BELL COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS NEWSLETTER . September

NEWS . EVENTS . GARDENING TIPS. EDUCATIONAL ARTICLES

FALL PLANT SALE 2022

If you didn't know we are hosting a Fall 2022 Plant Sale. We are very excited for our venue. For the first time we will hold our sale at The Bend of The River Ranch (7915 S. General Bruce Dr., Temple).

Because of the space we will have the Texas Parks and Wildlife Conservation Trailer with Biologist Cullum available to answer questions. Clearwater Underground Water Conservation District is bringing their Water Trailer hosted by the 4H2O Water Ambassadors. Plus our 4H Kiddos will have their Hot Dog stand serving us yummy treats. If that isn't enough we have plenty of room for vendors, so if you know of anyone who has garden themed (no plants) items for sale, just let Christy Reese or Barbara Ishikawa know.

Let's talk plants. We have ordered a lot of plants and I hear a lot of our Master Gardeners are growing a lot of plants. Jan George has informed me that we will be selling a of Texas Native just released for sale for the very first time ever. Here is a hint, it is a perennial, it has maroon flowers and is drought tolerant. You will have to wait for the sale to find out what the name of this new plant called.

The Plant Sale committee decided to sell understory trees no bigger than 1 and 5 gallon pots like Mexican Buckeye trees. We will also have 6 packs available for the first time. Of course we will have veggies, herbs, some succulents and perennials. We will have tentative plant list at our General Membership Meeting. *By Teri Marceau*

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Have Gardening Questions? Submit your questions and photos at: bell.mg@agnet.tamu.edu

UPCOMING EVENTS September 2022

Speakers Bureau
Monthly Outreach Seminar: In the Learning Center at 6:30 pm, **September 15, 2022,** class will be presented by Dirk Aaron from Clearwater Underground Water Conservation District. Mr. Aaron will be covering the importance of water conservation and the effects the drought is having on our area aquifers.

Plant Sale Preparation: The preparation for the fall plant sale is in full swing. On **Wednesday, August 31, 2:00-3:30 PM**, Barbara Ishikawa and Wayne Schirner will be holding a planning meeting in the Learning Center. This meeting will provide an overview of all aspects of the plant sale, solicit feedback and answer questions. We will also have detailed sign-up sheets for pre-sale and day-of-sale volunteer opportunities. Sign Up NOW in VMS. **You do not want to miss this meeting!**

WEDNESDAY WORKDAY: September 7th at 8:00 AM Wednesday workdays will resume on the **1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month**. Our new director **April Marek and the facilities committee** are excited to get started on meeting everyone and sharing their ideas on making our demonstration gardens to become extraordinary in fulfilling the associations mission. The demonstration gardens are a Master Gardner project which reflects what we do as Master Gardeners. 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. This is the beginning of a new season and a time to fellowship with those that come to break bead at our **Burger Wednesday** which will follow the workday at **11:00 AM.**

General Membership Business & Education Meeting: Meets on **September 14, 2022,** at 9:30 a.m.; Fellowship time is at 9:00 a.m. The meeting will begin with the educational portion of our meeting with **Meteorologist Brady Taylor of KWTX-10** followed by the business of our association. You don't want to miss either part. We will meet at the Harris Community Center, 401 N. Alexander St., Belton, TX 76513.

Nominating Committee: The committee is chaired by **Glenn Melton**, gmelton1@hot.rr.com. The committee has received candidates for all positions except the 1st Vice President. They are accepting nominations until September 1st. Please contact Glenn or **Bill Walker,** bwalker82@icloud.com.

Board of Directors Meeting: Meets on **September 28, 2022,** at 10:00 a.m., in the Education Center (which is in the AgriLife Building).

New MG Class: The Fall Master Gardener class has begun. The class is held on **Thursdays, 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM**, in the learning center. Be sure to reach out and introduce yourselves to all the new interns.

Burger Wednesday: They are on the **1st Wednesday of the month**. Bring a dish to share and small donations are accepted. Our new organizers and cooks are Don Wyatt, Ray Machovsky & Art Carr for more information contact **Don Wyatt**, dwyatt2005@sbcglobal.net, 254-314-6758. This month our lunch will be in conjunction with the first workday under our new facilities director and committee.

Texas AgriLife Extension Service
Horticulture Program in Bell County

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Master Gardener Program Coordinator:
Lyle Zoeller

	Executive Board
President	Kathy Love
1st Vice President	Jan Upchurch
2nd Vice President	Louann Hight
Recording Secretary	Misti Daniel
Treasurer	Barbara Ishikawa

	Directors
Communications	Teri Marceau
Facilities	TBD
Membership	Sherry Oermann
KMCCG	Dave Slaughter
Outreach	Crystal Mears & Rebekah Lackey
New Class	Pat Johnson
Projects	Wayne Schirner
Youth	Janice Smith

UPCOMING EVENTS September 2022

Continued

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.

Killeen Municipal Court Community Garden: Meets every Saturday, time varies according to the season. It is harvest season and fall garden preparation time. See Calendar of Events for details. Please contact Dave Slaughter slaughtd915@gmail.com. See VMS for additional harvest days to earn extra service hours.

Help Desk: The help desk is looking for people to buddy up with someone and who is either already signed up or come as partners and fill and empty spot. The help desk is open **Monday-Thursday, 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM *with an hour for lunch at noon)***. The desk is left unattended for our General Membership while we are all at the Harris Community Center.

TEXAS MASTER GARDENER
TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION
Bell County

&

Clearwater
Underground Water Conservation District
Every drop counts!

Presents a
Rainwater Harvesting Barrel Workshop
Sat. Oct. 15th ~ 9am-noon

We will offer a discounted price (TBD) which includes a complete Rainwater Harvesting Barrel to take home & edcuation class at the BCMGA 1605 N. Main St., Belton

Sign-up by bringing a check Mon. - Fri. or calling 254-933-5404

The members of Texas A&M AgriLife will provide equal opportunities in programs and activities, education, and employment to all persons regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation or gender identity and will strive to achieve full and equal employment opportunity throughout Texas A&M AgriLife.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By Kathy Love

August lived up to it's normal—hot—but at least not entirely dry! Many of you got significant rain but still not enough to break the drought. Let's continue to pray for rain!

