

THE GALVESTON COUNTY Master Gardeners

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Companion Planting

perspectives from our Master Gardeners

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Some thoughts As We Head Into Spring Gardening

*"Gardening is a matter of your enthusiasm holding up
until your back gets used to it." -Author Unknown*

*"My green thumb came only as a result of the mistakes I
made while learning to see things from the plant's point of
view." -H. Fred Dale*



*By Camille Goodwin
MG 2008*

Hopefully everyone is ready for spring gardening and has cleaned up some of the garden mess left by our multiple, short, unusual, freezes the past several months. Our newsletter this month brings lots of inspiration for the new growing season and follows a theme on companion planting. See various descriptions of companion planting on page 6, then educate yourself with some fabulous ideas for companion planting for successful vegetable gardens (page 7), and how herbs assist the flavor of vegetables and repel insects in your gardens (page 10). Enjoy the Best Shots article on pages 8 and 9 where Master Gardeners share some companion planting ideas.

Our Q&A topics this month discuss possible reasons your fruit tree might not bloom (page 4) and why grass might not be growing under your pecan trees (page 5). Donna Ward's engaging Trowels & Tribulations article on page 12 offers more advice for spring gardening activities to take care of before summer arrives. Jan Brick shares why we should have the lovely shrimp plant in our gardens on page 13. In Romeo and Juliet when Shakespeare said "a rose by any other name would smell as sweet" meant what matters is what something is, not what it's called. After reading John Jons' article on the Macartney Rose (page 11), you'll have second thoughts about planting this interloper in your landscape where its limited merits may be outweighed by its disadvantages. Arbor Day is April 25 when we commemorate trees—learn more on page 14.

As usual, much is happening in the Demonstration Garden; see page 13 for some of the current updates and on-going projects. Don't forget to check the updated calendar and volunteer opportunities on page 22.

Are you a GCMG in "good standing"? If you do not report your volunteer hours—you are NOT a member in good standing. Signing in at a plant sale, at the demonstration garden or other MG event is NOT the same as reporting your volunteer hours. By now, all certified MGs should have received an electronic form to fill in your 2014 volunteer hours. The first quarter hours for January 2014 thru March 2014 are due now; mghours@wt.net is the address to submit your hours electronically (or by hard copy).

Put a reminder note on your calendar to remind yourself to report hours at the end of each quarter (March, June, September, December). You may also receive a note from the Extension Office reminding you that volunteer hours are due. Use the electronic form to fill in your hours after every event you participate in. It's easier to do it regularly then to try to backtrack to capture the quarter or the entire year of volunteer time. If you are not comfortable using the electronic form, you can still manually fill in your hours on the form and submit those. Volunteer hours are submitted to the State and are used to help define budget dollars that Extension receives to support our local community. **REPORT YOUR VOLUNTEER HOURS.**

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*Front Cover Photo
by MG Linda Ornburn*



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By Robert Marshall
MG 2012

ask a master gardener

Hot Line Topics

Where are the blooms?

Question: My fruit tree is four years old and hasn't bloomed. What should I do?

There is nothing more frustrating than the anticipation of some delicious fruit and still waiting after three years. The possible solutions are a broad list.

First, is it the right tree for this area? Fruit trees are not grouped by Zone (we are Zone 9), but by something called "chill hours." If you don't have that information, you should be able to locate it on-line. Check out (<http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/annual-events/2014-fruit-tree-varieties-list.pdf>, and <http://harris.agrilife.org/files/2011/05/fruitnut.pdf> for specific chill hours for our area. This is almost a necessary step before buying any specific kind of fruit tree.

Chill hours are the time required for a specific variety of plant to go dormant long enough for bloom and fruit setting to be successful. In order to set fruit, most trees require exposure to a minimum number of hours of temperatures within the range of 32 to 45 degrees Fahrenheit. This temperature range is called chill hour requirement and the amount can vary widely for varieties within a given fruit class. The local growing area has a range of 500 chill hours to less than 200 chill hours over a winter season. If an advertisement claims a fruit tree is hardy to zero for a zillion hours, then don't expect a lot of fruit if you grow it locally. Chill hours for Galveston County needs to be "low chill hours" or 400 chill hours or less. Unfortunately that can't take into account what we called our "blue northers".

Does the tree have lots of big thorns? Check for the graft. Somewhere near the soil line should be a graft scar and it must be above the soil or mulch. If this is your first fruit tree, you may not have realized that most of them are two different trees. The bottom section from the graft down is a sturdy 'rootstock'. That means a very hardy fruit tree that rarely grows good tasting fruit. Then from that 'graft' up is your beloved

tree. That graft is close to the soil line but if it gets under the soil or mulch line, the tree will eventually become a strong rootstock tree. Once that happens, there is not much you can do to convince it otherwise.

Fruit trees, especially young ones, need even watering. During the summer season, that may mean a soaker hose left around the root area turned on once a week until you can dig down and not find dry soil till about a foot down. Overwatering can cause more damage than under watering your tree, so don't leave water standing around the tree....that's too much water.

How's your fertilizing schedule? Over fertilization is unnecessary, expensive and not good for your plants. The primary requirements for fruit trees is nitrogen so use either 21-0-0 or 46-0-0 fertilizer. Use fertilizer in the early Spring. If you continue to have problems with this tree, try a soil test before trying any other specific additives.

Another early Spring job is to prune. Pruning will encourage fruit production more than any other single thing you do. A short explanation of pruning is that you are trying to remove branches that may rub against another limb and that opens the canopy to allow light to get to the branches encourages new growth and fruit production. Check out this website for more information on pruning: <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/archives/parsons/fruit/pruning.html>

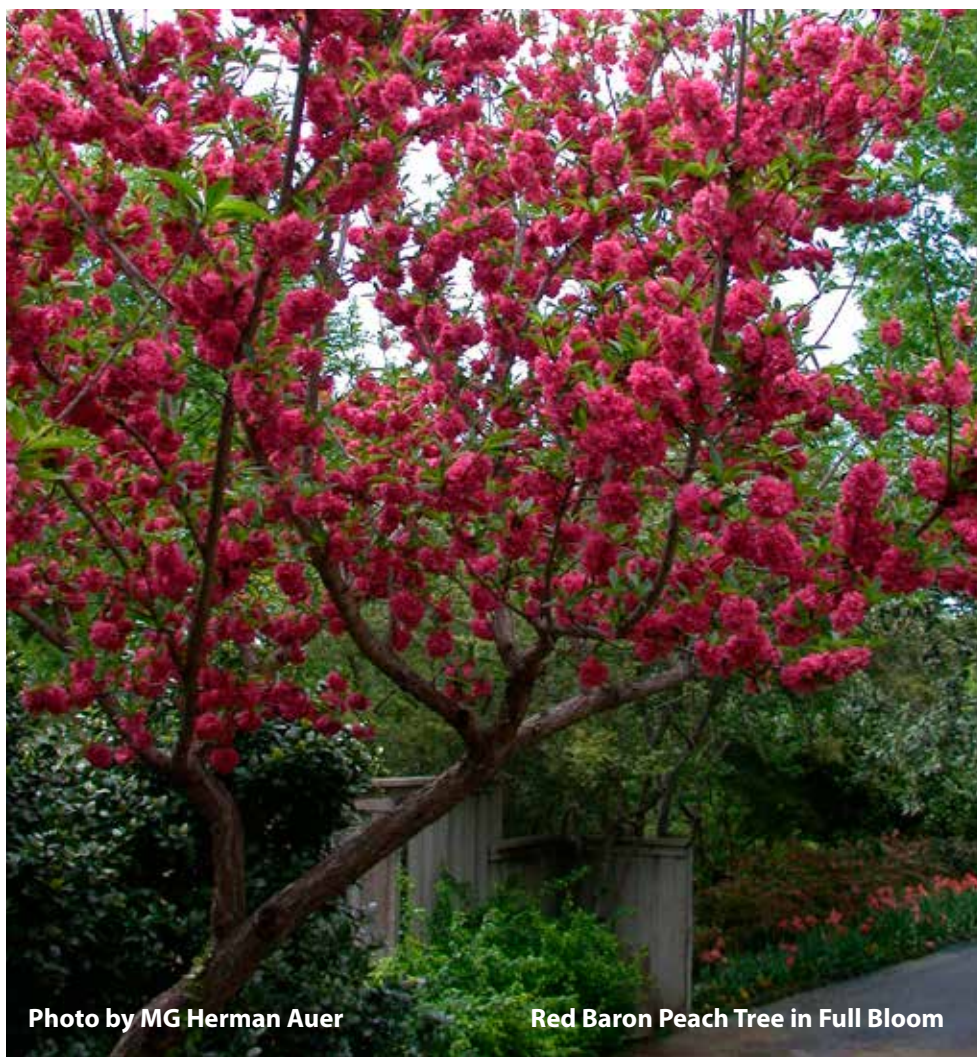


Photo by MG Herman Auer

Red Baron Peach Tree in Full Bloom

other options?

Sparse Grass Under Pecan Tree

Question: My St. Augustine grass is disappearing around my pecan tree. The larger the tree gets, the less grass I have. What can I plant by the pecan tree?

