

# KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



## *Joe Lamp'ol*

*Host & Executive Producer at PBS  
Growing a Greener World®*

Joe's infatuation with gardening and nature began as a child, growing up in Miami, Florida. After a run-in with his parents' favorite shrub, he panicked and jammed the broken branch into the ground. A few weeks later, it had taken root. Not only was he relieved; he was hooked on horticulture. That defining moment was literally life-changing!

From there he couldn't get enough information about growing plants and was a sponge for book knowledge and practical application. At only eight years-old, he propagated, planted, and grew everything he could get his hands on.

When it came to plants, Joe did not discriminate. He grew pole beans from seed along the side of their house, mango trees in the backyard, and even found room for a rose garden! He took cuttings, potted them up and sold them at church fundraisers, bazaars, and flea markets. There was no turning back.

When it came time for college, Joe was dead set on a horticulture degree. Fortunately, his very wise mother encouraged him to pursue a business degree as well. Mother knows best, so that is what he did. Upon graduation, there were a lot more employers looking for business majors than horticulture grads, plus the pay was better. Joe's life in the business world, although successful monetarily, left him restless and yearning for a professional life with the sun on his back and his hands in the soil.

Joe's business background gave him the skills he needed to venture out on his own – shedding the suit and tie and working in horticultural consulting and design, while endlessly using his own home garden and landscape as a living laboratory and loving every second of it.

Session: [\*Growing a Greener World\*](#)



## ***Dr. Sara Lewis***

***Ecologist and Professor Emerita  
Tufts University, Boston, Massachusetts***

An ecologist and professor *emerita* at Tufts, Lewis has spent the past thirty years studying firefly behavior, ecology, and evolution. She currently coordinates global firefly conservation efforts as co-chair of the IUCN Firefly Specialist Group. In addition to writing numerous [scientific articles](#), Prof. Lewis has given a [TED talk](#) and has written popular articles for [Scientific American](#), [Undark](#), [CNN](#), [The](#)

[Guardian](#), and [National Wildlife](#).

Her work has been featured in the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Washington Post*, and *BBC*, along with numerous radio shows and podcasts. She is also the author of [Silent Sparks: The Wondrous World of Fireflies](#), an entertaining and highly accessible journey into their luminous lives.

Session: [Protecting the Jewels of the Night](#)



## ***Sara Dykman***

***Author, Field Biologist & Outdoor  
Educator  
Beyond a Book***

Sara Dykman is a field biologist and the founder of [beyondabook.org](#), which fosters lifelong learners, boundary pushers, explorers, and stewards. She works in amphibian research and as an outdoor educator, guiding young people into nature so they can delight in its complicated brilliance.

Sara Dykman made history when she became the first person to bicycle alongside monarch butterflies on their storied annual migration—a round-trip adventure that included three countries and more than 10,000 miles. Equally remarkable, she did it solo, on a bike cobbled together from used parts.

Session: [\*Biking with Butterflies: Learning about Monarchs One Mile at a Time\*](#)



## ***Doug Tallamy***

***Author & T.A. Baker Professor of  
Agriculture  
University of Delaware***

Doug Tallamy is the T. A. Baker Professor of Agriculture in the Department of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology at the University of Delaware, where he has authored 111 research publications and has taught insect-related courses for 41 years. Chief among his research goals is to better understand the many ways insects interact with plants and how such interactions determine the diversity of animal

communities.

His books include *Bringing Nature Home*, *The Living Landscape*, co-authored with Rick Darke, *Nature's Best Hope*, a New York Times Best Seller, *The Nature of Oaks*, winner of the American Horticultural Society's 2022 book award. In 2021 he co-founded Homegrown National Park with Michelle Alfandari. His awards include recognition from The Garden Writer's Association, Audubon, The National Wildlife Federation, Allegheny College, EcoForesters, The Garden Club of America and The American Horticultural Association.

Session: [\*Nature's Best Hope\*](#)

# BREAKOUT SPEAKERS



## ***Dr. Don L. Renchie***

***Professor, Extension Program Leader and Coordinator—  
Pesticide Safety Education Program T.A.  
Baker Professor of Agriculture  
Texas A&M University***

A fifth generation native of Bryan, Texas, Don grew up participating in Brazos County 4-H programs. He participated in broiler projects, on the rifle and public speaking teams at the county and district levels. Don was also a participant in the ‘Upward Bound’ and “Junior Air Force ROTC” programs while in high school.

