

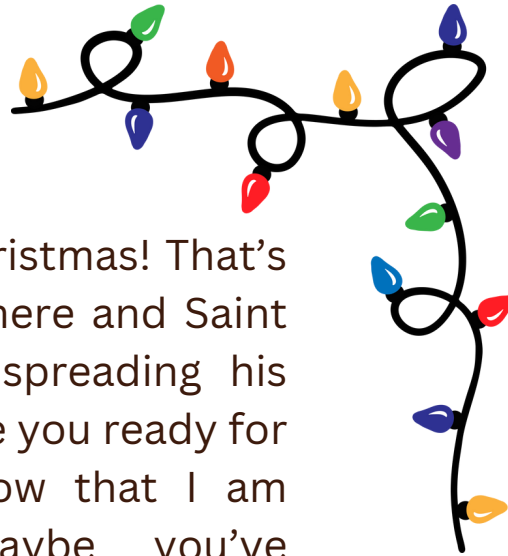
# Here's the Dirt

KIMBERLY MAYER, CEA - HORTICULTURE

Brazoria County



## December Happenings



Ho ho ho! Merry Christmas! That's right. December is here and Saint Nick will soon be spreading his Christmas cheer. Are you ready for the holidays? I know that I am certainly not. Maybe you've already done your shopping and put up your tree. If so, well done. Some of us aren't quite there yet. If you're looking for a great gift for the gardener in your life, here are a few ideas: pruning shears, sun hat, butterfly house and feeder, personalized garden tote or even some overalls to wear while working in the garden. Whether you're a procrastinator or a planner for Christmas gifts, I wish you and your family a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

## What's Growing On...

JMG Lesson at Harvest for the Hungry  
12/02/2023

December Board Meeting  
12/05/2023 9am  
VIRTUAL

December General Meeting  
12/08/2023  
10am@AgriLife

JMG Lesson at Harvest for the Hungry  
12/16/2023

Christmas Holiday and  
12/25/2023 and  
12/26/2023  
Office Closed

# Here's the Dirt

## December Horticulture Hero: Linda Ulmer

As Master Gardeners, we all find our position on the field, or in the garden, where we are comfortable in our skills and enjoy making our contribution to the team. There are a few members, though, that are relied on for their ability to pinch hit in a variety of program areas. Linda Ulmer stands out as a woman of many talents and skills and we so appreciate her quiet willingness to be a utility player on our Master Gardener team. A Master Gardener since 2014, Linda is a versatile Horticulture Hero!

Most of you know Linda as the keeper of Grandma's Garden. She is the gray haired pixie out at BEES every week planting, weeding and sharing her harvest from Grandma's garden. She is one of our hardest workers at BEES and can be seen slipping over to the square food gardens to help care for the asparagus, crossing the road to weed and mulch the native garden, and lending a hand to any of the other BEES gardeners that need a bit of help. Linda is always willing to stop for a few minutes and chat in the garden or potting shed. Many of us seek her out for a chat because her gardening experience, soft spoken voice and smile always brightens our day.

Gardening at BEES is just one of Linda's contributions to the Master Gardeners. She has also served for several years on the Intern Committee and is a key player in planning, organizing and delivering the intern classes each year. I'm sure Rose will tell you that Linda is her right hand woman on the Intern Committee, making sure that all the preparation work is done to deliver a successful program each year.

Linda ventures outside the garden too, volunteering for outreach as a speaker or helping with children's gardening education activities. In this past year, she has developed and delivered a presentation on shade gardening in the community and stepped in to pinch hit for Ellen with presentations on composting. She is one of our go to gardeners for tours at BEES and often helps with children's gardening activities at local schools and events.

If you volunteer for the annual tree and plant sales, you know that Linda is a key player in making sure that sale day runs smoothly with top notch customer service. She is usually found training and leading the checkers at a sale. Not an easy job because checkers often have to handle customer complaints. Linda is always helpful and stands right by her teammates with a smile, calmly carrying on.

I'm sure each of our members and interns has a story of how Linda has been a positive part of their experience as a Master Gardener. Thank you Linda for your willingness to volunteer and play a variety of positions in our organization.



# Here's the Dirt

## Nominate a Horticulture Hero

We truly have an amazing group of individuals within the Brazoria County Master Gardener Association. I wanted to make sure that we recognize and fully appreciate our volunteers on more than just a yearly basis. That's where this program comes in to play. I would love for you to send me your nominations for a monthly Horticulture Hero. The requirements are simple. Just send me an email with a paragraph explaining why this individual should be nominated for this award. I will make the final decision each month and then award that person at the General Meeting. Some examples could be: above and beyond service at an outreach event, behind the scenes planning and coordinating, or even an outstanding presentation to a local group, The possibilities are endless. Get your nominations to me by the last day of the month. Email me : [kimberly.mayer@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:kimberly.mayer@ag.tamu.edu)



