

# Gulf Coast Gardening

WRITTEN BY GALVESTON COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS IN COOPERATION  
WITH THE GALVESTON COUNTY OFFICE OF TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION SERVICE

Issue 194 - January-February 2015

## *Chickweed*

Beware, this weed is on the  
invasive plant list of most states

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*Anyone who thinks that gardening begins in the  
spring and ends in the fall is missing the best part of  
the whole year. For gardening begins in January with  
the dream. - Josephine Nuese*



*By Camille Goodwin  
MG 2008*

I usually don't make serious New Year's resolutions, but this year I thought I'd focus on better planning and the dream of what I'd like my gardens to look like. I often walk through my yard and think I'll do something with an area and when the time comes for implementation that idea no longer seems to work or in some cases I can't remember what I had in mind ☹. Since I have several areas that I'd like to refresh or revamp, I've decided to start by taking more garden notes of my landscape to remember what I liked, what I didn't like, which plants did well, which were a waste of time, were too fussy, or needed constant pruning or spraying. I'm also going to try to take more photos from my travels to help me remember what inspired me. One of my dilemmas is that I want different plants in my yard so that it doesn't look like all the other yards in the neighborhood. These plants are sometimes more work, so I have to balance that desire with the desire to enjoy my gardens more and not just see work when I look out the windows. So wish me luck—I'll see if I can follow this plan at least to our GCMG plant sale in February!

We have a long growing season along our Texas Upper Gulf Coast region. Although this is our "winter" we get some lovely days in both January and February to begin our gardening projects when other parts of the country must wait several more months to begin. This current newsletter features several educational articles to help get us thinking on our gardening projects for 2015. The Q&As, from our MG Hot Line on page 4 & 5 describe possible problems that affect rosemary and how to plant the best palms for our region. Moon Gardening is a fun and popular theme garden. Learn how to develop your own on page 6. More and more, Stevia is becoming a popular food supplement. It's featured as our plant of the month on page 7.

We just can't seem to get ahead of the weeds this time of year. Get the latest tips for dealing with the aggressively invasive chickweed (featured on this newsletter cover) in Anna Wygrys' article on page 8. For additional weeds active in our area, check our website at this link: [http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/Weeds/GC-361\\_Galveston-County's-12-Most-Aggressive-Weeds.pdf](http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/Weeds/GC-361_Galveston-County's-12-Most-Aggressive-Weeds.pdf) Learn about the peculiar giant water bug on page 9. The Best Shots piece on pages 10 & 11 feature some of the plants that give our region color and fragrance throughout our winter season. If you love roses, read John Jons' article on page 12 to learn what you should be doing in January and February for big, healthy roses. Page 13 discusses how to get the best tomatoes by growing them from seed.

Donna Ward shares a sweet memory on page 14 and Jan Brick describes ornamental varieties of cabbage and kale on page 15. Enjoy reading about Ira Gervais, our Association president, on page 16. Things remain busy at the Horticulture Demonstration Garden. The Carbide Park update appears on page 17. Don't forget to explore our updated calendar and bulletin board sections where upcoming meetings, seminars, conferences, classes, MG specialists training and volunteer opportunities appear. Dr. Johnson is featured on page 23 and describes how to make our landscapes outdoor living spaces.

We'd love to hear feedback from our readers so that we can continue to improve the newsletter. Please take a few minutes to send your thoughts and comments to Linda Steber at: [steber8@msn.com](mailto:steber8@msn.com) We thank you in advance for taking the time to send your feedback.



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Chickweed - Beware, this weed is on the invasive plant list in most states - Photo by Anna Wygrys

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By B. J. Yonley  
MG 2004

# ask a master gardener

## Q&A

### Hot Line Topics

**Q**uestion: I planted a rosemary plant last year and it was dead by mid-summer. What's the likely cause?

Found in every form from low and spreading to more than four feet tall, the evergreen shrub Rosemary tolerates both poor soils and our scorching Texas sun. It is also cold hardy in South Texas (but needs some winter protection in the rest of the state).

Rosemary is easily grown. However, in Galveston County we gardeners are sometimes frustrated by our heavy gumbo soil, then by high humidity. Any one of these conditions can kill tenacious rosemary because this herb is generally happy when it's hot and dry. So the most probable cause of death of any newly established rosemary plant is simply too much moisture in the soil.

Both gardeners and cooks love rosemary which is a member of the mint family. When I lived in London, I frequently "pinched" some from the tall shrubs that towered and spilled over almost every stone wall in my neighborhood. Then I stuck the twig in my pocket for its satisfying fresh fragrance that made me smile throughout my day.

On my way home from the market with either pork or chicken for supper, I broke off several sprigs with their little blue-gray needles and tiny lavender flowers. Later, I would add their distinctive and delicious flavor to my roasted meat.

Grown in Mediterranean countries like Spain, Italy, and Morocco for centuries, rosemary is a popular aromatic herb that adds charm to Texas landscapes and delights in the Texas kitchen.

So try rosemary again. Raise the bed! Try planting rosemary in whiskey barrels if adequate soil drainage is a problem. Add some sand and organic matter to our clay soil to improve drainage, and water sparingly.

Grow our versatile friend in full sun and enjoy its delicious beauty. Then share a sprig of your thriving shrub with a friend to root or to enjoy in recipes.



*Rosmarinis officinalis* (upright variety)



*R. officinalis prostrate* (creeping variety)



Photos by Monica Martens and Herman Auer

Rosemary's deep blue blossoms are both tasty and healthy





By O. J. Miller  
MG 2011 Intern

## Palms

**Q**uestion: When should I plant palms? How should I plant them? What varieties are good for this area and which ones should I avoid?

The best time to plant palms is after the last frost. This gives palms time to get established before the heat of summer. Many stores do not begin stocking palms until March or April so plant as soon as they are available.

Palms that are grown in containers can be easily planted. However, this does not apply to palms that are being relocated. Only relocate palms that have developed a trunk. Palms that have not developed a trunk are difficult to relocate because they cannot tolerate root disturbance. Plant your palm as you would any other tree. Mulch and water thoroughly. It is best to keep turfgrass and trimmers away from your palm.

Staking might be necessary for palms over 6-8' tall. Nails should NEVER be driven into the trunk as this damages the trunk and invites unwanted pests. One method is to use three one-foot sections of 2x4's bound around the trunk using metal or rubber strapping material. Then the braces can be set against and nailed into the 2x4's, NOT the trunk. Stakes should not be left in place over a year.

After about a week, you can begin your fertilization schedule. There are fertilizers specifically for palms but you can also use a balanced tree fertilizer. Fertilize every 4-6 weeks during the growing season with your last application being around the first of August. Water your palm when soil is dry to about your second knuckle. Except for the Everglades palm, most palms don't like wet feet.

Palms should be pruned to remove dead fronds, but take care not to overprune. As with crepe myrtles, many palms have suffered at the hands of an overzealous pruner. Fronds are critical to the growth and development of the palm. Fronds that are starting to turn yellow should not be removed as they are still contributing to the health of the palm. Remove fronds once they have turned brown.

Our weather over the last several years has brought some interesting challenges to palm growers. Even though palms are often found along the coast, they can suffer from salt buildup in the soil during periods of drought. It is important to water regularly to reduce salt buildup. Similarly, our last couple of winters have taken a toll on palms in our area. When near freezing weather is predicted, it is important that plants are thoroughly watered. A dehydrated plant, especially with a northern exposure, does not fare well in a freeze.

Our last few winters have also had implications for the varieties that are recommended for this area. Some palms should be avoided, as they might require replacement every few years, such as the Alexander, Bottle, Foxtail and the Christmas Tree palm (known as *Adonidia* or Dwarf Royal palm, *Veitchia merrillii*). Some varieties of the Queen palm do fairly well, especially with a southern exposure. Pygmy Date palms can also fare well if well established. Some of the varieties that do well in our area are the Everglades, Australian Fan, Washington Fan, California Fan, Needle, Sabal palms, the Pindo and Jelly palm (the *Butia* genus), and the Phoenix genus palms (includes the true Date palm, Canary Island Date and Wild Date (*Phoenix sylvestris*)).

About the only feather palms that will do well are the Jelly or Pindo palms. If you are lucky enough to find it on-line, one fishtail palm that has done well for me here is the Himalayan fishtail palm (*Caryota maxima* 'Himalaya'). With plenty of water, it is a fast grower with some cold tolerance.