There are a lot of things that affect St. Augustine growth around a pecan tree, some of which you cannot control. As a pecan tree matures, the tree's roots put out a chemical called juglone which actually discourages many plants from growing nearby. Juglone could be trying to knock out the competition.

Also, pecan trees produce tap roots and surface roots that extend beyond the canopy. At some point, you will find your grass affected not only within the shade of the tree, but also beyond the tree's shade.

St. Augustine is the best grass for Galveston County, but it does need six hours of sunlight and does not like to compete for fertilizer or water. Your solution is

to plant something around your pecan tree other than St. Augustine. In fact, the solution applies to all shade trees in your yard.

You should consider planting something that will be hardy enough to live without a lot of sunshine, fertilizer and water. There is a nice list of possibilities.

You might try a groundcover. One of the easiest to grow in our area is Mondo or monkey grass (*Ophiopogon japonicus*). It is a different texture and color from St. Augustine and also comes in variegated. It also can be walked on and does not require trimming or mowing. I have seen an entire front yard in Mondo grass and it looked very nice.

Other variegated plants that will work are

flax, lirope, ferns, and Asian Jasmine. Native plants and grasses will be happy around trees. The trailing lantana will tolerate light shade.

If you want to get bolder, try azaleas or gingers. Most important, you will have less grass to mow, more color and texture in your yard and, other than worrying about squirrels, this should make the pecan tree area more carefree.



By Tim Jahnke
MG 2011



Pecan Tree

Photos by GCMG Digital Library



Lady Fern



Liroppe



Asian Jasmine



mixing it up is fun

What is Companion Planting

by Linda Garren McKillip
MG 2003

Who would have expected that a simple term like companion planting would be surrounded in controversy? I certainly didn't, but I quickly found that it means many things to people depending on where they are standing in the garden. If you are Henry Harrison III, MG 2011, it has to do with plants that are beneficial to its neighbors. Tomatoes and marigolds together create cultural benefit such as pest control and increased yield.

A Cornell Ecogardening Factsheet tells us that perhaps the best historical example of companion planting is the "Three Sisters" in which corn, beans, and squash are planted together in a hill. Native Americans developed this system to provide food for a balanced diet from a single plot of land. Each of the crops is compatible with the others in some way. The tall corn stalks provide a support structure for the climbing beans. The beans do not compete with the corn for nutrients since, as legumes, they can supply their own nitrogen. Squash provides a dense ground cover that shades out many weeds which otherwise would compete with the corn and beans. Now that is teamwork!

Let us walk down another path in the garden. Ginia Keen Matern, a 2003 HCMG, sees two meanings to our term of the day: the chemical, scientific benefit, and, for her, companion plants are ones that provide a pleasing look with similar growth habits. She loves pleasing colors, textures and shapes that complement each other. When you get those things working for you, it can make the heart sing. Ginia says Dusty Miller (*Senecio cineraria*) can be a sad little plant until you place it against the backdrop of a red brick house, where it offers a marvelous contrast in color and texture. Speaking of Dusty Miller, its taller, airy, light color looks great behind a dense, dark green mound of oregano. The oregano disguises the leggy attribute of Dusty Miller. Ginia also loves to use herbs as companion plants in the landscape giving a dual purpose of both beautiful and useful. While you add herbs in the front bed, she suggests that it never hurts to put in something to attract bees, like bee balm or rosemary.

The first thing that came to Tabatha Holt's mind, MG 2009, was the beneficial side of companion planting and the symbiotic relationships between plants. However, she was quick to point out the values of working vegetables, such as kale, swiss chard, or ornamental cabbage, into the landscape.

Another twisting garden path for me was Tabatha mentioning a term I had never heard before, that is, allelopathic effects of one plant on another. The term allelopathy is from Greek meaning to suffer from each other. Allelopathy has traditionally been considered only the negative chemical warfare of one organism upon another. Modern research suggests that allelopathic effects can be both positive and negative, depending upon the dose and organism affected. Tabatha told me how walnut trees excrete a chemical into the ground so that nothing else will grow around it and compete for limited resources. Herman Auer, MG 1983, taught Tabatha this.

For Kaye Corey, MG 2001, companion planting is all about the visual. She wants beautiful containers spilling over with a plethora of plants. She sees luscious garden beds teeming with pleasing color and texture.

Alisa Rasmussen, MG 2011, is focused on the horticultural aspects of combining plants to bring out their best attributes and cover flaws. She likes planting narcissus with lantana or asters allowing the bulbs to welcome spring while the summer-blooming lantana or fall-blooming asters are dormant. Then, as the lantana grows and fills in with new leaves, they cover the fading bulbs. The result is nearly year-round interest. Other plants make fine companions because of color combinations. Alisa loves the dark Purple Majesty sage (*Salvia guaranitica* 'Purple Majesty') planted with yellow paloverde (*Cercidium floridum*). Varying textures make fine companions too. Alisa likes the huge, thick leaves of an agave planted with lacy, airy shrubs such as a bush sage. Another pleasing combination for her is the Brakelights red yucca (*Hesperaloe parviflora* 'Perpa' Brakelights) which is easy to grow and a good filler with native grasses like Gulf Coast muhly (*Muhlenbergia Capillaris*).

Alisa enjoys another pleasing combo of Texas gold columbine (*Aquilegia chrysantha hinckleyana* 'Texas Gold', also a Texas SuperStar) which blooms in early spring planted at the base of the deciduous Texas Olive (*Cordia boissieri*) which comes on strong in the heat of summer and gives the columbine some relief.

One of my favorite companion plantings is parsley with plumeria. In the heat of summer after parsley in the garden has bolted, parsley is shaded through the heat of the day by luxurious plumeria foliage. And then in winter, my leafless stick trees let the winter sun shine and keeps the parsley a bright vibrant green.

No matter where you stand in the garden regarding the meaning of companion planting, I think we can all agree that mixing it up is fun, especially when we find combinations that work for pest control, growth enhancement and pure beauty.



Photo by MG Linda Garren McKillip
Parsley and Plumeria

the difference between success and failure

Companion Planting with Vegetables



By Tabatha Holt
MG 2009

As I am an organic vegetable gardener, “Companion Planting” has meant the difference between success and failure in my gardens.

When I plan my gardens, I visualize them as a community much like the ones in which we live. Like humans, plants can be indifferent, thrive or sometimes struggle in their relationships with others, an important if not subtle metaphor for Companion Planting. Simply defined, Companion Planting is the establishment of plants that benefit each other in some way.

Agrarian societies throughout the ages have been aware of these special unions and employed them in the art of farming. There are three factors that are attributed to producing a successful companion vegetable garden; pest control, nutrient support and spatial relationships/interactions.

I was first introduced to these concepts while gardening with my grandmother at a very young age. Growing up in New England, our family had learned from the Native American tribes the popular companion planting method called the “Three Sisters Garden” (corn, beans and squash). Also called intercropping, this method of planting incorporates all beneficial factors mentioned earlier. Corn, a heavy nitrogen feeder benefits from the nitrogen produced by the legume bean (nutrient support). The leaves of the pole bean wrapping up around the corn stalk acts as a camouflage that proves confusing to the corn ear worm moth (pest control). The lower lying squash plants shield the soil around the base of the corn and beans from rapid soil evaporation and weeds (spatial interaction/pest

control).

After all these years I still utilize the same techniques that I was taught while spending my summers with Grandma but have now expanded to ‘Intercropping’ and ‘Crop Rotation’.

Intercropping allows gardeners to practice space saving by maximizing the amount of space we have available to us while providing a variety of vegetables instead of just one or two. During the Spring I plant squash, corn, bush beans, carrots, pole beans, cucumbers, tomatoes, herbs, radishes, Chinese cabbage, bok choy, eggplants, okra, peppers and kohlrabi.

After the Spring crops have been harvested, I clean out my beds and use a cover crop that acts as a weed, nematode, pest or soilborne virus suppressant such as winter rye grass, chopped alfalfa or mustard greens. Before letting the cover crops go to seed, I till them into the soil in preparation for the next season’s planting.

For the fall vegetable garden season I rely on carrots, onions, cilantro, dill, lettuce, strawberries, beets, peas, kale, collards, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower and radishes. By rotating the locations of vegetables, I avoid mineral depletion as a result of overuse in the same location.

These techniques of organic gardeners and farmers have been used for thousands of years and could be the answer to creating or at least maintaining a micro-world of biodiversity in our own backyards as well as creating healthy communities and wildlife habitats that are both environmentally and economically responsible.



Tabatha's Vegetable Gardens

MG BEST SHOTS



Nana Iris and Wood Fern by MG Anna Wygrys



Tomatoes in Flower Beds by MG Judy Poorman



Large Trees and Ginger by MG Mary Martino



Red Fountain Grass and Coreopsis by Dr. William M. Johnson



Rose and Amaryllis by MG Billy Jenke



Plumbago and Iris by MG Sandra Devall

...and Narrative companion planting



By Sandra Devall
MG 1998

This topic for Best Shots has opened a lot of conversations, discovering lots of ways that Master Gardeners have found companion plantings that form mutually beneficial relationships in gardens. Because it is getting warmer, I am back to walking my garden, have discovered places that need a little 'tweaking' and plan to follow several of these ideas by finding companion plants for some problems. The solutions that you will find in this article were chosen to focus on mutual benefits and moisture control.

