

Gulf Coast Gardening

WRITTEN BY GALVESTON COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS IN COOPERATION
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keep them coming back year after year

Hot-Line Topic - Easter Lilies



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You might be a Master Gardener if:

•Someone mentions *Aralia spinosa* and you say “Oh yes, devil’s walking stick.” •You’ve been gardening so long no one recognizes your face. •Your husband gives you a diamond tennis bracelet and you think to yourself, “Gee, for the price of this, he could have bought me a Mantis tiller.” •You take every single person who enters your house on a “garden tour.” •You sneak up to your neighbors front porch to deadhead the potted annuals. •You are excited over the amount of compost your worms are making. •You tell strangers about your worms. •You buy plants before you know where you’re going to put them. •You Grow Something Besides OLD! •You know that your corvette will hold five new grafted roses!



By Camille Goodwin
MG 2008

We all could have worse obsessions than Master Gardening! Spring has come early this year, our weather, for the most part, has been beautiful. Hopefully you’ve had time to begin getting your landscapes cleaned up from winter and purchased some new plants at our recent plant sale. Special thanks and kudos to our MG Association leaders and to all GCMG’s who worked like crazy not only logistically to get our new sales location set up but for the weeks of work, plant selections and coordination in advance of the sale to make it look seamless. Overall it was a lot of fun and a very successful sale.

The newsletter team has been working to bring our membership and community the latest research-based horticultural information and we hope this issue provides you with more educational knowledge to use in your own landscapes. Learn about the Citrus Leafminer on page 5, this leaf tunneling insect is very common in our Gulf Coast region. Easter Lilies are gorgeous this time of year, read how to get them established in your garden on page 4. You may have gotten “Holiday” plants during the last few months; the article on page 67 provides care and growing information to extend their enjoyment. I, myself, have a Christmas Cactus that was given to me in 1979. It still blooms every year, and it looks beautiful all year inside my home. John Jons helps us come into the 21st century with a review of some of the best Smartphone Apps for Weed Identification (page 7). With Spring just days away, Donna Ward’s article on page 17 gives us an idea of tasks we should be doing now for beautiful yards later in the year. Tomatoes are the topic of discussion by Jan Brick from *The Island Garden* on page 14. Genevieve Benson tells of her experience with a friendly fungus on page 16. Please enjoy meeting one of our favorite and extremely accomplished Master Gardeners, Ken Steblein, who works every day to protect our environment and freely shares his enthusiasm for green living (page 18). The Best Shots story on page 12 features vertical vivid vines. Have you ever visited a real English rose garden? Learn about the extraordinary David Austin Garden Center on page 10. Have a desire to make your own seed tape? John Anderson (MG ’90) tells us how to do this on page 9. Our Tool Primer continues on page 19—this time featuring rakes. Pam Jahnke shares with us on page 8, what she’s learned about hunger in our area and how our MG community beds help support our neighbors in need. Dr. Johnson, in *The Last Word*, shares his answers to questions from gardeners at our recent plant sale. The Demonstration Garden work continues at warp speed—read the latest news on page 20. If you haven’t been to the garden recently, come out to see our new hoop house. The Monthly Video Calendar has been updated for the current season and as always be sure to check our calendar and bulletin board for volunteer opportunities, garden team schedules and other information you might be interested in. Sandra Gervais must have a sweet tooth this month, the Seasonal Bites recipes are for easy desserts!!

This is the time of the year various insects and other landscape challenges begin to establish or show themselves. Visit our award-winning webpage to see all the latest info on Beneficials in the Garden and Landscape: <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/beneficials/index.htm> and learn about various diseases, disorders or insect pests at:

http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/Gardening_Handbook/index.htm

If there is a topic you’d like researched or have an idea for a newsletter feature, please contact me (mrmsc@comcast.net) or Linda Steber (steber8@msn.com).

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Cover: Easter Lilies - Keep them coming
back year after year
Photo by Ted Landry



Galveston County Master Gardeners are on Facebook with information about upcoming programs, Dr. Johnson's weekly column and more. Like us on Facebook and don't forget to opt to receive notifications. Share with others!

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By Sandy Zeek
MG Intern 2015

ask a master gardener

Q&A

Hot Line Topic - Easter Lilies

Question: Easter Lilies are so beautiful this time of year, but I would like to know if they will grow well and be beautiful in my landscape.

Answer: The short answer to this question is "Yes." The more informative answer begins with the fact that the botanical name for Easter Lilies is *Lilium longiflorum* and the most widely available variety of this plant this time of year is very likely the Nellie White cultivar. It usually has 5 to 7 large, trumpet-shaped white blooms on a compact plant. After these lovely plants have finished blooming indoors, Easter Lilies can grow quite happily in the landscape here in Galveston County. Before you plant them outdoors, however, begin by selecting plants for the season which are medium to compact plants with dark green foliage all the way to the soil level and with one or two open blooms plus several buds of different sizes. This will ensure you have blooming flowers over several days once you bring them home. If you will carefully remove the yellow anthers from the flowers when they open, the life of each flower will be prolonged and their lovely white color will not be stained yellow from the pollen. Though lilies prefer moist soil, they will not thrive in soggy conditions, so only water your plant when the surface of the soil feels dry when touched. If your Easter Lily is in a protective plastic or

foil pot cover, remove this outer covering before watering the plant thoroughly over a sink or outdoors. Allow the water to finish draining before you replace the decorative covering. Place the plant in a sunny window in your home with indirect sunlight and away from drafty areas.

After your Easter Lily has finished blooming, you can plant it in your landscape in a sunny location. These beautiful plants like to have their feet in the shade and their heads in the sun, so prepare a welcoming home for your lilies in a sunny bed which is raised adequately for excellent drainage. You can raise the level of a bed by adding from one to several inches of either a commercial planting mix or your own mix of one part each of perlite, peat moss, and soil. Dig a hole about 3 inches deep which is also wide enough for the roots of the plant to be spread out. Place a small amount of soil mixture into the hole and carefully place the plant into it, ensuring the roots are spread out the way they naturally grow. Carefully work more of your soil mixture around the roots, ensuring there are no pockets of air, then water thoroughly. Cover the area with 2" to 3" of shredded mulch,

preferably without added dyes. This protective layer offers several benefits including conserving moisture, especially during our hot, dry summers, keeping weeds under control, and providing valuable nutrients to the plant as the mulch breaks down.

Once the leaves and stems of your Easter Lilies have begun to turn brown and die back, cut them down to the soil level. You may see new growth but a second bloom is not likely this year. If our summer and fall are particularly dry, it would be good to water from time to time since being too dry is almost as damaging to bulbs as being too wet. If possible, mark the location of your Easter Lily bulbs to prevent disturbing them during their dormant period since they will not be visible until new growth emerges next year. During the winter months, a generous layer of mulch will help to insulate the bulbs. In the spring, carefully remove the mulch to allow new shoots to emerge. An application of slow-release fertilizer placed about 2" or so from the stem of the newly emerging plants and watered in well will enable your lilies to be healthy, happy, and beautiful. The plants will likely grow to about 3 feet tall and should bloom next year in June or July.



A word of caution to cat owners: The Easter Lily is toxic to cats, so keep this in mind whether you have the plants inside your home or out in your landscape.

Three Easters ago, the lovely Easter Lilies at our church were placed outside after Easter for a week or two in their original decorative containers without receiving any kind of care. The six plants were rescued, watered thoroughly, and planted in one of the gardens there. No special care has been given except for a new layer of mulch once a year and extra water perhaps once per month. As you can see from the picture of one of the plants, they have multiplied despite the neglect. To add insult to injury, some really nasty fill material was shoveled into the bed on top of these plants about 8 weeks ago and they are still doing okay. The bad material will be removed as soon as practical, some compost will be added, and then a 2" layer of good mulch will be laid down. These Easter Lilies will likely bloom in June or July as they have the past two summers.



Photos by Sandy Zeek & the
GCMGA Digital Library



Citrus Leafminer



By Laurel Stine
MG 2002

About eleven years ago, I happily planted two citrus trees in my backyard. Each day I checked the baby trees to make sure all was progressing as it should. Then one morning I noticed that some of the newer leaves had curled. I wasn't worried. I had grown citrus before and was aware of the distortion tunnelling insects could create on new growth. I carefully uncurled one of the affected leaves and saw—nothing. Wait—there was a tiny white trail on the leaf.

I had just been introduced to the Citrus Leafminer (*Phyllocnistis citrella* Stainton). And the increasing distortion as days passed made me really glad I had access to Master Gardener resources. I learned that the adult stage of the Citrus Leafminer is a small moth about 1/16" (2 mm) long with a wingspan of about 1/8" (4mm) in width. They are primarily active from dusk to dawn, spending the daylight hours resting underneath the leaves. They live from 2 to 12 days and feed on nectar.

The female Citrus Leafminer lays her eggs singly, preferring the undersides of new leaves. The eggs hatch between two to ten days depending on the air temperatures.

The larvae are tiny, only about 1/16" long. They are a translucent creamy color. They immediately enter just under the leaf's surface and begin feeding. As the larvae grow, the size of the tunnel grows, creating larger and larger galleries. It is at this point that the damage becomes most evident. The damage can envelop most of the leaf, distorting and compromising the leaf's ability to function as it should. They also occasionally tunnel into stems and the fruit peel.

The larva leaves a frass (feces) trail, observed as a thin dark line, inside the meandering serpentine mine.

The larvae pass (molt) into a new instar 4 times over a 2 to 3-week period as they develop. The larva emerges from the mine as a prepupa and rolls the edge of the leaf over causing a curling of the leaf. They can also make a tuck inside the central part of the leaf. Inside that tucked or curled tissue the leafminer becomes a pupa. The pupal stage lasts from 1 to 3 weeks.

The tiny adult moth can be very difficult to see in the landscape, although I believe I have seen them flashing off to the side when I first disturb the citrus leaves.

Citrus Leafminer control is important on young (one to three years old) citrus trees and mature trees if they have been severely defoliated. Healthy, mature citrus (four years and older) can tolerate the damage with little effect on fruit quality.