Another notable palm (and a personal favorite of mine) that does well in our area is the Bismarck palm. This native of Madagascar is a rather slow grower here, so consider planting a 15-20 gallon size plant. Unlike many other palms, this one does not tolerate root ball disturbance. Remove it from the container and set it into the prepared site. With some care, this majestic palm with its blue-grey fronds will be a wonderful addition to your landscape.



Photos by O.J. Miller & Jenifer  
Leonpacher

Bismarck Palm



Canary Island Date Palm

## THEME GARDENING

# Moon Gardens

A moon garden is a delightful concept in garden design that refers to any garden designed to be enjoyed at night. By planting flowers that reflect the night light and bloom at night you can add more color and fragrance to your yard. Moonlight theme gardens are very popular. Your moon garden can be a strolling garden or one designed for viewing from a favorite location like a porch or patio. You should design it to be viewed from both the exterior and interior of your home. It is one of the most popular and easy theme gardens to recreate.

Moon gardens are often described as white, magical, mystical, evening/night or romantic gardens. Key elements to incorporate in your moon garden design include architectural items, lighting (artificial and natural), and plants—especially those that take on life at night with their color, texture, movement or fragrance.

Architectural elements form the “non-living” structure of the moon garden and can include walls, fences and trellises that divide and define your garden’s space and shape, paths and borders that guide the visitor through the garden, and the area provided for viewing the garden such as arbors, pergolas and benches. Architectural items can include features such as water ponds, water bubblers, interesting sculptures and statuary like bird baths and planters. Color, texture and purpose should be considered when selecting your architectural elements. Is the item going to be a focal point, will it play a supportive role that adds to

the enchantment of the space or is it intended to disappear at night? For example a climbing honeysuckle will appear to float in the air if hanging from a dark colored arbor or trellis. To add to your garden’s intrigue, consider interesting walkways, paths and borders. If constructed from light colored sand, stepping stones or limestone they will radiate light and look alluring in moonlight. Light colors make the path to specific locations evident. Dark colored stepping stones give the illusion of walking on air. Architectural elements should be chosen to enhance and balance your garden’s overall design and should not dominate.

**Lighting:** Although the moon garden is designed to be viewed in the light of the moon, often the moon is not in a phase or a location in the sky to effectively light your garden. Artificial light can be used to supplement moonlight by emphasizing specific focal points, plants, accents or features. Lighting can be used to create shadows or dance against a background. Various types of lights can be used including a street lamp that shines on your property, a gas or electric lamp-post in your yard; twinkle lights such as those used at Christmas, hanging lanterns, soft landscape up-lighting, and lights suspended from trees or above seating areas can simulate moonlight. Soft lighting is best and special attention should be paid to the position and height of the artificial light. Solar lights are a great option as they cast warm glows and are not as bright as electric. Lighting is important; but it is

the element many people forget to plan for in their design.

**Plants make the moon garden:** Small ornamental trees and trees with textured bark or interesting sculpted forms create silhouettes and shadows when illuminated. Variegated grasses and contrasting foliage plants provide texture, movement and catch light. Ferns, herbs and scented geraniums also produce fine texture and bring fragrance to your night garden. Herbs should be planted along walkways or in containers near seating areas so the garden visitor can brush against them, adding fragrance for the senses. Flowers are important to moon gardens. White flowers glow brighter and luminesce at night. Pale pink, blue, gray or yellow flowers will reflect at night, but will be more muted than white flowers. Night blooming flowers are essential. They provide fragrance and attract moths and bat pollinators. Silver foliage plants and shrubs with stripes, spots or contrasting leaves create texture and last most of the season. For your moon garden, choose a variety of white annuals, perennials, bulbs, shrubs and trees that bloom at different times for a garden that you can enjoy throughout the year. Evergreens provide shapes and can serve as a dark background

to accent the white or pale flowers. Palms and bamboo provide movement in the breeze.

**Placement and Use:** Choose a spot that is in sunlight so that it will be in moonlight too. Your garden’s location should be easily accessible so you can enjoy the sights and scents of your moon garden. Your garden should be planned for your personal enjoyment. Think about the style, shape and placement of your garden. Will it be private just for you, or will you share it with family and friends?

Whatever you decide you’ll end up with a captivating way to relax and enjoy your garden in the evening.

## SUGGESTED PLANTS

White Angelonia, shasta daisy, petunia, white roses, white day lilies; variegated grasses and cannas, white phlox, angel’s trumpet, evening stock, night blooming cereus, white oleanders, gardenia, magnolia, spirea, yucca, flowering tobacco, white hydrangea, clematis, honeysuckle, obedient plant, tuberose, silver and variegated artemisia, viburnum, narcissus, white rain lilies, white crinum, white caladiums, white crepe myrtles, moonflowers, white verbenas, dusty miller, silver sage, various herbs and Leucospermum.



By Camille Goodwin  
MG 2008



Photo by Camille Goodwin

# Plant of the Month

## *Stevia (Stevia rebaudiana)*



By Jan Brick  
MG 2001

In a world searching for all things “natural” combined with a mounting desire to “go green,” to experiment with cultivating a number of our own edibles—and to lose those extra few pounds, it is no wonder that *Stevia* has attracted a good deal of attention.

*Stevia* is a perennial herb of the sunflower family; a genus of shrub-like herbs that include over two hundred species native to tropical and semi-tropical areas. The Indians of South America and the southwestern United States regularly used the leaves of the *Stevia* plant to sweeten tea and for medicinal brews for centuries; Spanish explorers who conquered much of South America and its Indian populations introduced it into their European homelands where it became a popular sweetener by the 1800s.

According to “The *Stevia* Story: A Tale of Incredible Sweetness & Intrigue,” *Stevia* species were first researched by Spanish botanist and physician Pedro Jaime Esteve, whose surname was Latinized to form the word, *Stevia*, which became the genus name for the plants. In 1931, French researchers isolated the glycosides that give *Stevia* its sweet properties. By the early 1970s, Japan became the first country to cultivate and market it as an alternative to refined sugar and artificial sweeteners.

*Stevia* may be a worthwhile plant to grow and a welcome addition to any herb garden. Use *Stevia rebaudiana* since it is the only sweet variety. Raised beds will prevent wet feet, while an organic mulch and frequent watering ensure a constant supply of moisture. Do not let it dry out, but over-watering and standing water will promote fungal disease. *Stevia* is a weak perennial, so plant after the last frost and treat it as an annual. It is tolerant of most soils but needs six to eight hours of daily sun while growing to its nearly three foot height.

Research on the effects of *Stevia* on blood pressure has been conducted in China and Japan. “Two long-term Chinese studies appear to show that *Stevia* may lower blood pressure in some people with high blood pressure. Most studies show that *Stevia* does not have an impact on blood sugar levels, and, in fact, that it may have hypoglycemic effects and it may be useful in the treatment of diabetes. There has been some concern about minor gastrointestinal effects, headaches and dizziness with *Stevia*. In addition, some studies have commented about purity and toxicity concerns. Mixing *Stevia* with sugar alcohols may have a laxative effect. Pregnant women, diabetics and those with high blood pressure should avoid using *Stevia* due to possible side effects. While the Japanese have studied *Stevia* and consider it a safe product for the general population, caution regarding frequency of use for certain populations should be considered.”

“According to the Herb Research Foundation, numerous scientists, and tens of millions of consumers throughout the world, especially in Japan, the herb is safe and intensely sweet, which could make it a popular non-caloric sweetener.” - - - Rob McCaleb, President, Herb Research Foundation, Boulder, Colo., USA

As with all things newly introduced to the marketplace, a certain amount of prudence is suggested. Proceed with caution when contemplating or initializing any changes in diet. Be sure to discuss with your physician to ascertain any possible side effects or adverse effects with treatments or medicines already a part of your daily routine.



Photo by GCMGA Digital Library

The FDA approves only highly refined forms of *Stevia* for sale and use as sweeteners

Coca-Cola and Pepsi-Cola use it in their beverages

*Stevia* is much sweeter than sugar and calorie-free

The leaves can be crushed into powder or mixed with water to be used as a substitute for sugar

The whole leaves add to the flavor of herbal teas

Approximately 3 tablespoons chopped fresh *Stevia* equals one cup of sugar or 1 teaspoon processed *Stevia* extract powder

Approximately 1 tablespoon of dried *Stevia* powder equals one cup of sugar or 1 teaspoon processed *Stevia* extract powder





## The Modern Paul Revere Project on Weeds

By Anna Wygrys  
MG 1993

I feel like running through the county shouting, “THE CHICKWEED IS HERE! THE CHICKWEED IS HERE!” This cool season annual is a major weed pest to gardeners. Many think it is perennial because it can survive the heat of summer in shady, moist areas, and the numerous seeds will germinate as soon as cooler fall temperatures arrive.

