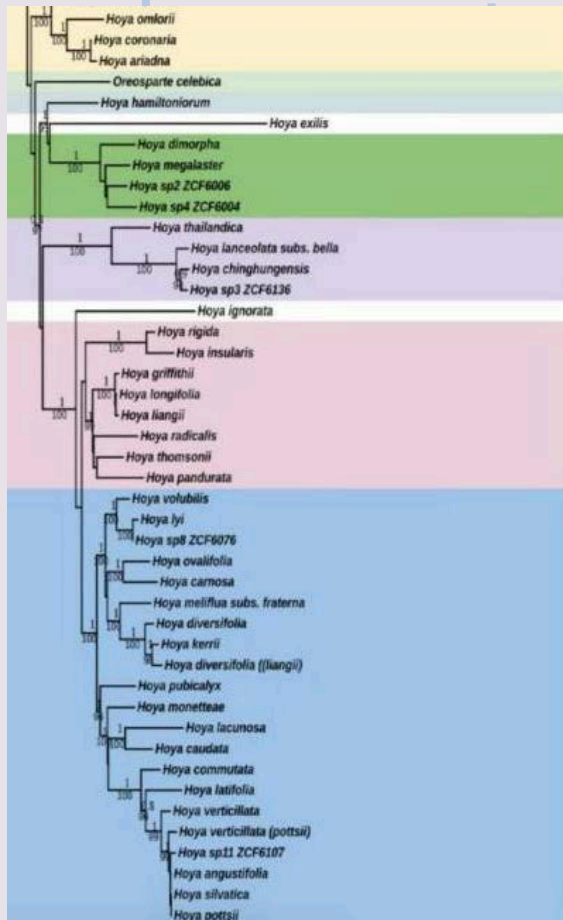
My favorite houseplant by far is the Hoya. I was first gifted a cutting of *Hoya carnosa* from my grandmother's own well-established plant in 2019. Until this time, I was aware of the plant that had been in my grandmother's house for at least the last two decades of my memory. When I realized the possible age of the plant, I was inspired to learn more. I began by asking my grandmother: how long have you had your plant, and where did you get it? She explained to me that her mother, my great-grandmother who has now passed, gave it to her as a cutting from her own well-established plant – at least thirty or more years ago. My interest now piqued, I began researching and searching for more Hoya in different species and varieties. These long-living plants have provided me with a connection to the past that I will always value.



# Houseplant Spotlight: Hoya

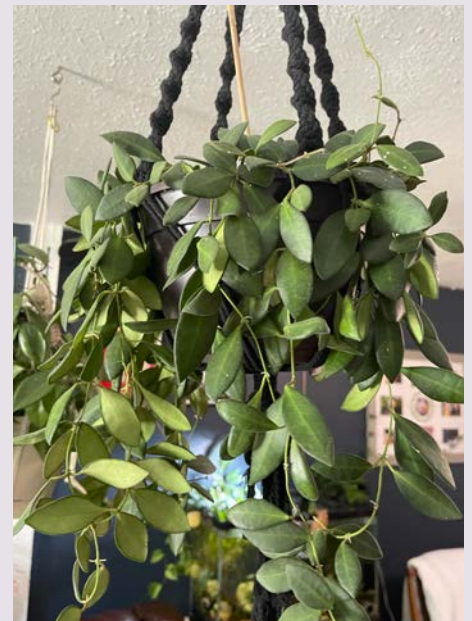
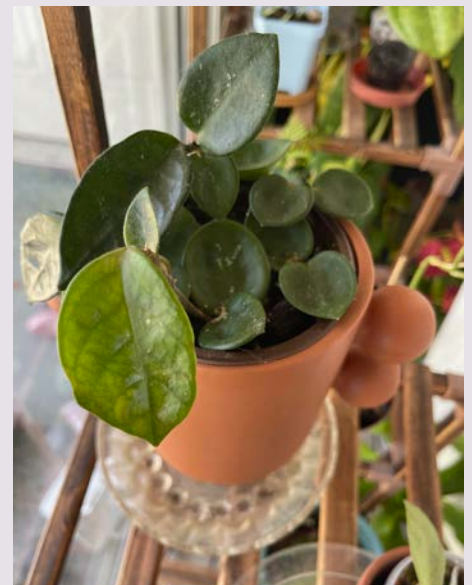
## Origins and History

Hoya, also known as wax plants or porcelain flowers, was discovered in the early 1800s by the Scottish botanist Robert Brown during an expedition to Western Australia. Although it was first classified as a member of the dogbane family (Apocynaceae), it was later reclassified when he created a new family for plants like Hoya and milkweed (Asclepiadaceae). Hoya is the second-largest genus of the Asclepiadaceae family, with over 300 known species. *Hoya carnosa* became especially popular in the United States as a pass-along plant during the 1970s when trade embargos led to reductions in plant imports.