Severe infestations on young trees can retard their growth. However, they are unlikely to die.

Maximum protection for Citrus Leafminer is obtained if controls are applied when the new foliage is only half emerged and the first affected leaves are just beginning to curl. Do not remove the damaged leaves, because the undamaged portions can still function and contribute to the vigor of the tree.

As Master Gardeners, we know the importance of using control methods which have the least impact on the environment. One method which has minimal impact is to control the emergence of new flushes of growth.

Citrus Leafminers normally do their damage on new growth. For trees growing in the ground, the timing of this new growth can be controlled by fertilizer applications. In the early spring leafminers are not very active. It is possible to put down all the fertilizer in the early spring, or by doing two applications, applying 2/3 in February, with the balance in May. This way by the time the leafminers are active most of the new growth has matured and hardened, making it less desirable to them.

Try to minimize the pruning of living branches after the early spring. This helps discourage additional new growth.

Sometimes additional controls may be required. If at all possible, avoid using these until the blooms are gone and the fruit is set. This minimizes the effect on pollinators and natural enemies of the leafminers.

The majority of products available are topical (applied to the surface of the leaf). Since the larvae live within the leaf, this makes control difficult.

Frequent applications of horticultural oils and products containing spinosad have been shown to have some deterrent effect.

Bayer has introduced an insecticide (Fruit, Citrus, and Vegetable Insect Control) that can be applied once a year after bloom, which may help deter the damage. It will give from 6 to 8 weeks of control. Follow the label directions on any product you use.



Leafminer galleries - The larva leaves a frass (feces) [trail](#), observed as a thin dark line, inside the meandering serpentine mine.



Female Citrus Leafminer -
Adult



Citrus Leafminer Pupa



By Elayne Kouzounis
MG 1998

Recycling Holiday Plants

they can have a second act with the proper care

Were you one of the lucky gardeners that were gifted with Christmas Cactuses, Cyclamens, Norfolk Pines and Poinsettias over the holiday season?? They can have a second act with the proper care.

CHRISTMAS CACTUS (*Schlumbergera*)

This is a small genus of about 6 species. Epiphytic (like orchids and bromeliads), they are plants that like to be tightly potted and kept in partial shade. Stems will turn reddish if they get too much sun.

Watering: Do not over-water; use the pencil test if not certain. Using a pencil or your finger poke it into the soil 1 or 2 inches down. If dry, add water, then let it drain.

Repotting: Use a commercial cactus mix or soil that is well-draining, porous and organic or use the latest expanded shale, a fantastic soil amendment.

Fertilization: Keep in a bright covered sunny area. Apply liquid fertilizer.

Pruning: When plant has finished blooming, remove one or two of the flattened segments to encourage branching and future blooms.

Rebloom: Blooms are triggered by the length of daylight and cool temperatures. Plants bud when the days have fewer than 12 hours of light and night temperatures are 50 to 60 degrees. Small buds appear in two or three weeks after days shorten, with full bloom in about two months.

CYCLAMEN (*Cyclamen* spp.)

Their gorgeous mottled and marbled green and silver leaves are so pretty until late spring.

Watering: Water plants carefully taking care not to wet their leaves. They need moist, well-drained soil.

Repotting: Usually they do not need repotting. They are hardy in zones 6-9.

Fertilization: Provide a top dressing of leaf mold. They like partial shade, no afternoon sun.

Pruning: Pull off dead flowers complete with their stems when they have finished blooming.

Rebloom: Laying the pot on its side to dry out could encourage reblooming in the fall. They tolerate cold but not summer heat.

POINSETTIAS (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*)

The green leaflike parts at the base of the flowers in some species are not sepals but modified leaves called bracts.

Watering: Give your plant some water when the soil is dry.

Indoors: Leaves will drop when temperature drops. Freezing weather can kill the plant. Keep it indoors in bright light with the temperature around 72 degrees during the day and 60 degrees at night. Mist occasionally; they love humidity.

Additional information: They are safe plants to have around children. They are not poisonous. Animal testing at high doses disproves the old wives' tale. In addition, you may use poinsettia blooms for arrangements by cutting the stem and burning the end.

NORFOLK PINES (*Araucaria heterophylla*)

These plants may be used as living Christmas trees. They grow well in our Gulf Coast gardens and can handle salt spray from the Gulf. They are not true pines. Many have survived category 4 hurricanes in Galveston.

Watering: They like normal humidity; water moderately while growing and sparingly in winter.

Repotting: In the wild a Norfolk Pine Tree can become a 220-foot tall tree, but in containers it grows to about 6 feet tall.

Temperature: Minimum is about 40 degrees Fahrenheit. It needs plenty of ventilation to lower the temperature to below 80 degrees Fahrenheit in summer, if possible.

Fertilization: Fertilizer is only needed if plant is grown in soil-less compost, from mid-summer.

Problems: Leaves fall or discolor from too much warmth, sun, or dry atmosphere, although the lowest branches fall naturally on old plants.



Photos by Elayne Kouzounis & the
GCMGA Digital Library

Smartphone Apps Weed Identification



by John Jones
MG 2003

The one thing I dislike about gardening is weeding. I know that if you can identify the particular offending weed it helps in managing the weed, but there are so many weeds! Identification often involves taking a reference text to the weed or the weed to a reference text to identify it. Well, life just got a little bit simpler. If you own a smartphone, you can get apps (applications) that will help you to identify and then appropriately manage the weeds.

So, recently I searched my smartphone's (Apple iPhone 6S) app store to see what apps were available. I quickly discovered that when you put "weeds" into the app search database it brings up lots of apps relative to marijuana and among those apps are actual apps for garden weeds. Some of the apps cost money, but I elected to just look at only free apps. I identified and selected sixteen apps (See table) and proceeded to review the apps. Some of the apps were focused on different US regions or featured wildflowers, but I thought they could be relevant to my garden's weeds. Please note that my review (in the table below) is not an endorsement of any of the apps, it's just what I discovered and liked in reviewing the apps for my needs.

Most of the apps basically consist of a picture or text database in which you can look at pictures and attempt to identify the weed or identify certain parameters or characteristics of the weed. The app provides you with a selection of pictures of weeds that meet those identified parameters. Hopefully, you can then identify the weed and read the information about the weed and how to manage that particular weed. More sophisticated apps enable you to take a picture of the weed and to match your photo of the weed with the app's weed picture database. Some apps email your picture to an "expert" who will attempt to identify the weed for you. I have tried some of these (non-vendor sponsored) apps, and I have yet to receive feedback from an "expert." I discovered that the photo quality (clear, uncluttered, well exposed) with some distinguishing characteristics of the weed will improve the photo match identification.

I'm sure these apps will further improve in the near future, specifically in the area of photo identification. Now all we need is an app for someone to manage (do the weeding) the weeds.

- Rank: how I personally ranked the apps. Number 1 indicates the best and number 16 not so good.
- Name: ... of the app
- Producer: who produced the app
- Ease of Use: how easy, applicable and usable the app was. 5 = the best; 1 = not so good.
- Customer Ratings: how the app was rated by customers on the app store website. 5 is the best and 1 is the worst rating. Some apps were so new that they were "NR," (not rated).



For the following columns, if a "Y" was in the column, this meant yes and, if an "N" was in the column, this meant no.

- Visual Search: The app included a feature whereby you could take a picture of the weed and the app would try to identify the weed from its photo database.
- Vendor ID: The photo could be emailed to the producer of the app or some other service who would attempt to ID the weed for you. I believe some of these services may charge for the identification.
- Picture ID Search: The app had a database of pictures that you could use to attempt to ID the weed.
- Text Search: The app had a list of names that you could search to identify the weed.
- Other: additional features of the app
- Notes: my notes on the app

Rank	Name	Producer	Ease Of Use	Customer Ratings	Visual Search - Photo ID Compare	Vendor ID	Picture ID Search	Text Search	Other	Notes
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1	Bonide	Bonide	5	3.6	N	N	Y	Y	Home pests, disease, insect, animal and weed control, barn and stable health, fertilizer, soil and seeds, products, quick reference.	A very comprehensive app
2	Like That Garden	JustVisual Inc.	5	5	Y	N	N	N	Also does butterflies	Primarily a visual search and ID application
3	Invasive plants in Southern Forests	AL Coop. Ext.	4	4	N	N	Y	Y	Reference Materials	Focus - Invasive plants. Lots of info
4	Common Weeds	USU	4	NR	N	N	Y	Y		Data base type search application
5	My Garden Answers	TeamSOA	4	3.5	Y	Y	N	N		The vendor ID referral was to a Harris County Master Gardener - where I reside.
6	Wildflowers of the Santa Monica NRA	US Dept Int.	3	4	N	N	Y	Y		Data base type search application
7	Weed ID	BASF	3	3	Y	Y	Y	Y		Data Base. Requires plant knowledge
8	ID Weeds	Mo Ext.	2	3.5	N	N	Y	Y		Functionality did not work as stated. Looks promising.
9	Federal Noxious Weeds	USDA	2	NR	N	N	Y	Y		Requires plant knowledge
10	Turfgrass Weeds	Georgia CAES	2	3.5	N	N	Y	N		Very basic
11	Weedalert	PBI Gordon	2	3.9	N	N	Y	Y		Focus - Herbicide application
12	Spectracide	Spectracide	2	3	Y	Y	Y	Y	Insects, Fungus	Focus - Pests.
13	AG Weeds ID	FarmProgress	2	NR	Y	N	N	N		Primarily designed to be used for specific crops
14	Garden Compass	Garden Compass	2	3.5	N	Y	N	N	Pests, Diseases	A plant identification (pay for?) service.
15	TurfXpert	BAYER	1	NR	N	Y	Y	Y	Disease, Insects, Products	Focus - Turf Management. Designed for use in UK.
16	Weed ID	Monsanto	1	3.1						Designed for use in Canada



By Pam Jahnke
2015 MG Intern

sharing our bounty

Our Community Gardens

As a Class of 2015 Galveston County Master Gardener Intern, in the past year I really enjoyed working in the community beds of our Master Gardener Demonstration Garden. Not only did we learn how to grow beautiful vegetables, but we got to share the bounty with people who may never have had a fresh tomato. My class tended 24 tomato plants and provided over 300 pounds of fresh fruits that were donated to local food pantries. Other community beds in our gardens are cared for by MG volunteers, and those vegetables, along with harvests from our orchard, are also donated. The volunteers in this program have been donating food for the past four years, beginning with 692 pounds donated in 2012 and growing annually to 2431 pounds in 2015. MG volunteers take the donations to the food pantries in time for their distribution days.