“Star Weed,” “Winter Weed,” “Satin Flowers” and “Tongue Grass” are some of the common names used for this native of Eurasia. Common Chickweed (*Stellaria media*) is in the pink family, Caryophyllaceae. It is an edible herb, and seeds can be purchased by gourmets relishing a chickweed salad. But BEWARE, this is on the invasive plant list of most states.

The shiny, yellow-green leaves are elongated with a rounded base that tapers to a point. Leaves are opposite on the sprawling, slender, weak stems. Large mats will form as stems form roots where nodes make contact with the soil. The white flowers have five pedals, but are so deeply divided that there appears to be ten. Blooms develop at the growing tips of stems. The fragile roots also form a shallow, matted mass that is difficult to remove by hand pulling. The numerous seeds are small, reddish/brown, and disc-shaped.

Pulling chickweed is a frustrating operation. You pull, it breaks. You pull, it breaks. Loosen the soil with a blade or weeder to encourage most of the root system to pull out. Better yet, eliminate emotional trauma by weeding at the seedling stage. It is much easier than trying to remove mature plants.

Chickweed is very sensitive to broad spectrum and broadleaf herbicides containing dicamba, dichlorprop or triclopyr. Products that prevent the germination and growth of the seeds must be applied prior to the seasonal eruption of plants because these chemicals need time to permeate the soil. These pre-emergent products should contain simazine, dithiopyr, dacthal, oryzalin, pendimethalin or isozaben. For lawns, corn gluten is an organic preventative of seed germination and growth.

A useful hint for direct application of herbicide to eradicating large colonies of chickweed growing under shrubs is spot-treatment by putting on a waterproof glove and then a cotton glove. Pour herbicide into a shallow container and moisten the lower surface of the gloves with the liquid. Pat the chemicals directly onto the chickweed. This will protect the foliage of desirable plants while getting the herbicide on the weeds.



Chickweed Seedpod



Chickweed Flower



Chickweed Germination



Chickweed Seedling



Chickweed Plant



Chickweed Roots

Photos by Anna Wygrys and Herman Auer



## beneficials

# Giant Water Bug

**Other Common Names: Electric Light Bulb, Toe Biter**



by Betty Gray  
MG 2006

**W**ith the Giant Water Bug (*Lethocerus americanus*), nature has outdone itself on the weirdness scale. This aquatic bug breathes through its behind, carries its own air supply, devours mosquito larvae and the males of some species take care of the kiddies. Sound like husband material to you? It would to me, if I were a female *L. americanus*!

Giant Water Bugs are members of the order Hemiptera, true bugs. They are the largest true bug in the United States and Canada, growing up to 4 inches in length (Fig. 4). Sometimes confused with a roach or beetle, the Giant Water Bug has a flat, oval-shaped body that is tan or brown. A closer look will reveal a short, pointed beak on the underside of the head (Fig. 1) and wings that overlap at the bottom end of the abdomen, forming an "X."

Its body design makes the Giant Water Bug a formidable predator (Fig. 2), well-suited for hunting in its habitat. The

forelegs are tipped with a hook-shaped claw to grasp and hold prey. Water bugs swim with their flattened hind legs that resemble oars. Using its hind legs, the bug grabs hold of a plant growing close to the surface of a fresh water pond or stream and snatches passing prey with its powerful front legs. Instantly, the Giant Water Bug pierces its victim with its sharp beak and injects a powerful toxin. The toxin has two purposes. First, it paralyzes the prey. Then, it liquefies the internal parts of the prey's body so the hunter can suck up a liquid repast.

The potential menu for a Giant Water Bug is impressive, including aquatic insects (larvae and adults), crustaceans, tadpoles, salamanders, fish, and amphibians. The Giant Water Bug can catch and eat an animal 50 times its size, the equivalent of a person slurping up a whole elephant milkshake in one sitting!

The life cycle of the Giant Water Bug involves simple

metamorphosis: egg to nymph to adult in 1-2 months. Adults live about one year. A female *L. americanus* lays her eggs above water on plants and other objects. Giant Water Bugs belonging to two other genera (*Abedus* spp. and *Belostoma* spp.), are both found in California but not in Texas, and they both exhibit paternal care of the eggs.

*Abedus* spp. and *Belostoma* spp. females lay their eggs on the back of the males, and that is the extent of female parenting responsibilities. Males carry the eggs until they hatch, taking care to expose them to air periodically to prevent the growth of fungus. They also "brood pump:" making water move over the eggs to increase oxygen diffusion.

A unique adaptation to living in the water is the manner in which a Giant Water Bug breathes. Snorkel-like breathing tubes are located at the hind end of the abdomen (Fig. 3). These tubes extend to the surface of the water, where they allow for an exchange of air from the at-

mosphere to a bubble of air the bug keeps trapped beneath its wings. From the bubble, air enters the body through spiracles (holes) in the abdomen.

Giant Water Bugs have found our water garden at the County Extension Office to be suitable for living. While Giant Water Bugs are active all year, they are most active in late summer and early fall. Then, they fly from the shallows to search for deeper water where they can remain moderately active during cooler winter weather. This is the time during which they are most likely to make contact with people.

Because they are attracted to light, we often find them in parking lots and under porch lights: hence the nickname "electric light bug." If you find one alive, either avoid handling it at all or handle with much caution. Water bugs can inflict a painful bite, the source of another common name, "Toe Biter."

The bite is not considered medically dangerous, unless the victim happens to have an allergic reaction to it. While these



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

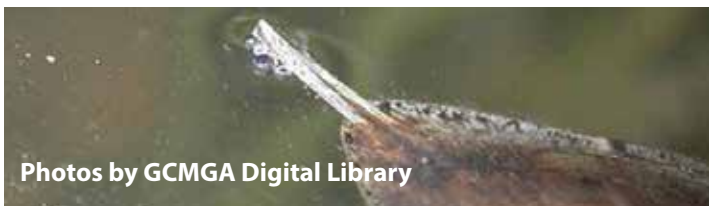


Fig. 3



Fig. 4

Photos by GCMGA Digital Library

# MG Best Shots



Pansy



Nandina



Oncidium



*Camellia japonica*



Photos by Mona Ray and Herman Auer

Narcissus



Sweet Pea





By Mona Ray  
MG 1987

## COLOR & FRAGRANCE IN JANUARY

It is not difficult to achieve color and fragrance in the Galveston County January garden. Color in the winter garden comes not only from blooms, but also from berries and other fruits. To enjoy the most color even in inclement winter weather, use these plants near entrances and walkways, especially the plants with winter fragrance. (This placement is also a good consideration for fragrant plants of any season.) A tool to assist in garden planning is a garden diary in which is recorded bloom, berries, and other colors in every month, better still, every week. This will be a guide in choosing a new plant to try, using more of what has done well, or perhaps finding better placement for plants to enjoy in winter.

**Shrubs for color:** The star of winter blooming shrubs is the camellia. The hundreds of combinations of reds, pinks, and white, spotlighted against its very dark glossy foliage, stands out against other greens in the landscape. By January, the earlier blooming *Camellia sasanqua* may overlap the later blooming *Camellia japonica*, often commonly called simply sasanquas and japonicas. *C. japonica* is usually larger and is long lasting when cut. *C. sasanqua*, though the blooms are smaller, shows well in the landscape because the blooms seem to cover the plant. Camellias can be successfully grown here, but like other plants, all varieties do not do equally well, especially the later blooming varieties. *C. sasanqua* is a common rootstock for grafts, and grafted plants are said to do better in our area. Good *C. japonica* varieties to try are "Debutante", "Jordan's Pride", and "Mathotiana" (sometimes sold as Purple Dawn, a descriptive name because the dark pink flower has purple edges). "Silver Waves" and "Marie Bracey" are also good here, but they are later blooming camellias. Less well known camellias are *C. reticulata* and *C. saluensis*. Other shrubs that bloom in January are Christmas Cheer azalea (*Rhododendron*), Turk's cap (*Malvaviscus*), and *Rosa mutabilis*. Not just for pots, the poinsettia, *Euphorbia pulcherrima*, grows to five feet tall in Galveston County and has a reputation for coming back from freezes.

**Shrubs and trees with berries:** The main attraction of some shrubs and trees is berries. *Nandina domestica* is available in several cultivars, but the common tall nandina holds its berries up where they can be seen. The foliage is a size and texture contrast to other foliage and may also have a red tinge. Red berries are also found on *Pyracantha coccinea*, birds eye pepper (*Capsicum*), several *Ilex* species such as holly, and yellow berries on *Duranta repens*.

