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Sept 2 – Master Gardener Booth at Waxahachie Farmers' Market – Plan for cooler weather garden walks. Stop by our booth for directions to our three demonstration gardens. Indian Trail Master Naturalists will be there with activities for children.

Sept 9 – Master Gardener Booth at Waxahachie Farmers' Market – Maximize your fall harvest. Stop by for information.

Sept 16 – Master Gardener Booth at Waxahachie Farmers' Market – Now is a great time to plant wildflowers. We have lists and planting info.

Also on the 16th – Wildflower Walk with Indian Trail Master Naturalists – See fall wildflowers at Mockingbird Park in Midlothian. Join the guided walk at 9:00 a.m.

Sept 23 – Master Gardener Booth at Waxahachie Farmers' Market – We have answers to Gardening Questions!

Sept 24 – Farm Heritage Day – Glance into history at the Ellis County Rual Heritage Farm, 130 Cunningham Meadows Rd., Waxahachie, TX 75167. Join us for fun activities, snacks and learning opportunities from 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Sept 30 – Master Gardener Booth at Waxahachie Farmers' Market – Are you ready for Fall landscaping?

What To Do In SEPTEMBER

PLANTING

- Plant these fall vegetables now: beets, carrots, “greens” (mustard, collard, turnip), kale, lettuce, radishes and spinach.
- Lawn establishment using warm-season grasses such as Bermudagrass, St. Augustine, zoysia and buffalo grass should be completed early in the month.
- Overseed established Bermudagrass lawns with perennial ryegrass this month, if desired.
- Plant these fall-blooming annuals from bedding plants before buds have opened: marigolds, petunias, asters, pinks, snapdragons and mums. Wait until cooler weather to plant pansies, violas and ornamental cabbages and kale.
- Complete sowing bluebonnets to ensure spring flowers. For season-long color, purchase a wildflower mix that contains annuals and perennials, as well as cool-season and warm-season plants such as bluebonnets, black-eyed Susan, Indian blanket, Indian paintbrush, Mexican hat, plains coreopsis, purple coneflower and evening primrose. Sow seeds in areas that are free of grasses and lightly tilled. Lightly rake area to get good seed-soil contact before watering.

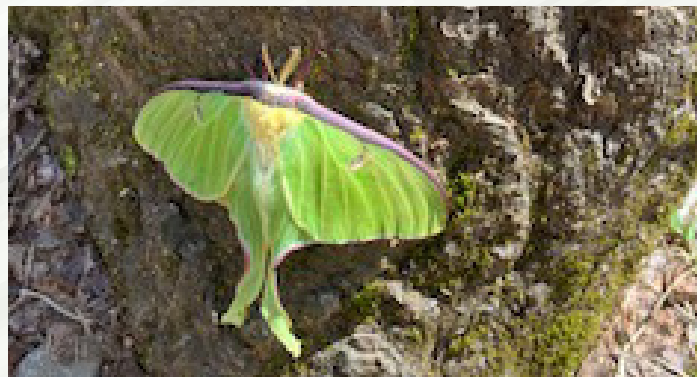
FERTILIZING AND PRUNING

- Apply high-nitrogen fertilizer (4-1-2 ratio) on lawns and shrubs to prepare plants for fall and winter. Container plants will benefit from using high-nitrogen, water-soluble fertilizers.
- Tidy up summer perennials by removing dead and faded flower stems and seed stalks. Continue through fall.
- Root-prune trees and shrubs to be transplanted this winter. Cutting the roots around the plant with a spade will stimulate new root growth in what will become the soil ball when the plant is moved.

GARDEN WATCH

- Apply a pre-emergent herbicide to lawns early in the month to control winter weeds. Depending on the type of weed targeted, it may be necessary to apply two products one for grassy weeds (annual bluegrass, ryegrass, etc.) and another for broad-leaved weeds (chickweed, clover, dandelions, henbit, etc.).
- Make final application of Image® or SedgeHammer® before mid-month to control nutsedge in warm-season lawns.
- Remove webworms from pecan trees. Cut off the ends of branches as soon as the webs appear. Tear open large webs to expose worms for birds. Spraying is not practical.
- Spray roses suffering from black spot and powdery mildew with labeled fungicide.
- Prepare beds for spring-flowering bulbs. Add organic matter to improve water drainage.