# Here's the Dirt

## November Outreach Volunteers



**Thank you to members who volunteered to lead or assist at the November BCMGA outreach events!**

# Here's the Dirt

## November Outreach Volunteers



**Thank you to members who volunteered to lead or assist at the November BCMGA outreach events!**

# Here's the Dirt

## November Outreach Volunteers



**Thank you to members who volunteered to lead or assist at the November BCMGA outreach events!**

# Here's the Dirt

## November Outreach Volunteers



**Thank you to members who volunteered to lead or assist at the November BCMGA outreach events!**

# Here's the Dirt



## Agent's Corner

### Triple T Trees, Turf and Tomatoes

<div style="background-color: #4CAF50; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"><b>Trees</b></div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"><span>January 27th</span><span><b>\$15</b></span></div> <p>Join us for a class on how to grow Citrus Trees in Brazoria County. Learn from qualified Master Gardeners before you plant your trees from the Fruit and Citrus Tree Sale.</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: center; align-items: center;"> </div>	<div style="background-color: #4CAF50; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"><b>Turf</b></div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"><span>July 11th</span><span><b>\$15</b></span></div> <p>Join us for a time of intrigue and clues. Come learn how to spot the signs and symptoms that your lawn might be facing after the brutal heat and summer drought. Find out ways to restore some vigor and density to your turf. Let's prepare now for a healthy lawn.</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: center; align-items: center;"> </div>	<div style="background-color: #4CAF50; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"><b>Tomatoes</b></div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"><span>March 16th</span><span><b>\$25</b></span></div> <p>Our very first Tomato Basil Bash! Come learn from Brazoria County Master Gardeners who will teach you the basics of growing tomatoes and basil. A fabulous combination.</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: center; align-items: center;"> </div>
<div style="background-color: #4CAF50; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"><b>Trees</b></div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"><span>April 26th</span><span><b>FREE!</b></span></div> <p>Join us to celebrate Texas Arbor Day by learning all about tree planting 101 and what trees grow best in our area. *Tree giveaway pending.</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: center; align-items: center;"> </div>	<div style="background-color: #4CAF50; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"><b>Turf</b></div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"><span>April 13th</span><span><b>FREE!</b></span></div> <p>Join your local Horticulture Agent, Kimberly Mayer for tips on keeping your lawn green. You'll make your neighbors green with envy after this class that teaches the basics of great lawn care.</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: center; align-items: center;"> </div>	<div style="background-color: #4CAF50; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"><b>Tomatoes</b></div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"><span>June 8th</span><span><b>\$25</b></span></div> <p>After you've grown your tomatoes in the spring and early summer, come join us for a tomato tasting and question and answer period with knowledgeable Master Gardeners. We'll also have time for a canning demo from Agent Shana Kutac.</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: center; align-items: center;"> </div>

To register: <https://brazoria.agrilife.org/events/>

Here's a snapshot of the 2024 Program Plans that we have coming up! Lots of great events!



# Here's the Dirt

## Notes from the Herb Garden

### Tomato Basil Bash

By: Joy Hargett and Sandy Henderson  
Brazoria County Master Gardeners



**BLOWN AWAY BY BASIL?  
TANTALIZED BY TOMATOES?  
JOIN US!**

**MARCH 16TH, 2024  
9 AM - 12 PM**

## Tomato Basil Bash

Ready for a saucy, herbaceous extravaganza at the Tomato Basil Bash? We'll teach you how to grow your best tomato and basil plants.

Register here:

<https://brazoria.agrilife.org/events>

[kimberly.mayer@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:kimberly.mayer@ag.tamu.edu)



Joy and Sandy would like to personally invite you to attend the first annual Tomato Basil Bash. These ladies will be presenting on Basil varieties for the Gulf Coast Region. Carol Butler will also be teaching on Basil propagation and the history of the herb. Join Ruth and August Aimone as they share all about tomatoes. And we also have an Extension Specialist coming to share his research in the field of tomatoes.



AgriLife Extension Office  
21017 County Road 171  
Angleton, TX 77515

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. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating.

# Here's the Dirt



## Destinations

By: Mark Mckee  
Brazoria County Master Gardener

Just like our own gardens, nurseries and public gardens tend to look less than their best during the fall and winter seasons. This makes finding destinations that please the eye slightly challenging at this time of year. Fortunately, this month's destination more than met the challenge!

Kim's Home & Garden Center in Huntsville, Texas is a local institution. It was originally located on I-45 in Huntsville, but in 1985 a freeway expansion forced the owners, Ben & Kim Bius, to either close the business or relocate. The couple had previously purchased a local property known as Top O' The Hill Farm. Top O' The Hill had been a dairy farm in the past and a large farmhouse had been built there in 1911 by the original owners.

While the Bius' original plans had been to use the Top O' The Hill property for an event center and short-term rental, circumstances sometimes require a pivot. They decided to incorporate Kim's garden business into the plans for the property as well. Following an extensive renovation of the house and the addition of a new building further back on the property to house the garden related part of the business, Kim's Home & Garden Center opened at its new location at Top O' The Hill Farm in 2020.

