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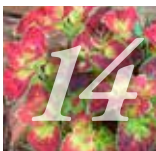
Dr. William M. Johnson



By Camille Goodwin
MG 2008

I like Ralph Waldo Emerson's way of saying Welcome to Spring! ~ My yard is beginning to laugh; many flowers are blooming along with the perpetual weeds at this time of the year. Every season, I spend a lot of time, effort and money on weed control in my landscape and it's always amazing how many weeds I can still have. In spite of the number of weeds in my lawn and gardens, I can see distinctly where my property line ends and my neighbor's begins. His weeds are the size of small shrubs and understory trees, my bazillions are mostly less than an inch tall, so maybe I'm winning?

There are many gardening tasks to occupy us in the spring. One of the first things to consider is the state of your gardening tools. Before you can do much, you may need to do some spring tool maintenance. See page 6 for some great tips. On page 14, Donna Ward provides advice on spring plant purchases,



fertilizing and sowing seeds for flowers and vegetables.

Compost is a most helpful element to consider in your overall landscape plan. We feature an article in this newsletter for this valuable resource - leaf compost (page 4) which solves many landscape problems.

Spring is the time for new ideas—have you tried seed gardening? Many of our MGs are seed gardeners. The story on page 5 will teach you about seeds and how to be successful in this gardening method. Are you looking for something new for a particular spot in your garden? Visit the Discovery Garden to see the Blue Flax Lily (page 22). It comes in many colors and heights; it might be just what you need. Perhaps you purchased caladiums at our recent plant sale. Read about this popular tropical tuber on page 8.



If you like fragrance in your garden the piece beginning on page 12 will help you decide on trees, shrubs and vines that will add a fragrant touch to your environment. If you are stuck at home from the quarantine, why not get a head start on gardening with Robert Marshall (page 29).

Learn about “mysterious mushrooms” on page 10, a most interesting fungus that's probably visiting your lawn and gardens! We cannot have a newsletter without a featured weed so on page 15 we highlight the Ten Petal

Anemone, a Texas native also known as the windflower. In other words, get ready, it's on the way to your yard as you're reading this!!

Please enjoy reading about three of our talented MGs, Debbie Brizendine, Johnell McKee and Patricia Martin, to hear how they came by their gardening genes. Those of us who live on the Gulf Coast love Galveston, our beautiful barrier island. It's been through a lot over time and is still recovering from more recent hurricanes like Ike and Harvey, but Grace does shine on it! Galveston has been recognized once again as a “Tree City USA.” Read all about it on page 17.

Don't forget to checkout our calendars and volunteer opportunities – all are recently updated.

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Thanks for your interest!

Q&A ask a master gardener

Can you give me some basic guidelines for leaf composting?



By Chris Anastas
MG 2012

One of the inescapable chores most all of us share is the collection and disposal of the plentiful fall leaves.

While our leaves do not typically acquire the brilliant colors of red and gold as they do in other parts of the country, we can very easily turn our humble brown fall leaves into gardener's gold. We are, of course, talking about leaf compost, a very valuable addition to your landscape and garden soil. It is not just an organic additive for our organically-starved

clay soils; it also makes the soil more tillable and improves aeration. Leaf compost is a wonderful home for earthworms (worm castings add even more nutrients to the soil) and beneficial soil bacteria. In addition, leaf mold can retain 300 to 500 percent of its weight in water, making it the perfect soil conditioner.

If you have already made the effort to rake them up or blow them into a pile, you are halfway to turning your leaves into Gardener's gold. If you have never tried composting, this is the perfect time for you to give it a try. It does not get any easier than leaf composting and you will be well rewarded.

The first step to leaf composting is gathering the leaves into a pile. Smaller pieces break down faster. Shredding the leaves with a shredder, running over the pile with a mower, or even using a weed trimmer can accomplish this. You may not want to discourage you children from jumping in the leaf pile as this can aid your efforts. Or, you can skip this step as the whole leaves will break down within a year rather than the three to six months it would take with shredded leaves.

Whole or shredded leaves should be placed in a pile at least 4 feet wide and 3 feet tall. Too small a pile will not retain the heat and moisture needed for composting to take place. Conversely, if the pile is more

than 5 feet tall, the center of the pile will not get enough oxygen to allow for the composting microbes to work and will also be harder to turn or manage. The leaf pile can be left loose or contained in an enclosure. The simplest method of enclosure is with woven metal wire or fencing forming a circle around the pile but leaving an opening for turning and removing compost. The pile can also be enclosed with brick or wood but make sure there are many openings for air and moisture to enter and escape. Wooden pallets or plastic fencing held in place with metal rods would work as well.

The next step is to wait. Yes, waiting is the next step! That is the beauty of leaf composting. The layering that is required in most composting is not necessary when composting leaves. If your leaves are all dry and brown you could add a very small amount of grass clippings, coffee grounds or other green vegetative matter to accelerate the composting, but it is definitely not necessary. Most fall leaves contain enough green to compost without additional help.

Turning also speeds up the process, but again is not necessary. If your leaf pile becomes soggy from too much moisture, a little turn now and then with a garden fork or shovel will allow the microbes breaking down the leaves to get oxygen so they can continue their work and keep the leaf compost odor free. Finished compost should be dark, crumbly, have an earthy odor, and may be ready as early as spring. In addition to mixing with soil, the leaf compost can be applied thinly as mulch at a rate of one-quarter to one-half inch on top of soil. Because of the moisture retaining properties, leaf compost may also be used in potting soil with the percentage of compost not to exceed 25%.

By the time the leaves begin to accumulate again next year, you should have experienced your first batch of gardener's gold and will be eager to start your second.



Gather the Leaves



Leaf Pile may Remain Loose



Simple Enclosure Method



Finished Compost

Seed Germination



By Betty Fisher
MG 2003

We have all planted seeds, but how much do we really know about them? Learning more about seeds can help improve your success with them. A seed contains an embryonic plant in a resting condition, and germination is its resumption of growth. Seeds need conditions of optimal soil temperature, water, oxygen and sometimes light to germinate. Seed dormancy is very complex, but it protects that living plant material until conditions are right for it to emerge and grow. When you look at a seed, you are looking at the seed coat. As people wear coats for protection from foul weather, seed coats perform

much the same function. They provide protection against entry of parasites, against mechanical injury and, in some seeds, against unfavorably high or low temperatures. Inside the seed coat is the embryo, an immature plant with all the parts of the adult plant. A close look shows leaves and a root; they may be tiny, but they are the beginnings of a plant.

The seed's embryonic leaves are called the cotyledons. The seed is filled with endosperm, a temporary food supply that will nourish the embryo during its early stages of development. Germination is a fascinating process. Seeing a tiny seedling emerge from a dry, wrinkled seed and watching its growth and transformation is observing the mystery of life unfolding. The first sign of germination is the absorption of water. This activates an enzyme; respiration increases and plant cells are replicated. Soon the embryo becomes too large, the seed coat bursts open and the growing plant emerges. The tip of the root is the first thing to emerge. It will anchor the seed in place and allow the embryo to absorb water and nutrients from the surrounding soil.

Before you buy seeds, dig out those old seed packets and see if the seed is still viable. Seeds should be stored under cool and dry conditions. You may choose to do a germination test on any purchased seeds more than one year old or any seeds that you have harvested from your garden. For every species of seed, there is an optimal soil temperature for germination.

The maximum number of seeds will germinate at the optimal soil temperature and in less time than at any other temperature. Soil temperature should

be taken by inserting a soil thermometer 3 to 4 inches deep into the soil surface at the same time each day. Leave your thermometer in the soil approximately three to five minutes. Note the temperature. Soil thermometers are available from garden centers, feed and seed stores, and from many garden supply catalogs. If you are germinating seed inside and having trouble

maintaining a consistent soil temperature, you might consider an electric heating mat specifically for seed starting which is available from many garden centers and mail-order suppliers. For a listing of optimal soil temperatures and days required to germinate vegetable seeds, go to HeirloomSeeds.com and search under each seed for germination temperatures.

Tips in successful seed germination must begin with a properly prepared and cared for soil. A good potting soil will be adequate for seed germination. There must be oxygen present in the top 6-12 inches where most of the root growth occurs. It is critical that water be absorbed in this top layer of soil. Do not pack in the soil on top of your seed. The depth at which seeds are sown is important; this information will be on the back of your seed packet. Or, as a general rule of thumb, your seeds should be planted about twice as deep as their width. Tiny seeds, such as carrots, should lightly be sprinkled on the soil and then pressed into the soil and kept moist until the seed germinates.

Another tip: When you have sown your seed do not leave for a vacation! The most important work is next. You must keep the growing medium damp until the seeds germinate. The earliest leaves to appear are the cotyledons or seed leaves. Their shape is normally simple and different from that of the normal leaves of the plant. The true leaves appear from between the cotyledons and can easily be recognized by their more characteristic shape, which varies according to the kind of plant.

