

# Free State Master Gardener News

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<https://txmg.org/freestatemastergardeners>



## BIRTHDAYS:

### February

Nancy Szabo, 2/07  
Pat Mullin, 2/12  
Connie Tramel, 2/21

### March

Gay Mitchell, 3/02  
Sandra Rosen, 3/10

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## Newsletter Staff Needs Your Help!

If you like to write, or even if you don't, but have good ideas for articles and/or subjects for the newsletter please consider joining the newsletter staff.  
Contact Sandra Rosen or Paula Marshall for more information.

We welcome all of our Master Gardeners to forward articles or information for our newsletter to our Editor:  
[sandrarosen42@yahoo.com](mailto:sandrarosen42@yahoo.com)  
News Committee:  
Sandra Rosen Joan Driver  
Paula Marshall Anna Baker  
Connie Tramel

Volume 4, Issue 2..... February, 2018

**"Knowledge is knowing that a tomato is a fruit.  
Wisdom is not putting it in a fruit salad."**—Miles Kington

**Rainwater Harvesting by Sandra Rosen:** This specialist training not only told us the values of rainwater harvesting, but it was hands on "how to do it." One interesting thing I learned was that the bane of rainwater harvesting is algae, and so you must have a rainwater barrel or tank that lets in no light at all. I also learned that there are many levels of collecting rainwater from the simple barrel in the backyard that waters the plants to an elaborate system that collects rainwater off the roof and with proper controls can be used in the home. In addition, Austin now requires all state buildings in the city to use some form of rainwater collection.

**Will is the root, knowledge is the stem and leaves,  
and feeling is the flower.** - Sterling

**Vegetable Specialist Training-John Womack**  
When I took my vegetable specialist training, I was able to take part in a special grafting class. I learned how to graft a heirloom tomato plant onto the root system of a Celebrity tomato. Now why would anyone want to do this? Because heirloom root systems are very small and as you know produce really delicious tomatoes, but not a lot of them. By grafting the heirloom tomato onto a Celebrity tomato's rootstock, you will get a heirloom tomato that is much more productive and produces many more tomatoes. It is a lot of work, but worth the trouble. There are also many other vegetables that can be grafted.

**Among gardeners, enthusiasm and experience rarely exist in equal measures. The beginner dreams of home-grown bouquets and baskets of ripe fruit, the veteran of many seasons has learned to expect slugs, mildew, and frost.**-Roger Swain

**Vegetable Specialist by Mimi Sherwin:** The thing that impressed me the most with the training was the depth of knowledge and education of the presenters. As always with the MG program the information comes at you with the speed and force of a fire hose. The section on pesticides and their proper use and how to protect ourselves and others has caused me to really read the labels on any product I am using. I think this year my vegetable garden will benefit from the information I received.

## What I learned at Vegetable Specialist Training by Nancy Szabo:

1. Too much. Like most MG classes it's drinking from a firehose. However, at the end of the training we received a flash drive with all the presentations and additional information. It is a great reference tool.
2. "It's about the soil, stupid". If you hear it often enough you will get the message. If you amend your soil as needed for the crops you are planting, you will have success. Take the time to do it right.
3. It's not about you. OK I signed up for this training with truly selfish intents, after all who doesn't want more to sell at the Farmer's Market? You are reminded that Master Gardening is not only about you and the knowledge you gain but also about sharing that information with your community.
4. It's more fun when you go with a friend. Mimi and I had a lot of fun and a special thank-you goes out to her daughter who put us up for a couple of nights – good times.

**If you have a garden  
and a library, you have  
everything you need.**  
Cicero

**A garden is a grand teacher. It teaches patience and careful watchfulness;  
it teaches industry and thrift; above all it teaches entire trust.**—Gertrude Jekyll

## **February Gardening Chores**

Tommy Phillips  
County Extension Agent, Ag/NR

February is one of those months that you never know what "Mother Nature" is going to have in store for us. It could be sunny and in the 70's one day...and then a freak cold blast the next. However, "Mother Nature" and her issues aside, there are things that we can continue to do in the garden this month.