## Types

Today, many varieties and species of Hoya are commercially available. Still, among the most popular and easy to care for is the *Hoya carnosa*, including its many varieties. Among collectors, Hoya species are prized for their unique, fragrant flower clusters and varied leaf coloration and sizes. Recent scientific analysis of the Hoya genome indicates an intricate relationship between the development of the various species and varieties.





# Houseplant Spotlight: Hoya



## General Care

This houseplant is typically low maintenance, with most types preferring to be kept in tight or root-bound pots. Because of the thick stems and leaves of a majority of Hoya, they have low water requirements and can be allowed to dry out between watering. Most species are also tolerant of lower light scenarios, though they do tend to grow best in medium to bright indirect light. In some climates, these plants are kept outdoors for most of the year, and many other enthusiasts place them outside in a dappled or shaded environment during spring and summer when temperatures are between 60-80 degrees Fahrenheit.



Sources:

<https://extension.psu.edu/hoyas-as-houseplants>

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8862764/>

# FUNGUS GNATS

Written By Jessica Dunmire



### What are they?

Fungus gnats are annoying, but what else? These tiny flies, which typically don't grow over 1/16", generally stay near the plant(s) they came from. Although upon close inspection, these flies may resemble mosquitos, the adults do not feed at all, so there is no risk to humans from having them around. In fact, only the larvae of this species feed and they do so on organic material found in the first several inches of soil.



### What impact do they have on our plants?

The impact fungus gnats generally have on houseplants is negligible. However, the presence of fungus gnats can be a clue that there is something else causing real harm to the house plants they've infested. Fungus gnat populations thrive in soil that stays moist with a lot of decaying organic material. Plants that are overwatered or planted in the wrong soil medium may experience roots that begin to rot. The rotting roots provide food for fungus gnat larvae, so the chances are if you have one problem you likely have the other. Rotted roots stunt the growth and reduce the health of your plants.

### How can you avoid infestation?

To avoid fungus gnats infesting your indoor plants, there are really only two important things to remember. One: Avoid using soil mixtures that will hold on to moisture. Two: Water less frequently, allowing your plants to dry out between each watering.

### Sources:

<https://extension.colostate.edu/topic-areas/insects/fungus-gnats-as-houseplant-and-indoor-pests-5-584/>

<https://aggie->

[hort.tamu.edu/newsletters/hortupdate/hortupdate\\_archives/2004/jan04/Fungusgnat.html](https://hort.tamu.edu/newsletters/hortupdate/hortupdate_archives/2004/jan04/Fungusgnat.html)

<https://agrilife.org/agwest/files/2013/12/Fungus-Gnats.pdf>

<https://lancaster.unl.edu/pest/resources/fungusgnats.shtml>

### How to rid yourself of an infestation?

Getting rid of fungus gnats is slightly more difficult, depending on how severe the infestation is. The simplest means for ridding yourself of fungus gnats is to remove the soil from the infected plants, sterilize the roots with alcohol, and then repot with well-draining chunky soil in a pot only an inch or two larger than the root ball of the plant. A pot too large only serves to encourage fungus gnats to breed because the soil inside will stay wet longer than the roots of the plant are able to absorb efficiently. Some guides also recommend using BT or sticky traps for controlling fungus gnats.



# July 2024 General Membership Meeting

General Membership Meeting

June 12, 2024

Mission:

The Bell County Master Gardeners Association assists the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service in providing high quality, relevant, research-based horticultural education and service to the residents of Bell County and the state of Texas through outreach, teaching, and demonstration projects.

2024 Bell County Master Gardener Volunteers Are:

GENUINE  
IMPARTIAL  
GENEROUS  
KIND





# July 2024 General Membership Meeting





# July 2024 General Membership Meeting





# July 2024 General Membership Meeting