August saw a significant event in BCMGA history. For the first time we are hosting a 2nd New Master Gardener fall class. Our Association has always had one class in the spring starting in January. We are grateful to Pat Johnson and Betty Nejtek our New Class Directors and their hard-working committee members for pulling off this first-time event. Their efforts are in response to the demand from our citizens for the opportunity to become a Master Gardener. Please welcome our 16 members of the Fall Class 2022!

September brings our Fall Plant Sale. Restrictions prevented us from holding this event for the last two years but gratefully we will have the sale this year! Fall is a great time to plant in Central Texas, particularly for trees and shrubs. One reason for this is our soil temperatures almost never drop below 40 degrees F and the root systems will continue to develop throughout the winter resulting is a stronger plant come spring.

Barbara Ishikawa and Wayne Schirner are heading up the sale and are holding a committee meeting next Wednesday, August 31st at 2 p.m. in the Learning Center. You should sign up for the Plant Sale Committee in VMS and if you have not yet added your name to the Plant Sale VMS event on Saturday, September 24, or if you are having trouble seeing the entry, try scrolling to the right on your computer or phone screen (VMS doesn't always fit the full week on the screen), or you can send Barbara an email (barbaraishikawa@gmail.com) and let her know how you are interested in helping.

Our location is the Bend of the River Ranch, 7915 S. General Bruce Drive, Temple, TX. We have ordered from three wholesale nurseries and hope of have a wide selection of perennials, small trees, vegetables, herbs, and succulents. Master Gardener volunteers have also been growing vegetables, herbs, and perennials. Plants will be delivered on Friday, 9/23, directly to the venue and you can sign up for service hours on this day too.

Additionally, we are inviting 'garden-related' vendors to join us. Cost for space is $25 for Master Gardeners and $50 for others. Adding vendors allows us to provide broader community engagement and encourages people to linger and enjoy the morning. Please contact Barbara (barbara.ishikawa@gmail.com) if you'd like to rent a vendor space.

There are many more volunteer projects related to the sale such as researching plant information to create labels and plant signage (we've got our order lists completed, volunteers can begin now to create or update plant signage); collect and donate shopping boxes, loan us a wagon / garden cart; set up activities – receive, organize, label, price plants, set up signage and on the day of activities – advanced training plant educators, talliers, cashiers, volunteer care (snacks, water, cover breaks), parking and wagon wranglers, information and customer assistance. This is everyone's opportunity to get significant service hours so please pitch in.

It is the time of the year to start the submission process for our local Awards. Dave Slaughter has agreed to take over as the head of this committee and will be looking for nominations for the Golden Trowel Award, Green Thumb Awards, and New Master Gardener of the year. The criteria for these awards can be found in the Members section of our website under the link to Golden Trowel & Green Thumb. There is no formal format for New Master Gardener of the Year but of course, they do have to be a member of one of the two 2022 classes. Only written submissions will be considered for these awards though if you need help with a write up, contact the help desk and we will do what we do and help!

Now that I am free of my state awards committee duties, I will resume handling the state awards submissions which include Outstanding Association, Outstanding Individual, Youth-JMG, Youth-Other, Research, Marva E Beck JMG Leader of the Year, and 3 new or slightly altered categories, Teaching Site, Workshop-Presentation and Written-Recorded Educational Content. As I learn more about the new/altered categories, I will share it with you.

Finally, on August 24th we bade our official farewell to our AgriLife Extension Agent for the past almost 10 years, Lyle Zoeller. His official retirement date is August 31st but the office threw him the 24th farewell event. Thanks to everyone who attended on behalf of BCMGA. We will surely miss his guidance, but of course wish him all the very best in the years to come! So, for now, happy gardening and stay cool out there! Come on in fall!!!

What Exactly Are Chiggers

By Wizzie Brown

Chiggers are the first stage out of the egg of a particular type of mite. They climb onto people and other animals walking through infested areas, crawl upwards, and wander around the body seeking a good site to settle down and feed. Feeding preference for these mites on humans is in areas where skin is thinnest (behind knees, armpits) or where clothing fits tightly, such as the ankles, waist, and the groin area.

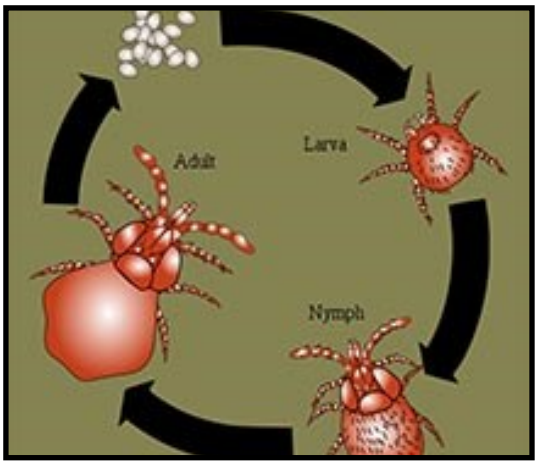
What Causes All That Itching?

Chiggers do not burrow into skin as many people believe, so "smothering" them with nail polish is useless. When chiggers feed, they inject a digestive enzyme that breaks down skin cells. The skin cells then create a feeding tube called a stylostome that the chigger uses to suck up liquified skin cells to eat. Itching and redness is caused when our body reacts to the enzymes injected into our skin as well as the body breaking down the stylostome. Itching typically begins 3-6 hours after being bitten, peaks at 24 hours, and can last up to two weeks. By the time you begin to itch from chiggers, they are usually long gone as they will fall off the body once feeding is completed or can be brushed off by clothing or showering.