### **Planting**

- \* Continue to plant evergreen shrubs, fruit, nut and shade trees.
- \* Plant asparagus, beets, broccoli, brussel sprouts, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, cilantro, collards, English peas, lettuce, kohlrabi, onion transplants, parsley, potatoes, radishes, spinach, Swiss chard, and turnips.
- \* Plant early spring-blooming annuals like dianthus, petunias and alyssum in late February.

### **Pruning**

- Complete pruning of oak trees before February 15
- Prune other shade trees and woody shrubs as necessary to remove dead wood and improve structure.
- Finish pruning pecan trees and fruit trees before spring bud break.
- Prune all standard roses, except climbing varieties, by about 50% by mid- February.
- Prune tall Nandinas, if necessary, to improve fullness, by removing one-third of the tallest canes at 2-3" above ground level (late February). Repeat the next two years.
- Trim or mow grassy groundcovers such as liriopse and mondo grass, if needed, due to freeze damage or ragged appearance, before spring growth begins.

### **Plant Care**

- Apply horticultural oil to fruit and pecan trees, and to scale-prone shrubs such as euonymus and hollies, when temperature is 45-65 for two weeks (mid-February). Check the Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Service website bookstore for a pamphlet on the Homeowner's Fruit and Nut Spray Schedule.
- Fertilize cool season grasses such as fescue and ryegrass with a slow release fertilizer.
- Apply pre-emergent herbicides to established lawns to control warm season broadleaf and grassy weeds, such as dandelions and crabgrass no later than early March.
- Fertilize pansies and other winter annuals with your favorite fertilizer.
- Continue to protect tender plants from hard freezes



### **President's Message**

I hope everyone enjoyed the many activities we had last year as well as all the new programs we initiated such as moving our membership meetings to the County library, the public library series, the years of service awards and the volunteer hours awards. We plan to continue with those again this year plus add a few new things into the mix. Topics for the membership meetings are being finalized as well as the Library

Series which will kickoff in May. Remember this is a program where we want our own Master Gardeners to share their knowledge with the public. Congratulations to the 2017 Intern Class for finishing your first year with our Association, and we look forward to your active involvement in 2018. I'm pleased to announce that it appears we will have 11 or 12 people in our 2018 Intern class which includes three couples. Also being planned for 2018 is both a Spring and a Fall public seminar. The Spring one is going to be called "Growing Fruit in East TX" and the Fall seminar is entitled "Perennials, Annuals and Texas Natives in the Landscape" which will be presented by Steve Chamblee of the Chandor Gardens in Weatherford. Steve is an excellent speaker and a contributor to Neil Sperry's column. Both events will be held at St. Therese Catholic Church in Canton. I'm also excited to be working with a few new board members, Mimi Sherwin, Louella Iliff and Connie Trammel. Big shout out to both Paula and Sally for also staying on for another year. Lastly, I would like to put in a plug for the State Master Gardener 40th Anniversary Conference in April. Registration is open and to encourage our membership to attend this three day conference the board has agreed to reimburse each one \$100 to help defray the cost; see me or one of the other board members for more information.

## January Program, Growing Transplants

by Paula Marshall

At the January meeting, Lowell Tanksley showed members how to nurture and grow transplants, and talked about raising vegetables on Tanksley Farms near Hainesville. It was his second program for the FSMG's, and once again, he showed slides of his farm and the more than 20 beautiful acres of healthy crops he grows. The pictures were breathtaking showing bushels of bountiful produce he sells at the Longview Farmers' Market, and Granary Health Food stores in Lindale and Tyler during the spring and summer

This man knows what he's talking about! He is a "go-to" for feedback and advice sought by experts. Several of the area's AgriLife agents rely on him for information about many topics, and the Texas A&M AgriLife Research Center in Overton has him test new varieties of vegetables they are developing.