**Shrubs for fragrance:** The fragrance of the large evergreen *Eleagnus pungens*, Russian olive, is more attention grabbing than its blooms. The leaves have a silvery appearance on the lower surface. It has oddly spotted and strongly fragrant tiny blossoms. Sweet olive, *Osmanthus fragrans*, also has insignificant flowers with a fragrance out of proportion to its size—such a nice surprise when you walk by. It is a surprise because sometimes the fragrance is released freely on the air and sometimes it is not. Another winter fragrant shrub is winter honeysuckle, *Lonicera fragrantissima*, a slowly spreading shrub, not a vine. It has attractive red translucent berries that are attractive to the birds.

**Bulbs:** Paperwhite narcissus, *Narcissus papyraceus*, is an easy and reliable bulb. Other narcissus may come and go, but paperwhites come to stay. Since they naturalize, they are a popular pass-along plant. Unfortunately, the varietal names are often lost. Narcissus have six petals and a corona or cup. This cup is small on paperwhites, and larger in the later-blooming type of narcissus commonly called daffodils. The cup can also be slit with a petal-like appearance, as in the photograph. Narcissus will naturalize for an informal display. If narcissus is grown in the lawn, it is a good idea to use them away from the house where their maturing foliage will be less noticeable. There are varieties with white cups, pale yellow cups, and darker yellow cups.

**Annuals and perennials:** Pansies, often sold by the flat, are a popular annual for this area in colors galore. The large flowered pansies come from complex crosses of *Viola tricolor*, *V. cornuta*, *V. lutea*, and others. Their familiar faces come as large-flowered pansies as well as the miniature Johnny-jump-ups, *V. tricolor* (also known as love-in-idleness). Sweet peas (pictured), *Lathyrus odoratus*, are available in many cultivars and fall into several groups. Pinks are in the genus *Dianthus*, and may be annuals or perennials. Most have blue-gray or gray-green foliage, in contrast to greener plants. Pinks are usually smaller than carnations and have fewer petals. The ones pictured with the pansies are pink in color, but the common name comes from the pinked or notched edges. The China pink, *D. chinensis*, may survive mild winters and is widely used for bedding. A perennial that may not be very commonly grown is the winter iris, *Iris unguicularis* (synonym *I. stylosa*). The fragrant bloom is short-stemmed and in purple tones with contrasting veins. *Lobularia maritima* or sweet alyssum forms low mounds covered with scented flowers. Salvias may be annual or perennial and becoming somewhat woody. The yellow *Salvia madrensis* does not start its bloom until fall, and no wonder that it is late as it reaches a great height before it blooms. Another salvia known to bloom in January is Carabiniere, a wonderful deep purple, which one year bloomed for twelve months in a row; it may not be readily available. Other annuals and perennials for this time of year are firespike, *Odontonema strictum*, and shrimp plant, *Justicia brandegeana*.

**Orchids:** The *Oncidium* pictured has extremely thick, tough leaves. The one-inch flowers occur on branched stems up to five feet long, beginning in October. It has proved to be a very tough and long lived orchid, surviving outdoors at temperatures from 40 to 100 degrees F.

With so many colorful and fragrant options available, we can all add a little color to those gray winter days.



## Rose Bed Monthly Update

by John Jons  
MG 2003

**H**ow to grow those great big healthy roses: What you should be doing in January and February. Throughout the year I get questions on “What should I be doing to my roses, now?” So, to help answer these questions, I have drafted articles for our newsletter that will highlight what you should be doing to your roses during the coming month.

**January:** Not much going on in the rose garden in January. Think about the problems you encountered growing roses last year.

**Garden Bed:** Make some decisions.

- Is your current rose bed in a sunny, airy (air movement) and well drained place? If not, you may not have healthy roses.
- Evaluate your roses. If a rose did not perform to your expectations, dig it up (called shovel pruning) and give to someone else. Use the spot (assuming it a good spot for growing roses) for a new rose to be planted in February or March.
- Start researching the roses you want to grow this upcoming year.
- Start building a new rose bed or replenish your existing beds with compost and soil.
- Check the pH of the soil in your rose bed. A reading of 6.0-6.8 is good and 6.5 to 6.8 is ideal. Consider using sulfur to lower the pH.
- Check-out your sprinkler system.

**Safety:** As you will be working in the “dirt” make sure you are protected with a tetanus shot or tetanus booster.

**Fungicide and Insecticide Spray Program:** If you want to spray - consider what kind of fungicide and insecticide program you want to use on your roses. It's not necessary to spray roses but keep in mind that all roses (like all other plants) are susceptible to varying degrees of fungal and insect attacks. The only purpose in spraying is to mitigate the damage done by fungus and insects. If a particular variety of rose is very susceptible to a particular fungus and the environmental conditions are optimal for that particular fungus, it can kill the rose or weaken it to make it more susceptible to other diseases. In regards to insects, with the exception of the (new to our area) chili thrips which attack the new spring growth on roses and

many other garden plants with same level of devastation—looks like mild growth-retarding herbicide damage. Chili thrips insect damage tends to be minimal and usually not worth spraying with a insecticide—as you will also kill the good insects. A good water spray on the plant will usually remove most of the insects that may damage a plant.

**February:** Mid-to-late February rose garden activity starts to increase.

- **Pruning:** Prune after Valentine's Day to early March. Learn about how to prune your bushes before you jump in and chop away. Check the Master Gardener website for upcoming programs.
- **Garden Bed:** It's still not too late to rework your existing rose bed soil by adding extra soil or compost. Do not mulch until you have planted all your roses and you have fertilized them (in March).
- **Plant the New Roses.** Typically, new roses will not be available in the stores till February through April. Catalogue orders may have to be shipped by April. Remember—do your research on a rose before you buy it! Consider consulting a copy of the American Rose Society's “Handbook for Selecting Roses” or visit Everyrose.com. to gather information on a particular rose variety. Buy only roses that are grade #1 and are proven to be relatively disease resistant and do well in our area. Do not fertilize the rose until it has been in the ground for about six weeks.
- **Fungicide and Insecticide Spray Program:** If you had a problem last year, now is the time to begin a fungus prevention program. If you had black spot last year start out with a curative fungicide spray. Only spray for insects if it's a problem that you cannot tolerate.
- **Propagation:** Now is the time to subdivide own-root roses like shrub and miniature roses and to try to root a few rose cuttings.
- **Water:** Usually we have low temperatures and enough rain this time of year to require minimal watering of the rose bed.



Photo by Wayne Elliott



# Tomato enthusiasts will love this

## Growing Tomatoes from Seed



By Ira Gervais  
MG 2011

**W**e grow tomatoes from seed because we can choose our varieties, we can get the seedling when we need them and we can watch them grow from the packet to our table. Most of all, everyone knows that home grown tomatoes just taste better!

- Start by planning. Where will you start the seeds and where will you plant them in your garden? They will need 8 hours of sunlight.
- Decide how many plants you will need (about 1 per person) and what variety you want. Select a tomato variety that suits your use and taste. Always use a disease-resistant variety in our area. Seed packets give good information on the varieties resistance.
- If you are canning, a determinate variety works best as they produce their production within a 30 day period.
- Cherry tomatoes or small fruit variety tomatoes tend to be sweeter than most other tomatoes. They are great for salads or just picking and eating off the vine.
- Color of the pigment tends to produce different balances of sugars and acids. Orange, yellow and pink pigments tend to taste milder and are less acidic than red tomatoes. These are good for salads, slicing and drying.
- Paste varieties are good for cooking and salsas.
- Tomatoes with plenty of foliage capture a lot of sunlight and can convert more sunlight into sugars and other flavor components. (Heirlooms have a larger amount of leafage than hybrids and many claim they taste better.)

In the end, tomato flavor is a matter of taste—your taste.

Start seedlings about 6 weeks before the date of published last frost in your area so they will be ready to go in the ground after most of the frost danger has past.

- The season is best extended at the beginning rather than trying to stretch into late June or July so you will need to get your transplants in early. Early Season (matures 50-69 days) and Mid Season (matures 70-79 days) varieties work best in our area. By late June to early July, the summer heat and repetitive high night-time temperatures (above ~72°) in our area will effectively end the production of quality tomatoes, so Late Season (matures 80 + days) varieties (like heirlooms) will not produce much if planted late in the season. Stinkbugs and Early Blight can also bring the season to an early close.
- Seeds will germinate in 7-10 days at a temperature of 70-80 degrees F. Make sure when seedlings start to emerge that they have plenty of light, or use fluorescent grow lights.