How to Avoid Chiggers

The best way to avoid getting chiggers is to avoid infested areas. Since this is not always possible, here are some other things to try:

- Wear protective clothing- tightly woven items that fit loosely; including long sleeves & pants; shoes or boots
- Tuck pant legs into socks and boots
- Use an insect repellent with DEET or picaridin before entering an infested area
- Avoid sitting on the ground
- Remove & launder clothing ASAP after being in infested areas
  Shower/ bathe after being in an infested area; scrub vigorously with a washcloth



How to Treat Infestatinos

To treat chigger infestations around the home, try the following:

- Keep lawn trimmed
- Maintain vegetation; do not allow weeds to grow up & keep brush cleared

Target infested areas with residual pesticide sprays

How to Treat Chigger Bites

For chigger bites:

- Do not scratch pustules; opening pustule might lead to infection
- Oral antihistamines or topical anti-itch creams to relieve itching sensation

For more information or help with identification, contact Wizzie Brown, Texas AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist at 512.854.9600.

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Fall Gardening by Wayne Schirner

We are at the beginning of the "second season" for vegetable gardening in Bell County. Here's a link to a vegetable planting guide that will help you determine when you should plant different crops, either by direct sowing of seeds or by transplants:

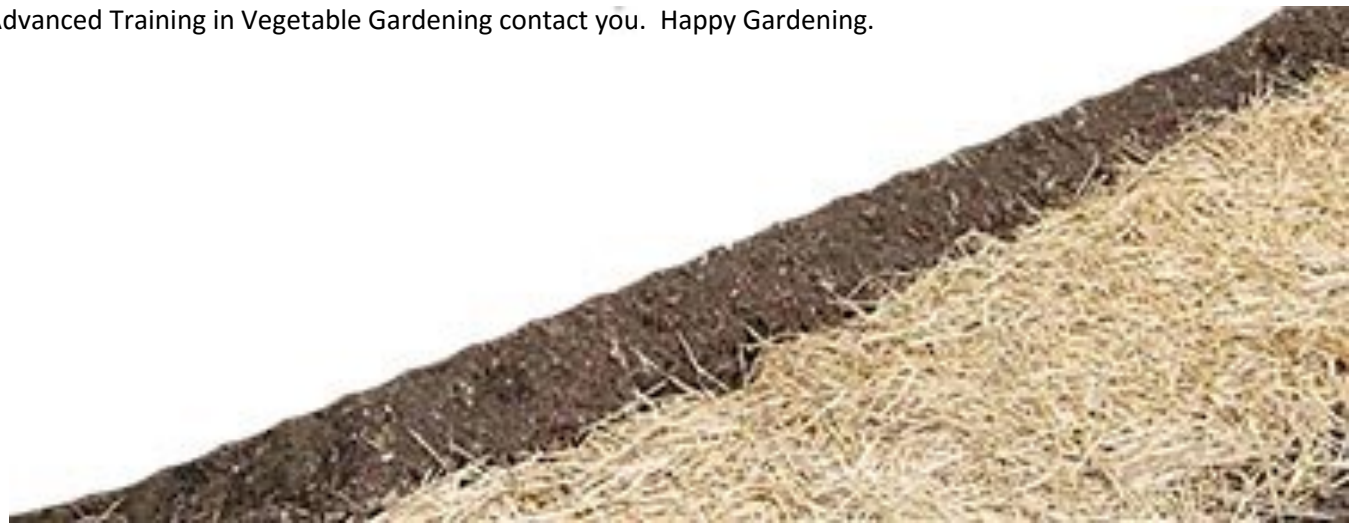
https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/travis/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/VegPlantingGuideJan2015.pdf

This planting guide was developed for the Austin area. Even though they are in the same zone as Bell County (8b) their average first frost date is about a week later than ours and their average last frost date is about a week earlier. keep that in mind when you are close to those dates.

A major cause of disappointment in vegetable gardening occurs by not planting at the correct times for our area, so save this chart on your computer/smart phone/tablet. That way you always have access to it. Many of the crops that can be started in the next couple of months do best as transplants, and for many crops it takes 6-8 weeks to go from seed starting to a transplantable plant. That means it is almost too late to be starting these crops now. Fortunately we have a great solution to solve that problem. Come to the Fall Plant Sale on September 24th. This will be the first time we will hold a plant sale at the Bend on the River Ranch, but we expect a great sale. Lots of space, lots of parking, and lots of plants for sale including most of the vegetables that can be planted now.

While you are waiting for the plant sale, get your garden ready to receive those transplants. Remove all dead or diseased plant material and level out your beds, whether they are raised beds or in the ground beds. Most garden beds will benefit from a top dressing of compost. You can simply layer a couple of inches of good compost on top of your existing beds, or you can work it into the top 3-4" of your existing garden soil. By "good compost" I mean one that doesn't have much un-decomposed organic material. Many purchased composts have lots of wood pieces present. Those are ok to use on the surface, but don't work them into your soil. Another option is to screen your compost to remove that un-decomposed material. After adding compost, I like to moisten my soil and then place a 2-4" layer of straw mulch on top. That will help retain moisture in your garden soil and also moderates the soil temperature. This can be especially useful if we get another hot spell, which we probably will. I like straw as a mulch because it has a distinctive color the makes it easy to separate from your garden soil. When you get your transplants, simply pull the straw away from where you are going to place your plant, plant, and then push the straw up against the already growing plant. If you are direct sowing, you have to wait for the seedling to be a few inches tall before you can snug the straw up against the plant.

If you need more help with your fall gardening, contact the Help Desk and they will have one of our Master Gardeners with Advanced Training in Vegetable Gardening contact you. Happy Gardening.



KMCCG AUGUST 2022

It was another great month at the Killeen Municipal Court Community Garden this past August.