He shared a story about a tomato he trialed for Overton, and the result was a mealy, flavorless fruit. He advised the Overton people that it was so bad he wouldn't even offer it to his customers for fear they would be afraid to buy tomatoes from him again. (Let's hope Overton took his advice and that the tomato isn't in nurseries for sale this year!)

Lowell's soil is extremely sandy, and he has learned to consistently feed it by growing cover crops and using different amenities, mostly organic. He highly recommends corn gluten meal which serves as a good herbicide as well as a slow-release nitrogen source. He plants Elbon Rye throughout the year in areas that are not actively growing crops, and adds compost whenever he can, most of which he produces from his own garden waste and a neighbor's aged horse manure.

He answered many questions from members throughout the program, giving advice on how to keep a garden healthy, and naming his choices of vegetable

varieties that he finds grow and taste the best. I wish I had a video of Lowell's entire presentation because it was loaded with helpful information. In my opinion, this is one of the most useful, informative and enjoyable programs we have had. Many thanks to Mimi and Louella for scheduling Lowell, and I hope we will have him back again. BTW ... we have an inside source to help get Lowell scheduled; he's Jimmie Pierce's brother!

### Recommended Products:

Medina Soil Activator, and  
Medina HastaGro,

"Nature's Care Really Good"  
compost (can be found at Wal-Mart or Tractor Supply),

Sun Gro 360 potting mix for growing  
transplants (Long Feed in Mineola)



### Recommended Varieties:

Plant short-day onions, Candy Apple Red, Yellow Granex, 1015's (if growing onions for storing, uncover the bulbs when fairly large, leaving only the roots in the soil so they don't rot)

Tomatoes: Celebrity, BHN 589, Early Girl, heirloom Cherokee Purple, Chocolate Stripecy, Chef's Choice, Sun Gold, Sweet 100; Aristotle Pepper; Golden Zucchini; Sunburst squash

Early Jersey Wakefield Cabbage (sweet); Sugarsnax carrot (keep soil loose to raise long carrots);

Sugar Cubes cantaloupe;  
plant only hybrid radishes; April Cross-Daikon radish is a good one for Kinchi and stir fry.

### Miscellaneous:

Sulphur increases "sweetness" of vegetables;

"Hands on Agronomy" by Neal Kinsey, is a book he recommends

Mr. Tankley's Vegetable Stand is located near Hainesville.



## Gardening Events – Mid-Winter, 2018

By Connie Tramel

### Smith County Master Gardeners at the Library

Free lectures of 2018 at the Tyler Public Library:

<http://txmg.org/smith/coming-events> or by calling 903-590-2980

**2- 9** Smith Co. Ag. Greg Grant, Texas Tough, History of the Texas Superstar Plant Program

**3-19** Wayne Elliott, Raised Bed Gardening on a Hillside

**2 - 2 - Parking at Canton Trades Days**, contact Pat Mullin 903-820-8556, to volunteer, this is a fund raiser.

**2-10 - Cherokee Co. MG, The Birds & Bees**,  
Greg Grant, vendors, books, plants, First Christian Church, 1920 Beaumont St., Jacksonville, TX

**2-10 - 10-12am Keep It Rosy!** Dr. Peter Schaar slashes through rose myths and teaches proper pruning and care of roses at The East Tx Arboretum & Botanical Society, Athens

**February 16-17 - Tommy** has partnered with the Texas A&M Forest Service to host a **Tree Workshop on Friday** at the Free State Building (at fair grounds). This will be to address items related to trees after the tornadoes, plus a variety of other topics such as: **Can My Tree Be Saved? • Current Tree Health Issues in East Texas • Fire-Wise Landscaping**; *This will be open to the public and limited to 75 participants (due to space).*

**Help is needed on Saturday, February**

**17** with the Tree Planting. We have designated Cherry Creek Park as a location to receive close to 15 container trees to be planted. MG help is needed prior to that event (possibly on Friday the 16th – afternoon) to locate good spots and on the day of the event to help dig the holes per Forest Service guidelines. The more labor we have...the faster and more efficient the day will be. So if you are interested in helping out on Saturday, February 17 – please email Tommy at [ct-phillips@tamu.edu](mailto:ct-phillips@tamu.edu).

