

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

GULF COAST *Gardening*

Issue 221 • May / June 2020



TEXAS
MASTER  GARDENER
TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION
Galveston County



2020 Master Gardener Association Leadership

President

Sharon Zaal

Sr. Vice President

Kathy Maines

VP for Programs

Herman Auer, Education Programs
Judy Anderson, Monthly Meetings

Discovery Garden Coordinator

Kevin Lancon

VP for Projects

Clyde Holt, **Jenni Hudgins**,
Stewart McAdoo, **Briana Etie**,
Julie Cartmill, **Judy Anderson**,
Joanne Hardgrove and **Tish Reustle**

VP for Volunteer Development

Peggy Budny and **Ann Anderson**

VP for Media Relations

Nita Caskey

Secretaries

Briana Etie and **Joanne Hardgrove**

Treasurers

Debra Brizendine and **Ed Klein**

Newsletter Editors

Linda Steber and **Robin Stone Collins**

MG Intern Course Team Leader

Peggy Budny

Fellowship

Penny Bessire

Hospitality Coordinators

Judy Anderson, **Lori & Keith Boydston**
and **Jackie Auer**

Speakers Bureau Coordinators

Betty Webb and **Nancy Langston-Noh**

MG Volunteer Hour Recorders

Wayne Elliott, **Dr. Margaret Canavan**
and **Linda Steber**

Jr. Master Gardener Programs Leaders

Kaye Corey and **Gayle McAdoo**

Plant Sale Chairmen

Ira Gervais and **Kevin Lancon**

Photography Team Leaders

Herman Auer, **Tom Fountain**
and **Chris Anastas**

State Association Delegates

Terry and Velda Cuclis

State Association Alternate Delegate

Ira Gervais and **Sharon Zaal**

Webmaster

Genevieve Benson

Board of Directors

Julie Cartmill, **Tim Jahnke**, **Frank Resch**,
Tish Reustle and **Linda Steber**

CEA-HORT and Master Gardener

Program Coordinator

Dr. William M. Johnson



By Camille Goodwin
MG 2008

*You know
you're a
Master
Gardener
when ~ ~*

You're found weeding the local park; When dirt under your nails replaces a French manicure; your feet are permanently stained from going barefoot in the garden; You're harvesting in a thunderstorm; You have a stack of seed catalogs on the back of your toilet. You own a set of gardening gloves for every season; You can turn an 8-mile pile of clear plastic and PVC tubing into a working greenhouse. Your dogs understand commands like, "don't step on that," and "stay on the path," and "put that back in the bucket!"; Gently kissed a leaf so your plants know they're loved.

You know you're a Master Gardener when it is almost 100 degrees outside and you are still pulling weeds...



Welcome to summer on our Texas Gulf Coast! Along with the coming warmer and more humid days, you might be seeing evidence of galls on your pecan trees, learn how to control the various insects that cause this problem on page 4.

Our Discovery Garden is full of life and ever-changing activity! Various insects are being discovered and identified (page 23), read about what's going on in our Butterfly Garden (page 8), see the update on the Louisiana Iris project (page 16) and how many shades of purple can you find at the garden (page 6).

As if we don't have enough insects in our own horticultural zone, Hedy Wolpa inspects big truck grills, traveling the interstates, to de-

termine what insects they've come in contact with (page 15). This is definitely a different form of "adventure" travel! Since becoming a Master Gardener, are you now like a "doctor" to your friends and family responding to endless gardening questions?

Donna Ward's story on page 7 tells how anyone can have a relationship with Mr. Google. Want to know more about vanilla? Kay Corey's piece on page 14 teaches us about vanilla and shares a recipe to make your own extract.

Kevin Lancon educates us on indeterminate and determinate potatoes. Who knew?? (page 5). Are you looking for new ideas for plants that might work in your landscape? Jan Brick teaches us about caladiums and kalanchoes, with many options, on page 12.

If you have full sun areas in your garden, discover which plants might work in those sunny locations on page 10.

John Jons has provided extensive information on the two kinds of compost tea (page 18)

and how to make your own.

It's always great to hear about garden clubs in our area. The story on page 17 features the Galveston Garden Club, which began in 1935 and describes its history and current renaissance. Check it out! Dr. Johnson helps us with gardening tips on page 27.

In our on-going stories about how our Master Gardeners got the desire to become Master Gardeners, enjoy meeting Sue Bain and Vicki Blythe on page 20.

Our regular features including the Discovery Garden Update, Seasonal Bites and all volunteer opportunities and calendars have been updated.

Inside This Issue...