SPARKPLUG'S APPALACHIAN ADVENTURE

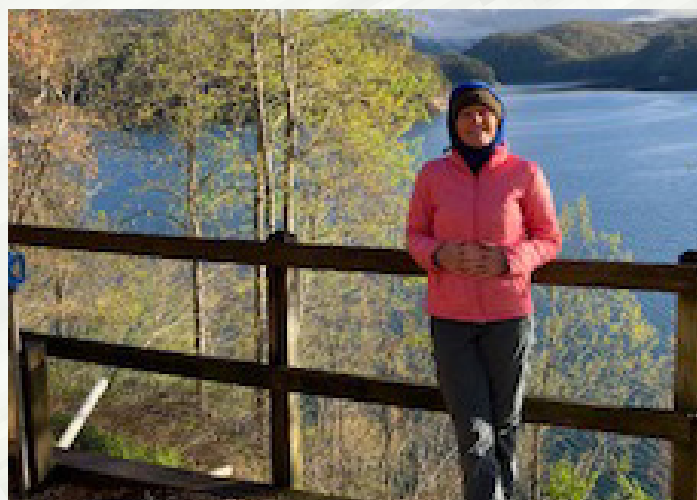


Hi everyone, Sorry it has been a while since I made contact. My cell coverage has been sketchy.

Made it through New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and am now in Vermont. Should be in New Hampshire in a few days. Averaging about 17 miles per day. Projecting finish date and summit to Mount Katahdin in Maine mid-September.

Recently a lot of rain, mud, sketchy river crossings, and mosquitoes. Why did I come out here again??!! Actually the beauty continues to overwhelm me, and I am still in awe of all creation!

Tamra (aka Sparkplug)



Cicada Killer Wasps

by Dixie Gilmore, ECMG

One day while walking down my sidewalk to pick up my mail, I encountered about five of the biggest wasps I had ever seen. I snapped a quick pic and retreated into the house. After a little research, I was able to identify the wasps and learn quite a lot about these beneficial insects.

The wasps I saw were Cicada Killer wasps and are about two inches long. The scientific name is *Spechius speciosus*; family Crabronidae in the order Hymenoptera. They are very large and have clear, amber colored wings and the black and yellow markings common to wasps. Wasps begin their daily flights early in the morning and continue until dusk. They remain in their nest at night. The males guard the nest, which in my case is in the space between the steps and sidewalk. They will fly around you, just to investigate what you are, but are not aggressive. The males do not have stingers.

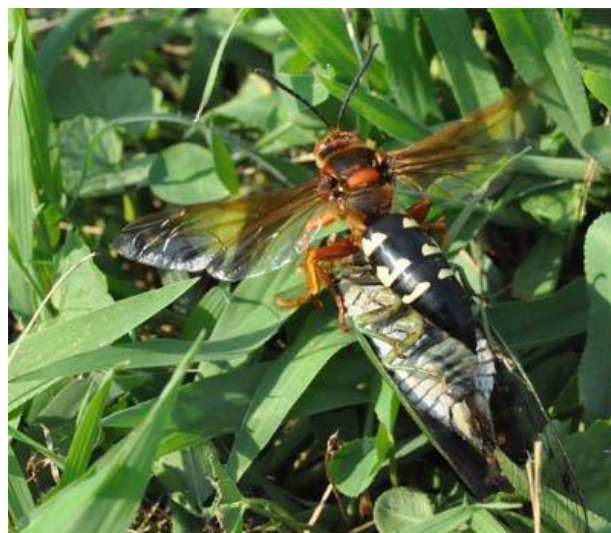
The females do have large stingers, but will only sting cicadas, unless you or an animal threatens them. The females excavate their nesting tunnels underground to a depth of approximately 10" and 30-70" long, with several tunnels branching off the main tunnel. The tunnels are the nurseries for their young. The cicada killers will share good nesting sites, even though they are not social insects. The female paralyzes a cicada with her stinger, then drags it back to the tunnel nest. She will repeat this action with up to three cicadas. She will then lay an egg inside the last cicada and seal the tunnel branch. The egg hatches in a few days and will feed off the cicadas for the next couple of weeks. When the larva is fully developed, it spins a cocoon where it will remain until the following summer, when it will exit the cocoon, enter the pupal stage, and finally emerge as an adult. Cicada Killer wasps only have one generation a year.