**2-20 - Henderson County MG "Growing a Cutting Garden"** with Shirley Niswonger, 5:30pm at Clint W. Murchison Memorial Library, 121 S. Prairieville, Athens, Free

**2-23 – East Texas Fruit and Vegetable Conference** – South, Pitser Garrison Convention Center, 601 North 2nd Street, Lufkin, TX Registration 8:00am–8:30am Program 8:30am–3:50pm: SESSION TOPICS – Fruit & Nut Tree Grafting, Honey Bees and Pollinators, Identification of Garden Insects & their Control, Weed Control in Orchards, Seed Saving, Disease Control in Tomatoes, Disease Control in Watermelons, Tree and Vine Planting, Building a Collapsible Raised Bed, and Hugelkulture. Register with payment by February 16 – \$30 per person \$10.00 late fee after February 16 \*No Refunds\* Make checks payable to ETFVC-South And mail to: Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Angelina Horticulture Committee 2201 South Medford Dr. Lufkin, TX 75901 For more information contact: Cary Sims (936) 634-6414 x2 [cw-sims@tamu.edu](mailto:cw-sims@tamu.edu) or Joe Masabni [jmasabni@tamu.edu](mailto:jmasabni@tamu.edu)

**2-24 - Texas Bluebird Society Season Kickoff**, Bryan, TX, for info.: <http://www.rsvpbook.com/event.php?522580>.

**3-11 - Daylight Savings Starts**

**3-21—3-31 - Zone 8 - Average last freeze date**

( More Events on page 6)

## Specialist Training Offerings in 2018

### Plant Health and Diagnostics Education

– February 8-9, 2018, hosted by Gonzales County

Vegetables – February 14-16, 2018, hosted by Dallas County

Earth-Kind® Landscaping – February 19-20, 2018, hosted by Bastrop County

Propagation – March 23-24, 2018, hosted by Tarrant County

Irrigation Efficiency – March 23-26, hosted by Dallas County

Rainwater Harvesting – April 30-May 2, hosted by Dallas County

Greenhouse Management – May 23-25, 2018, hosted by Hill Country in Kerrville, TX

Texas Superstars – September 18-20, 2018, hosted by Smith County

**Further Information and Registration is available for all these classes on the Texas Master Gardener Website - [www.Txmg.org](http://www.Txmg.org)., then Specialist Training**

## Classified Ads

We want to keep this feature, however, the ads need to come from our members. Please remember to send your ads into Anna at baker2anna@gmail.com.

3rd Wednesday  
Master Gardener  
Work Day  
8:30am  
at  
Extension Office  
February 21, 2018

## Garden Guru



**Dear Garden Guru,  
What is a safe way to use manure in a compost pile?**

Non-composted manure has a lot of nitrogen, and excess nitrogen will burn the roots of small plants. So, in order to use up the nitrogen in the manure, you must mix with carbon material such as leaves, wood mulch, cardboard, paper, or any brown material. By mixing these and then adding plenty of moisture, an action will result that will use much of the nitrogen from the manure. If you want a more complete compost, you may need to add some other nitrogen materials (green). To ensure all pathogens are removed, a compost thermometer should reach 165 degrees for a period of at least a week. Composting manures with carbon materials is nature's way of cleaning up.

## Free State Master Gardener Cynthia Holifield

By Joan Driver

Cynthia Holifield (MG class of 2015) says that she is the product of a line of women gardeners and passing on the tradition of a love of growing things through her children and a granddaughter. Cynthia learned about the Master Gardener program from a friend, and after retirement to Callendar Lake near Edom she signed up for training.