- 2 *Intro* by MG Camille Goodwin
- 3 *How to Reach Us*
- 4 *Q & A: Pecan Tree Problems* by MG Laurel Stine
- 5 *Determinate Potatoes and Indeterminate* by MG Kevin Lancon
- 6 *Purple Plants of the Month* by MG Lisa Davis
- 7 *Trowels and Tribulations* by MG Donna Ward
- 8 *The Butterfly Garden* by MGs Hedy Wolpa, Sue Bain and Vicki Blythe
- 10 *Best Shots Plants for Sunny Places* by MG Elayne Kouzounis
- 12 *Companion Planting* by MG Jan Brick
- 14 *The Story of Vanilla* by MG Kaye Corey
- 15 *Truck Stop Insects* by MG Hedy Wolpa
- 16 *The Louisiana Iris Project* by MG Monica Martens
- 17 *Galveston Garden Club* by MG Dr. Margaret Canavan
- 18 *Compost Tea* by MG John Jons
- 20 *Green Genes* by MG Karolyn Gephart
- 22 *Seasonal Bites* by MG Sandra Gervais
- 23 *We Can Still Learn* by MG Hedy Wolpa
- 24 *The Discovery Garden Update* by MG Tom Fountain
- 25 *Members in the News* by MG Lisa Belcher
- 25 *Minutes* by MG Joanne Hardgrove
- 26 *Bulletin Board* by MG Linda Steber
- 27 *Last Word* by Dr. William M. Johnson
- 28 *Monthly Meetings and Invitations* by MG Judy Anderson



Cover:
Photo courtesy of MG Vicki Blythe



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!

www.facebook.com/pages/Galveston-County-Master-Gardeners/220088841395231

How to Reach Us



Extension Office:
281-309-5065
galvcountymgs@gmail.com

To Submit Newsletter Articles:
Contact Linda Steber
281-534-6695
steber8@msn.com

We encourage your articles!
Due the 20th of each month.

Speakers Bureau:
Nancy Langston-Noh
@ 832-289-7087 and
Betty Webb @ 281-630-0103
gcmg.speakersbureau@gmail.com



Texas A&M AgriLife Extension provides equal opportunities in its programs and employment to all persons, regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, or gender identity. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas cooperating.



To subscribe to our newsletter, just click on the subscribe button above.

Interested in gardening in Galveston County? To receive a free online subscription to the Galveston County Master Gardener Newsletter, please enter your e-mail address after clicking on the "Subscribe to our NEWSLETTER" button above. You will automatically receive an e-mail message when each issue is posted. Your e-mail address will not be used for any other purpose other than sending the e-newsletter. We will not send any commercial mail to the address provided nor will the newsletter itself contain any advertisements . . . we are all about the joy of gardening.

Thanks for your interest!

Q&A ask a master gardener

Pecan Tree Problems?

small soft-bodied insects can cause infested leaves to drop early



By Laurel Stine
MG 1996

Question: What are these weird bumps on the leaves, twigs and nuts of my pecan tree?

It sounds as if you may have a case of Pecan Phylloxera Gall. Four species of Phylloxera insects cause galls on leaves, twigs and nuts of pecan trees. Although unsightly, galls on pecan leaves caused by *Phylloxera notabilis* are not particularly damaging although they cause infested leaves to drop early. Galls on twigs, caused by *P. devastatrix* can lead to

mid-season (July) defoliation and twigs breaking off during windy weather or excessive weight which results in reduced yield and misshapen trees.

Pecan phylloxera are small, soft-bodied insects that are similar and closely related to aphids. They live inside hollow galls formed on new-growth leaves or twigs that may reach up to one inch in diameter. Leaf galls remain green and fleshy until they have opened. Twig and stem galls are woody and may remain on the tree for several years.

Eggs hatch around budbreak in the spring and tiny nymphs begin to feed on tender young growth, releasing a chemical substance that stimulates the plant tissue to develop galls. The nymphs hatch and mate while still immature. This unusual capability is called neoteny.

After developing into adults in 4 to 5 weeks, females deposit clutches of eggs inside the galls or on fresh, young growth. Nymphs hatching from these eggs develop into wingless and winged females. The winged variants often are referred to as winged migrants. The eggs deposited by the winged migrants hatch into sexual males and females.

Within 3 weeks, the galls split open and release the adult stages. Phylloxera can have several generations. However, the stem phylloxera has only one damaging generation per year. Prior to dying, the female seeks shelter in a protected area on the tree, usually under the bark, in old galls or under dead scale insects. She will lay a single egg. The egg will remain dormant within the body of the dead female until the egg hatches the following spring and begins another cycle.

