

BIRTHDAYS:

Volume 4, Issue 7.....July/August, 2018

July

Pat Brand, 7/1
John Womack, 7/12
Cheryl Weidmann, 7/15
Heidi Rose Stone, 7/24
Gordon West, 7/28
Susan Warren, 7/28
Fred Weidmann, 7/30

August

Jimmie Pierce, 8/12
Becky Hettinger, 8/19
Stan Trekell, 8/29
Jan Graham, 8/31

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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
News Committee:
Sandra Rosen Joan Driver
Paula Marshall Anna Baker
Susan Dahlman



Free State Master Gardener's Community Garden

By Sharon Palmer

The community garden in Canton started out as a project for the Master Gardener class of 2017. What began as a 20' by 40' garden plot has now expanded into an area of 40' by 100'. Much thought and care has been put into our efforts as well as a lot of trial and error as we learn from where we have failed. It's a joy and privilege to be able to work alongside others in this endeavor; it makes the hard work more enjoyable. At first we gave all of our produce to the Van Zandt County Jail, thinking the inmates would enjoy something freshly grown. Our vision is to expand our giving to low income families, and senior citizens who are unable to get out of their homes. We want to serve the community by providing fresh vegetables to those on limited incomes because the cost of eating healthy, fresh meals can be high. So far this season, we have donated over 200 pounds of vegetables to the county jail and to some in low income areas.



A Year in the Life of a Keyhole Garden

By Nancy Szabo

For those that participated in the construction of the Keyhole Garden, I am sure you have wondered fleetingly how it is doing. Last summer most seed-planted vegetables did not do as well as those that were planted as starts. The marigolds struggled until the Fall and then really started to grow and flower. Using a compost thermometer, I checked the temperature throughout the summer and it stayed in the medium range, not getting as hot as it should. Having two keyholes, chickens and cows, we don't produce enough kitchen scraps to keep them all happy. I did water but probably needed to water more.

By the end of summer, quite a bit of shrinkage had occurred so I pulled the mulch and soil back, stuffed newspaper and shredded paper in, returned the soil and added a couple of bags of top soil and manure mix. I then added some broccoli, cabbage, and kale plants. At this point, the cardboard was still pretty well intact a foot or so down.

Over the winter, I continued to feed the kitchen basket. In the spring, we had a couple of meals of broccoli and kale. The cabbage never produced. Note on the kitchen basket – decomposition slows considerably over the



winter but spring rains and summer heat will get it back on track. Also – when all that decomp occurs, the basket is filled with wonderful compost that you may need to carefully shovel out to make room for more garbage.

This spring, I planted leeks, onions, chard, kohlrabi and beans which all did well. The kale is still growing. Decomp has progressed nicely and the keyhole is now filled with wonderful soil. I still hit some cardboard near the bottom. Just this past week after harvesting some vegetables and pulling plants, I had to again replenish

soil. Shrinkage caused the soil to be down below the top level of concrete blocks. A lot more newspaper and a bag of shredded paper were added. Four wheelbarrows of compost were added on top to bring the soil back up to its original level. Old hay is being used as mulch and I will probably start more beans and a squash but leave most of it until it is time for winter crops. There are still lessons to be learned here.



President's Message

Greetings Master Gardeners!

It has been a busy garden season for me and I know for a lot of you. I've been selling my produce at the Mineola Farmers Market

located at the train station. It's really a quaint little market with a variety of vendors. My peach crop is bountiful and is just now coming in. It going to be a banner year for peaches thank goodness after a disastrous 2017.

Yes, it has been hot, too hot for many plants and vegetables to continue to produce. My tomatoes are done as well as squash, cucumbers and beans. My melons, both cantaloupe and watermelons are in harvest mode. On Association news, our Library series had a great turn out, 50+ for the "Back Yard Chickens" and we're hoping the same for July's presentation. July's membership meeting should be fun with a plant swap and stories of failures, doom and successes. I plan to bring some garlic chive plants I've been trying to keep alive in this heat. See ya all there.