Know where you will place the transplants to get the necessary light. You can use an outdoor cold frame or a sunny (8+ hours) indoor area. If you choose fluorescent lights to grow your seedlings, keep the light no more than 2 inches above the seedlings.

To guarantee the best transplants at the right time, start 2-3 batches about 10 days apart. Keep back a start in reserve should you lose some to a frost or freeze.

### Seed Starting Process:

- Fill cell-packs, (if cell-packs are not available other containers can be used to start seeds, such as “Jiffy” peat pellets, egg cartons, pans, etc.) with a good sterilized seed starting mix or soil-less mix.
- Using a dibble or small screwdriver, make a hole in the center of the potting mix about ¼” deep and drop in 2-3 seeds and refill hole.
- Moisten growing medium. Keep moistened not wet. Don’t allow seed mix to dry out.
- Cover cell-packs or the growing pot. The cell-pack trays usually have a clear plastic dome covering. The clear plastic dome creates a mini green house environment. If you don’t have a dome you can use a clear plastic zip-loc bag sealed with the pot inside. Punch a few breather holes in the plastic bag. (Don’t forget to place ID tags on seedling pots.)
- Keep planted seeds at about 70-80 degrees F and keep them covered until seeds germinate (7-10 days). They may not germinate if too cold or if they get too wet or dry.
- Remove clear plastic dome when most of the seedlings have emerged.
- Move them to full light soon. Increase light levels to prevent the seedlings from stretching and producing a weak leggy plant. Consider setting up fluorescent lighting or grow lights. (A brighter light will help keep the seedling short and stout.)
- Keep seedlings no more than 2 inches from the fluorescent lights. Keep the lights on for 12-18 hrs. The seedlings will do better with a rest period.
- Do not overwater seedlings as it may lead to damping off.
- Transplant seedlings to a larger container (example - an 8 oz. Styrofoam cup with a few drain holes in the bottom) when the first true leaves appear from the seedlings.

A week prior to transplanting into the garden, harden off your plants to outside conditions. For the first 2-3 days, protect them from wind and direct sun. Gradually expose them to garden conditions as weather permits. Hardening off strengthens plant cell structure. It also results in a faster growing plant after transplanting into the garden.



Photos by GCMGA Digital Library



By Donna J. Ward  
MG 1996

## Shelling Peas PEA FARM REVISITED

**H**ey - *this used to be fun*. At least I thought it was. My Grandma was an accomplished practitioner of the Tom Sawyer method of getting a job done. No—she didn't talk me into whitewashing any fences, but she had me convinced that shelling peas, stringing beans and churning butter were fun things for little girls to do.

She would sit me down in the fenced chicken yard on an overturned wooden box. My scrawny legs were flanked on either side by a tin bucket, my back pressed up against the chicken coop. One bucket held crisp, freshly picked pea pods from her small-town Missouri garden.

The empty bucket was to hold the little round green jewels after I coaxed them from the pods. My job was to separate the two, and toss the emptied pods to the chickens which they scarfed down in a matter of seconds.

The frenetically prancing critters milled nervously in front of me. They knew the game was about to begin and they were anxiously waiting to gobble up the green tidbits. I would throw the emptied pods as far as I could—'cause to tell the truth—I was scared of them chickens. I never admitted that to Grandma—she wouldn't have understood. She was farm-raised, and I was a city girl.

I would shell the peas as fast as my little fingers could go, and pitched those pods as far as they would sail. My goal was to keep those noisy feathered buggers as far from me as possible.

Each time they ran toward me en masse anticipating a morsel, I would send another empty pod sailing over their heads. They turned in unison and ran the opposite direction in frenetic pursuit, clucking incessantly, shoving each other aside while exhibiting no manners whatsoever.

After my initial apprehension upon entering the chicken yard, shelling, throwing and watching the pursuit became a fun sport,

at least from my vantage point. It was a game that nobody won, although the chickens came pretty darned close.

Last year, I planted our first batch of English peas back in very early spring when it was still cold and a light mist was falling. As I recall, it wasn't the kind of day where you wanted to spend too much time outdoors. Maybe that was the problem, too cold and too wet.

To say that the germination rate was poor would be a gross understatement. The germination rate was zero/zip/zilch. My husband sowed a second batch later that year under warmer, drier conditions, and he was much more successful than I.

When they broke through the ground, their fast developing tendrils quickly grabbed the supports that he had provided and they were off! White blossoms appeared, and were soon replaced by tender green pods which began to fill almost voluptuously.

Harvest time couldn't have come too soon to suit me since fresh peas are pretty high on my list of vegetable partialities. I even enjoy the frozen packaged ones grown by the big green guy and the little elves.

Now here I am sitting out on my back deck. It's a breezy spring day, and I have pulled a chair up to the umbrella table that holds a red plastic colander. A pile of crisp, freshly picked pea pods from my garden is in front of me dumped onto yesterday's front page of the Houston Chronicle. The goal is the same—separate the round green jewels from the pods.

Later my thumbs hurt, and my right forefinger is feeling kind of tender from pulling on the 'string' that allows the pod to open, exposing the peas. Lucky is finding a pod that contains at least six round globes. Mostly I find three or four, and they're not all that big. One pound of unshelled pods yields a grand total of seven ounces of peas. I pitch the empty pods onto the compost pile instead of sailing them over the heads of nervous chickens. *This just isn't fun anymore.*



Photos by GCMGA Digital Library



# THE ISLAND GARDEN

## Cabbage & Kale

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



By Jan Brick  
MG 2001

**C**abbage and kale are the royalty of the cool weather garden. Ornamental types such as "*Brassica oleracea*" are valued for their attractive colors and textures. The kale's leaves are somewhat frillier and sport slightly looser heads than those of flowering cabbage while the cabbages have a more compact appearance. They make interesting garden accents and can be especially stunning when planted in broad ribbons or intricate patterns creating a rainbow of hues and intensities. For another dazzling display, try planting them as a border or in clusters in window boxes and patio containers.

Ornamental cabbages and kale can last throughout the winter. These cold-lovers, true attention-grabbers achieve their most remarkable and most striking colors after the first frost, and can fill spots left bare from a hard freeze as these plants are hardy to twenty degrees. These cold weather decorative plants will grow fifteen to eighteen inches tall and wide. Even though you may pay more, select larger more established plants at the nursery. Once cabbages get root bound, the top portion becomes stunted and will never fill out the way you'd like. Look for plants with short stems and relatively uniform length leaves, no holes and at least a hint of color. Plant in full sun in well-draining soil enriched with organic material. Let your plants dry out slightly between watering. Like edible kale and cabbage, these ornamentals can attract cabbage loopers. Not to worry though, a spraying with *Bacillus thuringiensis* ("Bt") will take care of this nuisance and as the weather cools, problems with pests will decrease.

Horticultural buyer Alison Caldwell recommends the following varieties for striking colors and remarkable foliage:

**Red Bor Kale:** This plant is tall, dark and handsome! Turns a dark eggplant color – great centerpiece in a planter or place at the center of a circular bed. There is also a green variety called Winter Bor.

**White Peacock Kale:** Looks like frisee lettuce and has extra fine cut leaves with white and green coloring.

**Red Peacock Kale:** extra finely cuts on purple foliage. Rosy pink center.

**Tuscan Kale:** Blue-green strap-like leaves add extra drama. This one is edible!

**Coral Queen Kale:** Fancy, frilly leaves with beautiful deep red veins.

**Coral Prince Kale:** Same size as the coral queen but in white with deep green leaves.

**Ornamental Kale Nagoya** features dusky green outer leaves that embrace red, rose or white centers. It has a higher tolerance to cold than some other cultivars.

**Sparrow Kale** colors up quickly on a cold-tolerant compact rosette.

The Dynasty and Pigeon series of flowering cabbage come in shades of white, pink or red. They are fast to color and slow to bolt.

Described as both ornamental and flowering, these brassicas are edible, although most people's taste buds find them bitter. Use these kale or cabbage as a garnish or to line a holiday salad bowl with ruffles of red and green. The plants will flower with the arrival of warm weather when the plants bolt (produce bloom stalks) as they mature. You can keep the heads looking their best awhile longer by pinching back these stalks as they appear.