Thank you all for your contributions, Master Gardeners! I never run out of new ideas and information because of all of you. I hope that some of the ideas we are sharing will be added to your information to share with others.

Mixing plants with Similar Soil and Light Requirements - Nana Iris and Wood Fern. This is a perfect mix of two plants that want shade and don't need any care. These two are also a perfect match because, although they are extremely hardy, one does not choke out the other. The Nana Iris is an early bloomer; it starts blooming in early March before everything else wakes up. It is a low grower; so it will look good in the front row of any shaded bed.

Vegetables in Landscape Gardens – Tomatoes and Flower Beds. There is a growing trend to look back into our history and resurrect gardening ideas; here's a good one. Perhaps you can remember tomato plants growing side by side with the landscape shrubs in your childhood home. I remember that there were always a few on the sides of the house. It also has become common to see herbs mixed with landscape plants, especially rosemary which grows like a nice perennial shrub. One year we had a cotton plant in the front flower bed because my Dad thought his city kids needed to see cotton growing!

Protection of the Trunks and Roots of Trees - Large Trees and Ginger. Ginger is a beautiful solution to planting around a shade tree; my favorite is shown in the photo, yellow butterfly ginger. This ginger is about 4-6 feet tall, as you can see, and has the most beautiful and fragrant blooms of all the gingers. There are also some perennial salvias, like 'Indigo Spires', that can be mixed with the ginger.

Here's just a short warning about some damaging solutions used around trees. Some are using buckets with the bottom cut out, old tires, wire cages or a four-inch mound of mulch around trees. The first three are dangerous only if they are not removed before the tree grows into them. The last one brings the root growth up and causes an unending problem. You can mulch around a tree if you keep the mulch about one foot away from it all the way around; then you will not have a problem. Older subdivisions are a good place to look for additional solutions. Roots can be protected by ground covers such as mondo grass or a lovely planting of annuals, but remember not to have too much 'added' soil or mulch.

Mixing like Nature – Red Fountain Grass and Coreopsis. This is really a perfect combination; nature knew what she was doing! The delicate colors of the wildflowers stand out so beautifully. These two plants differ in colors, textures, size, everything we try to accomplish ourselves when we plan our landscapes. The other benefit of this combination is that the grasses will continue after the wildflowers are finished blooming, and what is left of the wildflowers—seed pods and leaves—look just fine in the landscape. To continue this look for the next season, you may need to save the seeds and broadcast them for the next year, but the red fountain grass will last in our Zone 9 for quite a few seasons.

Green Camouflage of Woody Lower Branches - Rose and Amaryllis. This lovely red rose, *Cramoisi superieur*, is an antique rose from 1832 and is common around our area. There is one in my garden, but it goes by the name "Mom's rose". It is typical of most roses that the bottom 12 inches of the plant are never leafy, so all you see is sticks with thorns on them. The size of the amaryllis leaves is the perfect camouflage, and, as you can see in the photo, there are a variety of plants surrounding this rose, which helps with the difficult task of weeding around it. You can easily select flowering plants which have the perfect height for the specific rose that you have planted. For added benefits, try garlic or garlic chives to repel insect pests.

Blooms for Each Season – Plumbago and Iris . There are a few plants that are blooming their heads off in the hottest days of summer but lose all their blooms and leaves during the winter. One is on the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension "Texas Superstar" list, the Plumbago. We love it in the summer and hope no one looks at that place in our garden in the winter. That happens only if we don't have a companion plant to take the attention away. A good companion is the orange drop iris. This iris is not a really showy bloomer, but it does stay green year-round and is not particular about watering. A few other mixes in this category would be lantana and paperwhite iris.



Roses with Annuals by MG Tabatha Holt



By Pat Forke
MG 2010

some plants benefit others

Companion Planting with Herbs

First, here is a definition of an herb. An herb is defined by the New Oxford American Dictionary as any plant with leaves, seeds, or flowers used for flavoring, food, medicine, or perfume. In the science of botany, an herb is defined as any seed-bearing plant that does not have a woody stem and dies down to the ground after flowering. Although most gardeners think of plants such as the popular basil, chives, dill, garlic and oregano as herbs, there are many additional flowering plants that can be considered herbs. There are some plants listed here that you may not have previously thought of as herbs.

Let's look at some must-have herbs for your vegetable and flower beds. Choose some of the more aromatic herbs such as basil, thyme, oregano, chamomile, mint, rosemary and sage as they are the most effective in deterring pests. You might choose based on what you prefer to use in your kitchen; but, even if you choose not to use the herbs for culinary purposes, your vegetables and flowers will love the benefits they derive from their herb neighbors. Be sure you plant enough to allow some to go to seed as there are also numerous benefits derived from the seeds. Some of the ways companion planting can improve your gardening are flavor improvement, pest control, increase in pollination, and helping prevent problems associated with monoculture growing.

Basil planted with tomatoes will not only improve growth and flavor but will be helpful in repelling thrips. Beans, broccoli, Brussel sprouts, cabbage,

cauliflower, collards, kale, peppers and asparagus will benefit from their basil neighbor. Sweet basil (*Ocimum basilicum*) tends to repel aphids, mosquitoes and mites. It acts as a natural fungicide and slows the growth of milkweed bugs. Planted among tomato plants, it will control tomato hornworms.

Comfrey accumulates calcium, phosphorous and potassium and redeposits these in the soil and in compost if added to the pile. Used as a mulch, it can add minerals to your soil. Planted in a wet spot, it becomes a good trap crop for slugs.

Chives improve the growth and flavor of carrots and tomatoes. It can also be beneficial to roses. Chives will help prevent mildew, deters green flies and repels aphids.

Dill improves the growth and health of cabbage, onions and cucumbers. Lettuce will also benefit from dill planted in the same garden. Dill attracts hoverflies and predatory wasps. It is also a favorite food for the swallowtail butterfly larvae.

Garlic will repel aphids. Garlic will also be beneficial planted among fruits and roses to protect them from pests and encourage healthy growth. Garlic accumulates sulfur (a naturally occurring fungicide) and can deter snails.

Lavender is not only a beautiful plant but it also repels fleas and moths. The flowering lavender smells wonderful and nourishes many nectar-feeding and beneficial insects. It will be particularly beneficial planted near fruit trees. Lemon balm has citronella compounds that deter bugs. Dried and made into a powder and sprinkled around the garden, it will keep

many pests away. Rub the leaves on your skin to keep mosquitoes away.

Marigolds are considered the workhorse of pest deterrents. The Mexican marigold (*Tagetes lucida*) is preferred over the French marigold as it is more potent. French marigolds (*Tagetes patula*), when planted thickly in a vegetable garden, will help repel nematodes. The unscented marigolds will not protect your plants.

Mint of any flavor will deter aphids, white cabbage moths, flea beetles, fleas and ants. Cauliflower, broccoli and the cabbages will particularly benefit from a nearby planting of mint. Bees, as well as other beneficial insects and pollinators love mint. If you are concerned with the invasive characteristic of mint, it can be planted in pots and then placed in your garden or plant it elsewhere and use the cuttings to spread around plants you want to protect.

Oregano will enhance the flavor of your beans, cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, cucumbers and grapes.

Parsley, when planted with tomatoes and asparagus, wards off beetles and attracts the immature stage of hoverflies that eat insects. Allow some of your parsley to go to seed to attract

tiny parasitic wasps that will take care of all your hornworm problems. The fragrance of your roses will be enhanced with parsley planted between your bushes.

Petunias should be planted near your tomatoes and throughout your gardens. They repel asparagus beetles, leafhoppers, some aphids, tomato worms, and other garden pests.

Rosemary is a good companion plant to cabbage, beans, carrots and sage as it will deter cabbage moths, bean beetles and carrot flies.

Sage is a good companion plant to cabbage and carrots. It will repel cabbage moths, carrot flies and ticks.

Tansy deters flying insects, Japanese beetles, striped cucumber beetles, squash bugs, ants and mice. Tie up and hang a bunch of tansy leaves indoors as a fly repellent. Plant with fruit trees, roses and raspberries as a deterrent to pests.

Even with the knowledge that some plants will benefit others, local conditions, such as soils, temperatures and water conditions, may impact the effectiveness of companion plants. Try different combinations and note which combinations work best for you.



Parsley and Sage photo by GCMGA Digital Library

considered an invasive plant

The Macartney Rose in Galveston County



By John Jons
MG 2003

I was cycling along Highway 96 in Galveston County and then I saw it—a massive, green, thorny, thick, impenetrable mound of tangled canes, alongside the road, that was burying the fence that enclosed a pasture alongside a new subdivision—it was the “Macartney Rose.” Until this point in time I had only noticed this rose growing happily and healthy with abandonment in fields and along the side roads of southern Galveston.

One of the best examples of this rose, doing its best to consume open land, is currently growing in an uncontrolled mass of canes. It is over 20 feet high and about 40 feet long, and is situated just across from the south-east fence line of the Galveston County Master Gardener Horticulture Demonstration Gardens. Every year it tries to climb over the fence into the gardens. Fortunately, we have Master Gardener Wayne Elliott, who beats it back every year with a power trimmer.