To learn more about local food needs and distribution and how to improve our contribution, another MG and I toured the Galveston County Food Bank in Texas City in November. Natalie Clarke, Development Director, generously provided her time to answer our questions and show us the facility. We walked through a Client Choice Food Mart, where clients use points instead of cash to choose what they need, but there was no fresh produce available that day. All

Food Bank clients must register, and their monthly visits are tracked in a computerized system. They can also sign up for Food Stamp programs on site and may receive other social services. The county-wide food distribution system provides only a small fraction of clients' food needs. We were amazed to learn that the Bank serves one in five Galveston County residents (46,000 households) annually, distributing more than 6 million pounds of food. In about 50% of the households, the primary breadwinner holds a job throughout the year but still suffers food insecurity or hunger. Children and seniors are main client populations and there are specific programs for them such as Backpack Buddies and Homebound Nutritional Packs for seniors. The Food Bank, through federal funding and private grants and donations, distributes to food pantries in many towns and cities in the county. The Food Bank relies on the help of many volunteers to complete its mission as their paid staff is small. More volunteers are needed.

As we toured the gigantic warehouse, we saw that most of the food is canned or packaged. There is little fresh food because of storage needs and inherent spoilage problems. Natalie told us that there are children in the county who have never eaten fresh vegetables or fruit. We did see

a huge palette of oranges donated by a local grocery store, but I could see moldy fruit in the boxes. Each box will need to be sorted by a volunteer before being distributed. We asked about the best ways for our organization to help. In addition to information on the main Food Bank, Natalie gave us a list of local pantries and a calendar of days and times when food is distributed at each. Local pantries have the same problems with storage, so fresh food must be donated just before or on the day that people will receive it. All kinds of fresh vegetables are welcome. When they know that clients will receive something less well-known (eggplant, for example), volunteers can give out simple-to-cook recipes.

I was surprised to learn about the extent of hunger in our community. As I think about things I plan to do in the new year, I pledge to continue to work in the MG community beds. I will volunteer time to work at the Food Bank or another local pantry. Like most gardeners, I enjoy sharing the harvest, so another thing I can do is to plant a little extra in my home garden to donate locally. Adding an extra few plants or even a row is a small effort to make sure that others have access to some delicious nutrition. I can't imagine growing up not having eaten a perfectly ripe tomato. Mmmmm. Tomatoes.



Photos by Pam Jahnke
Jane Carter at the board where we keep track of produce going to food pantries



Broccoli picked in the community bed for food pantry recipients



That's me weighing the broccoli and recording the weights before writing on the board

another use for newspaper

Homemade Seed Tape



By John Anderson
MG 1990

I always put my class year behind my name. The reason for doing so is because it was Dr. J's first class for GCMGA and I'm proud to have been his student that first year. As for the subject, I recently started making my own seed tape because I was tired of the ants carrying off my small seeds before they could germinate. I was also tired of thinning the tiny plants which turns out to be more tedious than the placing of tiny seeds in a tape.

The first try was not nearly as successful as I had wished, but with a little more experience it has turned out to be a big success. I use the tape for mustard, turnips, kohlrabi, spinach, cabbage, broccoli, carrots, beets and Swiss chard to name a few. For those plantings that require more space than others, I make up the tape, cut it and place it at the proper row spacing and depth.

I know store-bought seed tape is available if you can find someone who handles it but that is the BIG IF. I cut newspaper strips $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch wide for the tape itself, smear it with a paste stick and place the seeds on that strip with tweezers and cover them with another strip. To provide a little insurance that I will get good germination, I usually place two seeds about $\frac{1}{2}$ of an inch apart. You probably should put paste on both strips of the paper to make sure you have a good bond. This project is almost free because the newspaper is already paid for, the paste sticks, which come in a two-pack anywhere you find school supplies, cost very little, and I'm sure you have a pair of tweezers around the house. I am also sure, if you have the patience to garden in our climate, you certainly have enough patience to make your own seed tape. Plant the tape at the proper depth, cover with your choice of mulch (I use chopped hay), and water down really well to start the deterioration of the paper and the germination process. Good luck and I know you will enjoy the results.



Cut two strips $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ inch wide and smear both with paste stick.



Place seeds on first strip with tweezers and cover with another strip, pasted sides enveloping the seeds.



Photos by John Anderson

Plant the tape at the proper depth and cover with our choice of mulch.



A Visit to the David Austin Garden Center

An English Rose Garden

by John Jons
MG 2003

I was enjoying another beautiful English morning in June. The sun was out, and I was having a nice cup of tea in my cousin's garden in the Midlands when I noticed his roses were in full bloom, so I suggested that we get in the car and drive to a nice little pub in Shrewsbury on the River Severn and on the way check out David Austin's roses.

David Austin's roses (the David Austin Plant Center) is located in Albrighton near Wolverhampton. Now if you are unfamiliar with these places, don't feel bad as they are quite a way off the well-beaten tourist routes. Albrighton is about 65 miles northwest of the American tourist mecca of Stratford-upon-Avon or about 150 miles from London. This is where the David Austin rose gardens and business are located.

Sixty years ago, David Austin Sr. set out to breed roses that had the best characteristics of the old garden roses and the new modern roses. He focused on breeding vigorous growing roses with many-petaled flowers that have a large rosette or cupped form and are very fragrant and repeat blooming with a large range of colors. He has subsequently introduced over 190+ rose cultivars. He was so successful that his roses are now referred to as "English Roses" or "Austin Roses." In 2010, he was named a "Great Rosarian of the World." His son and grandson now run the David Austin rose business.

As you drive down the narrow, winding, single-lane Albrighton roads to the David Austin Plant Center, and if you are brave enough to park your car in the narrow roads and peer over the hedges, you will see fields full of roses being grown (presumably) for market.

The last time I visited the David Austin Garden Center was in 2006. I was roaming the gardens and admiring all the roses and just happened to bump into David Austin Sr. who was discussing some of the blooms with his gardener. I introduced myself and then asked him a couple of quick questions about his roses. He politely asked me where I was from as, while I had a Brummy (Birmingham, England) accent, my questions were about growing his roses in southern Texas. I explained that I was born and raised in Birmingham but I now live in Houston. He started asking me questions about roses in America. At that particular point in time, I was leading an Earth-Kind™ research project in Galveston, Texas, in which Dr. George (Earth-Kind™ research project leader at Texas A&M) had informally appointed me as the international ambassador for Earth-Kind™. Naturally, I proceeded to share with David Austin the work being performed to identify low-maintenance and high-disease-resistant roses. He seemed very interested and requested that I send him some information on the Earth-Kind™ research. Much to my chagrin, after subsequent discussions on roses and rose hybridization with other Rosarians in England and on the European continent, I discovered they had been identifying and attempting breeding these kinds of roses for some while.

Compared to most of the American rose gardens that I have visited, the David Austin Rose Garden Center is quite small. It consists of approximately a two-acre rose garden and a plant center. The overall garden is divided into five gardens. If you ask for it, the staff will give you a 'Garden Plan & Rose Finder' which is a map

of the rose garden that identifies the specific bed location of all the individual rose plants (cultivars) indexed in alphabetical order. Apparently, there are over 700+ rose varieties in the gardens. Plus, among the roses there are other plants and shrubs that complement the roses in both form, growth and color. If you are a novice or experienced gardener or rose enthusiast, you will find, as I did, that the color schemes and the landscaping is absolutely amazing. The sheer masses of complementary plant bloom colors and the sizes of the rose blooms are incredible. I'm not sure I can adequately describe it, so I put a video on YouTube called "A Visit to an English Rose Garden: The David Austin Garden Center" – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vJXnsPHBh-U>. The overall garden was immaculately manicured. My cousin noted that the lawns were better than some of the golf greens on which he has played. Throughout the gardens there were gardeners tending the plants. They freely stopped what they were doing and enthusiastically answered any plant questions I had.

Continued on Page 11



Golden Celebration - © J. Jons 2016

an English rose garden continued

be sure to check out MG John Jons' YouTube video - it is awesome!

Located next to the rose garden was the plant center that consisted of a gift shop, tea room and a plant sales area. The ladies in our group really enjoyed the gift shop. It sold all kinds of rose-related gifts. The plant sales area sells roses and other plants. They had over 400 different varieties of container roses for sale. The roses and the different varieties of plants (for sale) were often neatly framed by little manicured boxwood hedges. The plant sales area was so well organized and colorful that it could have been its own rose garden. The tea room was very nice and clean, and the tea was quite good. My cousin noted that if they had a pub on the property, we could have spent all day there.

Behind the garden wall and off-limits to the general public were the greenhouses. There the new roses were hybridized alongside the fields where the newly-hybridized roses were tested.

After roaming and enjoying the gardens, we decided to have a cup of tea in the tea room. Unfortunately, there were not enough chairs around the table that we selected. So my cousin's daughter borrowed (stole) a chair from another table. When the person sitting at that table returned, I noted that it was David Austin Jr. We apologized for taking his chair and promptly returned the chair to him. He politely declined the chair and let us keep it, but he noted, "It's amazing. I own the place, and I can't get a chair to have a cup of tea." As to not miss the opportunity, I asked him some questions about his hybridizing program, and he delightfully answered them. I then asked if I could get a tour of the hybridizing greenhouses and

learn about their hybridizing processes. Ever polite, he declined as he noted that today was quite a busy day for him, but he asked me to wait a moment as he would find someone who would give me a tour. About five minutes later (before I had finished my cup of tea) he returned with his head gardener, who proceeded to take me on an external tour of the hybridizing greenhouses. While obviously busy, he patiently answered my many questions. He also had questions for me on growing roses in America, which I was delighted to answer.