The following is a quote from a garden writer who lives in Austin:

"Plants like to boast their best feature. For some, color is their vanity; for others, it's distinctive texture or form. Flowering kale and cabbage (*Brassica oleracea*) happily package all three traits. Their plump roundness boldly complements sprawling pansies and the slender leaves of emerging spring bulbs. Ruffled and ribbed foliage in vivid shades of blue-green, rose, red, purple and creamy white adds sparkle to shimmering silvers and grays. By contrast, yellows and pinks take on a crisp brightness. With their long lasting color, symmetry, and ruffled or crinkled edges, it's no wonder that flowering kale and cabbage have become so popular. Try some this year for a living rainbow to warm up a frosty and cloudy day."



Red Peacock Kale



Tuscan Kale



By Susan Meads-Leahy  
MG 2014

Rain and Cold – Won't keep a Master Gardner away, especially our President

## Prez Ira's First Year

On a cold and rainy Thursday, I had the pleasure of interviewing our current President, Ira Gervais, regarding his first year as President of this fine organization. Ira is originally from Southern Louisiana and worked as an executive in the oil and gas industry for 39 years. He has been in Texas off and on since 1980 and in Galveston County since 1992. After retiring for the fourth time in 2011, his wife Sandra (who is also a MG) got him involved in the Master Gardener's program to keep him from coming back out of retirement. I asked him what made him want to be a Master Gardener and he told me some wonderful stories of his childhood. His father's parents were farmers in South Louisiana who lived off the land. They primarily spoke French and Paw (his father) always had a vegetable garden and his grandfather grew citrus that he sold or bartered for money or other necessities. The only way they had to water their gardens was to use a hand-pump and a bucket! He told me a great story about how he and his cousin decided to pick his grandfathers' mandarins and take them to town to sell so they could make some pocket money of their own. They filled a pirogue completely full of mandarins to the point they could barely get in it themselves. They weren't very far from the shore of the bayou when they flipped the pirogue and were swimming amongst hundreds of mandarin oranges. Ira's grandfather happened to be on the bridge and saw all of his mandarins floating in the bayou, thus the chase ensued. He credits his aunt in saving their lives by letting them hide under the bed in the house until his grandfather cooled down.

Ira feels very strongly about giving tribute to all of the Master Gardeners before him in bringing the Horticulture Demonstration Garden in Carbide Park to what it is today. He told me how the area used to basically be a dumping ground and MGs all got in and dug out old roads, truck parts, etc. to clean up the 3 ½ acres we all know today. He stated he is amazed at the transformation from what it used to be to what we all love and enjoy now. Did you know that all of the water lines were dug by hand by MGs? Or, did you know that all of the grass was laid by hand by MGs? For me, it is a difficult picture to imagine since all I see is the beautiful landscape and garden it is today. Ira believes when you look back historically as to what Galveston County Master Gardeners have accomplished, there is nowhere to go but up and with the group of people we currently have it will only get better and better.

I asked Ira what he was most proud of during his first year as President. He said all of our vegetable beds have been rebuilt but he was especially pleased the greenhouse is nearing completion. Once finished, the greenhouse will become very beneficial as we will be able to not only use the space as a teaching area, but we will also be able to grow our own plants for the sales which will save us a lot of money. Additionally, there have been changes made to the plant sale by increasing the variety of plants as well as purchasing from new suppliers. Coming from a business background, Ira incorporated changes to how our multi-faceted organization handles funding for various programs and projects. Now, all of the Master Gardener

"groups" have operation budgets for various projects such as improvements, implementing additional programs for public presentations, etc.

Looking forward, Ira believes it is imperative to install bathroom facilities in the Garden area as there are a multitude of opportunities we are missing. You can't really hold teaching sessions (for Master Gardeners or the public) if you do not have working bathroom facilities. Ira would like to be able to make the Gardens more handicapped accessible in an effort to reach out to that particular demographic of Galveston County. He also believes we should work toward more research being done by our Master Gardeners.

In 2012, we donated 700 pounds, 2013 we donated over 1,000 pounds and in 2014 we donated over 2,200 pounds of vegetables grown in our garden to local food banks in Galveston County. Hopefully, this number will increase in 2015 now that there is a better determination of what food banks actually want or need (i.e., tomatoes, potatoes, cabbage, lettuce, carrots, onions, cauliflower, broccoli, squash, beans, etc). Of course you have to also see where measuring by the pound doesn't always give a true picture to the amount of food that is donated. Ira said last year we gave local food banks over 700 sweet peppers but when you weigh sweet peppers you don't get a true representation of the volume of peppers donated.

Ira said he is sometimes amazed at how fantastic our group of Master Gardeners have shown themselves to be by stepping up to the plate when something needs to be done. As volunteers, you don't always find a group that will just jump in blazing trails to make sure, whatever the need may be, it gets done with results almost always exceeding expectations. He has made many dear friends and strongly believes that being a Master Gardener in Galveston County brings us all to the same purpose no matter where we come from or our station in life. He told me he also comes to the gardens just to enjoy the tranquility of the area as it feeds his soul.

To quote Ira "As Dr. Johnson says, the mission of the Master Gardener program is to educate, educate, educate and to serve our communities. Our group does an outstanding job on all fronts."



Photos by Tom Fountain



# Project: Demonstration Gardens

# Carbide Park



*By Tom Fountain  
MG 2008*



Photos by Tom Fountain

Happy New Year! May peace and plenty bless your garden, while love and laughter brightens your days!

We finished the year with slightly below normal temperatures and rainfall was near normal for the year. The long term outlook over the remainder of winter indicates that temperatures will continue slightly below normal with near normal rainfall, so keep your jacket and mud boots handy.

Our Master Gardeners have been busy getting the garden ready for winter cold over the past month. Also, they have been working on the greenhouse and the butterfly garden. Others have harvested cabbage and a few other cold weather veggies for a local food pantry.



Pictured above are Herman, Clyde, Oscar, and Bob, winterizing the orchard. Next are Henry, Stewart, and Clarence, who are working on the greenhouse, followed by a crew including Judy, Tish, Tim, Joe and Connie, who were installing a Mason bee house or hotel in the butterfly garden. In the last picture Jim looks on as Wes and Clyde are preparing cabbage distribution.



This month's unsung garden heroes are Camille and her spouse Ken, who are pictured putting up a weather station in the garden. The station records the temperature, wind direction, speed, and rainfall. This information can be accessed online.



Despite the cold and wet work days we have had quite a few of our Master Gardeners coming out to work. Herman was out in the orchard giving "hands-on" instructions on grafting peach trees. Our garden crews did spend some time in the barn trying to warm up and dry off and visit some. If the cold, wet weather keeps you away from the garden, don't let it. There is always something to do and learn. It's almost time to think about getting seedlings growing for your spring planting



by Sandra Gervais  
MG 2011

## Let's Consider Cauliflower!

# Seasonal Bites

Think of cauliflower as the potato of the cruciferous world. It's white, mild in flavor and can happily be prepared in a variety of ways. Forget that it's one of those vegetables that your Mother always pushed you to eat because it was "good for you." Instead enjoy it because it's tasty and can even be downright spicy!

### Roasted Cauliflower Bites

Heat oven to 425 degrees and move rack to bottom third of oven.

Mix: 5 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted

3/4 teaspoon garlic powder

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/4-1/2 teaspoon black pepper

Add florets of one large cauliflower head. Toss until each floret is well covered.

Mix: 2/3 cup of finely grated Parmesan

1/3 cup of plain, fine bread crumbs or panko (do not use seasoned crumbs)

Coat each floret completely; try to get as much coating on the florets as possible. Spray baking sheet. Put florets on sheet far apart/not touching so that they do not steam. Spray florets lightly with the cooking spray.

Bake 18-20 minutes, turning once midway. Remove when fork tender and golden brown.

They can be served as nibbles with a ranch dip or as a vegetable with a meal.

NOTE: if you wish to use seasoned bread crumbs, omit salt and use less Parmesan. Also, think about adding other spices such as chili powder or cumin. Get creative!

### Extraordinary Cauliflower

One large cauliflower separated into florets steam or boil gently until they can be pierced with a fork. Drain well.

Melt in skillet 3 to 4 tablespoon of butter. Add 1 large Spanish onion, thinly sliced and in separate rings. Cook until soft.

Add: 1/2-2/3 cup of chopped fresh parsley

1/2 teaspoon tarragon

1/4-1/2 teaspoon of pepper

Salt to taste (1/4-1/2 teaspoon)

Put florets in sprayed individual baking dishes (4-6). Pour seasonings over tops. Sprinkle tops with 4 ounces of grated Muenster cheese. Bake at 350 degrees until cheese melts, about 5 minutes.

NOTE: Don't be afraid to add or change seasonings. What about using cayenne, or Italian mixed herbs? Or maybe Pepperjack cheese or smoked Gouda?