After high school, Don attended Prairie View A&M University, where he received his B.S in Animal Science and M.S. in Agricultural Education. In 1998, he received his Ph.D. in Agricultural Education from Texas A&M University. From 1984 until 1993, Don worked in the agricultural chemical supply industry and as the Pesticide Registration Coordinator for the Texas Department of Agriculture.

Since 1993, Don has been on the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service team. He is the Extension Program Leader and Coordinator for the Agricultural and Environmental Safety Unit; an Extension Pesticide Safety Education Specialist in the Pesticide Safety Education Program; the Co-Director of the Southwestern Technical Resource Center for IPM in Schools and Day Care Facilities; an Executive Board Member of the Brazos Valley Fair & Rodeo; an Executive Board Member of the National Pesticide Safety Education Center and Past President of American Association of Pesticide Safety Educators (AAPSE). More recently, he is a recipient of the Texas A&M University System “Regents Fellow Service Award” and the American Association of Pesticide Safety Educators “Fellow Award.”

Don holds membership in the Texas Agricultural Lifetime Leadership Program (TALL); the Texas Small Farmers and Ranchers CBO; the Texas Vegetation Management Association (TVMA); the Texas Pest Control Association; The Texas Farm Bureau and Gamma Sigma Delta International Honor Society of Agriculture. Don also sits on several Boards relating to youth development and pesticide stewardship.

Don works to promote quality pest management educational programs for agricultural producers and pest management professionals to affect the adoption and implementation of sound agricultural, structural, public health and environmental protection Best Management Practices (BMPs).

Session: [\*Pesticide Safety Education\*](#)

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## ***Jacy Lewis***

***Program Manager & Scientist, Viticulture  
and Sustainable Fruit Applied Research  
Program***

*Texas A&M AgriLife Extension*

Jacy has a M.S. in biology from Texas Tech University and has worked for TAMU AgriLife in both Research and Extension for the past 19 years. She is currently a PhD student in the department of horticultural sciences at TAMU and is the Program Manager for the Viticulture and Sustainable Fruit Applied Research Program for TAMU AgriLife Extension.

Program focus areas include assisting producers in developing production strategies that increase sustainability in fruit and winegrape production and increasing whole farm resilience. Along with production related recommendations on cultivation, IPM, water conservation, site and variety selection; common strategies include diversification, protected cultivation and exploring novel markets and marketing strategies.

Session: [\*Raspberries: New Possibilities\*](#)

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## ***Ashley Morgan-Olvera***

***Director of Research and Education***  
*Texasinvasives.org*

Ashley is the Director of Research and Education for Texasinvasives.org located at the Texas Invasive Species Institute (TISI) on the Sam Houston State University (SHSU) campus. She received her M.S. in Parasitology 2011 before starting at TISI as an invasive species biologist.

Throughout the past 12 years she has worked extensively with federal, state, and local groups setting up invasive insect, mollusk, and plant pathogen field-surveys, while participating in Clean Rivers surveys along waterways in the Huntsville and Houston areas. She understands public education is vital to stop the spread of invasive species and provides training and workshops to motivate others into action against invasive plants and pests.

Session: [\*Texas Gardens Beware, Invasive Worms are Encroaching!\*](#)

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## ***Brad Voss***

***Collin County Extension Agent – Horticulture***  
*Texas A&M AgriLife Extension*

Brad Voss is the County Extension Agent for Horticulture with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension in Collin County. In this role, he provides research-based information and educational programs to residents, landowners, and horticultural producers in Collin County. He holds a B.S. with honors in Agricultural Sciences and an M.S. in Agricultural Sciences from Texas A&M University – Commerce.

His specialties are soil science and fertility, plant nutrition, and integrated pest management. Brad likes discussing the ins and outs of our Blackland soil and helping

folks overcome the challenges they bring. Brad and his wife, Audrey, have two boys, Owen, and Rhys.