Your dog or cat may catch a Cicada Killer, and if it is a female Cicada Killer, they may have a severe reaction to the venom, especially if stung in the mouth. If this happens, take your pet to a veterinarian immediately.

The cicada killers and I continue to co-exist peacefully, ignoring one another. They do, however, seem to enjoy terrorizing the package delivery people. Most won't venture past them to get to my front door, no matter how much I reassure them that the Cicada Killers are harmless.



Eastern Cicada Killer Wasp



Wasp with Cicada



PHOTO: ANTONIS ACHILLEOS; PROP STYLING: KAY E. CLARKE; FOOD STYLING: TORIE COX



Yellow Squash Bundt Cake



PHOTO: JANET MADISON, ECMG

Courtesy of the Southern Living website <https://www.southernliving.com/recipes/yellow-squash-bundt-cake>

This is a delicious way to use some of your prolific squash harvest and is guaranteed to change the minds of even the staunchest squash-detractors. Bright yellow squash boosts the golden hue of this lemony cake, helping to create a tender and moist texture.

Ingredients

Cake

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 3 large eggs, at room temperature
- 1 ½ cups granulated sugar
- 1 cup canola oil (*it is important you use a very mild tasting oil, Canola is best*)
- 2 cups grated yellow squash (from 2 medium [6 ½ oz. each] squash)
- 1 tablespoon lemon zest plus 2 Tbsp. fresh juice (from 1 lemon)

Lemon-Buttermilk Glaze

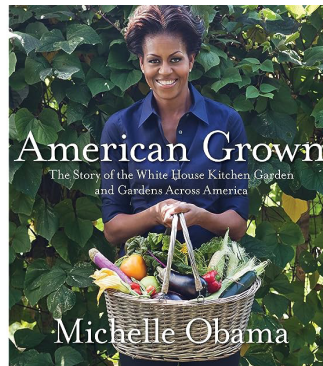
- 2 cups unsifted powdered sugar
- 2 tablespoons whole buttermilk
- 1 teaspoon lemon zest plus 1 Tbsp. fresh juice (from 1 lemon)

Directions

1. Prepare the cake: Preheat oven to 350°F. Coat a 10-cup Bundt pan with baking spray. Stir together flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt in a bowl. Place eggs, sugar, and oil in bowl of a stand mixer fitted with a paddle attachment. Beat on medium-high speed until light and airy, about 3 minutes, stopping to scrape down sides as needed. Stir in squash, lemon zest, and juice. Gradually add flour mixture, beating on low speed until just combined, about 45 seconds. Pour batter into prepared pan.
2. Bake in preheated oven until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean, 50 to 55 minutes. Cool in pan 10 minutes. Invert onto a wire rack; cool 1 hour.
3. Prepare the glaze: Whisk together all ingredients in a bowl until smooth. Drizzle over cooled cake.



by Melanie Wallace, ECMG



"Joy is what happens when your garden feeds your body and your soul."

American Grown: The Story of the White House Kitchen Garden and Gardens Across America chronicles former First Lady Michelle Obama's journey into starting a garden on the White House lawn.

"On March 20, 2009, I was like any other hopeful gardener with a pot out on the windowsill or a small plot by the back door. I was nervously watching the sky. Would it freeze? Would it snow? Would it rain? I had spent two months settling into a new house in a new city. My girls had started a new school; my husband, a new job. My mother had just moved in upstairs. And now I was embarking on something I had never attempted before: starting a garden."