Sow healthy seeds in a good potting soil at the proper temperature and with adequate light. Keep your seeds moist until they germinate. You will reap many benefits of your labors and witness the miracle of life.

Test your old or stored seeds this way:

Put exactly ten seeds on top of a damp, folded paper towel. Make sure the seeds are not too close to each other. Do not let seeds dry out; add moisture as needed.

Put the towel and seeds into a plastic sandwich bag and seal.

Label the container with the date and seed variety being tested.

Leave at room temperature for a week or so.

Count the number of seeds that sprout:

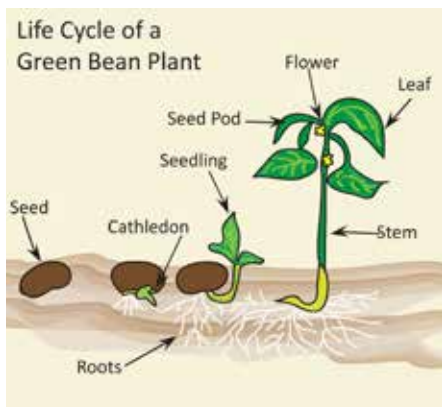
10 = 100% or perfect germination

9 = 90% or excellent

8 = 80% or good

6-7 = 60-70% or poor—sow more thickly

5 or less = 50% or less—throw the seed out or plant twice as thick!



Now is the Time for Caring for Your Tools



By Eileen Storey
MG 2006

We have had an exceptionally mild winter thus far in our Upper Texas Gulf Coast growing region and we are at the beginning of another beautiful spring. Many of us will likely be spending time out in our gardens tending to our annuals, perennials, vegetables, and trees. We likely will be using our favorite trusty tools to help us with planting, weeding, pruning, and other tasks. And many of us will likely put those tools back in the shed or garage when we were done for the day, neglecting to clean or make necessary repairs to them. Why is it so many of us make hours available for our plants, but not just a few short minutes for our tools?

Clean, sharpened, and unbroken garden tools are an important part of tending a garden. Imagine keeping your kitchen tools as you do your garden tools—would you eat off a dirty fork? Try to slice tomatoes with a dull knife? Continue using a pot with an unsecured handle to boil water? Not likely! So let's look at how we can keep our garden tools as pristine (or close to it) as we do our kitchen tools.

First, let's consider small hand tools. Trowels, digging forks and cultivators, weeding spades, and even bulb planters are the most common hand implements we use in our yards. After each use of these tools, it takes several steps to ready them for the next use. Wash off the blades or tines with clean water, then dry thoroughly with a soft cloth. Particles of soil left on tool surfaces can transfer disease pathogens, weed seeds, and insects and their eggs to soil and plants the next time you use the tool. Soil also holds moisture, which leads to rust.

If there is rust on the now-dry metal surface, rub as much of it away as possible with fine steel wool or sandpaper (100 grit should work, but you may need to go down to 80 or even 60 grit if the rust is persistent). Then, check the blade edges. Are they still sharp? Are they nicked or uneven? Sharpening hand tools can be done with a file, a whetstone, a Dremel tool with a grinder attachment, or in extreme cases, a hand-held or bench grinder. If you use the latter methods, be sure to wear eye protection while sharpening the blades.

Finally, to keep the metal surfaces rust-resistant for further use, rub them down with a thin sheen of oil. Motor oil is commonly used; in these small amounts, it does no harm to soil or plants. Vegetable oil may also be used, though I have found it attracts ants and gnats. Store hand tools in a pocketed caddy or wrap them in an old towel so that the now-sharp edges don't knock together.

For larger tools such as shovels, hoes, rakes, and the like, cleaning the metal parts is the same as with the hand tools. Sharpening the blades of some of these implements may require more work; however, for truly dull blades, using a hand-held or bench grinder with a grinding stone attachment can do the trick. Usually, though, a simple file can get an edge sharp enough for proper use. After working the blade, make sure the handle of the tool is in good shape.

Wooden handles should be checked for cracks, sanded and, as may be needed, to remove splinters. A severe crack in a wooden handle is a real liability—imagine the wood actually breaking mid-dig! It's best to replace handles such as these; new ones can be found at hardware stores. Keeping the wood clean and treated with linseed oil is key to keeping these tools durable and useful for years.

The storing of these large tools, too, is important. While many of us just prop our shovels, rakes, and hoes business-side down against the wall in our garages, keep in mind that concrete holds moisture. Drilling a small hole in the end of a wooden handle allows you to hang the tool off the floor, while still keeping the sharpened edge facing safely downward.

Probably the most important and costly tools we own are our pruning shears or loppers. While it is possible to take shears apart to clean them, it is fine to spot-treat the blades without dismantling the tool. Since pruning blades often come into contact with sap or pitch, paint thinner or turpentine is preferable to water for cleaning the metal.

Sharpening should be done carefully with a whetstone or file. Securing the tool in a vise will help keep your hands free to work the file, while ensuring the tool does not move. Check the spring and screw for tautness, and oil if necessary. Pruning blades don't likely need sharpening after each use and can be sharpened once a month or so. When sharpening the blades, take note if the pruners are anvil or bypass pruners. The blade of anvil pruners closes down on a flat surface, and both edges of the blade are beveled and should be sharpened. Bypass pruners have a blade that slides over the bottom half of the pruners, so the blade only has one beveled edge to sharpen.

While we may get a few more weeks of winter weather, now is certainly the time to pay attention to what we use to aid us in the garden. Making sure our tools are clean and sharp will ensure that we always approach our gardens with as much care as they deserve.



Keeping larger tools off the floor by hanging them on a wall ensures that the metal doesn't touch moisture-laden concrete.



Dried sap has built up along the edge of these bypass loppers and should be removed with turpentine or paint thinner.



Using a file on the edges of this trowel will sharpen the edges for better digging.



These hand tools are coated in dirt and rust and need to be treated with more care. The thin weeding tool has a cheap coat of paint on the blade that has started to chip off.



After the rust has been sanded off, the edges have been sharpened, and the blades have been coated with oil, these two hand tools are ready for action. They may not look brand new, but they are much better off than when they were bought at a garage sale!

Plant of the Month



By Lisa Davis
MG 2018

There is a jewel-box flower awaiting you in the Discovery Garden! Known as the Paroo Lily in its native Australia, it is also called the Blue Flax Lily or Blueberry Lily. In late winter or early spring, flowers appear with blue star-shaped petals on stems rising a foot over the plant. Bright blue to purple edible berries follow. The dark green, blade-like leaves can measure up to 18 inches long. The plant is believed to have been named after Diana the Roman goddess of hunting and queen of the woods. *Dianella caerulea* has been cultivated in Great Britain as far back as the last quarter of the 18th century. Make your way out soon to the Serenity Garden to see the Blue Flax Lily that has been cultivated right here in Galveston County.

Common Names:

Blue Flax Lily
Blueberry Lily
Paroo Lily

Location:

Serenity Garden

Propagation:

By seed or division

USDA Hardiness Zones: 7-11

Plant Characteristics:

Type: clumping, evergreen perennial
Family: Asphodelaceae
Height: 18 inches
Spread: 18 inches

Bloom Information:

Bloom Color: blue star-shaped petals with yellow stamens
Bloom Size: 5/8 of an inch on a delicate inflorescence about a foot above the foliage
Bloom Time: late winter to spring
Fruit: edible bright blue to purple berries
Foliage: dark green blade-like leaves to 18 inches

Culture:

Exposure: full sun to light shade
Soil Moisture: can tolerate damp conditions, but prefers well drained soil
Drought Tolerance: drought tolerant once established
Cold Hardy: cold hardy once established
Maintenance: low maintenance. If needed, every 2-3 years, trim foliage back in the spring to 4 inches above the ground and apply controlled release fertilizer after trimming.

Benefits:

Wildlife Use: A pollinator plant for butterflies and provides fruit for birds.
Garden Uses: Can be used in mass plantings or as a border in front of shrubs. Suitable for low maintenance gardens, in poolscape, or coastal gardens. Good companion plants for our area are *Cuphea*, *Liriope*, *Crocosmia*, *Phormium*, and *Loropetalum*.



If there are characteristics of the Blue Flax Lily that appeal to you, but you need height, flower, or leaf color, do not despair. There are 20-30 species of *Dianella* ranging in different heights, leaf colors, and bloom colors.

Are you in need of flower other than blue? Try *Dianella caerulea* 'Becca' for mauve flowers, *Dianella revoluta* for pale violet flowers or *Dianella tasmanica* 'Variegata' with pale violet flower sepals and white striped green petals.