Session: [\*Drought-Proofing Your Landscape\*](#)

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## ***Randy Seagraves***

***Extension Program Specialist and  
Curriculum Director – Junior Master  
Gardener Program***

*Texas A&M AgriLife Extension*

Randy is an Extension Program Specialist and Curriculum Director for the International Junior Master Gardener program. A former third grade teacher in College Station ISD, Randy is the lead author of 9 JMG® curriculum guides, including the evidence based *Learn, Grow, Eat & GO* curriculum and the new *Early Childhood Learn, Grow, Eat & GO* curriculum developed for teachers of our

youngest gardeners.

He is a guest lecturer for horticulture and education courses at Texas A&M, he has been a guest host for the Weekend Gardener television segment for local CBS affiliate in College Station, and Randy regularly speaks at regional, state, and national conferences across the country.

Session: [\*Get Kids Growing with JMG Core Curriculum\*](#)

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## ***Dr. Gregory Archer***

***Associate Professor and Extension Specialist – Poultry Science***  
*Texas A&M AgriLife Extension*

Dr. Gregory Archer is currently in his 12<sup>th</sup> year as an associate professor and extension specialist in the Poultry Science Department at Texas A&M. He received his B.S. in Animal and Poultry Sciences from Virginia Tech and is M.S and Ph.D. in Animal Science from Texas A&M. He has over 20 years of experience in animal behavior, welfare, health, and stress. He is well versed in the management of poultry

including backyard poultry.

Session: *Backyard Chicken Management*  
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## ***Dianne Odegard***

***Co-Founder***  
*Austin Bat Refuge*

After 12-1/2 years as Education and Public Outreach Manager at Bat Conservation International by day and bat rehabilitator by night, Dianne has now gone full-time with her true passion, as co-founder of Austin Bat Refuge. Dianne has been a wildlife rehabilitator since 1990, always working with animals that live in close proximity to urban areas and human structures, with the hope of educating people about ways to live harmoniously with wildlife. She considers

bat care to be service work, benefiting both bats and humans.





## ***Lee Mackenzie***

***Co-Founder***

***Austin Bat Refuge***

As a carpenter and then a nationally acclaimed design-build remodeler with his company [Mackenzie Design Build, Inc.](#), Lee has been humanely dealing with a variety of small mammals in structures his whole career. A wildlife worker for over 20 years, and now co-founder of Austin Bat Refuge, he creatively combines rehabilitation and permaculture, providing the highest possible quality of life in the “bat gardens,” an Austin Bat Refuge original concept and the first of its kind.

Session: [\*Peaceful Coexistence with Bats\*](#)

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## ***Juan Anciso***

***Professor and Extension Specialist –  
Vegetables***

***Texas A&M AgriLife Extension***

Juan R. Anciso received his B.S., M. Agr. and Ph.D. from Texas A&M University in 1983, 1984 and 1989. He received his B.S. in Biology, Master of Agriculture in Plant Protection and Ph.D. in Plant Pathology.

He is a Professor and Extension vegetable specialist for Texas A&M AgriLife Extension based in the District 12 office in Weslaco.

His areas of research being vegetable pest management, vegetable production and food safety on the farm known as Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs).

Session: [\*Hot, hot, hot! Growing Peppers\*](#)

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## ***John Smith***

***Program Specialist – Water Resources  
and Sustainable Agriculture***  
*Texas A&M AgriLife Extension*

John Smith serves as a Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist. Raised in the Texas Panhandle at Tulia by one of Texas' best County Agricultural Extension Agents, John grew up active in everything 4-H and on a farm producing cattle, swine, cotton, corn, soybeans, grain sorghum, beets, and a variety of specialty crops from the then plentiful Ogallala Aquifer. His Dad said when he moved to

Tulia "I thought I had died and gone to heaven because water was plentiful, energy was cheap and commodity prices high."

During John's time at Tulia, that scenario certainly changed with the decline of the Ogallala. The lesson learned there taught him just how precious water is. Today, John has served teaching water conservation, water quality and rainwater harvesting for over 16 years. He is Coordinator of the popular Healthy Lawns and Healthy Waters (HLHW) program that emphasizes RWH, turf irrigation and fertilization. He has also processed over 16,000 water quality private water well samples and provided the interpretation of the results of those tests and corrective recommendations.