As a brand new gardener, I felt a connection to the former First Lady from the opening paragraph of her book. When we moved into this new house, in a new city, in a new time of life, I was just beginning to develop an interest in gardening. With a backyard in complete shade... where would I plant the veggies?

I was pretty sure that my husband would not agree to digging up all of the grass in the front yard to develop a row garden. And, even if he did, I'm not sure that the neighbors would have appreciated it. So, I had to think outside the box - or outside the row...as it were.

As I began researching the art of planting vegetables in flower beds, I found lots of interesting information about growing vegetables among my front yard shrubs and perennials. If I think that vegetables are beautiful...and I do...why not, I thought. So, I went about designing my limited space to maximize both beauty and production.

How, you are asking, does my conundrum of front yard gardening relate to Mrs. Obama's planting of a White House garden? Well, we have more in common than you might think.

Kitchen gardens have a long history at the White House. Starting in 1800, second president of the United States, John Adams and First Lady Abigail Adams, planted the first White House garden. This was followed in 1836 by President Andrew Jackson, who built a hothouse made out of glass, known as the orangery, which was ultimately demolished and replaced by the West Wing.

We are all, of course, familiar with Victory Gardens which were planted at private residences and public parks during World Wars 1 and 2. During wartime, governments encouraged people to plant kitchen gardens, not only to supplement their rations, but to boost morale. During World War 2, FDR and Eleanor Roosevelt once again planted a Victory Garden on the White House grounds. But, home gardening fell out of favor after World War II.



As more folks moved into town during the 1950s and 1960s, home vegetable gardening decreased in popularity. Availability of fresh fruits and vegetables and canned goods in supermarkets allowed for less home gardening. This art form was abandoned by many Americans, opting for the convenience of supermarket fare.

Now, here's where our stories converge. In 1993, President Bill Clinton was denied his request to plant a garden on the White House lawn, being told that it was, "not in keeping with the formal nature of the White House grounds."

In the early 2000s, edible gardens came back into fashion, as Americans became more health-conscious and the desire for fresh, local food grew. In 2009, First Lady,

Michelle Obama planted the first vegetable garden on the White House grounds since World War II. *American Grown: The Story of the White House Kitchen Garden and Gardens Across America*, details her experiences with the kitchen garden and promoting healthy eating.

To my surprise, as I was planning my own front-yard garden, I found that many HOAs have a history of not allowing the planting of vegetables in the front yard. There are all manner of horror stories on the internet (so it must be true!) concerning folks denied the ability to plant kitchen gardens in their front yards. (Actually, the 88th Texas Legislature passed HB 92, a bill addressing this very issue in June, 2023 – so problem solved. Municipalities can no longer prohibit the growing of fruits and vegetables on residential property).

Even though our home is not in an HOA, we are in a neighborhood and I wanted to be respectful of the neighbors. Turns out, that would not be a problem. Everybody loves a good home-grown tomato. Some may call it bribery – I call it neighborliness.

Through the pages of this beautifully photographed book, we are invited into the White House Kitchen Garden from the first planning and planting through harvest, and we are even treated to some delicious recipes served right there at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. We get a behind-the-scenes look at every season of the garden's growth, along with a fascinating history of community gardens across the U.S.