The month started with our usual monthly meeting at Rudy's BBQ on August 2, (always the first Tuesday at 9:00 AM) where we discussed our future plans for the garden and reviewed our harvest reports from July and totals for the year. We also solved the world's problems, mainly due to discussions led by some of our garden elders, Bob Gordon, Edie Campbell, and Rebecca Caldwell, but that's a topic for another day. We always have a short training session at the end of the meeting. This month Melissa Johnson provided training on companion planting. The training was excellent, as were all the informative handouts. Melissa also volunteered to provide training in September, so join us for some great training and spirited world-problem-solving discussions. Melissa is also a tremendous asset in the garden, as well. Also at the meeting, the Killeen Municipal Court representative, Ilana Collison, provided certificates of appreciation, signed by Judge Krishna, to many gardeners contributing to the gardens every week. Just like July, it's been hot in the garden all month; our Saturday workdays usually finish around 12:00 PM, and it's normally 95 degrees when we finish the workday. The constant heat, during both the day and night, has greatly impacted our harvest totals. We harvested a total of 718 pounds for August, with okra and squash being the main crop harvested. With a lot of hope and anticipation of cooler temperatures in September, we expect to start harvesting tomatoes again. Speaking of tomatoes, Andi Bowsher has done a fantastic job keeping our tomatoes tied up this year with reusable tomato trellis clips made by MIHEY.

In August, we planted another round of summer squash, set out tomato transplants, and prepared the garden for new cabbage transplants. Later in the month or early September, we will plant radishes, turnips, beets, kohlrabi, and carrots. On August 20, we took our annual family photo. It's always a challenge to round up the entire team for the picture, but this year we managed to get 17 family members together. The photo was a good omen since it was followed by rain and cooler temperatures. The current squash plants loved the new weather pattern and quickly rewarded us with a generous bounty. Even the tomato plants rejoiced about the cooler weather and blessed us with new blossoms. We are fortunate to have Bob Gordon and Jerry Lewis spend most Saturday mornings with us, expounding their garden wisdom and insight. They are probably the two most knowledgeable vegetable gardeners in the Association, so we are blessed to be in their company. I understand they used to teach vegetable gardening classes to the interns before they were put out to pasture, which is clearly a loss for the entire Association.

April Marek and Misti Daniels have spruced up the trellis bed by adding many new perennials, such as cone flowers, lantana, and various sages. They also planted zinnias, which, according to Melissa's companion plant training, are beneficial for attracting ladybugs. We can definitely keep the ladybugs well-fed since we have oodles of aphids. Edie Campbell is famous for her baked goods, and we always look forward to her treats on Saturday morning. On several occasions, Rebecca Caldwell, April Marek, and Gail Pierce have also afforded treats from their kitchens.

Surprisingly, our demonstration beds of perennials continue to thrive and flower, providing much-needed nectar to our bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds. Several stalwarts, including Rebecca Caldwell, Jean Wagner, and Ann Beauchamp, get all the credit for making this happen. Our monarch waystation is in full bloom, just waiting for the return of the monarchs on their way to Mexico. In the meantime, the queen butterflies, bees, and hummingbirds are making use of the nectar.

Paul Carter, Walt Schneider, and Glenn Melton help everywhere, whether weeding in the vegetable garden, weed eating around the raised beds, working on the rock border, harvesting, adjusting fence lines, laying plastic, or moving compost and mulch. They always are working hard to make the garden a better place. Although not a master gardener, April Marek's husband, Ricky, is a true friend of the garden. He is here almost every week working alongside the rest of us, whether pounding in t-posts or repairing shed doors, Ricky is in the garden working. Larry Moehnke is working hard to add the brick border around the expanded vegetable garden area. Like Bob and Jerry, Larry is a wealth of knowledge when it comes to vegetable gardening. Randy Brown captures memories with his great photography, but he also plays a vital role in working with some of the youth, watering trees and perennial beds without a permanent water source. (Cont. page 8)

KILLEEN MUNICIPAL COURT COMMUNITY GARDEN REPORT

A couple of folks play a big role concerning the Thursday harvest: April Reding and Ed Ayala aren't always available on Saturday, but they both harvest at the garden on Thursdays when their schedules permit. Several new class members have already found their way to the garden. A special thank you to Chuck and Joyce Lauer, April Hignojos, and Santi Duncan for jumping in just three days after their first class. They quickly assimilated to the garden, where they harvested tatume squash and planted tomatoes and yellow squash.

The Killeen Municipal Court Community Garden is made up of a great bunch of hard-working and dedicated master gardeners and friends who practice their craft of gardening, actually in the garden. They strive to provide fresh produce to the shelters, educate the community on Earth-Kind practices and provide mentorship to youth performing their community service.

Highlights:

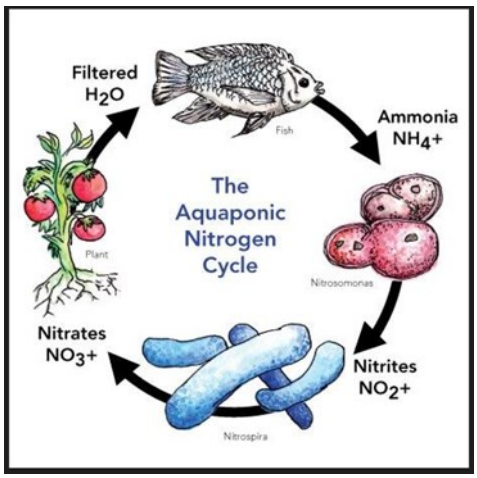
8-2-22—Warm, breezy, beautiful day. Corn was harvested, Bob Gordon took stalks as silage for his cattle to enjoy. 111.5 lbs of diverse produce, many varieties of squash, peppers, corn, and okra. Maintenance of weeding, trimming, watering, adding bio-soil to cleared rows in preparation for planting.

8-13-22—Warm Day in garden. Lots of Maintenance, watering, weeding, trimming.92.7 lbs of squash, peppers, and okra for the week. Many flowers now in bloom.

8-27-22—Another great day in the garden. Four interns from Fall class attended, toured and worked! 127.2.lbs of produce today; for the week 184.7 lbs. Lots of maintenance, watering, weeding; trimming and pruning at front entry, Fall Squash and tomato plants were planted. New photos are posted at FB BCMGA in KMCCG August Album.