The Macartney Rose is actually a wild (species) rose. Its botanical name is *Rosa bracteata*. It is also sometimes called the “Cherokee Rose.” This rose is native to southern China and was discovered around 1793. It got its common name from Lord Macartney, a British diplomat, who introduced the rose to England from southern China in the late 18th century. It often struggled to survive in England due to the cold temperatures. This rose is the parent of the rose called ‘Mermaid’ (1917) and ‘Happenstance’ (also called Baby Mermaid - 1950). These roses, which look like its parent, are quite thorny and prefer warm weather.

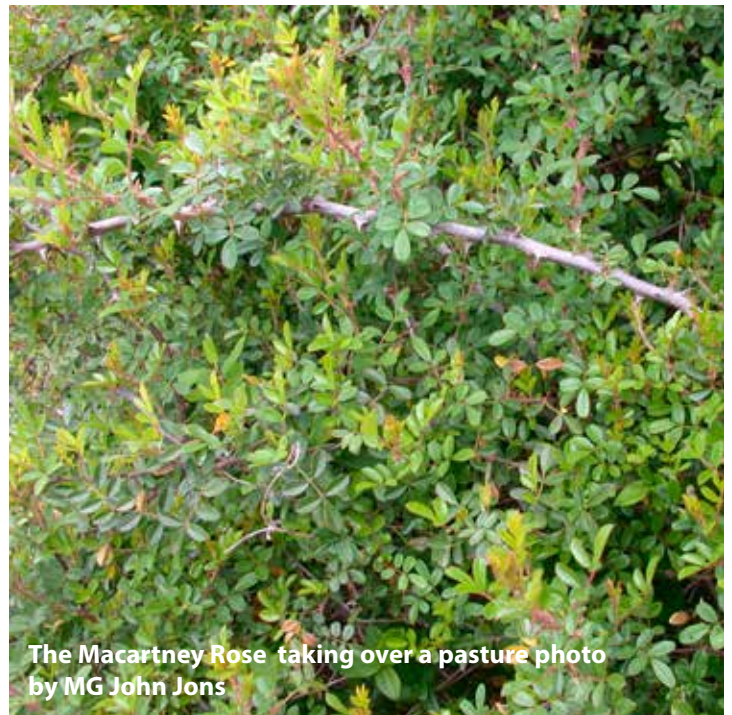
The Macartney Rose was introduced to America in the early 19th century and was initially used as a natural hedgerow. It is now considered an invasive species plant. This rose is an evergreen shrub with arching stems and recurved thorns.

The flowers have five petals and are pure milky white with pronounced golden stamens (yellow centers). The flowers occur in small clusters. In southern Texas it flowers primarily in the spring and for the rest of the year you have a large thorny bush. The hips (seed pods) begin maturing in mid-summer. It spreads primarily through the dispersal of seeds by birds and cattle. The seeds readily germinate in cattle feces. It is recommended that if cattle feed on the rose hips that you do not move them to other pastures, in order to prevent the rose from spreading.

It also spreads from continual sprouting from the base of existing plants and loose canes on the ground. It takes over pastures and other open areas by forming large clumps that grow into dense thickets. It is believed to occupy more than 500,000 acres of Texas range land. Interestingly, some vendors of old garden roses still sell this rose to the public and it would easily meet the southern Earth-Kind™ rose criteria. This rose was previously known to exist in lower Galveston but it apparently now seems to be spreading north and it’s probably now growing somewhere in southern Harris County. The primary control for this rose is a strong industrial herbicide—see the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension bulletin L-5427 08/09.



The Macartney Rose photo by MG John Jons



The Macartney Rose taking over a pasture photo by MG John Jons



By Donna J. Ward
MG 1996

there is much to do to get ready

TROWELS & TRIBULATIONS in a Suburban Garden

(Editor's Note: This is a reprint of Donna's article for La Ventana Del Lago, the City of El Lago's neighborhood newspaper.)

Here she comes again—flowers in her hair, bathed by gentle rain, her perfume carried on soft, warm breezes—April has returned. Thank goodness—I thought she'd forgotten about us! Old Man Winter hung around too darned long to suit me but he's finally packed his bags and left the neighborhood. That's the good news—the bad news is, summer is on its way.

There's much to do to get ready for the inevitable heat. You already know that mulch holds down moisture and moderates soil temperature, so if you didn't build a compost pile, you'll need to buy what you could have made for free. Your flower beds, trees and shrubs will noticeably flourish if their roots are sheltered from summer's blistering heat. If you have some soaker hoses, place them in the flower beds before you apply the mulch. No point in having to get them out and reposition them each time you need to water. This is also the time to plant those heat-tolerant annuals such as marigolds, coral vine, periwinkle, coleus, morning glory and zinnias.

Your past labors are currently rewarding you with a multitude of blossoms. Cut them and bring them into the house where you can enjoy them. You'll be encouraging the plant to have a longer blooming period. Not allowing the blossoms to produce seed makes the plant think its job isn't over and it produces more blooms. There's no law against deceiving your flowering landscape specimens—at least not yet.

Prune any spring flowering shrubs that have finished blooming. Don't wait too long, otherwise you'll be removing bloom wood, and next spring's show will be canceled.

Veggies? —did I hear you mention veggies? You're just in time to plant seeds of green beans (both pole and bush), collards, corn, cucumbers, southern peas, summer squash if you hurry, and if you really really hurry, transplants of tomatoes (buy the largest transplant you can afford). You might want to tuck in a potted eggplant also.

Remember that the Texas Administrative Code states in portion as follows: "(a) Sales tax is not due on the receipts from sales of, and the storage, use or consumption of the following: (3) Seeds and annual plants, the products of which ordinarily constitute food for human consumption, are used to produce feed for animals exempted by this section, or are to be sold in the regular course of business. An exemption certificate is not required when purchasing these items." Here's the bottom line—If the purchased seeds or plants produce food for you and your family, it's not taxable in Texas. Some sellers are just too lazy to program their cash registers, so you may have to remind them. "Animals exempted" includes the birds visiting your bird feeder, so don't pay sales tax on wild bird seed.

Hello April—c'mon in.....



Photo by MG Sam Scarcella

Eggplant in a pot



Photo by Dr. William M. Johnson

Mulch will shelter roots from summer's blistering heat



Photo by MG Cheryl Armstrong

The heat-tolerant zinnia

THE ISLAND GARDEN

Shrimp Plants

(Editor's Note: This is a reprint from Jan's article in "The Islander" magazine.)



By Jan Brick
MG 2001

Galveston and shrimp are nearly synonymous in my mind so “shrimp plant” sounds like it might belong in a Galveston garden—does it not? The two shrimp plants that are most common are *Justicia brandegeana*, which has salmon-colored bracts and *Pachystachys lutea*, which has yellow bracts. Personal preference in color usually dictates a gardener's choice as one is as easy to grow as the other.

The pink or salmon colored *Justicia brandegeana* is commonly referred to as Mexican shrimp plant, shrimp plant or false hop. The species is named after the American botanist Townsend Stith Brandegee. It is native to Mexico although it has naturalized in Florida, is an evergreen shrub with white flowers that extend from red bracts (modified leaves) that resemble a shrimp somewhat—hence the common name of shrimp plant. The stems and leaves are soft and silky to the touch with the leaves variegated and usually growing in clusters on the branches. The more sun that the plant receives causes an increase in the amount of creamy white on the speckled leaves.

With more sun exposure the bracts will appear in colors of pale pink to deep salmon. A chain of bracts will continue to grow from a few inches to nearly a foot in length. Flowers emerge from the bracts; usually they are long, thin, and white with speckled maroon throats. Blooming continues for months once it has begun, then halts for a short period before starting again.

Shrimp plants do best in well-drained soil in a sunny location as shade reduces blooms and allows the green stem on plants to stretch. Pruning the shrimp plant will help keep plants bushy and low. The best time for a good pruning is in early spring. Remove dead flowers and stems to encourage growth in a compact bush form. If allowed to “grow wild” and with age, plants may get a bit spindly and ragged looking but if trimmed back regularly, they can maintain that bushy habit and will not need support.

They are generally low maintenance and drought-tolerant, needing only an occasional small amount of fertilizer. Easily propagated by stem cuttings, shrimp plants can be planted in landscape beds as a ground cover, where the flowers will attract hummingbirds and butterflies. With only a little attention and maintenance, the shrimp plant will make a lovely statement in your garden.

The *Justicia brandegeana* has gained the Royal Horticultural Society's Award of Garden Merit.

The Golden Shrimp Plant or yellow shrimp plant (*Pachystachys lutea*), is sometimes called the lollipop plant or yellow candles. It is a tropical shrub that is round in shape that bears candle-like flower spikes of yellow bracts and tubular white flowers that attract hummingbirds. It is native to tropical Central America.

This colorful, soft-stemmed, upright perennial has six-inch long dark green leaves and bright yellow bracts from among which pure white flowers emerge over several weeks. Flowers are displayed above the foliage. It is a tropical shrub that is typically massed in beds or maintained as a background plant in a mixed perennial planting but can also be used as a hedge or a border. It can be quite attractive as a specimen plant grown in a large container.

The golden shrimp plant requires full sun to partial shade and fertile, well-drained soil. It will grow to three feet under ideal conditions; it should be pruned back hard annually to maintain its full growth and bush like shape. Regular fertilization during the growing season helps keep the foliage green. Golden shrimp plant is easily propagated from softwood and semi-ripened cuttings and begins to flower when less than a foot tall. This is a robust plant that flowers from spring to autumn. Although a light frost may kill above ground foliage and stems, new sprouts will grow from low stems near the ground.