Just as there is a variety of flower colors, there are even more variations in leaf color. As the name implies, the Gray Paroo Lily, *Dianella caerulea* 'Casitas Springs' has gray leaves. If you desire leaves with stripes, consider *Dianella tasmanica* 'Variegata' with white striped leaves or *Dianella tasmanica* 'Yellow Stripe'. Two varieties with contrasting foliage are *Dianella prunifolia* 'Utopia' and *Dianella revoluta* 'Little Rev'. 'Utopia' has reddish-purple and blue-green foliage which twist, exposing both sides of the leaf. 'Little Rev' has green on the upper leaf surface and blue-green on the more visible lower surface.

Is height your main concern? Ground covers to consider are *Dianella caerulea* 'Little Jess' and *Dianella revoluta* 'BabyBliss,' both of which are 12 inches tall. Want something a little bit taller? *Dianella caerulea* 'Casitas Springs' grows to 28 inches. Need something even taller? Reaching up to 3 feet tall is *Dianella tasmanica* and, even taller, at 6 feet, is *Dianella ensifolia*.

Most varieties of *Dianella* perform in sun or light shade. There are at least two variations that I found in my research which differ. *Dianella caerulea* 'Casitas Springs' should be planted in full sun and *Dianella ensifolia*, which prefers the shade or morning sun.

The Beautiful, Wonderful Caladium



By Camille Goodwin
MG 2008

At our recent plant sale in February, we sold almost 1800 caladium bulbs! These tropical perennials with their spectacular foliage, colorful, heart-shaped leaves are tremendously popular. Caladiums are “old-fashioned” plants in cultivation since the late 1700’s and are native to tropical forests in South and Central America. Here on the Gulf Coast of Texas we grow them as summer bulbs in our gardens, in planters and in pots. Their beautiful leaves display amazing color combinations of white, pink, red and green guaranteeing a colorful show wherever they are planted – be-

neath trees, between shrubs, in perennial borders or containers. Caladiums love our hot, humid weather and grow best in full to partial shade, though many varieties can grow in full sun as long as they get plenty of water. They actually over-winter in our Zone 9-10 where tubers can be left in the ground year-round. Caladium leaves have prominently colored mid-ribs, contrasting margins and patterns that can be mottled, veined or striped. They have no stems; the leaves present on long petioles which rise directly from the underground tubers (sometimes called bulbs).

Basically, there are two types of caladiums, fancy-leaved which have large, heart-shaped or semi-heart shaped leaves on long petioles (12”-30” tall); or strap or lance-leaved which have shorter and narrower, ruffle-edged leaves on short petioles. Strap varieties are more compact, usually less than 12” tall and have more leaves per tuber than the fancy-leaved varieties. Fancy leaf varieties grow taller than strap leaf.

How to tell the difference?

The main physical difference is where the stem meets the leaf. Fancy caladiums have a stem towards the center of the leaf, strap has a stem that meets at the edge. Generally, Fancy leaf prefers shade to filtered sun, Strap leaf likes partial shade to sun.



Fancy Leaf



Strap (Lance) Leaf

Both types work well planted in well-draining, raised beds, baskets or in pots, and in combinations with other caladiums. Use caladiums to add brightness, color and texture to your gardens. Grow single cultivars for greater focal impact or mix and match for multi-colored impact in smaller areas. Use fancy leaf



Caladium Tubers



Container Caladium



Caladium Mixed Garden

caladiums to soften a walkway to your front door, edge a shady garden bed or line a path beneath shade trees and shrubs. Make a mailbox garden by surrounding your mailbox with pretty foliage to increase your home's curb appeal and create a charming "mini-garden" at the front of your home. For companion planting, depending on which varieties you choose, caladiums can be bright and flashy or cool and sophisticated. The pinks, greens and whites pair beautifully with other soft colors, and the red-leaved varieties will hold their own when combined with hot-colored begonias, coleus or impatiens.

How to Buy and Plant Caladiums:

Caladium tubers are graded by size. A #1 tuber measures 1.5 to 2.5" in diameter. Tubers graded #2 or #3 are smaller. The size of the tuber is important because a larger tuber has more growth points, or "eyes." Each eye produces a sprout, and the more sprouts, the larger and fuller the plant and the foliage displays. Healthy caladium tubers are plump and firm, not soft or bruised. Buy the largest tubers you can find (#1 is the largest and what we sell at our plant sales). Each tuber has a large, central bud, surrounded by several small buds (eyes). The central bud produces the largest leaves, but can suppress the smaller buds from growing. You can gently gouge out the larger central bud with a sharp knife, being careful not to damage the smaller buds, to encourage their growth. Terminal bud removal or de-eyeing, is the most reliable way to produce a plant without several larger leaves crowding out over the rest.

How to Plant Caladiums:

Caladium tubers like well-draining, warm, moist (not soggy) amended, with compost, soil. Plant in our region when soil is at least 65-70 degrees (~ April 1st). Soil and Galveston beach water temps are close, so check water temp, too. Plant in a raised, well-draining bed, knobby side and eye side, up (both roots and shoots emerge from the top of the tuber). Dig a hole 3" deep and plant tuber in the hole so it's about 1½" to 2" below the surface. Plant tubers 8-14" apart in the spring when soil warms. Planting too early can cause tuber to rot or be delayed in development.

How to Water Caladiums:

Always water caladiums regularly. Keep the soil slightly moist. High soil temperatures in our zone will affect leaf color, so add mulch, to help keep soil temperature below 85 degrees to retain soil moisture and conserve water. If you have caladiums in full sun, don't let them dry out.

How to Feed Caladiums

Caladiums are heavy feeders. Feed every 6 weeks using a slow-release fertilizer such as Osmocote Outdoor & Indoor Smart-Release Plant Food 19-6-12 or a liquid feed such as Miracle-Gro Liquid All Purpose Plant Food 12-4-8. Use a low nitrogen fertilizer as too much nitrogen can affect leaf color.



Red Caladiums



White Caladiums

Bulb Storage until soil warms to 70 degrees:

Since caladiums are tropical plants, bulbs must be stored at temperatures above 60°F (16°C) with a relative humidity in the neighborhood of 75%. There needs to be good air exchange to prevent build-up of gases, as well. Caladiums are particularly sensitive to the presence of ethylene gas. When storing caladiums, unpack them immediately upon arrival and store them in open trays with proper air circulation.

Shade and Sun: Caladiums are ideal for shady yards and gardens. They grow best in full to partial shade. Many varieties can also be grown in the sun as long as they get enough water and their leaves are shielded during the hottest part of the day.

Caring for Your Caladium After the Growing Season:

In our zone 9, caladium tubers are hardy and do not need any special care to survive the winter. At the end of the summer, the plants will begin to go dormant. The leaves will droop and eventually wither away. Simply leave the tubers in the ground where they are and wait for the plants to re-emerge in spring. As long as the soil is well drained and does not freeze, the tubers will return to give you another great show next spring. However, if we have exceptionally cold, wet winter months, some tubers may rot. For the most beautiful caladium displays, plant new tubers each year near older plantings.

Mysterious Mushrooms

Editors Note: this is a reprint of Jan's article in the *Galveston Monthly*



By Jan Brick
MG 2001

Wild or commercially grown, mushrooms are a fascinating plant life. Packed with antioxidants, mushrooms will lend an earthy, interesting flavor to everyday menus.

Many of us are intrigued by the growths, odd shapes, and arrangements that appear haphazardly around our yards, lawns, trees and garden beds. There are fanciful explanations for this phenomena, such as the notion that they are the result of fairies dancing in rings, sowing the seeds

for future use as their homes. Mushrooms or, perhaps speaking on the side of caution, let's call them toadstools to avoid confusion for children or the untrained among us are the visible formations of types of fungi. These fungal fruiting structures differ in size, shape and color. While the caps and stems are the main assembly, microscopic pores form under the caps. Most mushrooms feed on decaying organic matter, thus the "rings" as they form around the food source. The growths will cease to appear once the food source is consumed. Removing and discarding them is recommended to avoid any incidence of poisoning of pets or children.

While only about 50,000 species have been described in North America, the fungus kingdom is exceptionally diverse and scientists believe that there may be millions not yet identified. Most fungi in lawns are beneficial since they decompose organic matter, releasing nutrients that are essential to plant growth. As the fungi break down the organic matter, the nutrients released provide essential fodder for lawns, garden plants, shrubs, trees, and flowering plants. Mushrooms are usually harmless to grasses, but some folks consider them unsightly and want to eliminate

them because small children or pets may play in the area. Remove mushrooms by picking them out of the wood, trees, or lawn patches as they appear then discard. The use of a fungicide is not recommended as the application of these products require multiple treatments at proper intervals over long periods of time.

Fungi are a fundamental ingredient of all fertile soil. Fortunately, it is nearly impossible to eradicate them. Therefore, when you see them popping up and fruiting in your yard, remember, they are a basic part of the life cycle. The base structures of the mushroom are microscopic but when nature calls, they come together to form beautiful, complex patterns and configurations. "Mushrooms are among the many un-numbered miracles of nature" ... enjoy their short-lived appearance. These fruiting constructions can survive for years producing when conditions are most favorable such as periods of prolonged wet weather.