By now, my relatives had finished their (many) cups of tea and were ready to move on and visit that pub in Shrewsbury on the side of the River Severn. As we left Albrighton, we stopped a couple of times to peek over the hedgerows to admire the roses growing in the fields.

I would suggest that if you like roses and/or enjoy gardening, and you have some time while visiting England, this is a rose garden that you may want to try to visit.

If you are like me and you do gardening club presentations, bring up my YouTube video and sit back to let the gardeners enjoy this rose garden as much as we did.

YouTube Video Title – "A Visit to an English Rose Garden: The David Austin Garden Center" - Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vJXnsPHBh-U>



Garden Overlook - © J. Jons 2016

MG Best Shots



Coral Vine by MG Judithe Savely



Passionflower by MG Mona Ray



Bougainvillea by MG Helle Brown



Confederate Star Jasmine by MG Margie Jenke



Carolina Jasmine by MG Herman Auer



Rangoon Creeper by MG Linda Steber

...and Narrative

grow with vertical vivid vines



By Deane Greer
MG 2009

Need to add some vertical interest to your otherwise horizontal landscape? Need to cover that boring gray, brown or chain length fence? Need to provide a windbreak and want something fast growing and relatively pest free? Have an arbor, patio roof, gazebo, or stone wall that needs covering? Want to add some pizzazz with brilliant color but don't have much lateral land space to spare? Well, blooming vines provide the answer. A sunny exposure, soil amended with a bit of compost, peat moss, or other organic material, and a trellis, fence, post, or wall for support are all that's needed to provide beautiful blooming vines. The following vines are proven winners for Southeast Texas and the Gulf Coast areas.

Coral Vine (Queen's Wreath), *Aligone leptopus* - Native to Mexico this perennial tropical evergreen vine will grow in partial sun, is fast growing and will reach 35 to 40 feet if happy. It isn't picky about soil but does require good drainage. Its lacy pink, dark rose pink, or white clusters of blooms are very showy and appear summer through fall. Since it climbs with tendrils, it needs support from a trellis, fence, or tree and makes a good cover for a patio and a great wind break. While drought tolerant, it puts on its best show after first rains of late summer. A hard freeze will decimate the top foliage; however, it rebounds from the roots. Propagation is through division or seeds.

Passionflower, *Passiflora x alatoeacruen* - Native to Brazil this vine gets its name from symbolism associated with the Crucifixion. It requires full sun to partial shade in the afternoon on hot summer days. A fast grower that can reach 10 to 20 feet, its tendrils require a trellis or some other support, and it is good for trellises and over fences and walls. While it grows in average soil, it does require good drainage and regular watering is needed to keep it in bloom. It is often grown for its unusual violet-blue multi-petalled flowers. The vine will die back in the winter but will return from the shallow roots if they have been well mulched. Harvest the seeds for propagation.

Bougainvillea, *Bougainvillea spectabilis* - Native to Brazil this tropical woody evergreen vine with spines grows in sun to bright light, can reach fifteen to eighteen feet in height, and needs a trellis, fence or some type support. A fast grower, its small white tubular flowers surrounded by three large paper-like bracts bloom best on eighteen to twenty-inch branches and provide a spectacular display of color year round with a mild winter. Since it blooms on new growth, pruning is required. Regular applications during the growing season of a half-strength balanced water soluble fertilizer or hibiscus food will increase blooms. Water this drought-tolerant vine sparingly because it blooms best when under stress and root bound. Propagation is through cuttings.

Confederate (Star) Jasmine, *Trachelospermum jasminoides* - Native to China this popular evergreen vine produces fragrant bright white small pinwheel-shaped flowers spring through summer. It requires sun to part sun, well draining soil, and regular pruning for thicker plants and to keep this vigorous vine in check. This vine is a "twinner" and great for covering fences, arbors, patio roofs or as an eighteen-inch ground cover. Many homeowners grow it near their residence because of the fragrant flowers it produces. It is drought tolerant and can be propagated through tip cuttings.

Carolina Jasmine, *Gelsemium sempervirens* - Native to Tropical America this perennial evergreen vine can reach ten to twenty-five feet. It is prized for its lanceolate, deep glossy green foliage and its showy display of bright yellow singular tubular flowers grown in clusters which appear in early spring. It grows in sun, part sun, or shade in acidic or alkaline soil. It is most happy in moist soil but does not like to be overwatered. Since it climbs via twines, it is great on fences, patio covers, and rock walls. Some gardeners also use it as a mounding ground cover. Propagate through seeds, stem cuttings, or air layering.

Rangoon Creeper, *Quisqualis indica* - Native to Burma, New Guinea, and the Philippine Islands this tropical perennial

vine grows in sun to part sun and is a vigorous growing, free branching vine which needs support. With a length range from six to thirty feet it is a good climber over fences, trellises, patio covers, arbors, etc. This ornamental vine prefers soil amended with fertile humus and some sand and requires moderate but regular watering until established. Once established, it is fairly drought tolerant. Foliage is generally lush and green; however, the blooms steal the show from summer thru fall. The beautifully colored flower clusters with pendulous trumpet-shaped blooms open white, then turn pink and end deep pink, bright red or reddish purple over a three day period. Foliage will die back if subjected to a low of thirty degrees, but the vine will grow back from the roots. Regular pruning will increase blooms since it blooms on new wood. Propagate thru seeds, cuttings, or layering.

Other flowering vines which perform well in Zones 8/9 include Sweet Autumn Clematis *Clematis temiflora*, Black-Eyed Susan *Thunbergia alata*, Mandevilla *Mandevilla splendens*, Hyacinth Bean Vine *Dolichos lablab*, and Trumpet Vine *Campsis radicans*. All of the vines discussed above may also be grown in containers and as a ground cover. In addition, their trailing, branching habit makes them good candidates for hanging baskets. While all vines, especially flowering vines, require some pruning to keep them in check and a bit of care, the rewards are worth the "blooming" effort.



Mandevilla by Margie Jenke



By Jan Brick
MG 2001

THE ISLAND GARDEN

The Tomato. . .The World's Most Popular Fruit

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

Tomatoes are the world's most popular fruit! More than sixty million tons are produced every year. It is hard to believe that such a widely-used food source was once considered extremely poisonous. Available year-round in fresh and preserved forms, there is no shortage of uses for this versatile "vegetable."

Up until the end of the eighteenth century, physicians warned against eating tomatoes, fearing they caused not only appendicitis but stomach cancer from tomato skins adhering to the lining of the stomach. The Latin botanical name, *Lycopersicon esculentum*, translates to "wolfpeach", peach because it was round and luscious and wolf because it was considered poisonous.

The English word tomato comes from the Spanish word, *tomate*. The tomato is native to western South America and Central America. Cortez discovered tomatoes growing in Montezuma's gardens and took seeds back to Europe where they were planted as ornamental curiosities, but not eaten. Most likely the first variety to reach Europe was yellow in color, since in Spain and Italy they were known as *pomi d'oro*, meaning yellow apples. The French referred to the tomato as *pommes d'amour*, or love apples, as they thought them to have stimulating aphrodisiacal properties.

Growing tomatoes is probably the most popular of all gardening activities—not only among experienced gardeners but with those who putter with a small plot or a container garden as well. Most of us have our favorite varieties, the ones we plant year after year, again and again. Perhaps it is out of habit or because "my neighbor recommended it" or it was all the nursery had left.

Currently, the tomatoes most commonly preferred fall into two categories, the hybrid and the heirloom. Since there are thousands of varieties of tomatoes available for the home vegetable gardener today, there may be some confusion between what is a hybrid and what is an heirloom tomato.

Hybrid tomato varieties are produced by plant breeders that have selected two compatible tomato varieties and cross bred them to create a new tomato variety that features traits from the two parent plants. For instance, a breeder may select a particular tomato plant because of its resistance to blight and other diseases and then another that produces in a short length of time. The new tomato will have an early production rate and be blight resistant as well.

Park Seeds recommends these hybrids:

"Better Boy" the classic favorite—A good all-around choice—Better Boy never disappoints—You can always trust Better Boy!

Better Boy holds a Guinness Book of World Records for yields (nearly 350 pounds of tomatoes from a single plant over a single season!), superior disease resistance, unbeatable flavor, and wide adaptation to climates and conditions all make this beefsteak the undisputed champ! Succulent, juicy, yet meaty tomatoes averaging about a pound apiece.

"Early Girl" the first to bear and often the last to bear!

Early Girl has been a favorite for decades. These fruits are meaty, aromatic, and flavorful! You simply can't find a better slicing tomato than Early Girl. These four to six-ounce fruits are ready in just under two months, red-skinned, smooth, and delectable! They are filled with tasty juice, and have an old-fashioned, rich tomato tang that imparts more flavor than many modern varieties can.

"Celebrity"—Nothing stops a Celebrity!

An All-America Selection winner and long-time popular favorite of American gardeners, Celebrity is a superior all-around tomato with fantastic disease resistance. These plants are exceptionally strong, bearing masses of smooth, round, bright red tomatoes. Weighing about eight ounces, these "vine ripened" tomatoes are very uniform (no green shoulders here!) and resistant to cracking. Yields about twenty to the stem on plants that will definitely need staking or caging to hold their huge bounty.

According to Greenmarket Heirloom Tomatoes, "The definition of the use of the word heirloom to describe plants is highly debated. One school of thought places an age or date point on the cultivars. For instance, some say that the seeds must be over 100 years old, others 50 years—another way to describe heirloom cultivars is to use the definition of the word "heirloom" in its truest sense. Under this interpretation, a true heirloom is a cultivar that has been nurtured, selected, and handed down from one family member to another for many generations. Additionally, there is another category of cultivars that could be classified as "commercial heirlooms," cultivars that were introduced many generations ago and were of such merit that they have been saved, maintained and handed down, even if the seed company has gone out of business or otherwise dropped the line."