An aficionado of both ornamental and vegetable gardening, Cynthia loves both designing new spaces and the challenge of improving existing gardens. "Mostly I enjoy getting really dirty and tired from a day spent working outside!" she says.

One of the spaces that gives her satisfaction is a butterfly garden at Black Beauty Ranch, an animal rescue organization in Murchison. Cynthia volunteered for animal care, but when administrators learned that she was a Master Gardener they asked her to develop the area adjacent to their welcome center. The butterfly garden will start its third spring this year.

A challenge that Cynthia encountered resulted from flooding of her lakeside vegetable garden two years ago. She lost her garden and several young fruit trees due to overabundant water. She replanted on higher ground, learning the importance of judging the water table on one's land and choosing appropriate trees accordingly. She also learned that commercial compost can be extremely high in phosphorous and recommends soil testing after applying amendments.

Cynthia's present focus on vegetable

gardening is supported by Curtis Stone's "Urban Farmer" You Tube videos. "Curtis makes a living gardening in other people's backyards and selling his veggies to restaurants – something I would enjoy!" she explains.



Cynthia's daughter Nora gets lots of help from 2-year-old Lauren learning to garden in the colder weather of Philadelphia.



Cynthia helped her son and daughter-in-law in Abilene create a fenced raised vegetable garden.



Cynthia helped her son and daughter-in-law in Abilene create a fenced raised vegetable garden.



Happily getting dirty in her vegetable garden at home.



**Events Mid-Winter Continued from page 4**

**3-30** - Parking cars for Fund Raiser at Civic Center for Canton First Monday.

**3-23** - Last day to order geraniums.

**3-27 – SPRING LANDSCAPE & GARDEN TOUR**

Join the Smith County Environmental Education Horticulture Committee on Tuesday, March 27, from 9-12 as we tour the beautiful and prestigious Azalea District garden of Guy and Joan Pyron. The tour will be led by Smith County Horticulture Agent, Greg Grant, and former Smith County Horticulture Agent, Keith Hansen, and will focus on outstanding landscape plants for East Texas gardens. «Cost: \$15.00, Contact: (903) 590-2980 for more information.

**3-28** - Pick up geranium orders at Pat Mullin's house.

**No plants will be held over at Pat's.**

1:00-3:00pm Last name of MG beginning with - A-L

3:30-5:30pm Last name of MG beginning with - M-Z

**4-4—6 - 40th Anniversary Celebration of Master Gardener Program**, College Station, TX; to register go to [www.2018TMGAConference.com](http://www.2018TMGAConference.com)

**4-25 - Texas Master Gardener Conference** in Victoria, TX

**4-28** - 9:00am-2:00pm, **Henderson Co. MG Plant Sale**, Henderson Co. Senior Citizens Center, 3356 State Hwy. 31 E., Athens

**East Tx Arboretum Events** <http://www.easttexasarboretum.org/events.html>

**Northeast Texas Beekeepers** Second Monday of each month. 6:30pm; Crossroads Church, 1930 Trade Days Blvd. Canton, TX

**OOPS!**

We inadvertently left out Pat Mullin's name in last month's article about the December Awards Dinner. Bob presented Pat with an embroidered patch to thank her for her hard work in scheduling and organizing fundraisers for the FSMG's. Thank you Pat -- you do a great job!



Happy February

Free State Master Gardener Association of Van Zandt County  
**2018 Annual Geranium Sale**

Locally Grown Americana Geraniums  
 to be distributed Wednesday, March 28, 2018  
 Three Beautiful Colors to Choose From

For more information or to order:  
 Call Pat Mullin, 903-520-8556 or  
 Texas A&M University Extension Office 903-567-4149  
<https://www.facebook.com/FreeStateMasterGardener>

**\$8.00ea.**

**Remember to  
 SELL  
 Geraniums!**

**Nice prize for the most plants sold.**