Mushrooms display themselves in many shapes, sizes, and forms with interesting and clever descriptive names that illustrate their diversity. Fairy Ring fungi present themselves in circular or semi-circular rings that can range in size from one inch up to twelve inches or more in diameter. Inky Cap mushrooms are a common yet distinctive group and so named because the cap itself decomposes into a dark liquid resembling ink shortly after its emergence. Puffball fungi are named for the clouds of dust-like pores that are emitted when the mature body bursts. True puffballs do not have a visible stalk or stem. Bird Nest mushrooms resemble tiny egg-filled nests. The Stinkhorn is commonly seen in the winter months, growing in piles of mulch or loose organic matter, resembling a cluster of red/orange/brown/gray mottled eggs within the mulch.



Black Trumpet Mushroom



Chanterelle Mushroom



Fairy Ring Mushroom

Edible Mushrooms

Mushroom hunting can be dangerous. Learn from an expert. When in doubt, throw them out.

Morel - harvest in spring; distinctive “honeycomb” cap; deeply wrinkled; yellow-gray in color; strong taste; best cooked in butter with leeks.

Chanterelle - grow in clumps in late summer and early fall; yellow or golden in color; funnel-shaped; meaty; may smell fruity, woody, or earthy. Chanterelles have a mild peppery taste. Cook with butter, wine, and cream.

Fairy Ring – harvest in summer and fall; small mushrooms that grow in a ring or arc; nipple-like cap in a pale tan or white color; remove stem and rinse in cold water; use in more basic recipes to enjoy their delicate flavor.

Hedgehog – harvest in summer and fall; defining characteristics include spines or teeth on the undersides of the cap and pale orangey tan in color; crunchy, sweet, nutty taste.

Shaggy Mane / Lawyer’s Wig – June through November (only edible when immature); a shaggy cap droops over the stem when young and ready for consumption; a good addition to soups; once the gills turn black, they are past their time.

Hen of the Wood – perennial that appears in the same place yearly in late summer and early fall for short periods of time; tuber-like in large coral like clumps; caps are grayish brown and are curled or spoon-like; sauté in butter or olive oil.

Black Trumpet – prefer damp and dark areas for good growth in summer and fall mainly in leaf litter making them difficult to see; dark brown, black, or gray in color in a trumpet shape with smooth texture overall; rich smoky flavor; delicious sautéed with garlic and oil.



Morel Mushroom



Shaggy Mane Mushroom

Mushroom Facts

- A single Portobello mushroom contains more potassium than a banana.
- Mushrooms are 90% water.
- Mushrooms are known as the “meat” of the vegetable world.
- One genus of mushrooms tastes like fried chicken (hen of the wood).
- Long before trees overtook the land, earth was covered by giant mushrooms.
- A 2400- year-old giant “honey mushroom” in Oregon covers 2200 acres and is thought to be the largest living organism on the planet.
- A three-pound white truffle mushroom once sold for \$330,000.
- Shitake mushrooms produce several crops when grown on sawdust or grain. When grown on logs, fresh shitake mushrooms will develop every five weeks for four to six years.
- You can purchase varieties of mushroom growing kits on line or at specialty garden nurseries.

Medicinal Properties of the Mushroom

- Reduces systemic inflammation in muscles and bones, gastrointestinal, and immune systems.
- Helps to lower cholesterol, a rich source of Vitamin D, copper, and zinc.
- Regulates hormone and insulin production to prevent diabetes.
- Increases amounts of hemoglobin that carries oxygen through the body.



Hen of the Wood Mushroom



Hedgehog Mushroom

Fragrant Trees, Shrubs and Vines



By Elayne Kouzounis
MG 1998

An outstanding feature of gardening in the Houston and Gulf Coast area is the quantity of fragrant trees, shrubs, and vines that thrive in this climate and can be used to surround us with flowers and pleasant scents throughout the growing season. Plants emit fragrance for a purpose beyond mere human enjoyment. Bees and butterflies, in their role in pollination, are attracted by the delicious aromas of scented flowers. In general, the most fragrant flowers are pastel in color. In attracting the pollinators,

color is not as important as the presence of fragrance. Many richly scented flowers, such as magnolia and gardenia, are simply white. Their heavy aromas make it easier for the pollinators to locate them. There are also many plants, such as scented geraniums (*Geranium* spp.) and bee balms (*Monarda* spp.), that have scent in their foliage rather than their flowers. And check the fine print—or sniff before you buy—for not all cultivars that ought to be fragrant are fragrant.

Fragrance is a relative subject and a matter of taste. Some people are intoxicated by the sweetness of the night-blooming jasmine, while others are nauseated by it. The best policy is to add fragrance to your garden by the spoonful, not by the gallon.

Knowing the blooming season for individual fragrant plants helps in selecting plants to avoid an overlap in fragrance. Where you place a fragrant shrub, plant, vine, or tree is important. Placing it beneath certain windows brings the scent indoors. If you have a deck, particularly one built high off the ground, surrounding it with shrubs and trees will conceal the underpinnings; if you choose fragrant ones, they will scent the air above them. It's, also, fun to tuck fragrant plants in odd corners of the yard where people stroll, barbecue, or play games. They will often stop to figure out where the aroma is coming from. If you like to attract birds to your garden, leaving seed heads on flowering plants and growing shrubs with tasty fruits is far better, I think, than putting out bird feeders. I try to site food plants in parts of my yard where birds feel protected. Shrubs, also, offer concealment from predators, as well as nesting sites.

If our gardens today were more often planted as fragrant retreats and our rooms were frequently perfumed with bowls of spicy pink, bunches of aromatic herbs, vases of fragrant roses, and jars of potpourri, perhaps we would not have to depend so much on tranquilizers to hold us together in this frantic, fast-paced world. Indeed, there is sound evidence of the therapeutic value, physical and emotional, of sweet odors, especially those of aromatic herbs and flowers. It is more than hearsay that sleep comes more readily between sheets scented with lavender, which is also said "to comfort and clear the eyes." Whether the smell of rosemary does "keep thee youngly" may be open to question, but we agree it



Carolina Jasmine
Gelsemium Sempervirens



Gardenia Jasminoides



Honeysuckle, *Lonicera* spp



Huisache-Acacia-farnesiana



Loquat - *Eriobotrya japonica*



Mimosa *Albizia julibrissin*



Mock Orange *Philadelphus* spp



Pittosporum tobira

keeps us happy. When is the fragrance of flowers most noticeable? The hours of strongest scent are not the same, even for the same plants. It depends on the essential oils, which are present in varying amounts at different times of day and night; they evaporate at different speeds and at different temperatures. Most roses smell sweetest on a mild damp morning as the sun strikes them, reach a crescendo at noon, and may be scentless by night. The same flowers may pour out a stronger perfume in a protected corner than in the open; exposure to sun, as well as to weather, affects them. Drought and heat often rob flowers of sweetness, and flower scents vary slightly from youth to age. Then there are the night-blooming flowers that show restraint by day—stock, nicotiana, some daylilies, and many others. What joy their sweetness brings at twilight and through the evening hours when they are planted near a terrace or below a bedroom window. The fragrance of most plants offers pleasure for the day. To enjoy boxwood, as many of us do while to others it is unpleasant, you must walk beside this shrub when the sun shines full upon it and the heat releases the oils. Some plants are noticeably sweeter after rain. The connoisseur of fragrance will do well when buying trees, shrubs, vines, even perennials, to select plants while they are in bloom in a nursery so their scent can be personally tested. There is a tremendous difference in strength of scent among specimens even of the same species. I have smelled almost scentless fringe-trees, but the one that graces my yard front entrance is sweet and perfumes my entire yard.

Helen Keller called the sense of smell “a fallen angel.” To her it was enormously useful and she relished not only its angelic aspects but less attractive sensations. She could detect St. Louis from miles away by its brewery odors and Peoria by whiskey fumes. She found Mark Twain’s conversation “fragrant with tobacco.”

The following list is designed to point out landscape uses and blooming seasons for a few of the many fragrant trees, shrubs, and vines that do well in our area.