Session: [Understanding Rainwater Harvesting Systems / Sustainable Agriculture Research Education \(SARE\)](#)

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## ***David Rodriguez***

***Bexar County Extension Agent – Horticulture***

*Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service*

David Rodriguez is deeply rooted in the Texas gardening and landscape plant world. He started working at the prime age of ten with local nurseries which included Grimm's Garden Centers and Landscape, Wolfe Nurseries and Calloway's. David then went off to Texas A&M University and earned bachelor's and master's degrees in horticultural sciences. Before and during these formal educational years, he often

worked seven days a week to save up money for his educational and living expenses.

David joined the ranks of the Extension Service, an educational agency of the Texas A&M University System in 2006 as the area Extension Horticulturist. During his service with the Extension Service, David has helped expand youth horticulture programming, enhanced outreach to the green industry which includes trialing and releasing new plant introductions in support of the Texas SuperStar™ Plant Program as well as increasing the awareness of the Bexar County Master Gardener program and their significant contributions to the community.

David also oversees the Bexar County Youth Gardens program, which serves more than 80 schools, the majority of which are in low-income areas of Bexar County. Among the most popular of his youth gardening programs are two award winning and national recognized Children's Vegetable Gardens at the San Antonio Botanical Garden and at Phil Hardberger Park. As part of these programs, children are provided a plot and learn to grow their own vegetables, herbs, and seasonal annuals under the mentorship of a Master Gardener. For many urban youths, these programs provide their first experience working in a vegetable garden and learning how plant-based foods are grown and how their nutritional value impacts overall health. It also teaches them responsibility, teamwork, and leadership in addition to many aspects of earth science.

David can be heard every Saturday morning on the WOAI 1200 AM Lawn and Garden Radio Show answering horticulture and gardening questions. He regularly provides his expertise through television interviews, print articles and numerous presentations on gardening and landscape topics at venues countywide and beyond.

David has received numerous awards and recognition including most recently The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Superior Service "Greenies Urban Farm" Team

award for growing and harvesting 25,000 pounds of fresh vegetables during the COVID-19 pandemic to supplement the food needs of needy citizens in Bexar County and The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Vice Chancellor's Superior Team Award in the category of Earth-Kind® Environmental Landscape Stewardship for his many community activities and educational outreach efforts.

Session: [\*The History of the Rodeo Tomato\*](#)

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## ***Janet Carson***

### ***Horticulturist & Author***

*Arkansas Extension Service – Retired*

Janet Carson is a horticulturist living in Little Rock. She has her BS and MS degrees from the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville.

Janet began her career as a county agent in Pulaski County covering all aspects of horticulture. She began the Arkansas Master Gardener program with three other counties in 1980. Upon completion of her

master's degree, Janet moved to the state extension office to take on the role of statewide horticulture specialist. She retired January 2, 2019, after a 38-year career with the Cooperative Extension Service.

She continues to write weekly columns in the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette on Saturdays and monthly columns in Arkansas Living magazines, along with a blog *Plan it Janet*. She leads garden travel programs, and now gets to spend more time in her own garden. She was the 2003 recipient of the John White Award for Excellence in Extension Education, the 2010 Extension Educator Award from the American Society for Horticultural Science, the 2016 Extension Employee of the Year, and the 2019 UA Horticulture Outstanding Alumni Award. Her first book *In the Garden* was published in 2010, and her second book *Field to Feast* was published in 2016, both by the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette.

Janet is married with two grown children and two dogs.

Session: [\*Made for the Shade\*](#)

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## ***Wizzie Brown***

***Senior Extension Program Specialist –  
IPM***

*Texas A&M AgriLife Extension*

Wizzie Brown is a Senior Extension Program Specialist- IPM with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. She received her Bachelor of Science in entomology from Ohio State University and a Master of Science in entomology from Texas A&M University. After leaving Texas A&M, Wizzie worked in structural pest control before taking a job with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service in Austin. She is a Board-

Certified Entomologist with a specialty in Urban Entomology and holds a non-commercial license from the Texas Structural Pest Control Service. Her research interests include red imported fire ants, bed bugs, and termites.