As with potatoes, cauliflower can be prepared many ways and seasoned with various herbs and spices. Because it is fairly bland, treat it like a potato and cook it with imagination. Think Italian. Or Chinese. Or Spanish. Or Indian. Use your imagination and have fun with the different tastes.



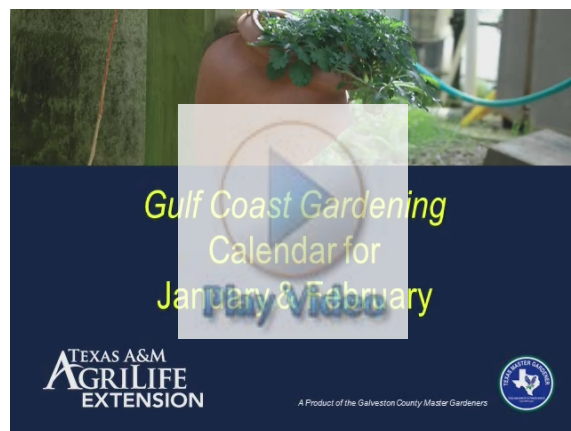
## January/February "Things To Do" Gardening Calendar Video



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.





## MINUTES - NOVEMBER 2014 MONTHLY MG MEETINGS

The meeting of the GCMGA met November 11 at the Galveston AgriLife Extension Office. Ira Gervais called the meeting to order and recognized the veterans present. Alice Williams, Director of Libbie's Place, a senior facility through Moody Methodist Church was introduced. Alice spoke about Libbie's and several Master Gardeners who help with the garden program were present.

*By Mary Lou Kelso  
MG 2000*

Ira reported on the awards that the GCMGA received (in the Extra Large County Association Category) at the recently held State meeting in Odessa.

- Second Place, Outstanding Association
- Second Place Project, Libbie's Place
- Second Place, Written Education, *Tree Stories* newspaper series by Margaret Canavan
- Third Place, Individual MG, Chris Anastas

Election of Officers followed:

- Dotti Krustchinsky and Ken Steblein, Board of Directors three year term
- Assistant Treasurer, two year term, Tim Jahnke
- TMGA State Association Delegate, two year term, Terry Cuclis

Dr. Johnson welcomed all present and then gave his "State of the Association" PowerPoint presentation. A survey was sent to all certified members of our organization with 283 responding. It was pointed out to be "certified" each year the member must attend 6 hrs of educational training and 12 service hours.

- 73% of Master Gardeners reside in Galveston County

- 22% reside in Harris County
- 5% reside in other Counties
- 202 MGs are female and 73 MGs are male
- 2014 Longevity of service to the organization:
  - up to 4 years: 30%
  - 5-10 years: 30%
  - 11-15 years: 20%
  - 16+years: 20%
- 9,202,776 page requests on MG Website
- Speakers Bureau Attendance
  - 19 MGs provided 51 presentations attended by 1,584 local residents
- 2006, a wedding was held in the Demonstration Garden

Food Bank DonationS with produce from the Demo Garden:

- 2012 - 692 lbs.
- 2013 - 1014 lbs.
- 2014 - 2,761 lbs.

Ira commented that 2014 was a good year and a lot was accomplished.

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## MINUTES - DECEMBER 2014

The December meeting of the GCMGA met for their Christmas program at the home of Mikey and Alan Isbell on Galveston Island on December 9. Ira Gervais, GCMGA President, welcomed everyone in attendance and Dr. Johnson thanked everyone for all their contributions during the year. MG members introduced their guests and Luke Stripling gave the blessing before everyone enjoyed the bountiful of food that was brought by everyone.



Photos by Tom Fountain

# Upcoming Events **Tuesday Night & Saturday Seminars**

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

## **SUCCESSFUL SPRING VEGETABLE GARDENING**

**Saturday, January 24, 2015**

**9:00 - 11:30 a.m.**

Presented by Galveston County Master Gardener Luke Stripling. Mr. Stripling has over 65 years of hands-on experience growing vegetables. Learn how to plan and start a vegetable garden. Find out about the best soils, location and plant varieties to use for Galveston County. Gain knowledge on pollination, mulching, composting, and the effects of full sun and shade on vegetable gardening.

## **ANYONE CAN GROW ROSES**

**Tuesday, January 27, 2015**

**6:30 - 8:00 p.m.**

Presented by Galveston County Master Gardener and American Rose Society Consulting Rosarian John Jons, the program will cover all the basics for growing large, beautiful, sweet smelling and healthy roses in Galveston County. Topics will include rose selection, bed preparation and maintenance, planting, pruning, disease and insect management and any questions that on growing roses.

## **GROWING GREAT TOMATOES (Part 2)**

**Saturday, January 31, 2015**

**9:00 - 11:30 a.m.**

The second part of the three part program on Growing Great Tomatoes in Galveston County. Galveston County Master Gardener Ira Gervais reveals secrets for planting and growing great tomatoes. Learn about the various varieties that do well in this area, how to make your selections, how and when to transplant your seedlings and various growing techniques. Find out about soil requirements and needed nutrients and the temperature ranges for best tomato fruit set.

## **GROWING BLUEBERRIES**

**Saturday, January 31, 2015**

**1:00 - 3:00 p.m.**

Presented by Dr. David Cohen, an accomplished home grower of blueberries by avocation and a practicing physician by trade, Dr. Cohen has an impressive "blueberry patch" as part of his home landscape and has gained considerable hands-on experience with successfully growing blueberries under our growing conditions. Learn the facts about blueberries and site selection and preparation. Find out about variety recommendations for this area and the planting, spacing, fertilizing and pruning requirements. The program will also cover harvesting and understanding the problems and the costs of growing blueberries here in Galveston County.

## **GALVESTON COUNTY MASTER GARDENER ANNUAL FRUIT, CITRUS TREE AND VEGETABLE SALE**

**Saturday, February 7, 2015**

**8:00 a.m. - 8:55 a.m. Plant Seminar**

**9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Sale**

Save this date!! The plant sale and seminar is located at the 4102 Main St. in La Marque at the Wayne Johnson Community Center located in Carbide Park. The Plant seminar is scheduled from 8:00-8:55 a.m. prior to the sale. Galveston County Master Gardener John Jons will provide a presentation discussing many of the Vegetable, Citrus and Fruit Tree varieties that will be available in the sale. A huge variety of tomatoes, peppers, fruit and citrus trees adapted to Gulf Coast growing area will be offered at the sale. Plant and tree sale from 9:00 a.m.- 1:00p.m. Check website for updates: <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/index.htm>

## **'Texas Tuff' Landscape Plants - Blooming & Beautiful**

**Saturday, February 21, 2015**

**9:00 - 11:30 a.m.**

Galveston County Master Gardener Sandra Devall will present a program on choosing varieties of low-care plants that thrive in Galveston County. Sandra will discuss hearty plants for your landscape that will be ornamental as well as welcoming to bees and other pollinators, birds and butterflies. Program will touch on ways to bring beauty to the garden and save you money by directing you away from plants that will not bring you gardening success here in Galveston County.

## **Kitchen Gardening**

**Saturday, February 21, 2015**

**1:00-3:00 p.m.**

Presented by Galveston County Master Gardener Mary Demeny, the presentation and discussion will be on vegetable gardening in your own backyard. The presentation will emphasize gardening on a smaller scale and making use of vegetables inter-planted in your flower beds and in pots.

## **The ABC's of Home Composting**

**Tuesday, February 24, 2015**

**6:30 - 8:00 p.m.**

Galveston County Master Gardener Ken Steblein will provide practical information for converting yard, garden and kitchen waste into compost. Compost is that magical soil amendment that is a soil conditioner, fertilizer and the key ingredient in organic gardening.





## A Great Way to support GCMGA AmazonSmile – You Shop, Amazon Gives [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com)

We are working on registering with several retailers who will donate a percentage of our purchases to Galveston County Master Gardeners. We have the Smile. Amazon.com program up and running. Here is a great way to support GCMGA. Amazon will donate 0.5% of our personal purchases to Galveston County Master Gardener Association.

### All you have to do is:

1. Go to [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com)
2. Choose Galveston County Master Gardener Association as your charity.
3. Save [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com) to your favorites.
4. Always start from this site to do your amazon shopping.
5. You should see your chosen charity in the top bar on amazon's website.
6. If you have any problems, search smile on amazon's website.

## Engagement Announcement

*Editor's Note: Gregory is a Master Gardener, Class of 2012 is our IT Specialist. We wish Gregory and Dawn much happiness*



### Dawn L. Polzin and Gregory S. Werth

Dawn L. Polzin and Gregory S. Werth happily have announced their engagement. The bride to be is the daughter of Nina and the late Robert Polzin of Wausau, Wisconsin.