SHRUBS

Gardenia, *Gardenia jasminoides*—summer
 Japanese pittosporum, *Pittosporum tobira*—late spring
 Jasmine, *Jasminum floridum*—late spring—summer
 Mock orange, *Philadelphus* spp.—late spring
 Night-blooming jasmine, *Cestrum nocturnum*—summer
 Silverberry, *Elaeagnus pungens*—fall
 Sweet olive, *Osmanthus fragrans*—late winter—early spring
 Yesterday, today, and tomorrow, *Brunfelsia* spp.—spring

TREES

Huisache, *Acacia farnesiana*—early spring
 Loquat, *Eriobotrya japonica*—spring
 Southern magnolia, *Magnolia grandiflora*—spring—summer
 Star magnolia, *Magnolia stellata*—early spring
 Mimosa, *Albizia julibrissin*—spring—summer
 Texas Mountain Laurel, *Sophora secundiflora*—spring

VINES

Carolina jasmine, *Gelsemium sempervirens*—spring
 Confederate jasmine, *Trachelospermum jasminoides*—early spring—late summer
 Honeysuckle, *Lonicera* spp.—spring—fall
 Wisteria, *Wisteria floribunda*—spring—summer

“A garden full of sweet odours is a garden full of charm,” L.B. Wilder



Southern Magnolia



Sweet Olive - *Ps.amtjis fragrans*



Texas Mountain Laurel



Texas Mountain Laurel



Wisteria

Trowels and Tribulations



By Donna Ward
MG 1996

It's difficult these days to avoid the crowds at the local garden centers and nurseries. Spring fever has infected the citizenry and they are out in droves. The avid gardener has a hard time controlling his impulses when faced with row upon row of eye-catching annuals, perennials, veggies, herbs, shrubbery, ground covers, etc. But before you whip out your wallet take into consideration the location that you want to improve with new plantings. Many in our neighborhood live with

a partially shaded garden area. Even those plants that enjoy shade need some sun - 2 to 4 hours a day - preferably in the morning.

Some colorful plants that fall into that category might be clivia, digitalis, iris, lobelia, anemone, primrose, caladium, crossandra, toad lily, butterfly and shell ginger. Don't forget that old-fashioned crinum lily with its pink or white flowers, and one of my favorites, Persian shield. Full or deep shade can still host a few attractive specimens such as coleus, impatiens, leopard plant, and if you're creating a 'woody' garden think about a type of plant that has been around for 400 million years - ferns. If you're looking for shade-loving ground covers, vinca minor, vinca major, liriopse, euonymus, ajuga are just a few. Next time your neighbor professes to be unable to grow anything because their yard is too shady, show them this column.

The azalea curtain is coming down on this season's performance and a feeding is last on the program. Feed when the blossoms have faded, and two more times a month apart. Avoid any feeding after the first of June. This is also the best time to give them a haircut. If you wait too long, you'll be cutting off the bloom wood that would raise the curtain on next spring's performance. If your other spring blooming shrubs are finished, prune them also.

March is the ideal time to fertilize your landscape trees and shrubs. Apply any fertilizer at the drip line and beyond - close to the trunk is a waste of fertilizer and money. If the St. Augustine is growing and you've had to mow a couple of times, feed your lawn too. St. Augustine loves warm weather and doesn't even think about growing until the days

are sufficiently warm. Feeding too soon only benefits the cool weather weeds. Avoid those fertilizers with an extremely high first number - that's nitrogen and promotes a quick 'green-up.' Looks good, but not exactly a balanced feeding in my opinion. At the risk of repeating myself, I prefer a 15-5-10, and whatever you do, don't apply a 'weed and feed' formulation. Most contain Atrazine, a toxic chemical that has been banned in much of Europe, but somehow our chemical manufacturers have been able to stave off prohibition.

If you want to avoid chemicals entirely, there are ways to feed a lawn organically. Fit your mower with a mulching blade that chops up grass into fine particles that naturally decompose on the lawn. Many horticultural experts say that over the course of the season, this technique provides a lawn with as much nitrogen as one complete application of lawn fertilizer.

If you've been wanting a bit more color in your landscape, and you're comfortable with planting seeds, you might sow some seeds of salvia, zinnia, cockscomb, sunflower, morning glory and coral vine. But be advised the last two mentioned will be with you forever, as they reseed prolifically and will come up in places you never expected. But they both have beautiful blossoms and will cover a trellis, provide some privacy, and block an unwanted view. If instant gratification is your thing, the nurseries are well-stocked with transplants of petunias, marigolds, pentas, salvia, coleus, impatiens, daisies, ixora, caladiums, hibiscus, bougainvillea, and much more. While you're at your favorite nursery you might want to check out the roses - it's not too late to plant another one or two.

If your inclination leans more toward the culinary than landscaping, you're in luck. March is probably the most ideal time to plant veggies. Put in seeds of cucumbers, lettuce, kohlrabi, mustard, radish, summer squash, collards, green beans (both bush and pole), lima beans and if you really hurry, beets. Since they need a longer growing season, you'll want to pick up transplants of eggplant, peppers and tomatoes. Get those tomatoes in the ground ASAP, so they start producing before the sizzling summer temps arrive. When the nighttime temperatures rise, tomatoes will stop setting fruit.

Hopefully you've been making notes, so plan on getting to the nursery first thing in the morning to avoid the crowd.



Coleus



Shell Ginger



Shell Ginger Flower



Susy's Iris

Weed of the Month

Ten Petal Anemone



By Greg Escamilla
MG 2011

Scientific Name

Anemone berlandieri

Family

Ranunculaceae

Duration

Perennial

Common Name

Ten petal anemone

The species name for the plant is named in honor of Jean Louis Berlandier (~1805-1851) who was a talented French botanist who studied plants in Mexico and Texas.

This anemone is one of the most common wildflowers of the Edwards Plateau and other parts of central and northern Texas. It is often the very first to bloom in the early spring, then it goes dormant in the summer. Seeds fly away in the breeze, therefore creating its other common name of windflower. It is native to Texas and will grow in well-drained sandy or calcareous (lime-containing) clay soils. Light requirements are reported as part shade, but they grow well in full sun in our area.

Ten petal anemone is also known by many common names: ten petal thimbleweed, Texas thimbleweed, ten-petaled anemone, windflower, southern anemone, basket anemone, and granny's nightcap. Ten petal anemone plants are 6-14 inches (15-38 cm) tall with one (1) greenish-white or purplish-blue flower on the terminal end of a stem. The flowers, which vary from white to violet-purple within the same patch (white being the majority), can be seen scattered abundantly in grassy open areas, including roadsides and lawns. Flowers are close to the ground. The parts of the flower that look like petals are actually 10-20 sepals, hence the name ten petal anemone. No petals here, only sepals. Similar to the work ethic of many teenagers today, flowers on ten petal anemones believe in short workdays: flowers open in the late morning and close up well before dusk!

All parts of the plant are poisonous when fresh, but are toxic only if eaten in large quantities. Symptoms include inflammation and blistering upon contact with fresh sap, and irritation of the mouth, vomiting, and diarrhea following ingestion.

This plant is attractive to bees, butterflies and birds. This plant may be considered a protected species, so check before digging or gathering seeds. It tolerates mowing rather well.

Ten petal anemone is not an aggressive weed like nut grass or white clover. Some folks rather like the flowers, but remember, if you have just one ten petal anemone establish itself in the lawn, you will very likely have a sizable "patch" in a few years!



Shangri La Gardens



By John Jons
MG 2003

"A garden to encourage and assist education and to improve and enrich the quality of life in Southeast Texas" by John Jons

Located in the heart of Orange, Texas is a garden that is an "ecological wonderland and living museum for visitors of all ages to explore" called Shangri La, Botanical Gardens and Nature Center. The garden is a "world-class" 252 acres facility with over 300 different plants and a wide variety of local wildlife. The gardens are the result of a private foundation established in 1961 by the Stark Family "to encourage and assist education and to improve and enrich the quality of life in Southeast Texas."

Throughout, the very well-manicured gardens are stunning, seasonal and "artistically themed" displays of plants that the horticultural staff has researched and determined to perform well in the Gulf Coast environment. Many of these garden displays are surrounded by border plants that have proven to be well adaptive to the rigors of the Gulf Coast Climate. The gardeners change out the plants four times a year. That involves nearly 100,000 plants that features in both plant variety and color for each of the four seasons. Within the many different gardens is a hanging garden that showcases tropical plants, a daylily collection, an edibles garden and a

children's garden. There is also an epiphyte (air plants) house that features many plants native to the Gulf Coast and a greenhouse that is used to exhibit plants of special botanical interest and a tropical plant collection.

The garden's well manicure beds are connected by trails that meander past plants and trees indicative of an upland forest and past the Blue Moon reflection pool (pond) which features a large central art structure. The lake is surrounded by 41 varieties of azaleas. The trails continue to Ruby Lake that is a 15-acre lake. This lake is surrounded by a wetland ecosystem (swamp) that showcases many bald cypress and pond cypress trees. One particular cypress tree called the "survivor tree," is approximately 1200 years old. Within the lake is a heronry with many nesting herons. Over 5000 birds can be found on Ruby Lake. On the southwest side of the garden is Adams Bayou which, after many twists and turns, flows into the Sabine River. Throughout the garden are a variety of art works.

Supporting the gardens staff are many volunteers. True to this mission the gardens host many gardening, nature and community education events for adults and children. Amazingly, entry to the gardens is free of charge.