Aquaponics by Steve and Rachel Glass

"Aquaponics can utilize up to 90% less water growing its plants compared to traditional farming"



Aquaponics is a blending of "aquaculture" and "hydroponics". Utilizing a naturally occurring process in nature (nitrification), aquaponics leverages feeding fish high protein foods which in turn create wastes (ammonia) to feed two naturally occurring micro-organisms that change the waste into nitrates that become the nutrients for plants. Conceptually, "hydroponics" utilizes "nutrient enriched water" to feed plants in a circulated system. Aquaponics creates its "nutrient enriched water" using nitrification which feeds the plants, then returns the water (now ammonia and nitrate free) to the fish in a continuous cycle. There are several exciting aspects to aquaponics in that it is an organic method of growing, fertilizers and pesticides are never used, systems can be scaled to produce food in apartments, urban backyards, and even scaled up to churches and communities. Importantly, aquaponics can utilize up to 90% less water growing its plants compared to traditional "dirt" farming. Generally, "lefty greens" (lettuces, chard, greens, Pak Choi, kale, cabbage, and herbs) are typically grown, however, tomatoes, peppers, broccoli, and fairy tale eggplant grow exceptionally well also. For further information, please reference the following individuals on the Internet and YouTube, Murray Hallam, Rob's Backyard Farm & Aquaponics, and Brooklyn Saint Mickell, "The School of Aquaponics" (very technical). You can reach us (Rachel & Steve Glass) at BellAquaponics@gmail.com, please put "Master Gardener" in the subject line.

Photos courtesy of Mike Myers, The Belton Journal

Herb Study Program

Tea, *by Tracy Brown*

It has been called the plant of Heaven. Originally tea was referred to as one species of shrub that was cultivated in China (Camellia Si-nen-sis) known as the black tea shrub. There is a legend on how tea was first discovered. In 2737 B.C. Emperor Shen Nung was kneeling before a fire heating water when suddenly a gust of wind caused some leaves to fall into the boiling water. The aroma caught his attention so he decided to taste the brew, so it was believed that was how herbal tea was birthed.

For centuries monks & herbalists studied plants for their healing properties and that knowledge was passed from one generation to the next, with new discoveries with each generation. Tea was given to other cultures as a humble gift from Buddhist Monks, thus expanding the use of teas out of China. Some Japanese monks brought back black tea shrub seedlings & today it's Japan's national beverage.

At one time tea was such a precious imported cargo to Europe it was reserved for royal tables & tea tasting parties of the rich & powerful. It was later introduced as an exotic medicinal beverage that could promote longevity & cure many disorders. With the increase of demand and the limited amount available the price of tea exceeded $100 per pound.

One of the earliest tea parties in America was held in New Amsterdam in 1674. Society ladies came dressed in their finest bringing their own tea cups (like we did today) and bowls the size of wineglasses. Many herbalists specified a dose of herbal tea as "the size of a small wineglass" Many early colonists learned about locally grown herbs from the First Nation Peoples. They made tea from the various herbs, usually for medicinal purposes. To protest the high tea taxes on British tea the colonists brewed teas from indigenous weeds. They called them Liberty Teas, using chamomile flowers, raspberry leaves & wild American sage as well as many other plants.

As we know there's power in all parts of a plant, the flowers, leaves, roots, rhizomes, berries, seeds & bark have many uses and properties which are easily absorbed into the body, having specific bio-chemicals that help heal & restore balance to our bodies. Unlike herbal capsules that never touch your taste buds, herbal teas follow the normal digestive process from your mouth through your system which is an automatic regulator for substances entering your body. They also engage the brain with sight, smell, and taste. Herbal teas in many cases can treat symptoms & underlying weakness (i.e. elderberry tea relieves symptoms of allergies as well as strengthening your respiratory tract by helping to remove imbedded phlegm & mucous from lungs and reduces inflammation. I've brewed fresh rosemary, lemon balm, parsley, mint and catnip tea. But right now we'll be discussing dry herbs Dry herbs: start simply if you are new to herbal teas or you want to try a specific tea for your health. A simple tea is just one herb with no sweetener. Start with one cup per day for about a week and note how it affects you and your symptoms. If your symptoms have abated you don't have to drink that particular tea every day. If you're still dealing with symptoms, drink 2 cups a day which can be a real health advantage. Listen to your body, you may then only need to drink that particular herbal tea intermittently for a tune-up. Do your research, health benefits, side-effects and interactions with medicine. I drink Echinacea during the winter to keep my immune system in top shape. I'll drink it for 3 days, stop for 3 days and continue. If I've been around someone who is sick or start feeling as if I'm coming down with something I'll go back to it for several days. I drink lots of green tea, iced in the summer and hot in the winter.

Out of the 3 top teas, green, oolong and black, green is your best choice since it has the most health benefits. Got an upset stomach one day, felt queasy, remembered I had Ginger tea, symptoms gone within a half hour. Remember take the moderate approach when using herbal teas since they work slow & steady over a period of time. Take your tea plain to start with so you can appreciate the true flavor and discover the many tastes of less common varieties as well as blends. In Chinese medicine taste is linked to different body systems & specific emotions.

Sour-liver & gallbladder/ lemon balm, lemon grass
Salty-kidney, bladder/ plantain, bladderwort
Pungent-lungs, large intestines/ sage, ginger
Sweet-spleen, stomach/ licorice, rose hips
Bitter-heart, blood vessels/ lavender, chamomile (blend I drink)

Ancient Chinese proverb:
"Better to be deprived of food for three days than tea for one."

BCMGA August General Meeting

We missed all those who were unable to attend today's meeting. So many things are happening that I wanted to give you a recap of the meeting.

Camille Wiseman gave an excellent educational program on Oak Wilt vs Decline. You can find a lot of the information she taught on tfsweb.tamu.edu.