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The Tomato. . .The World's Most Popular Fruit

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Heirloom Tomatoes - MG Terry Cuculis

The main appeal of heirloom tomatoes is their taste—they are eating tomatoes, pure and simple. An interesting aspect of heirloom tomatoes is their color, a rainbow spectrum including stripes and blushes. Each one is different—some are meatier, some have fewer seeds and some taste a bit salty or spicy. Heirlooms can be found in a variety of colors, shapes, flavors and sizes.

Recommended varieties of heirloom tomatoes are listed in the publication, “Common Sense Vegetable Gardening for the South” by William D. Adams and Thomas LeRoy.

Calabash: Purple color, sweet flavor, medium to large fruit, vigorous and productive

Costoluto Genovese: Red color, flavorful Italian adapted to hot weather

Garden Peach: Yellow-pink, fuzzy skin, mild flavor

Green Grape: Green in color, quarter-size fruit, sweet and juicy, compact plant

Green Zebra: Striped yellow and green, gourmet quality, small to medium fruit

Persimmon: Rose-orange, large fruit, high rating in taste tests

“The Tobacco Hornworm”

The tobacco hornworm larva is green in color with L-shaped stripes and a red “horn” appendage at its rear. It has an appetite to match its large size (nearly four inches at maturity). The tobacco hornworm can strip a tomato plant of its leaves and new stems rapidly. Although it prefers the tomatoes in your garden, the hornworm will also make a lunch of eggplant, potatoes and peppers. The tobacco hornworm is the larvae stage of an adult sphinx moth. The moth lays its eggs on the underside of tomato leaves in the spring—the eggs take about a week to hatch and the resulting larva will feast on your plants to maturity which takes two to four weeks. At that time the worms will burrow into the soil to pupate. Shortly a new moth will emerge from the soil to lay another series of eggs. Each moth may lay up to 2,000 eggs! The hornworms are easiest to spot in the morning and in small gardens the best control is removal and disposal although sevin or malathion products as well as applications of *Bacillus thuringiensis*, sold as Dipel or Bio Worm Killer will help control and prevent outbreaks.



Photos by GCMGA Digital Library

Tobacco Hornworm (larva)



Tobacco Hornworm (adult)

Spring has arrived, the gardens have been prepared, select your favorite tomato variety or try something new! There are many challenges and rewards to be had in the garden but none as gratifying as strolling through your garden—picking a sample tomato—eating it on the spot—what bliss!

The Red Currants

This is a tomato that is in a category all its own! These, the tiniest tomatoes grow perfectly round, are bright red and are often called “cute”. The “Red Currants” will produce hundreds of tiny tomatoes (about the size of a blueberry) that boast an overall good taste that is not too sweet but just right. Currants will continue to grow until frost but may continue to produce if the weather is mild. They will need staking or caging for support. Red Currants are great on salads but are best when you pop them into your mouth, one tasty tomato at a time!



Red Currant Tomatoes

Fun Facts

There are at least 10,000 varieties of tomatoes, from small cherry ones to Ponderosa, which can weigh over three pounds. The tomato first grew as wild, cherry-sized berries in the South American Andes. The tomato as we know it today was developed in Mexico. Lycopene, a powerful antioxidant that is abundant in tomatoes and tomato products, is widely thought to help in the prevention of a variety of maladies. Tomatoes are an excellent source of vitamin C. One medium tomato provides 40% of the recommended daily allowance.



beneficial fungi can provide good control of whiteflies

There's a Friendly Fungus Among Us

by Genevieve Benson
MG Intern 2015

The Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office offers a wealth of information. County residents frequent our facility with hopes of finding answers to their most perplexing horticultural-related questions. A variety of plant parts find their way to us with the general “What is this and how do I fix it” questions attached.

Generally, our resident Plant & Insect Specialist, Laurel Stine, is at hand to assist in answering these queries. However, this past January she decided to go on vacation! Can you imagine?! But what an opportunity for learning! As I am still wet behind the ears in my Master Gardening life, this afforded me the wonderful opportunity to further my gardening education.

As luck would have it, one such question found me when Laurel was away. A resident from Santa Fe visited the office and, as is often the case, entered with a leaf in hand wanting a diagnosis for his plant problem. He had citrus trees growing in his landscape and wanted to know about an abundance of orange growths covering his citrus tree and how to get rid of them, as they were covering 70% of the foliage.

Interestingly enough, the growths turned out to be beneficial fungi that were feeding on the nymphal (immature) stages of an insect pest known as the citrus whitefly. Anyone who has grown citrus can likely attest to problems caused by this whitefly and its honeydew excretions that cover a tree's leaves causing them to be sticky or covered with black sooty mold that grows on the honeydew.

Controlling whitefly populations can be a difficult task but several species of beneficial fungi can provide good control of whiteflies.

The reddish-orange growths are actually fungal threads (mycelia) and reproductive structures. Fungi which attacks/feeds on whitefly nymphs are collectively known as “friendly fungi”; a more technical term would be entomophagous fungi. The mycelia of these three species of fungi grow into and around whitefly nymphs to derive nutrients for the growth of the fungus, thus eventually encasing and killing the whitefly nymphs.

The two most frequently reported, and most effective, species of friendly fungi in our area are known as Red Aschersonia (*Aschersonia aleyrodis*) and Brown Aschersonia (*Aegerita webber*). Another friendly fungus species is known as Yellow Aschersonia (*Aschersonia goldiana*) which feeds on the nymphal stages of a different species of whiteflies known as the cloudywinged whitefly. The presence of Yellow Aschersonia most assuredly guarantees the presence of the cloudywinged whitefly. (NOTE: Even though it's known as Red Aschersonia, this fungus is actually pink in color with red spots. Yellow Aschersonia is cream to white in color with yellow spores.)

Home citrus growers in the Texas Upper Gulf Coast growing region tend to refer to these friendly fungi as the Red Fungus, Brown fungus or Yellow Fungus given their tongue-twisting scientific names.

Given appropriate weather conditions, these “friendly fungi” will do a wonderful job of managing whitefly populations on your citrus. You will see higher occurrences of friendly fungi when rainfall is ample over a growing season. As this past summer and fall growing season

was unusually wet in our Gulf Coast growing region, it was no surprise to find citrus trees covered with red-orange spots.

During his first visit in January the homeowner was surprised when informed that his citrus had a case of friendly fungi. And he did report that whiteflies had been a problem. As I was preparing this article, the home citrus grower eagerly brought in another sample of citrus leaves with Red Aschersonia (aka, Red Fungus) growths so we could get the high-quality photographs shown with this article.

As far as providing a solution to his problem, I did not recommend for any action to be taken as nature was taking care of nature. Our “friendly fungi” are an excellent example of Mother Nature providing her own methods of biological control!



Red Fungus (*Aschersonia aleyrodis*)

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 newspaper.)



By Donna J. Ward
MG 1996

If you hear a loud snarl, not to worry—it's just March coming in like a lion. I almost hate to see this winter end. It was mild to say the least, but cool enough to gift us with some tasty cool weather veggies. My German Giant radishes were a flop, lots of top growth, and not much below the ground where it counts. But I did discover that you can do a quick stir-fry with those leafy tops while they're still young and tender. The snow peas outdid themselves. There was a multitude of stir-fries with beef, chicken or shrimp, raw and dipped in a blue cheese/sour cream concoction, sautéed with garlic, julienned and tossed into a crispy cole slaw, they even went into some homemade spring rolls. I hate to complain, but I was running out of ways to serve them. With warm weather on the horizon—they are soon to be history. Just as well—Mr. Google is tired of seeing "snow pea recipes" in his search box.

Our February blooming Professor Sargent camellia has dropped most of its gorgeous red blooms, so it's time to give it a haircut to thin out crossed or broken branches and increase air circulation to ward off a scale infestation. Scale loves a dense shrub that inhibits air movement and traps humidity within its branches. A good feeding now would be appreciated, and if you've never acidified the soil around your camellias, do it now. The azaleas would appreciate the same treatment once they drop all of their blossoms, probably by the end of this month. Don't wait to prune, do it immediately after bloom drop, otherwise you'll be cutting off bloom wood for next spring's performance. As long as you have an acidifier whether granules or from a hose-end applicator, apply some to the southern magnolias—they will be much appreciative and will reward you with glossy, green leathery leaves, and spectacular, fragrant flowers in May. Feed all spring blooming shrubbery once they stop blooming. Remember the rule: Water first, feed, then water again. This also holds true for your landscape trees who are working to put on new spring foliage.

Looking for a little color in your landscape, how about some colorful annuals? Your favorite nursery has plenty to choose from. Just remember to remove all blooms on newly-purchased plants. I know it hurts (you, not them), but they will set a stronger root system and become more quickly established.

Have you ever made manure tea? Buy a bag of manure (better yet if you have access to rotted manure) put a few big scoops into an old ankle or knee high nylon sock. Tie a knot in the end and toss it into a bucket of water. Rainwater is best, but right out of your faucet will work also. Let it sit for a few days. This tea is high in nitrogen, and I especially use it on potted ferns and other tropicals. Don't use it more than once a month on bloomers, as high nitrogen promotes top green growth, not blossoms.

There are plenty of veggies waiting to go into the 'south forty' or in the alternative, that little sunny corner of your back yard. Plant seeds of cucumbers, wax, snap, lima, green and pole beans, pumpkins, squash, watermelon, lettuce, radish (hurry), corn, kohlrabi, collards, turnips (ugh), and transplants of cabbage, eggplant and peppers. Buy the biggest tomato transplant you can afford, as they quit producing once the night temperature gets warm, so get as much of a head start as you can. Although the little cherry and grape types do produce further into the summer temps than the usual standard slicing types. But they do tend to slide off of your hamburger!