To see a pictorial overview of the gardens go to my YouTube video called a "A Visit to the Shangri La Gardens, In Orange, TX" - <https://youtu.be/VNT0vMPGI6M19>



Arbor between the greenhouses



Artistic structure by the blue moon reflection pool

Tree City - Galveston



By Nancy Greenfield
MG 2017

For the second year in a row, Galveston has been named as a Tree City USA by the Arbor Day Foundation and the Association of State Foresters. With the help of an ambitious committee – including seven Galveston County Master Gardeners, the city has shown its commitment to making Galveston Island a greener place to live.

Approximately 3,400 communities across the country has been designated Tree City, which has been a viable greening program since 1976. Galveston applied for the designation following Hurricane Ike and the loss of 40,000 trees. In the past decade thousands of new trees have been planted, established and grown across the island.

This is a big deal for the city – it shows its commitment to the environment and trees.

To qualify, a city must meet four standards:

- Create a board which will be legally responsible for trees
- Pass a city ordinance outlining care of trees
- Establish a community forestry program
- Observe Arbor Day with a public function

In 2018 and 2019 the Tree USA committee was involved in more than 30 projects citywide, including planting of trees in parks, athletic facilities, along streets and in planter boxes on the Seawall.



Master Gardeners involved in the various projects include Nancy Greenfield, Kathy Maines, Margaret Canavan, Ginger Hopper, Barbara Canetti, Cathy Conlon-Townsend and Erhard Goerlitz.

Galveston recognized as Tree City USA



Thanks to the efforts of the City of Galveston Tree Committee, the Galveston Island Tree Conservancy and many committed residents, Galveston earned the designation of Tree City USA for the second year in a row.

The Arbor Day Foundation recognized Galveston for its efforts replanting trees post-Hurricane Ike by naming the community a Tree City USA. The foundation recognizes cities that create forestry programs, establish tree regulations and take other actions to care for trees.

The tree conservancy and volunteers for the tree committee have planted nearly 20,000 trees since Hurricane Ike. Congratulations and many thanks to all the people who have invested their time, energy and money to care for trees in Galveston.

Tree City



**By Dr. Margaret
Canavan
MG 2003**

Galveston has recently been recognized as a “Tree City USA” by the National Arbor Day Foundation for the second consecutive year. As the only city in Galveston County to achieve this hard-earned distinction, she joins about 3400 other cities across the country and 80 in Texas with the title. Years of activity by many individuals and groups went into achieving this status, and the work continues in order to maintain it. Galveston County Master Gardeners have been part of the energy and commitment required from the beginning of this effort and continue to this day.

The Arbor Day Foundation’s Tree City program was instituted in 1976 to recognize cities that take their trees seriously. To be a Tree City a municipality must jump through several hoops that include having a tree department or board with legal responsibility for the care of all trees on city-owned property, a tree care ordinance, a forestry program with a budget of at least \$2 per capita, and an Arbor Day observance. That is quite a challenging list and took 10 years to pull it all together.

It started with Hurricane Ike in 2008. It is difficult and painful to remember the Galveston landscape after Ike rolled through. Amid the flooding of a majority of all homes and businesses, we saw the destruction of the landscape. Trees were leafless and broken, and many were uprooted. Pol-

luted saltwater flooding had saturated the soil for up to 24 hours in some areas and drought-stricken trees and other vegetation soaked it right up, then died. This included many century-old live oaks.

In addition to rebuilding homes and livelihoods, early recovery required an inventory of tree damage. This was necessary, in part, to determine which were potentially salvageable and which were beyond hope in order to obtain Federal funding to aid in the cost of removal. In early 2009 45 Galveston County Master Gardeners worked alongside staff of Texas A&M Forest Service and AgriLife Extension Service to create this initial inventory. The numbers were staggering; over 40,000 trees were lost. Very few oaks on the historic Broadway esplanade survived. Galveston’s historic East End Neighborhood lost its beautiful tree canopy.

Public interest in rebuilding Galveston’s urban forest began to take root. In early 2009, a few residents got together under the leadership of Dr. Jackie Cole and formed a group that later became the nonprofit Galveston Island Tree Conservancy (GITC). Master Gardeners Catherine Conlon-Townsend and I were part of that organizing effort and we remain on the board of directors. The GITC’s first goals were to plant trees and educate the public about the care, feeding, and importance of an urban forest. Various GITC initiatives have results in almost 20,000 trees planted. The Conservancy has supported public lectures, training events, newspaper articles and social media to support the educational goal.

Also in 2009 the City of Galveston created a Tree Committee with the



responsibility of advising City staff in tree care activity. That group was instrumental in adoption of the Tree Protection Ordinance necessary for the Tree City designation. Committee members also assist in educational activities. Master Gardeners currently appointed to the committee include Kathy Maines and Nancy Greenfield who was responsible for the Tree City USA submission.

In 2010 the Tree Conservancy evolved to bring on board a lone employee, trained horticulturist and Certified Arborist, Priscilla Files. Under her management volunteers have worked diligently to achieve the goals of the GITC. She also serves as advisor to the City Tree Committee and helps coordinate planning and activities.

Beginning in 2010 annual GITC tree giveaways, staffed by volunteers, have provided thousands of five-gallon trees for residents to plant on their property. Spring 2010 also saw the first annual “NeighborWoods” event which has provided over 2500 free 15-gallon trees for streetside locations. Trees are planted at no cost by volunteers that have included Master Gardeners as well as students from Texas A&M Galveston’s “Big Event” workday. Dozens of trees have been planted in public parks through partnership with the City.

This is an expensive undertaking. Funding has been achieved through grants from foundations, businesses, and private donors from near and far. Major replanting of the Broadway esplanade was completed with

funds from the City of Galveston.

The education and stewardship provided from these efforts have come together to create a real Tree City, not just one on paper. But even more than that, what has developed is a Tree City powered by the knowledge and commitment of its citizens. A recent turn of events has made this evident.

The City of Galveston sent letters to numerous residents requiring them to trim trees that intrude upon streets. This action was spurred by an unfortunate incident that involved an expensive encounter between a fire department vehicle and a low-hanging limb. This is definitely a public safety concern. However, the pruning, indicated as necessary, could have caused severe injury to some large trees. Numerous residents, knowledgeable about pruning practices and tree health, expressed concern to City staff and leaders. The result of this was a decision to delay enforcement and re-evaluate the ordinance so that trees would not be damaged unnecessarily. There are now many eyes on the well-being of Galveston trees and showed that City staff and residents can work together positively.

The Joni Mitchell song says, “Don’t it always seem to go, that you don’t know what you’ve got till it’s gone.” Galveston learned that lesson with Ike. 40,000 trees gone caused everyone to reflect on what was lost. But with the determination of residents, the City administration, and help from Master Gardeners, Galveston is now a real “Tree City.”



Green Genes



By Karolyn Gephart
MG 2017

Master Gardeners love gardening and each one finds what areas they enjoy and pursues those interests.

It seems to be in their genes to get involved with plants. When they stop a moment to consider their past, certain people and events hold memories dear to them. Certain people and related activities seem to have been the starting point for a love of gardening.

Debbie Brizendine, Master Gardener Class of 2015, definitely has green genes which came from both her maternal and paternal grandparents, then passed on to her parents, and now to Debbie and her family.

“My paternal grandparents were from Round Top, Texas, so there was a lot of farming and raising livestock. My maternal grandparents were from Bloomburg, Texas, in the Ark-La-Tex area, where they also farmed and grew cotton.”

She was born in El Paso and moved to Texas City before she turned one year old. Her dad was in the military, but after his service he returned to Texas City where his parents lived.

“Both of my grandparents grew up on farms, so both my mom and dad also grew up gardening,” Debbie said. “We always had veggies growing in a garden in our back yard in Texas City. My grandparents, who lived a few blocks away, also had a big veggie garden.” Her parents seemed to always be out in their garden, working in it, growing things, then preparing the food to eat. “That has stuck in my head and now it’s a part of what Larry and I do at our home.”

Debbie, her husband Larry, and son Justin live on 3.5 acres in Santa Fe. They have raised beds, dozens of flower beds, as well as a small orchard



that they started after she became a MG. “We grow tomatoes, corn, okra, squash, green beans, broccoli, cabbage, Brussels sprouts, purple hull peas, onions, and potatoes.”

Debbie enjoys being treasurer for the GCMG program. Before retiring, she worked in finance for 38 years, including 20 years of service at AMOCO Federal Credit Union.

“I enjoy the treasurer’s position, dealing with numbers, learning budget procedures and rules and regulations regarding our 501(c)(3) status. I also enjoy learning how to use QuickBooks,” she said. “I also like helping out in the Discovery Garden kitchen.”





Like Debbie, **Master Gardener Johnnell McKee** has a grandparent who helped introduce a love for gardening in her as a child.

“My grandfather had a small, enclosed orchard that was secured by a fence and locked. It felt wondrous when he would take me by the hand and walk with me through it. I felt his joy and it inspired me,” Johnnell said. Johnnell became a Master Garden in 1998. She had previously worked as an office manager, secretary, and teacher. Originally from Austin, she currently lives in Friendswood, is married, has one daughter, seven grandchildren, and three great grandchildren.