Robert Williams, 713-626-6936

Start Advertising and Inviting People to our FALL SEMINAR!!!



Free State Master Gardeners Fall Seminar
Sept. 22, 9am-12:00pm

Perennials, Annuals & Texas Natives in the Landscape

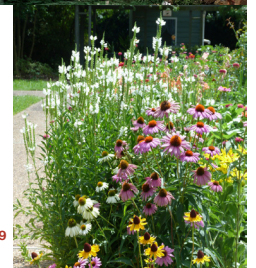
Special Guest Speaker

STEVE CHAMBLEE

OF
Chandor Gardens in Weatherford, TX



Steve is an innovator, artistic gardener and contributor to Neil Sherry's GARDEN Magazine and his weekly newsletters. Very well liked speaker for Texas Master Gardeners.



Vendors Door Prizes

Location: Cross Roads Church Canton
1930 Trade Days Blvd. (Hwy. 19S),
Canton, TX 75103

\$15.00 Per Person

To register call: Van Zandt Co. AgriLife at 903-567-4149

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July/August Gardening Chores

Tommy Phillips
County Extension Agent, Ag/NR

Typically gardening activities usually slow way down in the summertime as the temperature continues to climb and we are going through the hottest May and June on record. July and August are often very dry months, and, like most years, can be very hot, too. So, we usually don't start a lot of new garden projects, but there's always maintenance chores in store. And, we should consider starting the "fall" vegetable garden right now in July.

The best time to do any kind of gardening or maintenance is in early morning when it is not so hot, or late evening before sunset. Watch the heat, dress cool and comfortable, take frequent breaks, have plenty of water on hand and drink frequently. Here are a few items for the July gardening calendar.

WATERING

Mother nature has not been very kind to us this year with rainfall thus far, so gardeners should now be on alert for summer drought conditions which could occur at any time.

Proper watering is essential to keep plants healthy. The main rule of thumb is to water deeply and as infrequently as possible, as opposed to frequent, light sprinklings. This will encourage a deeper root system that can take advantage of a larger volume or "bank account" of water stored in the soil. Frequent and light sprinklings tend to keep the majority of plant roots near the surface of the soil. Plants with this type of root system are more susceptible to extreme heat and water shortages and are easily stressed during the summer.

One of the best strategies for getting shrubs and young trees through summertime dry spells is to apply a thick layer of mulch over the root systems of plants. All organic mulches break down over time, so if it has been awhile since you've mulched, carefully check all plants in your yard. A three to four inch layer will prevent most evaporation from the soil and significantly lower the soil temperature in the root zone, reducing stress on the root system. Common materials used for mulch include pine needles, pine bark, cypress bark, hardwood mulch, and shredded paper. So mulch, mulch, MULCH!

There is an excellent Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service internet publication called Efficient Use of Water in the Garden and Landscape<<http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/earthkind/drought/efficient-use-of-water-in-the-garden-and-landscape/>> which describes proper water techniques for all types of garden and landscaping, including an extensive explanation of drip irrigation.

LAWN CARE

Lawns at this time of year are rapidly growing and need frequent mowing. The best lawns will be those that are mowed regularly. If you mow often enough, you can return the clippings back to the lawn. The rule of thumb is to not remove more than 1/3 of the length of the blades per mowing. This may mean mowing every 5 or 6 days instead of once a week (or less). Removing more than 1/3 is stressful on the lawn, and will tend to leave visible clippings on top of the grass.

As rainfall becomes less regular, supplemental irrigation will need to be more frequent. Lawns need about 1 inch of water per week. This can be supplied in one or more applications per week, depending on the soil type and how hot and dry the weather has been. Sandy soils need more frequent watering, as do newly planted lawns. When watering lawns during hot weather it is best to do it early in the morning. Otherwise, much of the water will evaporate from the grass before the plants get to use it. To further avoid excess evaporation, use a sprinkler that produces large drops of water instead of a fine mist.

A good way to know if you lawn needs water - Turfgrass lies flat after being walked on, and doesn't immediately pop back up.