While conducting research for this article, I came upon another species called the Green Shrimp Plant. It is touted as being a host plant for a number of butterflies including Malachites, White Peacocks and Buckeyes. Always interested in attracting butterflies to my garden, I continued to read ... the following is what I found...good news and bad news! The Green Shrimp Plant, Browne's *Blechum pyramidatum* or *Ruellia blechum* is also known as Wild Hops. It is a trailing annual or perennial branched herb that is native to tropical America and an area extending from Mexico to the northern-most parts of South America. Green shrimp plant has a history as a weed on numerous tropical islands in the Pacific.

The Green shrimp plant like the other shrimp plants thrives in sun to part shade and has average water needs. The small white, pale pink or lavender/purple flowers arranged in spikes bloom repeatedly all year. It is sold as a garden ornamental in the United States, but can be found along roadsides and in fields. Please be aware that this plant grows and spreads very fast; self-sows freely by seeds and from broken plant fragments; deadhead if you do not want volunteer seedlings next season.

Handling the green shrimp plant may cause skin irritation or allergic reaction; pollen may cause allergic reaction; May be considered an invasive noxious weed.



Shrimp Plant

Photo by MG Sandra Devall



why not plant a tree

Celebration of Arbor Day - April 25, 2014

Plant a tree in memory of someone you love or to celebrate a life event.

By Linda Steber
MG 1991

Arbor Day (from the Latin arbor, meaning tree) is a day for promoting trees, a day set aside for the planting and appreciation of trees, a holiday when trees are honored.

The first Arbor Day took place on April 10, 1872 in Nebraska. It was the brainchild of Julius Sterling Morton (1832-1902), a Nebraska journalist and politician originally from Michigan.

In 1854 J. Sterling Morton moved from Detroit to the area that is now the state of Nebraska. At that time there were virtually no trees in the area and he and the other pioneers desired to have trees in their surroundings. They also saw that trees were needed to act as windbreaks, to stabilize the soil, and to provide fuel, building materials and shade from the sun. Morton planted many trees around his own home but wanted to encourage and enable others to do the same. His opportunity came when he became a member of Nebraska's

state board of agriculture. Morton proposed, and the state board accepted, a resolution "to set aside one day to plant trees, both fruit and forest." The Board declared April 10 Arbor Day, and offered prizes to the counties and individuals that properly planted the largest number of trees on that day. More than one million trees were planted in Nebraska on that first Arbor Day in 1872.

Shortly after this observance in Nebraska, other states passed legislation to observe Arbor Day every year with appropriate ceremonies. By 1920, 45 states and territorial possessions were celebrating Arbor Day. In 1970, President Richard Nixon proclaimed the last Friday in April as National Arbor Day. Today all 50 states celebrate Arbor Day, although dates may vary in keeping with the local climate.

Most holidays celebrate something that has already occurred and is worth remembering. Arbor Day, however, celebrates hope for the future.

The trees planted on Arbor Day show a concern for future generations. The trees will grow and provide wildlife habitat, erosion control, wood products, shelter from wind and sun, and beauty for ourselves, our children and our children's children.

As Arbor Day is largely about planting trees and raising awareness of their benefits, there are many ways that people can take part in the day. Arbor Day reminds us to not take trees and other essential parts of the environment for granted. It encourages us to learn more about trees and to plant trees for future generations.

Many schools have Arbor Day activities. This often involves teaching children about trees and the important part trees play in the environment. Schools welcome volunteers to work with the children. People with specialist knowledge about growing and caring for trees are often invited into the school to talk and work with the children.

Although Arbor Day is just one day a year, tree planting, tree care and raising the awareness of trees is something that can go on all year round. Trees make great gifts and can be a great way to give someone a special gift that will also play an important role in the environment for many generations to come. Trees make a great gift for a special birthday, to mark the birth of a baby, to celebrate a wedding or for many other occasions.

A tree to consider planting in Zones 6-9 is Pecan *Carya illinoensis*, our Texas state tree. This is a symmetrical pecan that makes a fine ornamental and nut tree. It needs moist, well-drained loamy soil. It grows 70' to 100', with a 55' spread. It is grown from seed. Two trees should be planted for pollination.

To find out more about our state tree and others, the following tree references were received from Julie Massey, Tim Janke, Doris Heard and Sandra Devall, all Galveston County Master Gardeners.

Great Small Trees for Houston. A booklet produced by the Garden Club of Houston which list trees that are native to our area and will thrive with little maintenance, plus are beautiful and friendly to our wildlife.

http://www.gchouston.org/Portals/0/MembersDocs/Small_Trees_brochure.pdf

Houston – Texas Tough Trees. This booklet which was produced in 2012 suggests trees for the Houston region and suggests creating a legacy of trees which can survive in hurricane and severe drought conditions.

http://elmgrovekingwood.com/picture/hpboughtexastreesbook27_31_12.pdf

Trees of Texas. This booklet is produced by Texas Forest Service and is the perfect tool to use to identify trees from either leaf, limb or full tree look. <http://texastreeid.tamu.edu/>

Southern Gardener <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/southerngarden/landtable.html>

Landscape Plants for the Texas Coast. This is an extensive chart for Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service that deals with all landscape plants, but also includes trees. This chart also includes salt tolerant plants and divides the Texas Coast into three areas which is helpful for those living close to the Gulf. <http://aggiehorticulture.tamu.edu/archives/parsons/publications/saltplants.html>



Pecan Tree Photo by
MG Herman Auer

Project: Demonstration Gardens

Carbide Park



By Tom Fountain
MG 2008



At last spring has arrived in the garden, flowers are blooming and the grass is turning green again. The past few months we have had some roller coaster weather—cold, cloudy with a chance of rain or a little warmer, or mostly cloudy with a chance of sunshine. We have continued to be a little dryer than normal with only one half of our normal rainfall for January through March, thanks mostly to our March rainfall. Now winter seems to have lasted a little longer than normal, but spring is here so get out and enjoy because summer is not far away.



The garden has had lots of visitors this past month. We have had Dr. Welch walk through the garden and Chris Wiesinger the bulb hunter (pictured above, third from the left), the new class workday, a home school group and due to spring break a few kids and grandkids. It is always fun to have visitors and they almost always seem to have good things to say about our garden.



Good news, Henry and Stewart and the crew that have been reberfishing the beds, have completed that project and all the beds look great. This has meant more hands on the greenhouse project and a few design changes that should help speed up the project. At the other end of the garden, Tish and Alisa along with a few others continue developing the "serenity" and "low water use" gardens and making them ready for spring. If you have an opportunity to visit that area do so. You will find some new gardening features and always lots of beautiful plants. The orchard is full of blooms so now Robert, Jackie and others have started chasing weeds.

Do you know some of our lunch salads and vegetables come from our garden. By the way the kitchen crew will have a change for a while, O. J. went on a trip, and Greg will be off working. So Jan has volunteered to work with the kitchen crew until their return. There are lots of opportunities to participate in our garden activities. Ask any one in the garden and they can point you in the right direction. Happy gardening, y'all.



a taste of Italy and Mexico

Seasonal Bites

MG Camille Goodwin shares this recipe that she was introduced to and learned to make from a recent visit to Italy. She brought these almond sweets to the current MG Intern class and had many requests for the recipe. Ricciarelli have a soft interior that melts in your mouth with a crunchy exterior. These sweets date back to the fifteenth century and were made with almond paste (in the form of marzipan or Marzapanetti). They were reserved for the sumptuous banquets of the Lords because they were made of precious ingredients mainly almonds and sugar.

Ricciarelli di Siena, Italy

Makes about 20 cookies

egg whites, 2

lemon juice, 1 drop

confectioner's sugar, 1 cup

ground almond flour, 1 cup

almond extract, 2 tablespoons

seeds from 1 pod of a vanilla bean

grated zest of 1 orange

extra confectioner's sugar, about 1 cup



The night before: Whip the egg whites with a drop of lemon juice to stiff peaks. Fold in 1 cup of confectioner's sugar and the ground almond flour. Mix in the almond extract, the grated peel of one orange and the vanilla seeds. Cover with cling-film and set aside in the fridge overnight (or at least for 4 hours).

Next Day: Place the extra confectioner's sugar on a working surface. Using a small cookie scoop or spoon, make small balls of dough and drop into confectioner's sugar (dough is very sticky – dust your hands with sugar, too). Gently cover dough balls with the sugar and shape the dough with your hands to a sausage shape. Place on cookie sheet lined with parchment paper or silicone sheet and curve dough slightly into a "C" shape. Sprinkle more powdered sugar on cookies on cookie sheet.

Bake in preheated oven to 325 degrees for about 18 minutes. They will resemble crinkle cookies. When you remove them from the oven, they will be still soft and moist, but don't worry! they will reach the ideal texture once completely cooled. Leave them on the cookie sheet for about 30 minutes to cool. Store them in an airtight container; the day after they are even better. Enjoy!!

Many Master Gardeners attended the recent Gulf Coast Herb Fair presented by The Friends of Moody Gardens at the Moody Gardens Visitor Center and Garden Restaurant. Chef Marcus Zepeda prepared this delicious recipe at one of the tasting stations and he was gracious enough to share his recipe.