Since becoming a Master Gardener, Johnnell has enjoyed the education, the fall and spring plant sales, and being sent for consulting to individuals in the area. She looks forward to devoting more time to the Discovery Garden in the future. Home gardening is important to her. “I like the colorful beauty of a yard and believe that your yard is a reflection of your home,” Johnnell said.

MG Patricia Martin grew up with flowers all around her. From grandparents, to parents to in-laws, flowers were there, impacting her journey to get her to the Master Garden program in 1998.

“My great grandfather grew gladiolus for Manitowoc, Wisconsin florists for years. He entered garden club flower shows, as well as regional shows and won many blue ribbons. My mother grew geraniums, ferns, and flowers while I was growing up,” she said. “My sister and I have traded daylily plants for many years. One of my uncles graduated from A&M with a horticulture background. He raised vegetables and hibiscus in his backyard.”

Born in Corpus Christi, Patricia and her husband Tom live in El Lago. She is an active member of Heritage Gardeners club in Friendswood and provides horticulture presentations at each monthly meeting.

When it is flower show/horticulture show time for the club, all members look to Martin for horticulture leadership and organization for the show. She was a former lab technician for a pipeline company in Baytown and



taught physical science for three years, but her green genes were always with her.

“I enjoyed my botany classes in college and even had some plants in my dorm room. The campus at Stephen F. Austin was gorgeous in the spring with flowering dogwood trees, azaleas, and beds of tulips among the pine trees,” she said.

Her mother-in-law instilled in her a love for amaryllis and other spring flowering bulbs. She transplanted many of her amaryllis bulbs in her own yard.

With the Master Gardener program, Martin is an asset in the Check Out area for payment at the plant sales and was a former mentor with the MG Intern classes. She has written several articles for this newsletter and has worked on organizing publications.

Debbie, Johnnell, and Patricia can look back to their families to see how a love of gardening was instilled in their lives. Today the three bring that love and share it with others at Master Gardener events and in their communities as well as at home.

The Discovery Garden Update



By Tom Fountain
MG 2008

It only takes a walk through the Discovery Garden to notice that spring is near. Beds are being prepared for spring planting. Vicki, Hedy, and Sue are working together to prepare their bed to plant (Fig. 1). Also, the class of new Master Gardeners has started their tomato study. Kevin (Fig. 2) is demonstrating how the tomato plants are to be planted, fertilized, and staked for the study, with the class gathered around.

Even though we have had a few cold snaps and soggy garden days, our temperature continues to be three to four degrees above normal over the past few months.

Despite the above average rains in January, our part of Texas is again edging toward drought conditions. Rainfall around Galveston County was almost an inch below normal this past month. Persistent drought conditions continue in the counties to our west.

The weather outlook for the spring indicates more of the same. The Weather Service predicts temperatures will likely continue above normal and rainfall near normal.

Our garden group is especially busy this time of the year, not only do you have the spring planting, but also the spring plant sale and then there is the pruning. Our spring plant sale was successful due to our Master Gardeners "can do attitude." Lisa, Joanne, Ronnie, and Kaye (Fig. 3) are in the greenhouse getting plants ready for the plant sale.

Pruning time is an opportunity to hold workshops such as pruning grapes, roses, and fig trees. Phil, Ronnie, and others are listening as David talks about pruning grapes (Fig. 4). The class of new Master Gardeners are getting hands-on learning on pruning roses from Jon Johns (Fig. 5).

Other activities in the garden this time of year include trying to stay warm while learning how to take care of your gardening equipment. Tim is doing his best to keep the workshop he is teaching warm (Fig 6). Some times one can visit and learn about an activity in which you are interested. Herman and David are visiting with Gene and Briana in the Aquaponics garden and learning about how the system is doing and what problems they have had (Fig. 7).

Linda and the kitchen crew are ready to order the kitchen cabinets that they wanted, and the money has been raised. So the expansion at the multi purpose building is expected to resume soon. There are still a lot of things left to do to get the kitchen ready for cabinets including; electric wiring, sheetrock, and painting.



Meeting Minutes 2020

January & February



By Briana Etie
MG 2017

January 2020 Master Gardener Monthly Meeting A Double Feature evening!

Sharon Zaal opened our meeting at 6:00 p.m. after socializing. She asked Judy to lead us in prayer. Judy explained what she had planned for us. A double feature evening. She asked Hedy to explain our evening at the Discovery Garden with a "White Sheet Insect Observation." We enjoyed a meal together.

Our first speaker introduced us to Houston Botanic Garden, a new Houston attraction. He invited us to an opening on January 26th @2:00pm.

Later at the Discovery Garden, we enjoyed a light show of insects with a very informative booklet for the insects we should see. After watching my son Beau enjoy himself, I intend to duplicate this show on a summer evening. We have shared pictures of our evening on our SmugMug site gcmg.smugmug.com.



February 2020 Master Gardener Monthly Meeting Spring Plant Sale 2020 Preview

Ira Gervais opened our meeting updating us on our upcoming sale. We enjoyed a light snack and Karolyn Gephart, MG 2017, introduced us to the plants of the 2020 Spring Sale with a beautiful and informative power point.



Seasonal Bites

easy recipes



By Sandra Gervais
MG 2011

I ate this recipe for Pasta Alfredo, which was quite tasty, and then found out it was from Weight Watchers! It's not hard to make. Guess it was my lucky day. Then I came across another easy pasta recipe which also was yummy. Here are the two pasta recipes. See if you agree with me about them.



Cottage Cheese Alfredo

Sauce:

- 1 cup milk (can use skim for fewer calories)
- 1/2 cup cottage cheese (can use low-fat cottage cheese to lower fat content)
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- 1/4 teaspoon salt-or more to taste
- 1/8 teaspoon black pepper-or more to taste
- 1/4 teaspoon garlic powder-or more to taste
- 1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese or Romano cheese

Put all ingredients into a food processor or blender.
Blend until smooth.

Pour mixture into small saucepan.

Add dried basil and dried oregano to taste. (Start with 1 teaspoon each and add more to taste.) Cook on medium-low heat until smooth and heated through, stirring occasionally.

Adjust all seasonings to taste.

Cook on low for an additional 5-8 minutes, still stirring occasionally until flavors meld.

While making above sauce, cook 8 ounces of your favorite pasta according to directions. Drain well.

Add pasta to the sauce right before serving and let it soak for a few minutes. Top with fresh parsley. A cooked meat, shrimp, or chopped, grilled vegetables may also be added.

Serves 4.



Sheet Pan Pasta Bake

Preheat oven to 375 degrees

- 20 ounces of cherry tomatoes, halved
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 teaspoons black pepper
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 6 garlic cloves, minced

Toss all ingredients well to coat. Spread on a rimmed sheet pan in an even layer. Bake 20-25 minutes or until tomatoes are soft and very fragrant. Remove from oven.

Meanwhile, cook 16 ounces of whole grain fusilli or similar pasta according to directions in well salted water until al dente. Drain well.

Add cooked pasta to warm sheet pan along with 8 ounces of fresh mozzarella cut into 1/2 inch pieces and 1/2 cup fresh basil, roughly chopped.

Toss to combine.

Adjust seasonings.

Drizzle with extra olive oil.

Serve topped with 1/4 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese.

Serves 8.

Spring Plant Sale 2020

Photographer Carlos Rios, volunteering at the spring sale, shot candid photos of MGs in action. Documenting activities is his specialty after spending 33 years as an award-winning photojournalist for The Houston Chronicle.



Kokedama Workshop for Craft Booth at Plant Sale

MG Pam Hunter hosted a Kokedama workshop with Katherine Tondre as our instructor.



Members in the News



Several of our Galveston County MGs attended the recent Landscape Design School at the George H.W. Bush Presidential Library at Texas A&M University. Sponsored by Texas Garden Clubs, Inc. and the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, the school is offered in four programs scheduled about six months apart with ten hours of instruction at Bryan-College Station. "Master Gardeners who complete a course may apply for 12 hours of credit to their requirements for continuing education in their county. After completing 4 courses, they will receive the Landscape Design Steward certification."

Alamo Fire in full bloom in the Earth-Kind Garden at the MG Discovery Garden



One of the features in the Earth-Kind Garden is the outline of Texas where we have the Maroon Bluebonnets planted. The goal was to have Maroon Bluebonnets, now called "Alamo Fire," (*Lupinus texensis*) blooming in the spring throughout the Texas outline. Looks like we are reaching our goal. Seeds will be planted each fall until we have the Earth-Kind Texas fully blooming with Alamo Fire each spring.

Master Gardeners participated in the 8th Annual Friends of Moody Gardens Herb Fair





bulletin board



Volunteer Opportunities

For the **Master Gardener Hotline** contact Ginger Benson by email at galvcountrymgs@gmail.com or call the office at 281-309-5065.