Watch out for lawn pests. Chinch bugs multiply rapidly in warm weather, and their feeding causes St. Augustine grass to look like drought stress. No treatment is needed until symptoms first appear. Look for wilting grass which does not respond to water. The grass will continue to dry, giving it a burned look. Look for tiny, 1/6 to 1/5 inch bugs scurrying quickly up and down grass blades and or scurrying to hide down in the thatch. Flooding the perimeter area with water, or soaking the edge with soapy water will drive them up from the thatch onto the grass blades where they are more easily seen. Damage usually occurs first in the hottest and driest parts of the lawn. I have already diagnosed several cases of chinch bug damage in June.

July and August is also the time to treat for white grubs if there is a problem. Treatment is based on whether grubs are present in the turf and the way to find out is to dig a few test areas and look for the small grubs in the soil. Not all lawns will have grubs and excessive use of pesticides can lead to other turf problems and contamination of sewer discharge, so it is better to check first rather than automatically treat.

VEGETABLES

Harvest vegetables regularly from your garden to keep it productive. Letting squash turn as big as baseball bats will cause production to go down. Harvest vegetables at their peak of maturity for maximum nutrition and quality.

Begin preparing for the fall garden in July. That's right! It may seem odd to start a fall garden in the summertime, but you need to get plants started in time for harvests before first freeze.

Examine existing plants you might consider carrying through to fall. Tomatoes often are not replanted, but if they are covered up with spider mites (they're often bad by this time of year), seriously consider replanting this month. You'll need to pamper new transplants a little to get them started, but they'll be ready for a great harvest in October when quality will be high!

Do not plant the same vegetable type in the same spot year after year. Soil-borne diseases will build up and eventually

cause major problems. Add compost or other organic matter, and composted manure, cotton seed meal or other fertilizers to the garden spot before tilling. Also, if you thought plant growth was poor this spring, check the pH of your garden soil before adding nutrients, and add lime if needed.

Besides transplanting tomatoes in July, other vegetables that can or should be transplanted this month include eggplant (7/15 - 8/1) and peppers (7/1-8/1). Other crops that can be started from seed this month include Lima beans (7/15 - 8/15), cantaloupes (7/15 - 8/1), southern peas (7/1 - 8/1), pumpkin (7/1 - 8/1), summer squash (7/15 - 8/15), winter squash (7/1 - 7/15), and watermelon (7/1 - 8/1) [dates in parenthesis indicate optimum planting window for best results].

August planting of vegetables, plant broccoli plants, Brussel sprouts, cabbage plants, Chinese cabbage, carrots, cauliflower plants, Swiss chard, collards, kale, English peas, Irish potatoes, and summer squash.

Set out tomato transplants (if you can find them) right away for a fall harvest. Look for an early maturing variety (65 to 75 days). Remember that our average first freeze is mid-November and that tomato maturity slows down as the days get cool and cloudy.

Peppers and tomatoes planted earlier this year will not set fruit during the heat of summer, even though they may still be flowering. If the plants remain healthy, they will set fruit again once temperatures stay below 90 degrees. Sidedress established, healthy plants with fertilizer and keep watered to encourage new growth.

An eggplant is ready to harvest when the fruit is fully colored and has achieved the mature size for the variety. Seed should be white, and the tissue firm. If the seeds are brown and hard, or the skin has become dull rather than shiny, the fruit is past eating quality, so harvest the next fruit sooner.

Remove old plants that have stopped producing to eliminate shelters for insects and disease organisms.

Here's a tip for getting seeds up in the heat. Make your rows and open up a furrow. Soak the bottom of the furrow with water and then sow the seed, covering it with dry soil to the proper depth. This will help prevent crusting. Finally, lay boards or wet burlap down the row to give some more protection from the intense heat. Check every day; once germination begins, remove the covers.

Drip irrigation combined with mulch is an excellent way to maintain high quality vegetable plants throughout the summer. Drip systems are easy to install and require less water than sprinkler or furrow irrigation. Usually drip systems need to be operated frequently (how often depends on soil type and drip system) to adequately supply water to the plant's root zone. Frequently check emitters for clogging.