Photos by Donna Ward

Snow Peas



Professor Sargent camellia



Cherry Tomatoes



By Susan Meads-Leahy
MG 2014

My personal inspiration to become a Master Gardener

Meet a Master Gardener

Ken Steblein

My first meeting with Ken Steblein was at a presentation he had at the Rosenberg Library about three years ago where he was presenting “50 Ways to Lead a Greener Life.” I had an immediate connection with Ken because I could actually feel the passion he has for making our community and Earth more sustainable. After hearing Ken speak of the Galveston County Master Gardener (GCMG) Program, the friend that went with me to the presentation told me, “Hey, you can do that; you would be a great Master Gardener!” That was the beginning of a beautiful journey to become a part of one of the most wonderful and fulfilling organizations I have ever been privileged to be a member.

In speaking with Ken regarding his journey to becoming a GCMG, he said it was a natural progression in his life as he already had a career as a horticulturist. At one point he had between four and five members of his family who were educated and working in various areas of horticulture.

Ken was very active in the 4-H club where he grew up in Western New York, near Niagara Falls. He said there was a very big difference in the 4-H experience in Texas versus Cornell University. He found his passion in horticulture at a very early age, participating in competitions where he began making a name for himself in the field.

Ken attended Longwood Gardens (in the Philadelphia area), which offered a degree-granting graduate program for those pursuing a career in horticulture. After that he went to Scotland at Threave Gardens; these two schools are equal to a four-year degree in horticulture. These degrees offered him a high affiliation and respect in the horticulture community, but, after moving to Texas, he felt the GCMG Program echoed his experience and would bring him additional expertise. Ken was in the class of 1992 and became a Master Composter in 1993.

Ken has a huge passion for giving back to the community, and, as I said before, when you speak with him, you can actually feel his passion in the way he communicates his thoughts regarding this matter. He took a position with UTMB in the Grounds/Landscaping Department as the Landscape Manager. Once this department decided to outsource that portion of their campus, Ken continued with UTMB on the newly developed “Green Team.” He applied for a \$100K grant from the Texas Resource Conservation Commission and was successful in his efforts to start a composting partnership between three entities. This grant partnered UTMB with the City of Galveston and Moody Gardens and provided funds for collecting debris and grinding it into mulch, which continues to be given away to anyone in the City of Galveston. This program was initiated approximately 25 years ago and has grown exponentially, with the City of Galveston eventually taking over the program.

UTMB continues to partner with the city by collecting landscape debris from the campus for mulch. It is then back-hauled to UTMB. Additionally, Ken has been integral in forming other partnerships to recycle styrofoam. They densify the material into styrofoam patties, which makes the material much easier to ship. They “re-aerate” the material for other uses.

Ken said this natural progression at UTMB led to the job he currently holds there, as he had become an asset; there was not anyone else who had the passion and experience to head up the “Green Team.” He said his passion for green living stems from not being green all of his life. He comes from a farming family, and they used to sacrifice quality for quantity. He spent a portion of his life he considers as a migrant worker, picking apples, cherries and the like. You can see the pride in his eyes with the accomplishments he has made in becoming a champion for a greener life, and he feels his



father would be proud of him at this point in his life.

Unfortunately, Ken lost his father to cancer about fourteen years ago, and he is now battling the same. He has moved from chemotherapy treatments to MD Anderson care where he is currently participating in a yearlong clinical trial. It is taxing since he can't drive to/from MD Anderson while in treatment, and they can't always get all of his appointments on the same day; however, as always, our Master Gardeners have stepped forward to assist Ken with his commutes to Houston for treatment. This is another great testimony to the caliber of people we fondly call Galveston County Master Gardeners. Please keep Ken in your prayers as he continues to battle his cancer; each and every prayer is taken very seriously by him as well as being deeply appreciated.

On a closing note, don't hesitate to take his class that has now become “75 Ways to a Greener Life;” you will not be disappointed. I sincerely hope you will see what I saw in his eyes and felt in my heart as he imparts his wisdom with a passion you will never forget.



By Barbra Markey
MG 2013



By Henry Harrison
MG 2011

the language of garden tools

Tool Primer



Leaf Rake



Shrub Rake



Landscape or Bow Rake

Today we will discuss different types of garden rakes and their usage. Some languages define the word rake to mean "heap up or scrape together." Think of the rake as an outdoor broom with a variety of uses.

Landscape garden tasks require specific rakes to be effective, as well as efficient. Most rakes are hand-operated tools with a purpose of cultivation or leveling and thinning soil. Whether you intend to collect leaves or grass, proper selection of the correct tool is essential.

Good leaf rakes should be attached to a fiberglass shaft, as fiberglass offers a feather-like execution and allows one to dig deeper and obtain more debris; moreover, fiberglass is lighter than wood, is stronger and holds up well in the weather, particularly if accidentally left outdoors.

Investigate rakes with key mechanisms that work together to structure interrelated parts that function together to achieve a means, or discharge a specific task. Flexible tines on a metal rake should be in a fan-like shape and angle slightly downward to grab leaves. Locate a rake with welds that re-enforce the bar and with tines welded to the frame. This rake smooths landscape soils and prepares for shrub/tree planting. It can collect leaves under shrubs and from garden surfaces. Minor/light weed removal can also be accomplished, if desired.

More often than not, you must explore to locate a good quality, high-performance rake that meets your particular need. One good thing about the Internet, which may be used to obtain tool information, is it offers an opportunity to study many different sites until you discover one for your specific requirement.

An alternative leaf rake, available for purchase, is a lightweight rake that screws together. If screws loosen, re-tightening is possible. Tines are made from a piece of stamped steel, cut into small strips. Because the rake head is made from stamped steel, it will rust if left outside.

A personal favorite is the shrub rake. It is simple, dependable and great for removing leaves and other debris from gardens. It performs without disturbing growing plants in the landscapes, effortlessly goes under fences, and is great for reaching tight, awkward spots. It gets debris, doesn't cover large areas, but doesn't miss anything. The tines are flexible and attach to the collar on the rake, and it allows you to preserve ground cover. In addition, these rakes are 1/3 the weight of a standard rake. Careful shopping can yield several different brands and prices. Rakes with 24" handles, for tight spaces, are available.

Standard landscape or bow rakes are not for leaf raking. Tines are heavy and widely spaced on a strong, metal frame. Their primary purpose is to loosen and turn over soil, or level and grade dirt before planting a garden. Turn the rake over and use the back of tines to smooth the soil. These rakes are most successfully used in small landscaping jobs. Professional landscapers use a larger version of this tool.

March-April "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.

Project: Demonstration Gardens

Carbide Park



By Tom Fountain
MG 2008



Photos by Tom Fountain

We have had a fairly typical winter for south Texas, a few frosts and no real freeze. Our local temperatures have been near normal and rainfall slightly below. The timing of rains along with cool temperatures has kept the ground in the garden moist. The moisture has the winter vegetables looking real nice, as long as those pesky rabbits are kept at bay. I have also noticed a few blooms on some of the fruit trees in the orchard; this seems a little bit early this year. After being asked a few times if we were going to have another freeze this year, I have taken a look at the climate data for this area and the long-range forecast and concluded we have less than 10% chance of a freeze this spring.

The past few months have been quite busy around the various work areas in the garden. A hoop house was built, and crushed granite was added to the parking area. A stove along with a microwave was finally added in the kitchen, and if you haven't noticed, the garden area was expanded 130 feet to the south. Our gardeners have also kept the day-to-day operations going, including pruning, weeding and grafting.



The greenhouse crew has been extremely busy growing a variety of vegetables and herbs for the spring plant sale. In the pictures above, left to right are; John and Keith securing the hoop house cover. ED and O.J. are making a salad and the new stove is in the background. Mary is watering plants in the greenhouse. Sharon is welding a plant table for use in the hoop house, while Henry is fabricating a leg for another table.



On top of all the many projects, our moving of the plant sale to the new location at the Galveston County Fairgrounds was a big task that had everyone busy trying to envision all of the needs there. It was a very timely move as we needed more room and the success of the sale will reflect that all the hard work was worth it. Another "Big Job" well one!



by Sandra Gervais
MG 2011

easy desserts

Seasonal Bites

A few years ago, one of the older members of our garden club brought this dessert to a meeting. We all loved it, ate every crumb and thought it was aptly named. She said the recipe was easy and she was happy to give it to us. She was also asked to bring it to many meetings!

FANTASTIC DESSERT

Spray a 9 x13 dish with Pam. Heat oven to 350 degrees.

Layer 1

Mix well together:

- 1 cup flour
- 1 cup chopped pecans
- 1 stick of soft butter (or margarine)

Spread in bottom of prepared dish to form a crust. Bake for 20 minutes in a preheated oven, or until lightly browned. Cool completely.

Layer 3

Mix together:

- 1 small box of instant chocolate pudding mix
- 1 small box of instant vanilla pudding mix
- 3 cups of milk (not skim)

Beat until mixture starts to thicken, about 2-3 minutes. Spread over cream cheese layer.

Layer 2

Mix/beat together:

- 1 cup powdered sugar
- 8 oz. cream cheese, softened

Fold in 2/3 of a large Cool Whip container. Spread over cooled crust.

Layer 4

Top with remaining Cool Whip and refrigerate until ready to serve.

Best if made the day before serving.

Note: this could be dressed up for Easter with a sprinkle of spring-tinted coconut or maybe nuts and cocoa.

And while we're on the subject of easy recipes, here's one that I thought everyone had. From comments about it, apparently not! It was given to me over forty years ago by a busy Mom who said it was fast, easy and good. Again, the name says it all.

FORGOTTEN COOKIES

Heat oven to 350 degrees.

Have 2 large eggs at room temperature. Separate the 2 eggs carefully. (You want no yolk in them.) Beat them until stiff peaks form. Gradually beat in 2/3 cup of sugar. Fold in 1 cup of chopped nuts. Then fold in a small pack (or 1 cup) of chocolate chips. (Can use regular or miniature chips.)

Drop by teaspoonful onto ungreased baking sheet. Turn OFF the oven (this is important). Place baking sheet in oven. Leave cookies in oven for at least 2 hours. I do them like my friend did and simply go to bed.