Pineapple-Strawberry Pico De Gallo

4 oz. diced pineapple (fresh)

6 sprigs of mint

6 strawberries

2 tomatoes

Juice of one lime

6 sprigs cilantro (coriander)

½ purple onion

1 fresh jalapeno

1 teaspoon salt

Dice all and mix together. Add lime juice and salt.

Serves 6-8



Carole, Patsy and Linda with Chef Zepeda at the Gulf Coast Herb Fair



By Mary Lou Kelso
MG 2000

MINUTES FEBRUARY & MARCH MG MEETINGS

The GCMGA monthly meeting for February 11 was called to order by GCMGA President Ira Gervais. Ira welcomed everyone to the meeting. Discussion was held regarding the recent February Fruit Tree Sale. MGs present reported shortages with some citrus. After the short meeting, Tish Reustle gave an update regarding activity at the Demo Garden with the Asian Garden.

The March meeting of the GCMGA meeting was held at the Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office on Tuesday, March 11, with a potluck dinner before the meeting began. Ira Gervais welcomed everyone to the meeting. Dr. Johnson reminded all MG's that it was very important to submit their volunteer hours for 2013. He commented to everyone that when he retires from Extension, he wanted an easy transition for the new agent with all MG's having their hours in place each year. He commented it was because of all MG's hours that helped with the new building to be approved and built.

The 2014 volunteer logs have been sent by Wayne Elliott. A few 2014 MG interns were in attendance at the meeting and Dr. Johnson asked that they introduce themselves.

Saturday, March 15, MG Clyde Holt was conducting a bonsai class and the cost was \$15 for the supplies,

The program after the meeting was given by Henry Harrison III and Tim Jahnke and their presentation was Garden Tool Maintenance.



By Pat Forke
MG 2010

TOOL TALK BY HENRY HARRISON III AND TIM JAHNKE, CLASS OF 2011

Our March meeting included a very informative and humorous presentation by two obviously very experienced Master Gardeners. Here are some of the tips they shared:

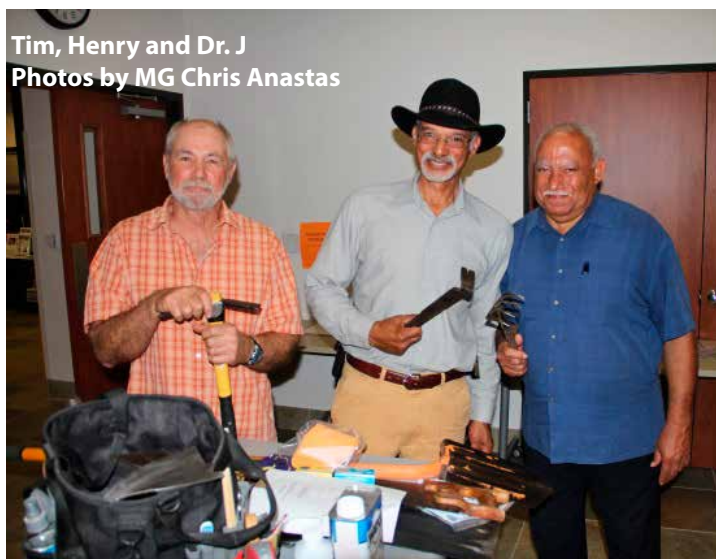
A good tool is made of 12 gauge steel and can sometimes be found at garage sales for a good price. You will want to be sure to get a tool that is heavy enough so it can work for you.

There are numerous sharpening tools available. Browse through your local hardware store and choose a few that look interesting to you. Some recommended ones include, a mill file, diamond stone sharpener, and Sandflex hand block. If you prefer a pruner where the blade can be replaced, try either Bahco or Felco pruners. These are available on-line.

If rust is an issue, you will want to use a heavy duty brass brush to remove the rust. To enhance your wooden handles, you will want to sand with 150 grit sandpaper to a smooth finish. Then cover with boiled linseed oil or teak oil. Wipe clean. Repeat three times. Ash, hickory and oak handles are the best.

If you need to disinfect your tools, use bleach, isopropyl alcohol or hydrogen peroxide. Rinse off and dry. Your tools can also be cleaned with a microfiber pad and mineral oil. For heavy cleaning, a bronze wool pad rather than steel wool can be used to scrape down your tools. The bronze pad is available at West Marine. For light cleaning, keep a covered five gallon bucket, filled with sand mixed with some oil, and stick your tools in after each use. Remember that WD-40 is only useful as a temporary lubricant that disperses water. Keep all your safety equipment such as sun and safety glasses, ear plugs, hats and assorted gloves, clean and readily available.

Store your tools in an area that will minimize metal corrosion and damage from moisture. Make sure your tools have identifying marks—particularly if you are working at our demonstration garden!



Tim, Henry and Dr. J
Photos by MG Chris Anastas



recertification (continuing education) hours for MGs 2014

Date	Name of Program	Speaker	CEUs for MGs
1/4/2014	Growing Avocados & Papaya	Jerry Hurlbert	3.25
1/4/2014	Grafting Your Own Fruit Trees	Herman Auer	2.25
1/7/2014	Successfully Growing Peaches	Herman Auer	1.5
1/11/2014	Spring Vegetable Gardening	Luke Stripling	2.5
1/17/2014	Grow Great Tomatoes (for MGs only)	Ira Gervais	2
1/17/2014	Growing Citrus in the Home Landscape (for MGs only)	Chris Anastas	1.75
1/18/2014	Planting Fruit Trees	Herman Auer	2
1/20/2014	Fruit & Citrus Trees for the Gulf Coast (MGA Meeting)	Heidi Sheesley	2
1/21/2014	Anyone Can Grow Roses	John Jons	1.5
1/25/2014	Grow Great Tomatoes	Ira Gervais	2
1/25/2014	Growing Blueberries	David Cohen	2
1/28/2014	Growing Citrus in the Home Landscape	Chris Anastas	1.5
2/4/2014	Gardening by the Square Foot	John Jons	1.5
2/8/2014	The ABCs of Home Composting	Ken Steblein	2
2/8/2014	Kitchen Gardening	Mary Demeny	2.25
2/11/2014	The Evolution of the North End Garden (MGA Meeting)	Tish Reustle	1
2/13/2014	Rose Pruning for the Home Gardener	John Jons	0.75
2/13/2014	Pecan Graft Wood Collection	Herman Auer	2.5
2/20/2014	Rose Pruning for the Home Gardener (MG Interns)	John Jons	1
2/22/2014	Heirloom Tomatoes	Terry Cuculis	1.5
2/25/2014	Honey Bees Around the Garden	Stewart McAdoo, Robert Marshall	1
3/1/2014	Texas-Tuff Plants for the Home Landscape	Sandra Devall	2.5
3/4/2014	50 Ways to Live a Greener Life	Ken Steblein	1.5
3/11/2014	Tool Talk (MGA Meeting)	Henry Harrison III, Tim Jahnke	1
3/15/2014	Bonsai for Beginners	Clyde Holt	3.75
3/20/2014	Fig Pruning for the Home Orchard	Terry Cuculis	0.5
3/20/2014	Peach Tree Fruit Thinning	Herman Auer	0.5
3/27/2014	Peach Tree Fruit Thinning	Herman Auer, Robert Marshall	1.5
3/29/2014	Tomato Stress Management	Ira Gervais	2
2014 Recertification Hours for MGs		Total CEUs (Hours)	51
Last updated: 3 April 2014			

Reminder: In order to maintain your status as a certified Texas Master Gardener, each year you must complete a minimum of 6 hours continuing education, as well as 12 service hours. Additionally, those hours must be reported using a volunteer hours log.

The 2014 Texas Master Gardener Association Conference

<http://www.2014tmgaconference.org/>



The conference will be hosted by the Permian Basin Master Gardeners on September 25-27, 2014, at the [MCM Grandé Hotel and FUNDome](#), Odessa.

There will be numerous garden field trips, expert presentations, informative exhibits, fun times, and much, much more!

MAKE PLANS TO ATTEND NOW!

[Raffle Tickets Are Available Here Now.](#)

[Conference Hotel Reservations Are Available Here Now.](#)

a special invitation
Master Gardeners are invited



By Mary Lou Kelso
 MG 2000

Lydia Miller, President of the Oleander Society, extends a special invitation to Master Gardeners to Moody Mansion Luncheons and information about the annual festival

A BLOOMING EVENT

Tour the Oleander Garden Park and Moody Mansion
 Plus enjoy a delightful Springtime Luncheon in the Moody
 Mansion Ballroom

\$30.00 per person - 10:30am/2:30pm

Choose a date: April 23, May 7 or May 21, 2014

Minimum 25 - Maximum 50

You do not need to have the minimum in your group. You will be
 part of the total needed.

This event is designed for garden groups and other social groups.