What was previously a nice white farmhouse has been beautifully renovated and has been rechristened as "The Mansion". Surrounded by landscaped flower beds and St. Augustine lawns, it looks more like a well-loved home and not a business. The front walkway was decorated for the Fall season with pumpkins of all shapes and sizes, creating an immediate feeling of the holidays. Walking toward the front doors, we could see that the transition of seasonal decorations had begun, with a small indication of things to come for Christmas. Once we opened the doors, we walked into full blown Christmas! The first floor of the mansion has been made into a retail space, and the day we visited was full of Christmas decorations for decorating your home. We were treated to a gracious tour of the house and an explanation of its history by Kim's decorator, Cynthia, who made us feel very welcome. We had a great time shopping and were able to knock a few items off our Christmas list!

In addition, The Mansion is also a venue for weddings and Kim's hosts several events for the community throughout the year, including an Easter Egg hunt and several markets for artists and craftsmen. The stock in the house is always changing to reflect the current season or holiday, so every visit will be a new experience.

The property itself has a peaceful, park-like feel, since the Bius' have been very careful to maintain many large trees. There is a huge Magnolia tree next to The Mansion and what is possibly the largest Sweetgum tree in the country located toward the rear of the property. The walk from The Mansion to the Home & Garden Center was peaceful and relaxing because of their presence.

# Here's the Dirt

## Destinations

**By: Mark Mckee**  
**Brazoria County Master Gardener**

The Home & Garden Center is located behind The Mansion and is where the nursery part of this destination begins. Inside this beautiful garden center there is a lot more to see than just the usual fertilizers and chemicals. In addition to a large selection of house plants, the Home & Garden Center has

decorations for your garden, including an assortment of wind chimes, water fountains, sculptures, pots, and garden ornaments. We had a great time shopping here.

The remainder of the property is dedicated to the nursery area as well as a small soil and stone yard. Although winter is just beginning, you can tell that the nursery is a great resource for the area when local gardeners begin shopping for their spring gardens.

If you are in the Huntsville area, or just passing through on I-45, take an hour or two to visit Kim's Home & Garden Center. Kim's is a great destination, owned and operated by people that are proud of what they have created and who work very hard to make your visit an awesome experience.

(Please note: AgriLife does not endorse this company.)

Huntsville is a college town (Go Bearkats!) so places to eat are many and varied. In addition to familiar national chains, there are many local spots that cater to the college students as well. Several of the people we talked to recommended The Farmer's Cafe restaurant, which we enjoyed very much. There were several other restaurants in the same area that we would have tried, including the City Hall Café and the Five Loaves Deli.



# Here's the Dirt

## Destinations

**By: Mark Mckee**  
**Brazoria County Master Gardener**



Kim's Home & Garden Center

2715 Lake Rd.

Huntsville, TX 77340-5609

[www.kimshg.com](http://www.kimshg.com)

**UPCOMING DESTINATION EVENTS:**

**Christmas In Roseland**

**Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays from November 24 to December 23**

**Special Christmas Market - December 8 – 11**

**(The gardens of the American Rose Society will be lit up for Christmas, with entertainment and special events each night)**

**American Rose Society**

**Shreveport, LA**

**[www.rose.org/visit-public-gardens](http://www.rose.org/visit-public-gardens)**

**Radiant Nature (Nov 17, 2023 to Feb 25, 2024)**

**Glass in Flight (Oct 21, 2023 to April 14, 2024)**

**Houston Botanic Garden**

**One Botanic Lane**

**Houston, TX 77017**

**[www.hbg.org](http://www.hbg.org)**

**(If you have a suggestion for a destination, or would like to contribute a DESTINATIONS story, please let Kimberly Mayer or I know.)**

# Here's the Dirt

## Destinations

By: Mark Mckee

Brazoria County Master Gardener



# Here's the Dirt

## Destinations

By: Mark Mckee  
Brazoria County Master Gardener



## Here's the Dirt

# Writers wanted!



**If you enjoy writing about gardening and would like contribute an article or two to our newsletter, please feel free to reach out and let me know. I'd love to have you participate in this newsletter. I am looking for short but informative articles that speak to a variety of interests. It can be a question that you get quite often from friends and neighbors or maybe a subject that is near and dear to your heart or we can do something like a plant or tree of the month and share some great information on that. If you are interested, email me at [kimberly.mayer@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:kimberly.mayer@ag.tamu.edu).**

# Here's the Dirt

# Community Outreach Needs



**JMG Lesson at Harvest for  
the Hungry - December 16th  
from 9am-11am**



\*Please reach out to Preston Armistead or Kimberly Mayer to sign up or for more details.



# Here's the Dirt



Texas A&M AgriLife  
Extension Service  
21017 County Road 171  
Angleton, TX 77515  
979-864-1558

<https://brazoria.agrilife.org/horticulture/>

**Follow us on Facebook**

<https://www.facebook.com/brazoriacountymastergardeners>

**Brazoria County Horticulture - Texas A&M AgriLife Extension  
Service**