Title: [\*Texas Dragonflies\*](#)

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## ***Bob Whitney***

***State Extension Organic Specialist***

*Texas A&M AgriLife Extension*

Bob Whitney is the State Extension Organic Specialist located in Stephenville at the Research and Extension Center. He works with certified organic producers conducting research and extension programs to improve organic production in Texas. Bob is also the state coordinator for the new USDA initiative entitled Transition to Organic Partnership Program (TOPP) which helps interested producers with the transition to organic agriculture.

Bob holds master's and bachelor's degrees in agriculture from Tarleton State University, has worked in various positions and capacities for Texas A&M AgriLife for over 40 years and was named a Texas A&M Board of Regents Fellow in 2007.

Laurie is his wife of almost 42 years, and they have two children: Kate, Extension Agent – Horticulture in Williamson County married to Brant Hajda, a corn and cotton farmer near Granger and Marshall, who is a Mechanical Engineer and business owner in Houston with his wife Kelsey and Vivian, his first grandchild.

Bob has been involved in Texas agriculture for his entire career but has also conducted numerous projects in countries around the world including the Middle East, Africa, Asia, and Central America. He just recently completed a farmer training program in organic agriculture for USAID in Guinea, West Africa.



## ***Kate Whitney-Hajda***

***Williamson County Extension Agent –  
Horticulture***  
*Texas A&M AgriLife Extension*

Kate Whitney-Hajda is the Horticulture Extension Agent for Texas A&M AgriLife Extension in Williamson County. Kate has fourteen years of experience with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, serving as a county extension agent in Williamson and Bosque Counties and as a program coordinator at the Borlaug Institute for International Agriculture. She is a certified plant nerd and loves to read and cook in her

free time. Kate recently married Brant Hajda, a corn and cotton farmer, so her garden just got a lot bigger!

Session: [\*A Practical Approach to Organic Vegetables and Lawn Care\*](#)

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## ***Steve Chaney***

***Tarrant County Extension Agent – Home Horticulture***

*Texas A&M AgriLife Extension – Retired*

Originally from a small town in South Oklahoma, Steve Chaney learned to love the garden from a very young age. After receiving two BS degrees from Oklahoma State University in Landscape Architecture and Marketing, he owned and operated a design/build firm for over ten years before joining the Extension family and acquiring his master's degree in Agricultural Education.

He first served as a CEA in Wichita County and, after four years, continued his service to the community as a CEA in Tarrant County, where he continues to make a significant impact. His experience and expertise have helped to make the Tarrant County Home Horticulture programs recognized as “top in the state”. After retiring on December 30, 2020, he has continued to be actively speaking, training MG's and consulting with TRWD in Tarrant County.

Session: [\*Move Over, Raised Beds, and Make Room for Hügeltkultur\*](#)

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## ***Michael Cook***

***Extension Program Specialist – Viticulture***

*Texas A&M AgriLife Extension*

Michael Cook is the Viticulture Program Specialist for the 55 counties of North Texas with the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. His primary function is to provide educational support for the nearly 120 commercial vineyards, which grow vinifera, hybrids, and muscadines, in the region by providing workshops, programs, educational materials, and one on one site visits with growers. He also collaborates with

colleagues on applied research initiatives across the state. Michael is a Dallas native and studied Horticulture at Texas A&M University. He was then awarded a fellowship to California State University – Fresno where he earned a MSc. in Viticulture & Enology and is now pursuing a PhD at Texas A&M University.

Session: [\*What's the Buzz about Pesticide Impact on Honeybee Colony Collapse Disorder\*](#)  
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## ***Dr. Manuel Chavarria***

***Assistant Professor & Extension Turfgrass Specialist***  
*Texas A&M AgriLife Extension*

Dr. Chavarria received his PhD in Molecular and Environmental Plant Science at Texas A&M University; his research focus is turfgrass physiology and abiotic stress. Dr. Chavarria is currently an Assistant Professor and Extension Specialist in Turfgrass in Soil Crop Sciences Department at Texas A&M University and AgriLife Extension.