For more information: email lmiller4511@att.net or 409-770-4312

2014 Oleander FESTIVAL

CELEBRATE
 The Wonderful World of Oleanders!
Hardy, Wind-Salt Resistant, Easy to Maintain

Friday, May 2
 Kick-off Luncheon and Silent Auction
 at Moody Gardens Hotel
 11:30 am in the Viewfinders Terrace
 (Reservations Required)

May 3 - 4
 Moody Gardens Visitors Center
 10 am - 4 pm

GRAND OLEANDER SALE
 Over 27 Varieties
 Large, Mid-Size and Dwarf
Plus
 Tropical Plant Vendors, Plant Societies
 and Fun Activities for Children

For More Information Please Call:
 (409) 770-4312

WWW.OLEANDER.ORG

**A PERSONAL INVITATION
 TO
 A BLOOMING EVENT**

PRESENTED BY THE INTERNATIONAL OLEANDER SOCIETY

DATES: APRIL 23, MAY 7, MAY 21, 2014

TIME: 10:30AM TO 2:00PM

LOCATION: MOODY MANSION
 2618 BROADWAY, GALVESTON, TX 77550

Tour The Oleander Garden Park and Moody Mansion and enjoy
 a Springtime Luncheon in the Moody Mansion Ballroom.

\$30.00 per person

Choose a date> April 23, May 7, May 21, 2014
 (RSVP within 7 days of event date)

Groups> Max-50 email lmiller4511@att.net or call 409-770-4312

celebrities amongst us Special Visitors



Chris Wiesinger, otherwise known as The Bulb Hunter was the featured speaker at the Gulf Coast Herb Fair last month. While in the area Chris visited the Extension Office and Demo Gardens. He is seen here presenting Dr. J with his third book, *The Bulb Hunter*, published by Texas A&M University Press. Chris says this latest book, co-authored by Dr. William Welch, includes Chris' personal and historical stories about his bulbs and plenty of how-to's for being successful with bulbs.



Dr. William C. "Bill" Welch, Professor and Landscape Horticulturist (retired) with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, College Station is pictured here with Dr. J and MG Cynthia Mueller. Dr. Welch presented *Perennials & Roses* to our new 2014 Intern Class last month.

Welcome New Member



Please welcome Dana Crawford, MG 2011, who has recently transferred here from Travis County. Dana was born and raised in Southern California, then spent a few years in Arizona and Colorado before coming to Texas in 2001. After trying unsuccessfully to grow a garden in her backyard, she decided to join the Master Gardeners group in Denton County. Since graduating as an Intern in 2011, she had a bit more success in growing a garden!

After a brief stop in McKinney, she joined the Travis County Master Gardeners in 2013. She has enjoyed being with each Master Gardner group and hated to leave after making new friends but found herself spending a lot of time visiting family here in Galveston. She finally decided to follow them to the Gulf Coast and really likes it!

Besides her regular day job, she volunteer with the Festival Beach Food Forest project in Austin and is a graduate student of Environmental Studies at Prescott College. Her studies focuseed on the application of permaculture strategy to sustainable community development. According to David Holmgren, co-founder of the permaculture movement, "Permaculture is a design system for sustainable land use and livelihood." She is looking forward to becoming involved with the Galveston County Master Gardeners.

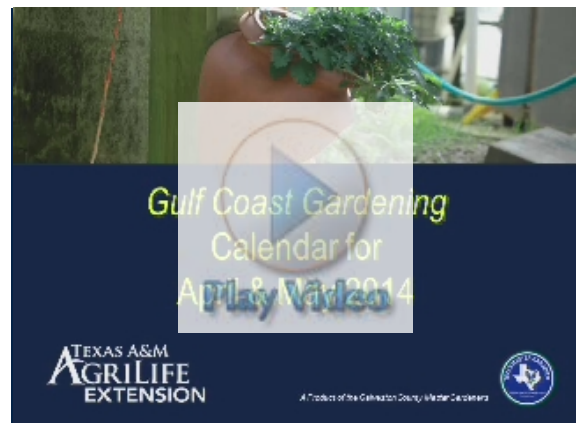
April/May "Things To Do" Gardening Calendar Video



by Jenifer Leonpacher
MG 2010



by Gregory Werth
MG 2012



Click on the "Play Video" icon (above right) to see what a "group effort" can do (by the aforementioned Master Gardeners) to prepare an exceptional "Things to Do" Calendar.

Upcoming Events

Please be sure to register for the programs you want to attend. Accurate attendance counts are needed so that program materials may be on hand for attendees. The following AgriLife Extension Programs are free to the public..

Location: Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office in Carbide Park

4102-B Main Street (FM 519), La Marque, Texas 77568

For course reservations, call 281-534-3413, ext. 12 or email GALV3@wt.net

Tuesday Night & Saturday Seminars

GARDENING FOR JEWELS—HUMMINGBIRDS

Saturday, April 5, 2014

9:00 - 11:00 a.m.

Galveston County Master Gardener Deborah Repasz, photographer and hummingbird enthusiast, will give a PowerPoint presentation highlighting ways to increase hummingbird sightings in your yard, by creating an inviting habitat, including examples of shelter, food, and water, plus a discussion of the impact of the use of pesticides. Plants presented will be proven winners grown in the speaker's yard, as well as other resources to utilize to attract hummingbirds.

THE CULTURE AND CARE OF PALMS

Tuesday, April 15, 2014

6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

Palm tree enthusiast and Galveston County Master Gardener O. J. Miller has over 15 years experience with palms in our area. This program will include an introduction to palms, an overview of the exotics and commonly found palms at nurseries in our area, palm planting methods, palm fertilization, freeze preparation and proper care. The program will include a discussion on the better varieties of palms for Galveston County and the surrounding area.

THE JOY OF DAYLILIES

Tuesday, April 29, 2014

6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

Nell Shimek will present a program on growing and propagating daylilies in our area. Nell has grown and hybridized daylilies for more than 30 years and is currently growing more than 800 varieties in Alvin.

RAINWATER HARVESTING

Saturday, May 10, 2014

9:00 - 11:00 a.m.

This program is presented by Master Gardener Tim Jahnke. Tim will discuss and show ways humans have collected the precious resource of rainwater for more than 500 years with information on current applications for today's gardener.

GALVESTON COUNTY HOME FRUIT GROWER'S TOUR

Saturday, May 17, 2014

9:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon

Three Galveston County fruit orchards are on this year's tour. Vegetable gardens at each site will also be open. This year's tour sites contain a wide variety of fruit trees ranging from a large peach orchard located in Dickinson, the Galveston County Master Gardeners Demonstration Orchard located in La Marque and a sizeable Master Gardener's home orchard located in Santa Fe. Each site will be open from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon. (No pre-registration needed. You may visit sites in any desired order. There is no rescheduling of this event due to inclement weather. Wear appropriate shoes and necessary attire.)

TOUR SITES:

- Wilson and Renee Hillman's Fruits 'N Such orchard at 6309 Ave U, Dickinson Texas, 77539 (located off Bowerman Road and FM 517).832-443-6733
- Galveston County Master Gardener Demonstration Orchard and Garden at 4102 B Main Street, Carbide Park in La Marque Texas, 77568
- Galveston County Master Gardener Bill Verm's home and backyard at 5202 Highland Road in Santa Fe Texas 77517

****Further Information and maps will be posted on the following web sites:**

<http://galveston.agrilife.org/> and <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/index.htm>

bulletin board

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

To volunteer for the **MG Phone Desk** contact Laura Bellmore by e-mail at galv3@wt.net or by calling the office at 281-534- 3413, ext 1.

Libbie's Place Adult Day Care has been designated as a Demonstration Garden for the Master Gardener Association. It is located at 5402 Avenue U in Galveston and is part of Moody Methodist Church outreach ministries (<http://www.moody.org/libbies-place-senior-day-program>). A crew is needed to maintain and upgrade the garden as needed with your time spent counting towards MG volunteer hours. MG Pam Gilbert is heading up the crew and will determine the day, time and frequency of the work days. If you are interested, or have any questions, please contact Pam at 409-771-5620 or by email at DrPGilbert@aol.com to let her know the day/times (AM/PM) that would work best for you. Thank you for your time and consideration in this great new endeavor for the Master Gardeners.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Tour Guides for "First-Thursday-in-a-Month" Public Access & Tour of our Demonstration Garden

Long-winded title but it says what we will be doing. Our Demonstration Garden will be open for touring by the general public on the first Thursday of each month from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. MGs are needed to serve as tour guides for our demonstration Garden. Contact MG Julie Cartmill at 281-932-8896 or email evergreentreesinc@gmail.com or MG Bobbie Ivey at 713-748-8564 or email at blivey@sbcglobal.net to volunteer.

Master Gardener Digital Photo Library Committee

Do not be alarmed/dissuaded with the name of "committee!" If you like to organize things—join our newest volunteer endeavor known as the Master Gardener Digital Photo Library Committee. The current weekly time schedule for this activity is every Thursday from 10 a.m.-12 noon. MG Sandra Devall will be providing leadership for this. Volunteers will be adding photographers' names to digital photos for cataloging/sorting, sorting photos, or looking up botanical names. If any of those tasks fit your interest—just show up and get with Sandra (281-534-3413, Ext. 17 or sandra.devall@co.galveston.tx.us)! The Photo Library has been the primary source for photos used in PowerPoint programs, website, publications, newsletters, etc.