In the morning they are dry, pretty and ready to go. I did say my friend was a busy Mom. Note: these cookies are basically little meringues so the general rules for meringues hold. That is, no egg yolk in the mix, no contact with any oil or grease, and beating the whites until stiff. If desired, you can add 1 teaspoon of cream of tartar after the sugar to ensure stiff egg whites but I never have. Some people cover the baking sheet with parchment paper to avoid sticking. I'm lazy and any broken ones are always mine.

Enjoy Easter.



MINUTES - NOVEMBER, DECEMBER, 2015 & JANUARY, 2016

MONTHLY MG MEETINGS

Galveston County Master Gardener Association (GCMGA) Meeting Minutes November 10, 2015

The Tuesday, November 10, 2015, GCMGA monthly meeting was held at the Extension Office at Carbide Park with a "State of the Galveston County Master Gardener Program for 2015" PowerPoint presentation provided and then officers elections were conducted. MGA President Ira Gervais thanked everyone for coming to the meeting. MG Ginger Benson and MG Cindy Croft presented the new slate of officers for 2016. Ira Gervais was reelected for another term as President and Connie Webb was elected as Co-Treasurer with Julie Cartmill rotating off that position. Ira thanked everyone for their vote and commented how much he has enjoyed working in the capacity of President. MG Velda Cuclis was reelected to serve as our Delegate to the TMGA State Association. MG Henry Harrison was elected to the MG Board of Directors while MG John Jons rotated off.

MG Stewart McAdoo, Committee Chair for Greenhouse Operations, discussed the operation of the new greenhouse that is now complete with plants that were grown for the Fall Sale.

The 2015 GCMGA Highlights were as follows:

- State Awards at Annual Conference: Second for Individual (Robert Marshall) and First for Newsletter
- Tomato test trials by Interns and requirement to work in different areas of the organization
- 48 up to 61 MG's working at the Demo Garden each Thursday
- Successful spring and fall plant sales
- 2,500 lbs. of vegetables and fruits grown in Demonstration Garden were donated to area food banks thus so far this year.
- Dr. Johnson discussed that the bylaws which have not been revised since 2007, will need to be updated in 2016
- The Speakers Bureau serviced 1198 clients with hosting 48 Educational Hours
- Gulf Coast Gardening. Total public served 2867 individuals with 116.75 educational hours

Pam Jahnke will be organizing a CPR Class for the Demo garden on January 21.

Due to the class being at capacity, she might be scheduling another in the future.

MG Bobbie Ivey discussed Libbie's Place on Galveston Island, which is approved for MG hours, is in need of more volunteers. Please contact Bobbie if you are interested in helping out.



*By Mary Lou Kelso
MG 2000*



*By Cindy Croft
MG 2009*

Galveston County Master Gardener Meeting Minutes December 15, 2015

The December meeting of the GCMGA Association was held at the lovely home of Alan and MG Mikey Isbell on Galveston Island, Tuesday, December 15, 2015.

A brief meeting was conducted with GCMGA President Ira Gervais who thanked everyone for attending and also for all the volunteer service they provided in 2015. Dr. Johnson also thanked everyone and wished everyone a Merry Christmas. He reminded the MG's that their 2015 volunteer hours were due into the office by December 27. In order for everyone to be certified, they are required to have at least 6 hours of continuing education and 12 hours of volunteer time. Mikey and Alan were thanked for hosting our meeting at their home each year and for all the work that Mikey contributes to make it such a festive event!

A potluck dinner followed with MG Luke Stripling giving the blessing.

Galveston County Master Gardener Meeting Minutes January 12, 2016

The meeting of the GCMGA Association took place Tuesday, January 12, at the Extension Office at Carbide Park with GCMGA President Ira Gervais presiding. Ira discussed the Spring Plant Seminar and Sale that will be held on Saturday, February 20. He also commented that the 2016 Fall Perennial Sale would be held on Saturday, October 15, so that everyone could have the date on their calendar.

This year the site for both sales is being moved to Jack Brooks Park on Highway 6 which is about 3.3 miles from the Extension Office. John Jons will preview the plants for the sale starting at 8 am and the sale will start at 9 am until 1 pm. Dr. Johnson showcased the two previous areas that the sale has taken place in the past. The reason for the "big move" is because the sales area is under a covered building.

The set up days will be February 17, 18 & 19. Ira discussed all the material that we need to execute the sale would have to be moved temporarily to our new location, which meant a lot of things. We had to be ready on sale day to have everything we would need, which in the past was a walking distance away. While this was a huge undertaking, it is felt that it would make for a better event and fundraiser with being able to draw in a bigger audience.

Ira commented that there would be double the amount of fruit trees, more vegetables and also for a second year, a yard art sale of items donated by MG's.

The meeting ended with a potluck for everyone present which was enjoyed by all.

Upcoming Events

2016 Galveston County Master Gardener Educational Programs for Interested Gardeners

The following Master Gardener Programs are free to the public.

Location: Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office in Carbide Park

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

GPS location: [29.359705, -95.003591](https://www.google.com/maps/place/4102+Main+Street,+La+Marque,+TX+77568/@29.359705,-95.003591,15z)

For course reservations, call 281-534-3413, ext. 1, and then press option 2, or email GALV3@wt.net

Website: <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/index.html>

TOMATO STRESS MANAGEMENT, Part 3 of a 3-Part Series

Saturday, March 12, 2016

9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Presented by GC Master Gardener Ira Gervais. Learn about various fungus, diseases and environmental problems that could occur in your tomato garden, and what you can do to combat or resolve these problems.

VERMICULTURE – WORM CASTINGS FOR YOUR GARDEN

Saturday, March 12, 2016

1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Presented by GC Master Gardener Linda Brown. She will present details about how to build your own worm box, the kind of worms to use, where to get them, how to care for them, and how to harvest the castings and use them in your garden.

THE ABC'S OF HOME COMPOSTING

Tuesday, March 15, 2016

6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

GC Master Gardener Ken Steblein will provide practical information about the different types of composting so that you can decide which method will work best for you. Learn how to build a compost pile; about the feedstock that goes into it (yard, garden and/or kitchen waste); and, how to maintain, harvest and use compost. Compost is that magical soil amendment that is a soil conditioner, fertilizer and the key ingredient in organic gardening.

HONEY BEES AROUND THE GARDEN

Saturday, March 19, 2016

9:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.

GC Master Gardener Robert Marshall will present the history, types, social life and hive structure of domestic honey bees. Included in the program will be an overview of residential honey bee keeping.

TURNING DIRT INTO SOIL

Saturday, March 19, 2016

1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

GC Master Gardener Jim Gillian will explain the difference between dirt and soil, soil structure and characteristics, pH, nutrients, sources and strategies for soil amendment, soil testing and cultural practices. He will emphasize how to improve your existing soil.

'TEXAS TUFF' LANDSCAPE PLANTS – BLOOMING AND BEAUTIFUL

Tuesday, March 29, 2016

6:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

GC Master Gardener Sandra Devall will present a program on choosing varieties of low-care plants that thrive in Galveston County. She will discuss hearty plants for your landscape that will be ornamental as well as welcoming to bees and other pollinators, birds and butterflies. The 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 in Galveston County.

CULTURE AND CARE OF PALMS

Saturday, April 9

9:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Palm tree enthusiast and Galveston County Master Gardener O.J. Miller has over 17 years of 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 for Galveston County and the surrounding area.

A PASSION FOR PLUMERIA

Saturday, April 9

1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Presented by Galveston County Master Gardener Loretta Osteen, the program will include information about the history of the Plumeria and tips for growing and caring for them in our area. Also included will be information about the different flower shapes, fragrances and colors of the different varieties of Plumeria successfully grown in our area. Methods of propagation, proper winter storage and care will be presented.

GRAFTING PECAN TREES

Thursday, April 14

1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

NOTE LOCATION: 7851 Winding Trail Street, Santa Fe, TX 77517

Directions: From Hwy 6 in Santa Fe, go south on Avenue T, cross Highland Rd onto Vacek St. (Ave. T becomes Vacek.) Turn left at the second left street onto Winding Trail.

Galveston County Master Gardener Herman Auer and other GC Master Gardeners will demonstrate inlay bark grafting and four-flap grafting on small pecan trees. A small number of pecan scions will be available for attendees after the demonstrations.

TAWNY (Raspberry) CRAZY ANTS: MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES FOR HOMEOWNERS

Saturday, April 16

9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Presented by Paul R. Nester, Ph.D., Extension Program Specialist-IPM at Texas A&M.

OLIVE OIL PRODUCTION

Saturday, April 16

1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Presented by olive oil producer Randy Brazil of Liberty County, Texas. The presentation will include events leading up to and the purchase of the olive farm, research on growing olives and the future of the olive oil business in southeast Texas.

RAIN WATER HARVESTING

Tuesday, April 19

6:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Presented by Galveston County Master Gardener Tim Jahnke. He will discuss and explain ways humans have collected the precious resource of rainwater for more than 500 years and information on current applications for today's gardener.

bring your digital camera and instruction book

Digital Photography Team

Calling all Galveston County Master Gardeners and Galveston Bay Area Master Naturalists!

Do you have a digital camera and want to better utilize/understand the array of options that most cameras come equipped with?

We are bringing back our Digital Photography Team meetings starting Wednesday, March 9. We will be meeting at the Galveston County Extension Office from 9:00 a.m. till 11:00 a.m. The meetings thereafter for 2016 will be held on the second Wednesday of each quarter with the other three meetings being on June 8, September 14 and December 14.

The purpose of the meetings will be to learn about digital photography from Scott Buckel (a Master Naturalist and a professional photographer) and to share ideas, tips and critiques with each other. Attending the meeting will qualify as re-certification hours for Master Gardeners and AT for Master Naturalists. Since both Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists have an extensive photo database that is always in need of high quality and topical photos, learning to take better photos is a help to both organizations.

All Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists including Interns are welcome to participate! In this first quarterly meeting, we will discuss and decide what we want out of the meeting for the future. During the second part of the meeting, Scott will provide a presentation on the basic principles of photography. We will review shutter speeds, apertures, exposure and other aspects of photography to understand the technical aspects of photography. So we will begin at the beginning!

We extend a TIP OF THE TROWEL to MG Chris Anastas for making this activity happen!!

For this first meeting, we ask Master Gardeners to R.S.V.P. to Ginger (GALV3@wt.net) if you plan on attending. Will see you at 9:00 a.m. on Wednesday, March 9, at the Extension Office.

Don't forget to bring your digital camera with you (and instruction book, if you have it) to the class.



2016 State Conference



May 17 @ 8:00 am - May 19 @ 5:00 pm

Buds & Bark 2016 Texas Master Gardener Conference

Myers Park and Event Center
7117 County Road 166
McKinney, TX 75071

For More Information, check out their website:

<http://www.ccmgatx.org/txmg2016>



bulletin board



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

To volunteer for the **MG Phone Desk** contact Ginger Benson by e-mail at galv3@wt.net or by calling the office at 281-309-5065.

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 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.

Tideway is a program of the Transitional Learning Center

Dr. Johnson has approved Tideway Transitional Learning Center (644 Central City Blvd., Galveston, Texas 77551) as a location where Master Gardener service hours may be earned. Plans to prepare the gardens at Tideway for spring planting are ready and volunteers are needed. Volunteers can contact Brack Collier at bcollier@tlc-galveston.org. The focus is on the long-term needs of individuals with an acquired brain injury. The program offers accessible horticultural experiences, through which individuals with a brain injury can improve sensory awareness, motor skills, range of motion, endurance and flexibility as well as regain confidence, and learn new skills. This provides the opportunity for our residents to develop the necessary skills to gain and maintain a productive lifestyle whether it is on site or volunteering in the community. The residents at Tideway are very much "hands on" in building the different garden beds, in fact some of the residents came up with the designs. And they have chickens.

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 M. Johnson. Note that fees do not include lodging or food unless specified otherwise.

For more information on the Specialist Training on Propagation on April 21 – April 23, 2016 in Tarrant County, and on Specialist Training on Rainwater Harvesting on April 27 – April 29, 2016 in Dallas, check out the details at <http://txmg.org>

Be sure to register for the

2016 Texas Master Gardener Conference
Myers Park & Event Center, McKinney, TX
May 17-19, 2016

<http://www.ccmgatx.org/txmg2016>



Don't forget to put the link for our weather station on your smart phone and computer: <http://www.weatherlink.com/user/gcmga>

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 Robert Marshall at 281-993-5595 or e-mail at rbrtm01@att.net or MG Bobbie Ivey at 713-748-8564 or email at 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 Herman Auer (409) 655-5362, e-mail hermanauer@comcast.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.



Here is a great way to support our GCMGA

Amazon will donate 0.5% of our personal purchases to Galveston County Master Gardener Association.

All you have to do is:

Go to smile.amazon.com - Choose Galveston County Master Gardener Association as your charity. Save smile. amazon.com to your favorites. - Always start from this site to do your amazon shopping. - You should see your chosen charity in the top bar on amazon's website. - If you have any problems, search smile on amazon's website

the last word . . .

FAQs FROM GARDENERS AT PLANT SALE

(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 Master Gardener volunteers sponsored a spring plant seminar and sale last Saturday at the Rodeo Area at the County Fairgrounds. The weather was ideal (our bar for ideal weather for a plant sale is quite low: no freezing temperatures, no rain, no fog) and hundreds of gardeners showed up.

Many, many folks commented on the quality of the fruit trees on hand as well as the quantity. Home tomato growers were able to select from a wide array of tomato varieties (a total of 31) as well as different types of tomatoes (such as heirlooms, hybrids, determinate, indeterminate and bush types).

If you were not able to attend this year's spring plant sale, you will be afforded a second opportunity to purchase citrus and fruit trees as well as spring vegetables at the Horticulture Demonstration Garden in Carbine Park from 9:00-11:30 a.m. on Thursday, Feb. 25. Visit the Master Gardeners' website (<http://aggiehorticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/index.html>) for additional details or contact the County Extension Office by email (GALV3@wt.net) or by phone (2813095065).

Individuals attending the event had a variety of questions on growing vegetables and citrus/fruit trees as well as a variety of nonfruit tree related questions. The following is a sampling of the questions asked.

Q: What kind of planting hole do I need to prepare to plant my peach tree?

Answer: I thought about Mrs. White, my high school English teacher, as I responded to the gentleman's question by asking, "How much did you pay for that peach tree?" (Mrs. White thought it to be rather rude for anyone to answer a question with a question even if it is an indication that one is listening and paying attention.)

I explained to the buyer that he should put a twentydollar tree into a twentydollar planting hole. A twentydollar planting hole is not a timeconsuming activity. The planting hole should be no deeper than the root system but at least twice as wide as the diameter of the root ball.

Save the removed soil because it needs to be placed back into the planting hole. Do not try to improve the soil with amendments such as a commercial garden soil mix or even compost. Roots have a tendency to not "venture out" from the fluffy amended soil and the tree can become rootbound.

This is particularly true for gumbo clay soil. Water tends to pool in a planting hole amended with a garden soil mix or compost. If its root system becomes waterlogged, the fruit tree will die.

As soil is moved back to fill the planting hole, be sure to lightly tamp it to settle and firm the soil as well as avoid the creation of large air spaces in the backfill. Don't use your foot as doing so will likely result in excessive soil compaction around the roots.

Q: Will citrus trees do well if grown in containers?

A: That would be a definite YES. Many types of citrus trees will do well in containers if adequate care is provided and if you have a large enough pot. However, do not expect as big a tree as one grown in the ground.

Also, it is very important to purchase citrus trees grafted onto Flying Dragon rootstock. This type of rootstock dwarfs the tree (still giving you full size fruit). Citrus grafted onto Flying Dragon rootstock also have a few extra degrees of cold hardiness.

It is important that a large enough container is used at least a 15gallon size container should be used for most dwarf type trees while up to 30gallon containers should be used for larger size trees. Many gardeners use half whiskey barrel planters (available at many gardening outlets) to grow citrus plants.

Be aware that fruit and citrus trees grown in containers must be watered often and throughout the year including the winter season.

Q: What is the difference between "clingstone" and "freestone" peaches?

A: Almost all fresh peaches sold in grocery stores and roadside fruit markets are freestone. They are generally softer and juicier, and because the pits pull away from the flesh so easily, they can be cut nicely into uniform pieces for tarts or pies. Clingstone peaches are used mostly for canned fruit and work best in recipes calling for diced or pureed peaches.

One note of importance a clingstone peach contains more pectin in the fruit than a freestone; therefore, clingstone peaches are the best type to use when making jelly. I find both types of peaches to be flavorful when left to mature on a tree and picked fresh.

Q: Will you sell this wagon?

A: The pros and cons of American capitalism have been debated time and time again. Four customers were ready and very willing to pay a very unfair, cash on spot price, based on market demand for wagons, after the sale yard was opened but I respectfully declined the offers as wagons were already in short supply.

Q: Does the cost of a fruit tree include planting it in my landscape?

Several such questions, and variations of this question, were asked. Two customers were aware that I consider chocolate to be one of the major food groups and said that ample chocolate could be provided to seal the bargain. Donald Trump would consider them to be savvy deal makers. The answer was still "no."

I along with the Master Gardener volunteers did enjoy meeting and interacting with the customers at the sale.



Photo by Dr. William M. Johnson

Master Gardener Barbara Lyons (pictured above) tagging in citrus trees during setup day prior to the 2016 Master Gardener Spring Plant Sale held on February 20 at the County Fairgrounds.

2016 MGA MONTHLY MEETINGS

January 12, 2016

Overview of the 2016 Calendar Year
6:00 pm - Extension Office
Carbide Park - La Marque

February 16, 2016

John Jons - Preview of Spring Plant Sale
10:00 am - Extension Office
Carbide Park - La Marque

March 8, 2016

League City Water Smart Park
1810 Louisiana,
4:00 pm - League City

April 12, 2016

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

May 10, 2016

Rodney and Lynne Mize - Backyard Meeting
5:30 pm - 4004 Lovers Lane
Dickinson

June 14, 2016

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

July 12, 2016

Emmyline Dodd - Presentation on Insects
5:30 pm Extension Office
Carbide Park - La Marque

August 9, 2016

Mary Lou Kelso, Moody Gardens
Galveston Island
Venues begin at 9:15 am

September, 2016 TBA

Fall Plant Sale Preview
Extension Office
Carbide Park - La Marque

October 11, 2016

Raini and Bret Cunningham - Backyard Meeting
5:30 pm - 2711 Avenue O
Galveston Island

November 8, 2016

Ira Gervais - Annual Meeting, Election of Officers
5:30 pm - Extension Office
Carbide Park - La Marque

December 13, 2016

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, March 8, 2016 4:00 p.m.
Master Gardener March Meeting
League City Ghirardi Family WaterSmart Park
Park address: 1810 Louisiana, League City, TX 77573
Louisiana Street, just south of FM 518



Join the Galveston County Master Gardeners for a very special visit to the Ghirardi Family WaterSmart Park, hosted by Charriss York, Stormwater Projects Coordinator for Texas Coastal Watershed Program.

This park features three types of gardens: WaterSmart, Raingardens/Swales, and a Green Roof. The plant selection for each is different, demonstrating the many ways to include native and adapted plants in any home landscape.

The park is home to the Ghirardi Compton Oak and the Bootlegger Oak.
Charriss will lead a walking tour of the park beginning at 4:00 p.m.

Following the tour, Master Gardeners are invited to participate in a pot luck dinner. Spouses and guests are also welcome; please adjust pot-luck offering accordingly.

Drinks, plates, forks, knives and spoons will be provided.

Master Gardeners, please bring chairs.

Car pools are recommended due to limited parking.

E-mail to follow with more details.



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FEEDBACK



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