The principal focus of Manuel's Extension and research deals with turfgrass management needs from homeowners, municipalities, sport fields, golf courses, and sod farms. Manuel's vision of his extension and research program is concentrated on physiology stress in warm-season turfgrasses related to salinity, poor water quality, water conservation in urban landscape, and drought stress.

Session: [\*Turfgrass Weeds Management\*](#)  
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## ***Skip Richter***

***Brazos County Extension Agent –  
Horticulture & Author  
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension***

Skip received his master's degree in Horticulture from Texas A&M University, "the source of all earthly knowledge." He has worked with the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service for 34 years in Montgomery, Travis, Harris, and Brazos County where he currently serves as a County Extension Agent in Horticulture.

Skip is an enthusiastic student and teacher of natural gardening techniques. He helped develop Extension's "Don't Bag It" yard waste recycling programs, the "*Composting for Kids*" educational web page, and the Grow Green environmental education program which educates Austin area residents on landscaping practices to protect water quality. Skip is a popular speaker for garden clubs, Master Gardener programs, and other gardening events across Texas. He has written numerous gardening articles for magazines and newspapers, including his weekly gardening column for *The Eagle* newspaper in Bryan/College Station. His "*Gardening with Skip*" YouTube channel features over 120 brief gardening videos.

Skip has served as the National Gardening Association's regional horticulturist for the southeastern U.S. and is a contributing editor to *Texas Gardener* magazine. He has hosted the Gardening Success radio show in College Station for over 8 years. His book, *Texas Month-by-Month Gardening* provides guidance on planting and caring for your garden and landscape every month of the year.

He received the County Extension Agent Award from the Texas Nursery & Landscape Association in 2023 and was recently selected as a Regents Service Fellow by the Board of Regents for the Texas A&M University System.

Skip's happy places are sitting in his garden observing and musing about the interactions of plants, insects, and the soil, and helping gardeners have more bountiful gardens and beautiful landscapes. Okra is the latest in a long list of his horticultural obsessions.

Session: [\*Composting: The Basics & Beyond\*](#)

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## ***Raeline Nobles***

***Denton County Master Gardener  
Texas Master Gardener Program***

Raeline is a 10-year veteran of Denton County Master Gardener Association. She is a retired Marriage and Family Therapist and former CEO of Prism Health North Texas where she and her 100-member team of medical and social service professionals built the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest HIV/AIDS prevention, care and research organization in Texas. Her therapeutic career focused on communities of poverty, violence and chronic/terminal health issues, and the

psychological harm these issues bring to individuals, families and communities.

Her focus on collaboration with nonprofit, corporate, governmental and spiritual partners created programs centered on creating access to education, quality health care and economic opportunities of lasting impact, many of which continue today. Her current pursuits include integrating her love of gardening with helping others cope with illness, impending death and grief.

Session: [\*Gardening as a Therapeutic Resource\*](#)

Contact: [rnobles2@verizon.net](mailto:rnobles2@verizon.net)



## ***Chris Wiesinger***

***Founder & Author***  
*The Southern Bulb Company*

Chris Wiesinger founded The Southern Bulb Company in 2004 along with his lovely wife, Rebecca, and several friends in an attempt to recapture that which was once “lost” to the Southern gardener: bulbs that thrive in warm climates. Chris began collecting bulbs when he was young. He used his bulb passion for a college project at Texas A&M which then grew into a lifestyle and business. Chris sought out heirlooms

and rare flower bulbs like the red spider lily.

Mr. Wiesinger was featured in a New York Times story that affectionately dubbed him “The Bulb Hunter” and Chris later used that as the title for his book in 2013 when he wrote *The Bulb Hunter* which details his life as a bulb collector and farmer. Chris loves to share his passion for life and bulbs with others.

Session: [\*The Bulb Hunter\*](#)

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## ***Allison Watkins***

***Tom Green County Extension Agent – Horticulture***  
*Texas A&M AgriLife Extension*

Allison grew up in Johnson and Bosque Counties and attended Tarleton State University for her B.S. degree in Horticulture. She began working as the County Extension Agent – Horticulture in Tom Green County in 2009 and then earned her M.S. degree from Texas Tech University in 2012. Allison enjoys focusing her educational efforts on Earth-Kind® landscaping and gardening methods and

coordinating a wonderful group of Concho Valley Master Gardeners in San Angelo.