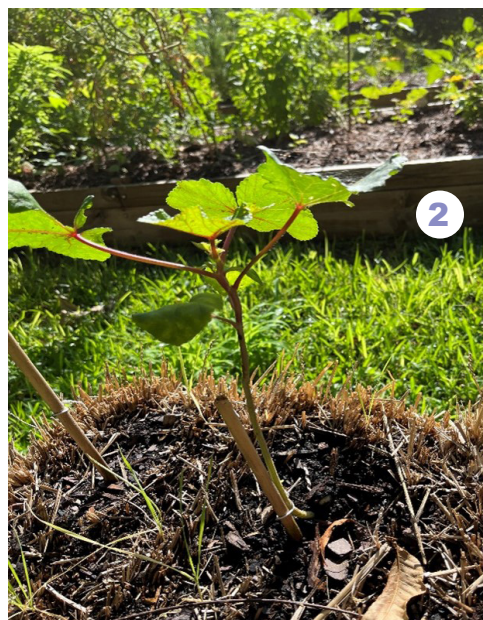
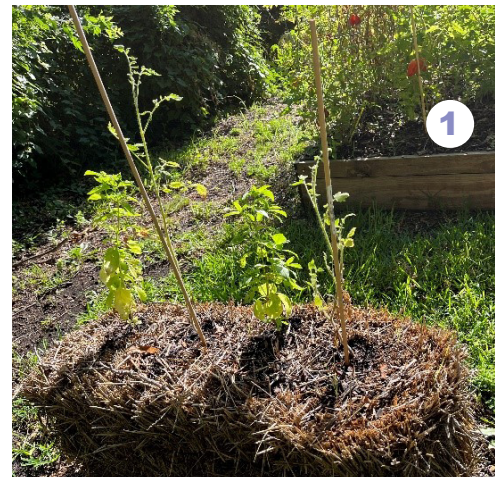
These dog days of summer are a perfect time to curl up in an air-conditioned room, to dream and plan for next year's kitchen garden. *American Grown* offers a beautiful guide into that dreamworld.

Strawbale Garden Experiment Part 2-Conclusion

by Beth Norris, ECMG

The experiment is nearly complete on my first attempt at strawbale gardening. I say first attempt because as with any new adventure, I usually say "if at first you don't succeed, try, try again! Since this was a joint venture between my devoted (if less than enthusiastic) husband and myself, I will say this for the experience: overall it was well worth it.

Among more than a few things I learned is that the strawbales may heat up a little too much in our hotter summer months, and even with daily watering, the plants that did survive look a little worse for wear than our raised bed garden plants. I



also learned that with the needed frequent watering, we needed to fertilize more than we did with our raised bed plants. We realized that strawbale gardens lose added nutrients due to the composition of the straw itself. Think of the straw as actual drinking straws that are hollow, and moisture will flow out and evaporate more easily.

If you are in an area where you cannot do an in-ground or at least a raised bed garden, the strawbale option may be a good choice. The only soil required is the small amount added with each plant sown in the bales, so that is a consideration for the bale garden approach. I did see in another strawbale garden article where they covered the tops of the bales around the plants with compost, which we did not know to do for this first adventure.

If I do this again next year, I will:

- 1) Start earlier in the sowing season--maybe early April or late March
- 2) Plant more established transplants than those I did this time
- 3) Fertilize more often than we do for our raised beds
- 4) Add homemade compost from time to time

Here are updated photos of our two strawbales. Picture one shows basil and tomatoes; picture two shows okra.

In conclusion, this was a fun experiment and one that I will definitely consider doing again next year. As I mentioned before, if you are short on ground space for actual gardening, this is a good alternative.

<https://www.marthastewart.com/8075488/straw-bale-gardening-guide>

<https://www.thespruce.com/straw-bale-gardening-848248>

ORNAMENTAL SUNFLOWERS

—MORE THAN JUST YELLOW

by Dr. Calvin Trostle, Professor & Extension Agronomist, Lubbock, TX

Versatile varieties offer array of colors but may require secondary bud removal

My backyard has some surprises. Still somewhat unknown, there are many different colors and even petal patterns in ornamental sunflowers. This is a fun part of being the AgriLife Extension state specialist for farm sunflowers. I get to enjoy sunflowers beyond the field. Here are two of my favorites (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1. Examples of ornamental sunflowers defy the assumption that all sunflowers are yellow. The first sunflower, 'Chianti', is popular for its maroon color.