SUMMER COLOR

If you are still looking for summer color to plant, you are not out of luck. Marigolds, cosmos, vinca (periwinkle), gomphrena, cleome (spider flower), zinnias, purslane and portulaca all do well in the summer heat. As a matter of fact, marigolds planted in late summer and carried into fall tend to have brighter colors than spring-planted marigolds. Spider mites, the number one pest of marigolds, are not as prolific during the cooler days of fall as they are in the summertime.

Plant bright, tropical color with esparanza (yellow bells), firebush (Hamelia), allamanda, mandevilla, Mexican heather, tropical and perennial hibiscus, bougainvillea, and pentas. Copper plants should be planted now so they'll have time to grow before they turn the reddish copper color in the fall.

Be sure to cut off faded flowers before they set seed (called deadheading) to promote new growth and more flowers. Once a plant's energy goes to maturing seeds, blooming will slow down or stop.

Chrysanthemums should be fertilized and pinched back this month. Pinching makes them bushier and produces more blooms for the fall. They will start setting flower buds in August.

OTHER MAINTENANCE TIPS

Prune hydrangeas right after bloom if you need to cut them back. Flower buds are formed in late summer and early fall, so late fall and winter pruning removes these buds and eliminates next year's flowers.

Blackberries need to be pruned now that harvest is ending. Remove the dying fruiting canes and tip back the vigorous, new growth two or three times to form a dense hedge for greater fruit production.

Plants in containers and hanging baskets need to be frequently watered in the summer to keep them from drying out. All this water leaches out plant nutrients from the soil. Use a water-soluble fertilizer regularly to keep your plants growing and healthy.

Now is the time to plan for next spring. Consider digging and dividing any crowded spring-blooming bulbs. Once the bulbs have matured and the foliage has turned brown, it is time to spade them up and thin out the stand. Crowded bulbs produce fewer and smaller blooms. They usually need thinning every 3 to 4 years.

Potted plants outdoors may need watering daily to prevent wilting. Such frequent watering will leach out nutrients, so be sure to regularly fertilize potted plants with a water-soluble fertilizer.

Finish planting lawns this month to give the new grass opportunity to become established before cold weather stops growth. Wait to fertilize established lawns until September.

A late-summer pruning of rosebushes can be beneficial. Prune out dead canes and any weak, brushy growth. Cut back tall, vigorous bushes to about 30 inches. After pruning, apply fertilizer, and water thoroughly. If a preventive disease-control program has been maintained, your rose bushes should be ready to provide an excellent crop of flowers this October.

Gardening Events – July/August, 2018

By Marsha Sasser

Saturday, July 7: Kaufman Co. MG presents ***“Save Your Water/Rain Barrels”*** by KCMG Intern Allison Marable at 11:00 a.m.; and ***“Ants: The Good, The Bad, The Ugly”*** by Ralph Davis, KC Ext. Agent at 12:30 p.m. Barbara Walker Elementary, 4060 Abbey Road, Heartland (entrance at back side of building off Autumnwood Lane, Cafeteria Door 7). Call 972-932-9069 for more info.

Saturday, July 7: Northhaven Gardens presents ***“Success with Fall Tomatoes”***. 7700 Northhaven Road, Dallas. 1:00 -2:30 p.m. Free. Call 214-363-5316 to register.

Saturday, July 7: Northhaven Gardens presents ***“Workshop with Wine: Succulent Bowls”***. NOTE: Cost is \$79. Call 214-363-5316 to register.

Thursday, July 12: FSMG July meeting: ***Plant and Garden Book Swap***. (Members only). 8:30 a.m. Social; 9:00 Program.

Saturday, July 14: Kaufman Co. MG presents ***“Lawn Care: Bermuda and St. Augustine”*** by KCMG Dudley Hargrove. 11:00 a.m. – noon at Barbara Walker Elementary. (See July 7 KCMG event for address.)