Misti Daniel (Spring Class of 2022) was voted by the board to the position of Recording Secretary, replacing Gail Koontz.

April Marek (Spring Class 2022) voted as Facilities Director.

Dave Slaughter presented the Project Highlight this month on the Killeen Municipal Commission Court Garden.

Communications is looking for an Associate Director. If you are interested and/or know of someone who would be a good fit please see Teri Marceau.

Sylvia Maedgen has merchandise that needs to be picked up as well as extras in case you want something. Please contact Sylvia for more details.

Our FALL plant sale is scheduled for Sept. 24th at the Bend of The River Ranch in Temple. There is a lot of planning to be done between now and then.

- We will be looking for folding tables, chairs and tents. If you have a contact please let Teri Marceau know ASAP.
- We will have vendors as well. If you or someone you would like to have a vendor booth please let Teri Marceau or Barbara Ishikawa know.
- Don't forget to attend Wayne Schirner's seed planting class/party on Aug 17 in the learning center.

The Herb Study will meet on Wed 17th at 10:00 AM in the AgriLife Extension Classroom (not the Learning Center). For more information contact Tracy Brown.

Finally, it is time to nominate yourself or someone for the following positions. To nominate someone please contact Glenn Melton.

- First Vice President
- Treasurer
- Education/Community Outreach Director
- Youth Programs Director

We hope to see you at next month's meeting. Until then please stay healthy and happy gardening.

Teri Marceau

GARDENING TIP OF THE MONTH

Why Plants Prefer Rainwater

By Melissa Johmson

There is no water that plants love more than rainwater. Why is that? You water your plants on your regular schedule whether it be daily, every 2nd day, soaker hose, or however your preferred method of watering is, but rainwater seems to be the plants water of choice. so why is rainwater such a preferred water source? Well, in fact there are 4 reasons. Rainwater is 100% soft water. Rainwater is free of the salts, minerals, treatment chemicals, and pharmaceuticals that are found in municipal, groundwater and surface water and rainwater is pure hydration. Because salts and chemicals build up in the soil overtime and this make it thought on the plants. Rainwater can help flush these chemicals away and refresh the health of the soil.

Rainwater is slightly acidic on a natural level. Plants prefer soil PH levels between 5.5 and 6.5 and by design is the exact PH for rainwater. City water is treated to be more alkaline this is done to protect the metal pipes from corroding and can end up having a PH over 8 to 8.5. so, rainwater PH is more preferred.

Stored rainwater contains some organic matter. Collected from your roof, it is usually clean and runs clear and it was exposed to anything on your roof. Things like leaves, pollen, bird droppings, which are all great for your plants. Rain barrel storage is like having a little bit of fertilizer in every time you water your plants.

Rainwater contains nitrates which is an important macro-nutrient. The nitrogen is one of the 3 key macro-nutrients that our plants need to survive. It is necessary for the development of foliage. But many forms of nitrogen are not able to be absorbed by the plants. Nitrates which are made up of nitrogen and oxygen formulated by Mother Nature for maximum uptake by our plants. Now, plants typically absorb most of their nitrates from the soil. And guess where those nitrates come from?? The precious rain…..

Reference: Ecolandscaping.org, bluebarrel systems.com

SPREADING WILDFLOWER SEEDS:

SPRING OR FALL

Wayne has already talked about getting your vegetable garden ready for your fall garden. I want to head in a different direction for our monthly garden tip. I love wildflowers as do so many Texans. We as Master Gardeners get asked the question, "when is the best time to spread wildflower seeds?". Personally, I a waiver between late spring and early fall planting here in central Texas (planting zone 8b). I have tried the early fall but was not very successful. This year I spread a mixed bag of wildflower seeds from the Wildflower Seed Farm in early June. I watched for when the spring wildflowers started going to seed and followed the natural seeding. Now I wait and see.

Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center says this about when to spread wildflower seeds. **"***When to Plant - Fall is the best time to plant many native species in Central Texas. Some seeds need a chilling period (cold stratification) to break their dormancy, while others have hard seed coats that need to be worn down or scarified before they can germinate (learn more about scarifying and stratifying seeds). Sowing seeds in the fall often provides the conditions necessary to break seed dormancy. Warm, wet spring weather then induces the seeds to germinate. Ideally, native seeds should be planted following nature's seeding schedule."* https://www.wildflower.org/learn/plant-wildflower-meadow This article from Lady Bird Johnson talks further about soil preparation and seeding methods as well as talking about the first three years of a wildflower meadow. Although, they talk about meadows, these methods can be pared down for a small wildflower garden.

The Wildflower Seed Farm talks about some of the risks of spreading the wildflower seeds in the spring when the native wildflowers go to seed. This is what they said, *"There are risks associated with an early spring planting in USDA Zones 1 through 11. Warm spring weather and adequate rainfall will accelerate germination and seedling growth. However, if rainfall is sporadic after initial germination followed by an extremely hot, dry period, supplemental watering may be required to keep the ground from drying out and the seedling from dying. Fall Sowing In the southern and western portions of the United States, USDA Zones 7 through 11, the autumn months of September through December are the most favorable to plant your wildflowers. Many of the species will quickly germinate in order to allow the seedling enough time to establish a healthy root system before going dormant in the winter. Some of the seeds may not germinate if the ground temperature is below 70 degrees Fahrenheit. These seeds will remain dormant within the soil until early spring and will begin to emerge under more favorable conditions."* Wildflower Seed Farm

Whether you spread seed among native grass meadows or you create a little native corner in your home garden you will be creating a wonderful habitat for all kinds of wildlife from tiny little ants to rabbits. It will also be a buffet of seeds and nectar for the birds and bees. Oh, and the butterflies will have a place to rest and eat, and possibly lay their eggs. I hope you try creating a wildflower garden to enjoy.