Volunteer Opportunities

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 Jennifer Pinard at jpinard@tlc-tideway.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!

Volunteer Opportunities

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/libbie-s-place-senior-day>. 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, email 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.

GalvCity Master Gardener Discovery Garden

Conditions as of: 06:01 PM Sunday, Mar 15, 2020



74°F

HIGH: 79°F at 03:49 PM
LOW: 69°F at 01:06 AM



Wind: 1 mph SE High gust 16 mph at 12:52 AM



Humidity: 84% Feels like 76°F



Rain: 0.00 in Seasonal Total 9.11 in



Barometer: 30.18 in Hg Falling Slowly

Vantage Pro2 Plus, Cabled via IP
Shop Weather Stations at www.davisinstruments.com

DAVIS

Don't forget to put the link for our weather station on your smart phone and computer:

<https://www.weatherlink.com/embeddablePage/show/269c8db099654c0fa522d3420104b173/wide>

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Tour Guides for Thursday Public Access and Tour of our Discovery Garden

Our Demonstration Garden is open for touring by the general public on each Thursday from 9:00 - 11:00 am. MGs are needed to serve as tour guides for our Discovery Garden.

Contact MG Denny Noh at 281.723.2830 or dnoh@aol.com to volunteer.

Volunteers are needed to develop and deliver presentations on various horticulture topics of interest to the public in our surrounding communities and our Master Gardeners. Classes are given at the Extension Office on Tuesday evenings and on Saturday. This is an excellent opportunity to contribute, develop and use skills from life experiences as well as contribute to one of the main GCMG missions of Education. We have experienced GCMG Mentors and Specialist available to guide and support. Please contact if you have any questions and so we can get you scheduled to present a class. Volunteers are also needed to help with the Saturday programs and the Tuesday evening programs. If you can help, please contact

Denny Noh @ 281-723-2830 or dnoh@aol.com
Nancy Langston Noh @ 832-289-7087 or nancylnoh@aol.com

AgriLife Extension Office Discovery Garden needs volunteers!

The gardens around the AgriLife Extension Office are maintained by Master Gardeners under the team leadership of MG Ginger Benson. 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 Ginger at 281-309-5065, email galvcountrymgs@gmail.com to find out the schedule and join her team.

SmugMug

To see lots of photos of what the Galveston County Master Gardeners are up to, we now have access to browse and search photos in SmugMug. Use the following link in your favorite web browser to access: <https://gcmg.smugmug.com/>

Please see the

Texas Master Gardeners Website for details.

By visiting the website you can find up-to-date

information on Advanced Training Programs that were added in

between editions of the newsletter. txmg.org. You may download

the application forms from that website. **Note** all applications for

the Advanced Training Programs must be approved and signed by

Dr. William M. Johnson. **Note** fees do not include lodging

or food unless specified otherwise.



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



Stuck at home from the quarantine?

Get a Head Start on Gardening

Editor's Note: Master Gardener Robert Marshall prepared this timely article which was published in the Wednesday, April 15, 2020, edition of the The Daily News.



By Robert Marshall
MG 2012

Get a head start on gardening

On my online Nextdoor app for Friendswood, I see people asking what they can do for entertainment while in self-quarantine because of the COVID-19 pandemic. My response was get out and do yard work and start a Victory Garden.

Gardening can be a great way to productively pass the time when social distancing and self-quarantine are being practiced while also adding greenery and potentially some fresh food for the dinner table. With most schools closed until further notice, gardening is also a way to help keep kids focused (and perhaps to teach a few lessons on science, math and responsibilities!).

Gardening provides exercise. Gardening also provides your children an opportunity to discover the science of gardening and you can get a few fresh vegetables or maybe just fresh cut flowers to have on the dinner table. If you live in an apartment with a balcony you can garden in containers, or if you live in a house with a yard you can find great pleasure in getting your hands dirty for an hour or two each day as you tend the garden.

Containers can be anything you can lay hands on, half whiskey barrels, fifty-five gallon drums cut in half or an old number three washtub like the one your grandparents all claimed to use on Saturday night to take a bath in out behind the barn. Small metal stock tanks are a favorite but expensive. Try to make sure the container is at least a foot deep and has plenty of drainage holes in the bottom.

The general recommendation for back yard gardens is to build raised beds. The default raised bed is 8-to-12 inches in height, between 3 and 4 feet wide and as long as you want. However you can lay out the beds to any shape or size desired. Remember keeping the beds 3 or 4 feet wide allows you to plant new plants as needed and to be able to easily reach weeds without walking in the bed. Keeping the width of raised beds to 3 or 4 feet also makes watering and harvesting easier.

Bed placement is determined by how much sun it will get during the day, access to a water hose and how much you want to produce. Avoid areas of the lawn where water stands for long periods after a heavy rain because if the area floods you will need higher walls to allow better drainage.

Building materials can be wood, stone, bricks, cinder blocks, and can be as cheap as what is on hand. I see people offering leftover pavers, cinder blocks and bricks for free on my Nextdoor neighborhood news group if you are willing to pick them up. Consider building one smaller bed for each child and let them plant fast maturing plants like radishes or beans.

Bed design is as simple or as complicated as you want to make it. If this is your first garden, start simple and upgrade later. One reason I like cinder

blocks is they can be moved easily so if something happens that requires the bed to be relocated just stack them out of the way and spread the soil in low spots. I have seen beds that range from simple-to-construct wood boards to beds that allow the gardener access to walk inside with an open center and fenced to keep chickens and pets out.

Now that you have decided to give gardening a try, develop a general plan. What is the best location for a garden? How will the raised bed affect mowing? Will the raised bed be shaded by large trees during the morning hours? Can you easily get to the raised bed? What do you want to plant? Consider what vegetables you eat now and look into when they grow best in your area. Contact the Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office to obtain Publication GC-104 (Recommended Vegetable Varieties for Galveston County). This publication lists vegetables for spring and fall gardens as well as dates to plant vegetables in our growing area.

After you have constructed your raised bed, it's time to fill the bed with soil. Depending on how large the bed is, your favorite big box store or garden center can provide bags of soil to fill them or soil yards can provide rose or garden mix that can be hauled home in the back of a truck or trailer. To figure how much soil you will need measure the inside dimensions of the bed and multiply the height times the width times the length to get cubic feet volume. A yard of soil is 27 cubic feet so knowing the volume of the beds will determine how much soil to buy.

Once you have selected and planted your new garden, make sure to check to ensure that adequate soil moisture is maintained. Stick your finger into the soil to determine if it is moist or dry. With some experience, you will



be able to determine soil moisture just by looking at the surface of the soil. Now all that is left to do is water as needed, pull weeds, and wait for the harvest. BUT it is not too early to start planning for a productive home garden and putting to good use the over-abundance of time provided by a self-quarantine.

Gardening provides your children an opportunity to discover the science and art of gardening. Gardening can also be a great way to productively pass the time when social distancing and self-quarantine are being practiced.
Photo by William M. Johnson

2020 GCMGA Monthly Meetings

CANCELLED



**You're Invited
Monthly Backyard
Meetings**

**BECAUSE OF THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC,
THE MG MEETINGS HAVE BEEN CANCELLED OR POSTPONED UNTIL
FURTHER NOTICE**

**By Judy Anderson
MG 2012**

May 5

Backyard meeting at the home of Camille and Ken Goodwin,
894 Kingsgate Lane, Houston, Texas 77058

June 9

Graduation and Recognition at the home of
Mikey and Allen Isbell,
1715 35th Street, Galveston, Texas 77550

July 14

Join the GCMG for a potluck dinner to be
followed by a presentation from Dr. Andrew King, PhD (Texas A&M): "Medicinal
Landscapes: Producing a functional, safe and
beautiful Medicinal Garden"

August 11

San Leon and orchids. Clyde Holt hosting

September 8

Backyard meeting at the home of Pam
Hunter, (2018), LaMarque, Texas

October TBD

Karolyn Gephart sale preview presentation.

November 9

Annual Meeting preceded by potluck dinner.

December 8

Holiday Party at the home of Mikey and
Allen Isbell.

**You may contact Judy at
jande10198@aol.com for information.**

****NOTE CHANGE ** May 5, 2020**

Please note the change of date for the May meeting. The Texas Master Gardener Conference conflicted with the regular Monthly Meeting date. Please mark your calendar for this meeting at the home of Camille and Ken Goodwin. Everyone knows Camille as the bulb lady and this is our opportunity to see her beautiful blooming bulbs. It will also be fun to see the engineering creations of her husband, Ken. Together they have created an enchanting oasis in a busy neighborhood. While you are there be sure to visit the Little Free Library. Camille was the first person I know who had a Little Library, but I often see them now. Please bring your pot luck dish and a chair to enjoy the evening.



We Want Your Feedback

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