Saturday, July 14: Northhaven Gardens presents ***“Plants for Hot & Dry Gardens”***. 10-11 a.m. Free. Call 214-363-5316 to register.

Saturday, July 14: Texas Discovery Gardens presents a ***Native Plants Symposium***. 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. \$50 for non-members. Call 214-428-7476 for info.

Tuesday, July 17: Henderson Co. MG presents ***“Compost Tea Making – The Organic Way to Healthier Vegetables, Flowers, Orchids, Vineyard, & Lawns”*** by Sherri Doss, owner of Bluebonnet Worm Farm. 5:30 p.m. at Clint W. Murchison Library, 121 S. Prairieville, Athens. Call 903-675-6130 for info. Free.

Thursday, July 19: Free State MG presents ***“Attracting Birds & Butterflies to Your Garden”*** by FSMG Louella Iliff. 10:30 a.m. at Van Zandt County Library. Free.

Saturday, July 21: Kaufman Co. MG presents ***“Growing Roses/Preventing Rose Rosette”*** by KCMG Dianne Kaufman. 10:30 a.m. – noon at Barbara Walker Elementary. (See July 7 KCMG event for address.)

Saturday, July 21: Texas Discovery Gardens presents ***“Fascinating World of Butterflies”***. 10:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. \$30 for non-members. Call 214-428-7476 for info.

AUGUST EVENTS

Saturday, August 4: Northhaven Gardens presents ***“Growing Fall Vegetables by Seed”***. 1-2 p.m. Free. And ***“Native Texas Wildflowers”***. 2:30-3:30 p.m. Free. Call 214-363-5316 to register.

Thursday, August 9: Henderson Co. MG presents ***“Simple Irrigation”*** by Keith Daniel, President of Jasper Co. MG. 6:30-8:30 p.m. at Athens Senior Citizens Center, 3344 Hwy. 31 E, Athens. Call 903-675-6130 for info.

Thursday, August 16: East Texas Arboretum presents ***“Plant Propagation”***. (No further info available at this time.) Call 903-675-5630 for info.

Thursday, August 16: Free State MG presents ***“Azaleas in the Landscape”*** by Keith Hanson, Certified Ag Agent, at Van Zandt County Library. 5:30 p.m. Free.

Saturday, August 25: Northhaven Gardens presents ***“Growing Bearded Iris”***. 10-11 a.m. Free. Call 214-363-5316 to register.

Specialist Training Offerings in 2018

Junior Master Gardeners–July 24 – 26, 2018 hosted by Denton County In Corinth, TX.

Vegetables –September 4 – 6, 2018 hosted by Bexar County in San Antonio, TX

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

Composter –December 5 – 7, 2018 hosted by Fort Bend County in Rosenberg, TX.

Further Information and Registration is available for all these classes on the Texas Master Gardener Website - www.Txmg.org, then Specialist Training

Recipes for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

Cucumber Soup

- 5 cups peeled and sliced cucumbers
- 1 6 oz carton of lime yogurt
- 1 teaspoon dill
- 1 teaspoon basil
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- salt/pepper
- 1 clove garlic

Mix all ingredients in a blender. Some sugared ginger also can be added. Chill - must be really cold to be good. When ready to serve, add a spoonful of sour cream and some chopped pecans on top.

Sandra Rosen

Dry Okra

Okra, left whole, with cap on (Choose small to medium-small pods; they are the most tender; no "horns" please!)

Olive Oil or butter

Sea salt, pepper to taste

Place a skillet large enough to hold the desired quantity of Okra side by side without touching each other. Glaze the skillet with either olive oil or butter and season it with salt/pepper. Turn heat to very low. Add the whole okra pods, arranging them evenly across the skillet. Cook gently, turning, the okra every five minutes or so to achieve a "tan" over their entire surfaces. When sufficiently tanned (30 minutes or so), serve immediately. Best eaten with fingers. Can be dipped into a sauce if you really, really don't like okra, but these are really, really good as is....just use some salt.

Sandra Rosen

Quick and Easy Tomato Sauce

Line a baking sheet with foil, like a jelly roll pan.