Ornamental sunflowers are now somewhat common though many gardeners are still unfamiliar with the different types. Gardeners flower lovers will likely find small packets of mixed colors for sale in the spring at their favorite garden store (Fig. 2). These are sunflower types that generally produce one large head (though often with many secondary buds, see below). Sunflowers you buy in pots typically are more bushy in growth and will naturally have many heads rather than one primary head.

Tips for Seeded Ornamental Sunflowers

Most ornamental sunflowers are not genetically pure like the commercial sunflowers farmers grow for oil, confectionery seed, sunflower meats, or dove hunting. Farmer sunflowers are genetically uniform and produce one yellow sunflower per stalk. But ornamental sunflowers are still somewhat close to their wild relatives. Most can still have one large flower per stalk, but they might develop many secondary heads. It is the gardener's decision whether you would like a large single flower or perhaps a tall bushy plant with a dozen or more blooms per plant. Most gardeners plant sunflowers with the expectation of one large flower.

To enhance ornamental sunflower growth for a larger impressive single flower, growers may need to “pinch” off secondary buds that form in the crotch between the stalk and leaf stem (Fig. 3.). Some secondary buds may also form on the back side of the head. For an individual gardener this may take a few minutes once a week for a few weeks. Removing these secondary buds, which typically produce small flowers, will eliminate this parasitic growth. Nutrients and water resources can be directed to the main flower. This is especially important for cut flowers. If a grower is curious about what a plant will look like with many blooms, then leave some plants unpinched.

When to plant: Most ornamental sunflowers will have a suggested planting range on the seed packet. In general, sunflowers can germinate



Fig. 3. Secondary buds on the main sunflower stalk will be colorful but small and colorful but will detract from the large primary bud marked at the top. Pinching these secondary buds off will not injure the plant.

in cool conditions and tolerate cool temperatures as low as 36°F

at night. You can plant them as early as your area's last average spring freeze date or within 60 days of your first average fall 32°F.



Fig. 2. Examples of small ornamental sunflower seed packets at garden stores in the spring.

An Array of Sunflower Colors and Petal Patterns!—Online Shopping

The website for a world of ornamental sunflowers:• Sunflower Selections. Dr. Tom Heaton's life-long hobby in full color, <http://www.sunflowerselections.com> This website is for individual varieties in contrast to the mixes noted above. You can purchase 100 seeds for as little as \$6 up to 10,000 seeds or more.

- Also “Sunflower Steve.” Until recently this company offered individual varieties, but currently is only selling a blend, <https://www.sunflowersteveseedco.com/>

Your favorite garden catalogs will also have a few varieties of individual sunflowers, but the Sunflower Selections breeding group likely supplies most of the seeds.

Sunflower Photography

In my role as state Extension specialist for sunflower I get a few calls a year from someone asking where they can go to take pictures of sunflower fields. If they call soon enough in the year (May) they may not need to drive far as there are commercial fields in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. Additional fields are scattered in south and central Texas to attract dove for hunting. I have answered requests for where a wedding party could take photos in a sunflower field to a high school senior wanting senior pictures.

Tips for sunflower photography. Sunflower imagery is best for photos within 30 to at most 45 minutes after sunrise. The yellow light of the early sun enhances the yellows of sunflower to a vivid glow! Sunflower heads are all facing east in the morning then track the sun throughout the day (nutration, but this stops soon after sunflowers begin initial bloom). Brighter sunlight later in the day bleaches out the vivid yellow of sunflower. Evening pictures before sunset do not find uniform west-facing heads, and the colors don't seem quite as strong as early morning.

*This weekly agronomic Memo for Texas A&M AgriLife Extension county agents is compiled by Dr. Calvin Trostle, Professor & Extension Agronomist, Lubbock, ctrostle@ag.tamu.edu
Permission is granted to AgriLife Extension personnel to use this information as you see fit for Extension education purposes (newsletters, web posting, social media, etc.).*



Plant TEXAS WILDFLOWERS

August through October is a great window for planting many types of Texas wildflowers. For more information visit:

<https://aggie-hort.tamu.edu/wildseed/tamuhort.html>