By the time symptoms are noticed, it is too late to treat during the current season. As far as the basic health of an infested tree is concerned, no pesticide treatment is actually needed. The vigor of infested trees can be increased by proper fertilization (following the recommendations indicated by a soil test) and watering during dry weather.

If you decide that an insecticide is needed, it should be applied before the immatures become embedded in the new tissue. Insecticides only need to be applied to a tree if a tree had galls the previous season. Apply horticultural oil during the dormant season, then follow up with malathion at budbreak—just as the buds begin to split and show green color; terminal bud growth should be about 2 inches long.

There is another active ingredient labeled for pecans called imidacloprid. Here is what Alabama Extension has to say: “There is a product labeled for pecan trees for soil applications only: This product contains the active ingredient imidacloprid. Soil application would have to be made prior to budbreak for the active ingredient to be taken up and distributed throughout the tree before the stem mother settles in to feed. Only one application of imidacloprid can be made per year. Control will depend on timing of application and sufficient uptake. Drench applications made in the fall have been successful in controlling phylloxera the following spring.”



Pecan Phylloxera Gall



Photos by Dr. William M. Johnson

Pecan Phylloxera Gall

Indeterminate versus Determinate Potatoes



By Kevin Lancon
MG 2018

Recently, while browsing a few social media gardening sites which I subscribe to, the topic of determinate versus indeterminate potatoes was being discussed and debated. This caught my attention because I had only heard of these terms used when referring to tomatoes but never with regards to potatoes. Apparently, potatoes (like tomatoes) come in both determinate and indeterminate varieties. Determinate types (most early varieties) tend to fruit all at one time, and indeterminate types (late varieties) fruit over long periods of time.

Determinate and indeterminate potatoes are defined by growth patterns. Several different varieties of potatoes fall into each category but unfortunately long or late season potatoes will not produce well here, if they produce at all. Potatoes are a cool weather crop and warm soils inhibit the formation of tubers, and long or late season potatoes will be forming tubers when our soils are beginning to warm. In general, once the soil has warmed above 80° F, the formation of new tubers ends, therefore all of the varieties that do well in the Gulf Coast are determinate varieties.

Varieties that are readily available to us on the Gulf Coast include:

Nearly all commercial potatoes sold in the US are determinate. They have been bred to produce at a particular time, so that an entire field can be harvested at the same time. They also were bred to produce one hill at a designated height, to make machine harvesting easier. Traits such as indeterminism, long stolons, and erratic growth habits are not traits that the potato industry wants in their gene pool.

With all of this said, there is also a false theory amongst many backyard gardeners, me included, that potato plants will continue to grow more potatoes all the way up their buried stems, resulting in a much increased harvest in a small area. This practice is referred to as “hilling” potatoes, which is a practice of pulling additional soil up around the stems of the vines every time they reach 8 to 10 inches tall, leaving only the top leaves exposed. Traditional deep and repeated hilling only benefits indeterminate varieties, which as noted above cannot be grown successfully in the Gulf Coast. Additionally, hilling too deeply can actually kill determinates and can result in the vines producing only a few, very tiny tubers. Through photosynthesis, the leaves are making sugars that are sent down to the tubers for development. The key to growing lots of large potatoes is to grow lots of leaves, therefore aggressive hilling is a detriment to growing large and bountiful potato crops. If hilling is practiced at all in our area,

Variety	Skin Color	Days To Maturity	Group	Habit
Red Norland	Red	70-90	Early Season	Determinate
Red LaSoda	Red	85-95	Mid Season	Determinate
Red Pontiac	Red	90+	Mid Season	Determinate
Russian Banana	Tan	90+	Mid Season	Determinate
White Kennebec	Buff	80+	Mid Season	Determinate
Yukon Gold	Yellow White	70-90	Early to Mid Season	Determinate



it should only be done to a sufficient depth to cover any exposed tubers from exposure to the sun. Direct sunlight can cause potatoes to “green” which is the development of glycoalkaloid and is extremely distasteful.

Determinate potatoes will only produce stolons on the first 3 to 6 inches of stem above the potato seed and will not produce any additional stolons at or above the initial first green shoots of the plant. Potatoes should be planted 6 inches deep for the best results. Studies have shown that 6 inches is optimum, while 2 inches resulted in reduced production, and 4 inches was not significantly less productive than 6 inches; however, if you plant them 4 inches deep or less, you will probably end up having to “hill” the potatoes to prevent sun scald.