Cut a mixture of tomatoes into quarters or halves and leave the skins on. The small tomatoes work well in this recipe, but whatever you have works.

Add some peeled and quartered carrots, onions. Use about half as many of these as the tomatoes.

Sprinkle with extra virgin olive oil. Add about 1/3 to 1/2 cup of a combination of fresh herbs - oregano, parsley, rosemary, thyme, sweet basil, etc. Sprinkle with salt and pepper.

Bake at 400 degrees for about 45 minutes or until onions and tomatoes start to brown. Let roasted vegetables cool, then put in food processor or blender and puree.

Pack into pint containers and freeze. It can also be packed in freezer bags so that they can lay flat in the freezer to save space. Thaw well before using and drain off any water.

This can be used as a pizza sauce, as a sauce for pasta, an ingredient for meat loaf, and as a basis for soup.

Sandra Rosen

Squash Relish

10 Cups diced squash

2 Cups diced onions

Pour salt over and let set 20 minutes

4 bell peppers diced

Combine: 2 cups white vinegar, 3 cups sugar, 1 tsp. mustard seed, 1 tsp. celery seed. Bring mixture to a boil and boil for 5 minutes.

Add onions, squash and bell peppers to juice. Bring to a boil. Lower heat and cook for 25-30 minutes.

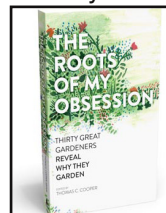
Put in hot pint jars and seal.

Janis Slampa/Donna Burcham



July 12th - Members Only-Plant & Book Swap

Our July Meeting will be for us! Remember to bring plants if you want to exchange them. Clean out your old magazines, books, etc and exchange with other members.



Classified Ads

Bob Williams' Peaches are starting to come in. If interested in an email when they are ready to pick, whether you pick your own or not, send me your name so I can make a list. I will be selling 4lb bags (10-12 peaches) for \$8 and a box (25lb / 1/2 bushel) for \$40



3rd Wednesday
Master Gardener
Work Day
9:00 am
meet at
Extension Office
July 18, 2018

Hügelkultur Seminar Update

By Nancy Szabo

The Hügelkultur build on the Silver Spur Resort grounds occurred May 2 with about a dozen attendees consisting of Master Gardeners, new gardeners, and a wonderful family of helpful home-schoolers. After a brief presentation explaining the build process, we trooped outside to get our hands dirty. Silver Spur grounds workers had already dug out the L-shape trench and filled it with logs. A trailer of newly cut branches and other debris was unloaded and piled on top of the logs. Next came layers of straw, manure, compost, soil with each layer being watered down. A variety of plants were planted including herbs, salvia, strawberries, peppers, tomatoes and flowers. Wood chips were layered on top to provide a well-mulched surface. A rain storm arrived a couple of days later. I was concerned that the mound may have suffered, but a few days after the storm it was still intact and the plants looked good. I have since stopped by a couple of times to check the progress. The grounds keeper has been watering off and on and while some of the squash suffered, the herbs are looking good, peppers are producing and the strawberries are sending out runners. The next time you have a few minutes, stop by the Barnyard and check out the hügelkultur mound and all the gardening work going on there.



Garden Guru



Dear Garden Guru - Is it a good idea to save my seeds from year to year?

It does make sense, but it is not worth it if the seeds don't germinate. Here's a basic easy test to see if your seeds are still viable: Take ten seeds from your batch and place them on a dampened paper towel. Fold the paper towel over in half, covering the seeds. Put the towel in a plastic ziplock bag. Set it in a warm place (approximately 70-75 degrees F). They should start to sprout in 2-12 days. When the seeds have no longer sprouted for several days, you will know the germination rate from this batch of seeds. For example, seven sprouted seeds would equal a 70% germination rate and worth planting. Two sprouted seeds would equal a 20% rate and probably not worth your bother.

John Womack
Specialist: Rainwater Harvesting, MG
Vegetable, MG, Landscaping Design,
NGC, Permaculture Design