Help Desk ~ Ask a Master Gardener
By Teri Marceau

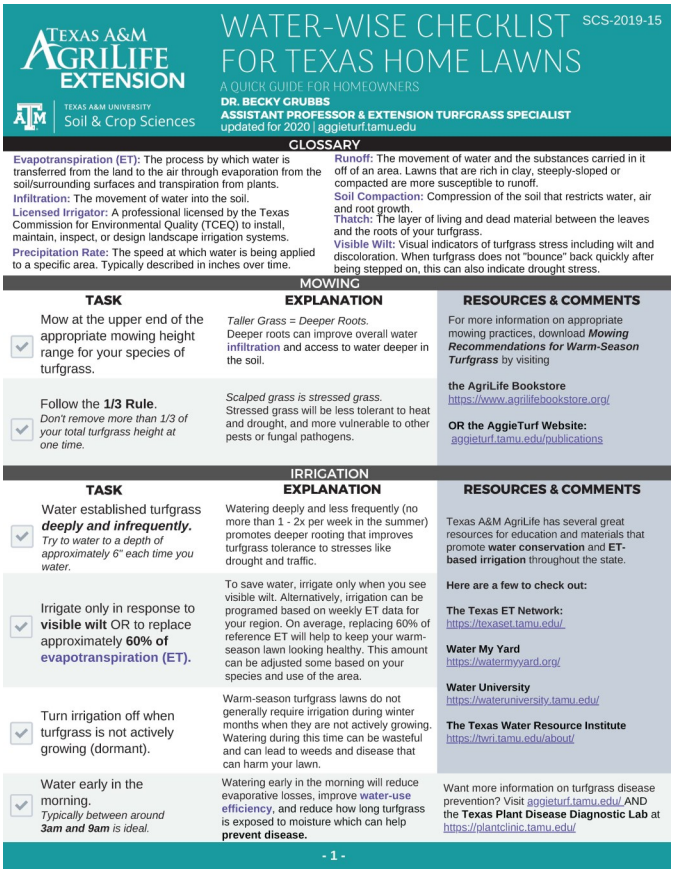
WATER * WATER * WATER

Water has been the topic of many citizens and gardeners in Bell County and beyond. We are seeing drought stressed trees, turfgrasses, vegetable gardens and shrubs. We have seen young trees with what appears to be heat stress to tomatoes blooming put not putting on fruit. It has been a long hot summer while we are grateful for the few inches of rain we had in the past week we have a long way to go to be out of the drought.

A Mr. Prather sent these photos in just a few days ago. Mr. Prather was concerned that he didn't know what could be ailing his bushes. He also has large brown patches of brown spots in his lawn. After a few hours of research Kathy Love came up with a possible diagnosis of Entomosporium Leaf spot but without a plant disease diagnostic preformed we can not be certain. With that being said it very well could be lack of water and daytime temperatures in the triple digits with hot night time temps causing the problem. Kathy sent this great Water Wise Check List from TX A&M:

https://aggieturf.tamu.edu/wp-content/uploads/Water-Wise-Checklist-for-Texas-Home-Lawns-1.pdf

The drought is on the minds of everyone, therefore, you won't want to miss our September 14th General Membership Meeting as Meteorologist Brady Taylor will talk about the forecast for the rest of the year. Plus, Dirk Aaron from Clearwater Underground Water Conservation District will be speaking at our Monthly Outreach Seminar on Thursday September 15th.



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WATER-WISE CHECKLIST FOR TEXAS HOME LAWNS

SCS-2019-15

A QUICK GUIDE FOR HOMEOWNERS

DR. BECKY GRUBBS
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR & EXTENSION TURFGRASS SPECIALIST
updated for 2020 | aggieturf.tamu.edu

GLOSSARY

Evapotranspiration (ET): The process by which water is transferred from the land to the air through evaporation from the soil/surrounding surfaces and transpiration from plants.
Infiltration: The movement of water into the soil.
Licensed Irrigator: A professional licensed by the Texas Commission for Environmental Quality (TCEQ) to install, maintain, inspect, or design landscape irrigation systems.
Precipitation Rate: The speed at which water is being applied to a specific area. Typically described in inches over time.
Runoff: The movement of water and the substances carried in it off of an area. Lawns that are rich in clay, steeply-sloped or compacted are more susceptible to runoff.
Soil Compaction: Compression of the soil that restricts water, air and root growth.
Thatch: The layer of living and dead material between the leaves and the roots of your turfgrass.
Visible Wilt: Visual indicators of turfgrass stress including wilt and discoloration. When turfgrass does not "bounce" back quickly after being stepped on, this can also indicate drought stress.

MOWING

TASK	EXPLANATION	RESOURCES & COMMENTS
Mow at the upper end of the appropriate mowing height range for your species of turfgrass.	*Taller Grass = Deeper Roots.* Deeper roots can improve overall water **infiltration** and access to water deeper in the soil.	For more information on appropriate mowing practices, download ***Mowing Recommendations for Warm-Season Turfgrass*** by visiting **the AgriLife Bookstore** https://www.agrilifebookstore.org/ **OR the AggieTurf Website:** aggieturf.tamu.edu/publications
Follow the **1/3 Rule**. *Don't remove more than 1/3 of your total turfgrass height at one time.*	*Scalped grass is stressed grass.* Stressed grass will be less tolerant to heat and drought, and more vulnerable to other pests or fungal pathogens.	