Session: [Year-Round Landscape Color](#)

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## ***Kelly Bryan***

***Master Bander***

*West Texas Avian Research, Inc.*

Kelly Bryan developed a passion for birds before he was a teenager. He grew up in the central Texas town of Mart, near Waco in McLennan County. After graduation from high school, he eventually obtained a master's degree in biology from Sam Houston State University. His thesis topic was studying song variation in Prothonotary Warblers. College was interrupted by the Vietnam Lottery. He served from 1970 to 1973 as a North Vietnamese language

specialist and radio intercept operator in the U.S. Army Security Agency. He started a career with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department in 1976 at Huntsville State Park. He went on to manage three different state parks including Kickapoo Cavern, Devil's Sinkhole and Davis Mountains. The last eight years of his career with TPWD were spent managing natural resources on Region 1 Parks out of the Fort Davis Regional Office. He also served as a volunteer firefighter for 33 years, including 12 years as the volunteer fire chief for Fort Davis.

He became interested in bird banding while at Sam Houston. After retirement from TPWD, an opportunity presented itself for him to study hummingbirds in the west Texas region. From 2006 to 2018 he and his team of banders and helpers caught and banded over 20,000 hummingbirds of 15 different species. One bird, a female Rufous Hummingbird banded at his Davis Mountains property, was recaptured twice in Alaska. In October of 2016 he noticed an unusual hummingbird at one of his feeders on his property. It was an Amethyst-throated Mountain Gem, a first record for the United States and Texas. He has made numerous contributions to the ornithology of Texas, through observations of special Texas birds and his publications. He recently moved back to McLennan County where his pursuit of studying birds through banding research continues.

Session: [The Hummingbirds of Texas](#)



## ***Molly Keck***

***Extension Program Specialist – IPM  
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension***

Molly Keck is an Integrated Pest Management Program Specialist with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension in Bexar County, TX (San Antonio, TX). Molly is a graduate of Texas A&M University with a bachelor's and master's degree in Entomology and is a Board-Certified Entomologist and hobbyist beekeeper.

Molly has been working for Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service since 2005 and specializes in urban and structural

entomology, providing pest management and identification programs to Master Naturalists, Master Gardeners, the general public, school age students, and pest management professionals.

Session: [\*Butterflies 101 – Butterflies are Amazing Creatures!\*](#)

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## ***Jake Mowrer***

***Professor – Soil Nutrient and Water  
Resource Management  
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension***

Dr. Mowrer currently works with clientele across the state of Texas on issues related to soil nutrient and water resource management. Daily activities run the gamut from applied field research to public outreach and education on best practices in rural and urban settings. Demonstrating for farmers the importance of nutrient stewardship and cultural practices that improve water capture and use-efficiency is

also a big part of the job. Research activities include projects that focus on the intersection of water-smart and climate-smart agricultural practices and how they

enhance or undermine desired outcomes regarding nutrient and carbon cycling. In his spare time, he enjoys playing jazz mandolin and brewing beer.

Session: [\*Gardening in Consonance with the Soil\*](#)

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## ***Dr. Tim Hartmann***

***Assistant Professor & Extension Program Specialist***

*Texas A&M AgriLife Extension*

Originally from Blanco, TX, Tim Hartmann received his bachelor's and master's degrees in Horticulture and Plant Breeding, respectively from Texas A&M University. He received his Ph.D. in Horticulture from Texas A&M in May 2020 after completing a project focused on the feasibility of golden kiwifruit production in Texas. Tim has been with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service in College Station since 2014.

As Extension Specialist & Assistant Professor, Tim focuses primarily on fruit production, but also works with propagation and general horticulture. His research has recently focused on alternative fruit crops such as kiwifruit, pineapple guava, Asian persimmon, and apricot. Tim's undergraduate teaching responsibilities include undergraduate Plant Propagation (2021, 2022) and Temperate Fruit & Nut Production.

Session: [\*What's New and Exciting in the World of Texas Fruit\*](#)

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