The groom to be is the son of Marietta and the late Vernon Werth of League City, Texas.

The couple is planning an October 10, 2015 wedding in Madison, Wisconsin

## Growing Citrus in Your Own Backyard

*MGs helped pull off this tasting for 111 people as well as the program, Whew!!!! It does take a village!*

The Galveston County Master Gardener *Gulf Coast Gardening* Educational Program series got off to a great start for 2015 on Saturday, January 17. A program titled "Growing Citrus in Your Own Backyard" drew 111 in attendance. With monitors for both classroom 1 and 2 being utilized, all those in attendance had good visual access to the program.

Master Gardener Chris Anastas presented the program which included information on the history of citrus in the Galveston county area. In the late 1800's and early 1900's, there were many commercial citrus groves thriving in the area. However, in February of 1911 when temperatures dropped to 8 degrees and killed over 90% of the commercial citrus groves, commercial groves as a result relocated to the South Texas valley.

There was a discussion about the benefits of various rootstocks for the clay and sandy soils in our area. The wide scope of citrus varieties were covered, followed by a break that included a citrus tasting of nine different citrus varieties. The citrus tasting was enjoyed by all and was supported by a team of our Master Gardeners. The program resumed with instruction on the selection, planting, watering and fertilizing of citrus. Citrus pests, diseases and cold protection were then discussed. An update on the citrus greening and the quarantines affecting our neighboring counties followed.

The program finished with information about the Texas Upper Gulf Coast Citrus Show which is hosted each year by Galveston County AgriLife Extension. After a short break Master Gardener Robert Marshall gave a short program offering expanded information and detail about Citrus Greening, a new bacterial disease in Texas.



Quite a Crowd



Identifying a Fruit



Tasting Table



Answering Questions



# bulletin board



## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

To volunteer for the **MG Phone Desk** contact Laura Bellmore by e-mail at [galv3@wt.net](mailto: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 Windus 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](mailto: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](mailto:evergreentreesinc@gmail.com) or MG Bobbie Ivey at 713-748-8564 or email at [blivey@sbcglobal.net](mailto:blivey@sbcglobal.net) to volunteer.

**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](mailto: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](mailto:fmbmab@verizon.net) to find out the schedule and join her team.



## 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*

## 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://txmg.org>. 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.

### **Dealing with Drought – Landscaping Basics – Travis County**

February 12 @ 10:00 am - 12:00 pm

Registration: \$10.00 through 2/08/15, \$15.00 starting 2/09/15 and onsite.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service – Travis County  
1600-B Smith Rd., Austin, TX 78721

Learn basic landscape principals and become familiar with the native and adapted plants to incorporate into your garden. Carolyn Williams has been a Master Gardener for over 14 years and a gardener in Central Texas for over 40 years. She holds both Basic and Advanced Landscape Design Certification from ACC. She will share her experience of working with good Texas tough plants to use in your designs. Contact Daphne Richards (512)854-9600, [drichards@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:drichards@ag.tamu.edu) or <https://agriliferegister.tamu.edu/TravisCounty>.

### **Landscape Design School Series XXIV, Course II – Brazos County**

February 23 @ 8:45 am, February 24 @ 4:00 pm

George Bush Presidential Library and Museum  
1000 George Bush Dr W, College Station, TX 77845  
\$165.00 per person

For course description, registration and schedule, contact Michele Wehrheim (313)649-1067, [texaslandscapedesignschool@gmail.com](mailto:texaslandscapedesignschool@gmail.com) - Website: <https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/southerngarden/>

### **Irrigation Efficiency Specialist – Bexar County**

March 23 @ 8:00 am - March 25 @ 5:00 pm

San Antonio Botanical Garden, 555 Funston Place, San Antonio, 78209 United States - | \$200.00 per person

This hands-on training will include practices for determining irrigation efficiency, setting controllers, soak and cycle method, minor irrigation repairs, system trouble shooting, catch can test, converting spray head irrigation to new water conserving head, converting spray irrigation to drip irrigation and many other water conservation practices. For information, contact Karen Sanders (972)952-9671, e-mail [karen.sanders@tamu.edu](mailto:karen.sanders@tamu.edu).



# the last word . . .

## MODERN LANDSCAPES ALSO FUNCTION AS OUTDOOR LIVING SPACE

*(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*

**T**he wide availability of a diverse range of high-quality outdoor materials and furnishings has motivated a growing interest in outdoor living. Examples of materials and furnishings range from a multitude of distinctive pavers to high-performance grills to calming water features.

More Americans are looking for ways to enjoy their landscapes and to also be kind to the environment. Over the past decades, the focus of environmental issues has dramatically changed from that of simply conserving precious natural resources from a global perspective into creating a sustainable environment in the home landscape.

As gardeners become increasingly sophisticated and knowledgeable, they will move beyond some of the traditional ideas about landscape design and maintenance. Outdoor living is becoming a primary focus. Our gardens are more often being looked at as an extension of our homes—an area to live in and use—rather than just pretty plants to look at from the living room window.

Designing private, intimate spaces into the average home landscape is becoming more important as our fast-paced world creates an ever greater need for places to relax and enjoy a little quiet time. Private outdoor living areas can be fashioned out of hedges and screens as outdoor garden rooms to give a sense of enclosure and respite from the world.

In addition, accessories that help personalize and enhance landscapes are becoming more popular and will continue to do so. Examples include wind chimes, gazing globes, topiary, gazebos, arbors, decorative containers, and sculptures and other art suitable for outdoor display to individualize our outdoor spaces.

New garden designs are increasingly interactive. We crave gardens that appeal to all of our senses—sight, sound, smell, touch and even taste—with an emphasis on personal enjoyment and the therapeutic values of gardening. An example would be creating a garden that includes a variety of fragrant plants you remember from your childhood.

Water provides sparkling light, beautiful reflections and a most relaxing sound in the garden. Regardless of the garden's size, we are more and more frequently enhancing the composition by adding a water feature—such as a fountain, reflection pool, waterfall or water garden—that can range in size from a half barrel to a large pond.

The “flower power” generation has brought to gardening a deeper understanding and appreciation of ecology and a respect for natural environments. Realizing the amount of water and energy our landscapes can use, gardeners are switching from plants that need frequent watering and maintenance to those that require less irrigation and maintenance once the plants have become established.

Smaller turf areas, low-volume irrigation systems, mulching and low-input plant care are important components of these energy-efficient landscapes. An example might be replacing a traditional high-maintenance lawn area with ground covers and easily maintained decks, terraces and patios of wood, brick, paving or stone.

Gardeners are composting and recycling more, using less fertilizer and choosing environmentally friendly products for dealing with

pests. Pest control now tends to utilize the concepts of Integrated Pest Management (IPM), where many strategies are employed (especially using plants that are less prone to problems) to manage pests; and pesticides—whether organic or chemical—are applied only when absolutely necessary. It's also appropriate to accept some level of pest damage to landscape plants.

Many of us have decided it is okay to share our gardens with other creatures, and even create habitats to provide for their needs. Landscapes designed to attract and provide food, water and shelter for wildlife such as butterflies, birds, beneficial insects and natural predators have, and likely will continue to, become more commonplace.

It is remarkable that gardeners “on the cutting edge” are not only looking for new and interesting plants and cultivars but also continuing to focus much of their attention on rediscovering or preserving our garden heritage. Antique roses, heirloom annuals, perennials, vegetables and bulbs and other tried-and-true, old-fashioned garden plants have gained new interest and use.

Overall, our concept of gardens and landscapes is becoming more personal, interactive and relaxed. Landscapes may still include formal elements, but large turf areas, monotonous pruned shrubs, clipped hedges, foundation plantings and precise annual beds are likely to become less common. A more diverse palette of plants, both native and introduced, will be used in a way that is more resource-efficient and lower in maintenance to create beautiful, functional landscapes that nurture both nature and people.



**Photos by MG Margie Jenke**

Water provides a most relaxing sound in the garden. Homeowners often enhance the composition of their home landscapes by adding a water feature that can range in size and complexity from a large water garden to a fountain.

# 2015 MGA MONTHLY MEETINGS

"Thanks to all of the 2014 Backyard Meeting hosts; looking forward to a new year of garden parties. Check the next issue for the Backyard Meeting Schedule". Judy



*By Judy  
Anderson  
MG 2012*



## GALVESTON COUNTY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION

Upcoming Master Gardener Programs - TBA



### 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



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