IRRIGATION

TASK	EXPLANATION	RESOURCES & COMMENTS
Water established turfgrass ***deeply and infrequently.*** *Try to water to a depth of approximately 6" each time you water.*	Watering deeply and less frequently (no more than 1 - 2x per week in the summer) promotes deeper rooting that improves turfgrass tolerance to stresses like drought and traffic.	Texas A&M AgriLife has several great resources for education and materials that promote **water conservation** and **ET-based irrigation** throughout the state. **Here are a few to check out:** **The Texas ET Network:** https://texaset.tamu.edu/ **Water My Yard** https://watermyyard.org/ **Water University** https://wateruniversity.tamu.edu/ **The Texas Water Resource Institute** https://twri.tamu.edu/about/
Irrigate only in response to **visible wilt** OR to replace approximately **60% of evapotranspiration (ET).**	To save water, irrigate only when you see visible wilt. Alternatively, irrigation can be programed based on weekly ET data for your region. On average, replacing 60% of reference ET will help to keep your warm-season lawn looking healthy. This amount can be adjusted some based on your species and use of the area.	
Turn irrigation off when turfgrass is not actively growing (dormant).	Warm-season turfgrass lawns do not generally require irrigation during winter months when they are not actively growing. Watering during this time can be wasteful and can lead to weeds and disease that can harm your lawn.	
Water early in the morning. *Typically between around **3am and 9am** is ideal.*	Watering early in the morning will reduce evaporative losses, improve **water-use efficiency**, and reduce how long turfgrass is exposed to moisture which can help **prevent disease.**	Want more information on turfgrass disease prevention? Visit aggieturf.tamu.edu/ AND the **Texas Plant Disease Diagnostic Lab** at https://plantclinic.tamu.edu/

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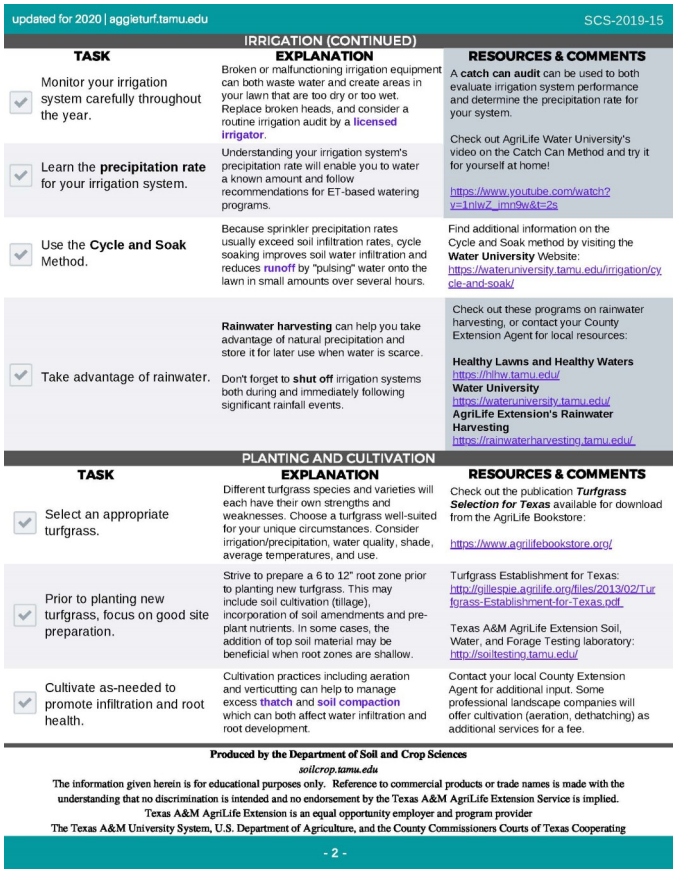

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IRRIGATION (CONTINUED)

TASK	EXPLANATION	RESOURCES & COMMENTS
Monitor your irrigation system carefully throughout the year.	Broken or malfunctioning irrigation equipment can both waste water and create areas in your lawn that are too dry or too wet. Replace broken heads, and consider a routine irrigation audit by a **licensed irrigator**.	A **catch can audit** can be used to both evaluate irrigation system performance and determine the precipitation rate for your system. Check out AgriLife Water University's video on the Catch Can Method and try it for yourself at home! https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1nIwZ_jmn9w&t=2s
Learn the **precipitation rate** for your irrigation system.	Understanding your irrigation system's precipitation rate will enable you to water a known amount and follow recommendations for ET-based watering programs.	
Use the **Cycle and Soak** Method.	Because sprinkler precipitation rates usually exceed soil infiltration rates, cycle soaking improves soil water infiltration and reduces **runoff** by "pulsing" water onto the lawn in small amounts over several hours.	Find additional information on the Cycle and Soak method by visiting the **Water University** Website: https://wateruniversity.tamu.edu/irrigation/cycle-and-soak/
Take advantage of rainwater.	**Rainwater harvesting** can help you take advantage of natural precipitation and store it for later use when water is scarce. Don't forget to **shut off** irrigation systems both during and immediately following significant rainfall events.	Check out these programs on rainwater harvesting, or contact your County Extension Agent for local resources: **Healthy Lawns and Healthy Waters** https://hlhw.tamu.edu/ **Water University** https://wateruniversity.tamu.edu/ **AgriLife Extension's Rainwater Harvesting** https://rainwaterharvesting.tamu.edu/

PLANTING AND CULTIVATION

TASK	EXPLANATION	RESOURCES & COMMENTS
Select an appropriate turfgrass.	Different turfgrass species and varieties will each have their own strengths and weaknesses. Choose a turfgrass well-suited for your unique circumstances. Consider irrigation/precipitation, water quality, shade, average temperatures, and use.	Check out the publication ***Turfgrass Selection for Texas*** available for download from the AgriLife Bookstore: https://www.agrilifebookstore.org/
Prior to planting new turfgrass, focus on good site preparation.	Strive to prepare a 6 to 12" root zone prior to planting new turfgrass. This may include soil cultivation (tillage), incorporation of soil amendments and pre-plant nutrients. In some cases, the addition of top soil material may be beneficial when root zones are shallow.	Turfgrass Establishment for Texas: http://gillespie.agrilife.org/files/2013/02/Turfgrass-Establishment-for-Texas.pdf Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Soil, Water, and Forage Testing laboratory: http://soiltesting.tamu.edu/
Cultivate as-needed to promote infiltration and root health.	Cultivation practices including aeration and verticutting can help to manage excess **thatch** and **soil compaction** which can both affect water infiltration and root development.	Contact your local County Extension Agent for additional input. Some professional landscape companies will offer cultivation (aeration, dethatching) as additional services for a fee.

Produced by the Department of Soil and Crop Sciences
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