Volunteers are needed to help with the Saturday programs and the Tuesday evening programs. If you can help please contact Christine Anastas (281) 468-3787 or Robert Marshall e-mail rbrtm01@att.net

AgriLife Extension Office Demonstration Garden needs volunteers! The gardens around the AgriLife Extension Office are maintained by Master Gardeners under the team leadership of MG Peggy Budny. This is an opportunity to make a good impression on the many visitors to the AgriLife Extension Office. Come out and have a good time while learning more about ornamentals. Please contact Peggy at 281-334-7997 or by email at fmbmab@verizon.net to find out the schedule and join her team.

VOLUNTEER HOURS LOGS

To report volunteer hours send your log sheets to mghours@wt.net

SPECIALIST & OTHER MG RELATED TRAINING

Please see the Texas Master Gardeners Website for details. Please note that if you go to the website you can find up-to-date information on Specialist Programs that were added in between editions of the newsletter. <http://www.texasmastergardeners.com>. You may download the application forms from that website. Note that all applications for the Specialist Training courses must be approved and signed by Dr. William Johnson. Note that fees do not include lodging or food unless specified otherwise.

Master Gardener Specialist Training Conclave May 15-16, 2014 on Texas A&M Campus

MG Vegetable Specialist; MG Earth-Kind Landscape Specialist; MG Home Fruit Specialist; MG Junior Master Gardener Specialist:

The MG Specialist Conclave is an opportunity for certified Master Gardeners to gain specialist training in a conference setting. Four specialist courses will be taught concurrently at the Texas A&M Horticultural Sciences Department building on the Texas A&M University Campus at College Station, Texas. Certified Master Gardeners with approval and support of their county coordinator may register for one of the training sessions.

Registration \$250

**Master Gardeners completing their requirements are eligible for \$50 in rebates from the Texas Master Gardener Association. On-Line Registration: <http://agriliferegister.tamu.edu> (keyword Master Gardener)

For more information and details on the classes:

<http://txmg.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/files/Conclave-Announcement.pdf>

DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP

The Photography Group meets on the second Wednesday of each month at 1:30 pm at the Extension Office at Carbide Park. This photography group is open to all Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists for fun, learning and practice of photography. Pictures are submitted to the MG/MN database for use in publications and lectures.

NEED A GIFT?

The following Master Gardener award-winning publications are on sale. Stop by the Extension Office to pick them up for yourself or for gift-giving.

The Butterflies of Galveston County
Thumbnail Guide to Gardening for New Gardeners
Ambrosia from Your Back Yard
Bilingual Guide to Yard Care
Herbs for the Upper Gulf Coast of Texas
Our Edible Landscape
Creating the Tropical Look

the last word . . .

PLENTY OF INFO SHARED AT HOME AND GARDEN SHOW

(Editor's Note: This article is a reprint of Dr. Johnson's Weekly Gardening Column in The Galveston County Daily News)



By Dr. William M. Johnson CEA-HORT
& MG Program Coordinator

The 26th Galveston Home & Garden Show was recently held at the Galveston Island Convention Center.

Twenty-four Master Gardener volunteers with the Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office were available to provide information to visitors.

MG distributed publications and plenty of visitors came by to ask plenty of gardening questions. Appreciation also is extended to Stewart Title who sponsored our booth and made it possible for our Master Gardener volunteers to participate in the Home & Garden Show.

The next time you meet a Master Gardener, please give them a thank you for their public service. The following is a sampling of the questions we received:

Q: I have followed your advice to hold off any major pruning of freeze-damaged shrubs and perennials? Can I prune them back now?

A: Before answering, I should note that the above question, or variations of said question, was the most asked question I had to address during this year's Home & Garden Show.

In my Green Thumb column Feb. 5, I advised gardeners to wait awhile before pruning back freeze-damaged plants.

One gardener relayed a conversation she had with her husband as he was preparing to practice major pruning to their home landscape a few days after reading my column. She said she explained to her husband that it was not time to do such pruning because "Dr. Johnson warned against doing so." She conveyed that her husband replied, "You mean that all the other neighbors who are pruning their landscapes on this beautiful day are wrong and Dr. Johnson is right?" She responded yes, and the pruning mission was put off.

So, yes, it would be far safer for the health and performance of landscape shrubs to delay pruning by a few weeks when a cold snap occurs in February. Waiting a few weeks or so to give the plants time to seal off damaged tissue and prepare for new growth is worth denying the understandable urge to prune early.

Pruning too soon also signals plants to send out tender new growth, which would be all the more vulnerable if subsequent cold temperatures occur. Pruning away the dead portions too soon after a cold snap exposes buds that may still be alive. And another frosty morning could wipe out those survivors.

So, I have recommended keeping the shears in the garage and let the dead portions of the plants protect the understory.

The threat of another severe cold snap has considerably lessened. It would be satisfactory to now prune landscape shrubs and perennials that sustained damage from cold weather.

I am still holding back on pruning my banana trees that sustained a moderate amount of damage, as I know the browned leaves still provide some protection from chilly temperatures. In fact, several of the taller banana trees pushed out new leaf growth, but those leaves were also damaged by cold temperatures that occurred a couple of weeks ago.

As I was surveying the shrubs at my office in Carbide Park, I noticed that several Esperanza—also known as Yellow Bells and Tecoma Stans—have produced new growth at the base of plants.

If your cold-sensitive shrubs have started to put out new growth at the base, go ahead and prune back the old top growth.

Be sure to be prepared to cover the new growth with a sheet or blanket as such new growth is particularly sensitive to cold temperatures.

Q: How can I attract beneficial insects to my landscape?

A: We had an insect display box containing a variety of insects collected in the county including several beneficial insects which generated considerable interest and lots of questions, including the one above.

The use of beneficial insects to help manage their pest relatives has been a mainstay among gardeners for a very long time. There are a number of excellent advantages to this method of insect pest control. Utilizing beneficial insects requires a minimum of effort by the gardener and helps reduce the incidence of insect pests with resistance to insecticides.

Gardeners can attract and keep our natural friends in their home landscape and gardens by following a few recommendations, many of which is just good gardening sense that we use anyway.

One way to conserve beneficials is by avoiding indiscriminate use of insecticides. While they play an important role in pest control, indiscriminate and improper use of insecticides can also pose hazards to ourselves and our environment.

For information on how to attract and maintain beneficial insects, visit <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston> and click on the link titled "Beneficials in the Gardens."

Q: My broccoli plants have produced a bountiful display of yellow flowers. Why did this happen?

A: Broccoli is a cool-season vegetable grown as a fall or winter crop in local gardens.

However, we have had some unusually warm days and unusually cool days during the past few weeks and the warm days stimulated broccoli plants to set flowers.

That also means that you missed a portion of your harvest.



Tecoma Stans

Many cold-sensitive landscape shrubs, such as Esperanza or Tecoma Stans, have initiated new growth at the base of dead trunks. Such shrubs can be pruned back to new growth.

MG Judy Anderson is asking for volunteers to host backyard meetings. You may contact Judy at jande10198@aol.com if you would like to volunteer.

2014 MGA MONTHLY MEETINGS

January 20, 2014

Heidi Sheesley - TreeSearch Farms
Pre-Fruit Tree Sale Presentation
1:30 pm - Extension Office
Carbide Park - La Marque

February 11, 2014

Tish Reustle - Activity at Demo Gardens
6:30 pm - Extension Office
Carbide Park - La Marque

March 11, 2014

Henry Harrison III and Tim Jahnke
Garden Tool Maintenance
6:30 pm - Extension Office
Carbide Park - La Marque

April 8, 2014

Karen & Tom Morris - Backyard Meeting
5:30 pm - 2910 Bayshore
Bacliff

May 13, 2014

Barbara & Gary Hankins - Backyard Meeting
5:30 pm - 12030 Sportsman Road
Galveston Island

June 10, 2014

Graduation at Mikey and Allen Isbell's
7:00 pm - 1715 - 35th Street
Galveston Island

July 8, 2014

Heather McKnight, League City Arborist
7:00 pm Extension Office
Greenhouses
Carbide Park - La Marque

August 12, 2014

Mary Lou Kelso, Moody Gardens
Galveston Island
Venues from 9:15 am, Meal @ 5:45 pm, Hotel Party 7:30 pm

September 9, 2014

TBA

October 14, 2014

Mike & Leslie Mize - Backyard Meeting
5:30 pm - 1504 7th Street
League City

November 11, 2014

Ira Gervais - Annual Meeting, Election of Officers
7:00 pm - Extension Office
Carbide Park - La Marque

December 9, 2014

Holiday Meeting - Mikey and Allen Isbell
6:30 pm - 1715 - 35th Street
Galveston Island



*By Judy Anderson
MG 2012*

GALVESTON COUNTY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION

Upcoming Master Gardener Programs

Tuesday, April 8, 2014

Once again Karen and Tom Morris will be hosting the Galveston County Master Gardeners at their home on the Houston Ship Channel. The evening offers a view of the boat traffic on the intercoastal waterway, with an opportunity to stroll through a landscape that features vegetables, and an abundant orchard. There is plenty of parking, but care must be taken to leave the narrow street free for neighbors and emergency vehicles. Directions to the home will be sent by email. Karen and Tom extend an invitation to MG's to bring a pot luck and join them for "dinner on the patio".

FEEDBACK



We Want Your Feedback

We would love to hear from you. Send us your comments or suggestions for future articles, or just let us know how you are using our newsletter. To make sending feedback easy, just click on the button with your response