Shades of Purple in the Discovery Garden



By Lisa Davis
MG 2018

The word purple comes from Greek *porphyra* used for dye obtained from shellfish. Due to the high cost of the dye, it was reserved for the wealthy class, royalty, and clergy. The Romans changed the name to *purpura*. In the 7th century, it became *purpul* in Old English.

Did you know that there are more than two hundred shades of purple? Some have rather common names that need no further description such as “very light purple,” “grayish purple,” or “very deep purple,” while others have beautiful names such as “Purple Amethyst” (a bright shade with slightly more blue than red), “Opera Mauve” (a pinky-purple) and “Razzmic Berry” (deep purple with a dab more of red). Northwestern University, Kansas State University, East Carolina University, University of Central Arkansas, and Louisiana State University all have their own shades of purple! Professional teams such as the L. A. Lakers, Sacramento Kings, Phoenix Suns, Baltimore Ravens, and the Minnesota Vikings have their individual named hues of purple as well.

Let’s go on a walk through the Pergola in the Discovery Garden and see what purple we can discover. We’ll look for flowers, leaves, and stems in many hues of purple once reserved for the garments of the wealthy.

It would be difficult to miss two plants which can reach up to 6 foot tall: Colocasia ‘Black Sapphire Gecko’ bearing dark purple-black leaves and Agapanthus with purple flowers borne on tall, slender stalks. Colocasia, an elephant ear, is tolerant of our humidity and is suitable for a three-gallon container. Agapanthus, a bulb-like rhizome, is a survivor of chronic

drought.

Other purple blooming bulbs in the Pergola are gladiolus and Chinese ground orchids. Gladioli are planted in the spring and can reach 32-42 inches tall. The trick to growing gladioli and not having the long stalk of flowers topple over is to plant the corms 3-4 inch deep.

Perennial shades of purple can be found now, throughout the summer, and well into fall on the Mexican heather, Victoria blue sage, and the Texas native mealy cup sage. Add these repeat bloomers to your garden if you are in need of some royal color for an extended period of time.

Dutchman’s pipe is a fast-growing native vine with heart-shaped leaves. The purple flowers are shaped like curved, old-fashioned meerscham pipes popular in the Netherlands and Germany. The flowers attract pollinating flies and is a larval host plant for the pipevine swallowtail butterfly. Dutchman’s pipe was once used as an aid in childbirth because of its resemblance to a human fetus.

Rounding out our visit to the Pergola are annuals. Lobelia is an herb that grows well in the sun or part shade and can be started from seed. It is also known as pukeweed since doctors once prescribed it to induce vomiting. Larkspur is also easy to grow from seed. Plant it in the fall and you will make visiting bees happy come spring. Angelonia, also known as the summer snapdragon, thrives in our heat and humidity and enjoys the sun. Finally, so fittingly named for a color of royalty, we have purple prince alternanthera, a non-flowering mounding ground cover grown for its rich, purple foliage.



Colocasia ‘Black Sapphire Gecko’



Dutchmans Pipe



Lobelia

Trowels and Tribulations



By Donna J. Ward
MG 1996

To say times have changed would be grossly understated, but those who are complaining of boredom have absolutely no sense of adventure. If you own a computer or smartphone, which most of us do, there's no excuse for being bored. Have you not become acquainted with Google? When some of my friends question me about various subjects to which I know they could easily have the answer but are too lazy to investigate on their own, my stock answer is "Mr. Google knows everything." It's easy enough for them to do their own research.

For instance, I planted shallots, a/k/a multiplying onions, in late September. They did well but I want more, so is there a time other than fall to plant shallots? "Growing shallots" typed in Mr. Google's search box resulted in 289,000 sites with possible answers to my question! Now if I can't find the answer with that many sites, I'm afraid there's no help for me. And yes, they can be planted in spring, so that's on tomorrow's agenda. A friend told me that after her morning walks, she's bored to tears in the afternoon. I know her trip to London last year instilled a love of breakfast scones. Did she know that Mr. Google can give her 28,300,000 sites with scone recipes? Maybe you don't want to bake scones, but what I'm trying to convey is if there is a subject that interests you, there's no excuse for not pursuing it. You must be interested in gardening or you wouldn't be reading this column. We have lots of time on our hands these days, and the gardening answers are out there. You just have to look for them.

Now, you may be wondering if it's too late to fertilize those azaleas - it's not, just get it done before June. It is too late to prune them. That should

have been done right after the last bloom dropped. Mr. Google says if you wait too long to prune, you'll not have any blooms come spring. But there's no schedule on when to mulch - anytime is a good time! We all want to control weeds, conserve moisture, and lower the soil temperature during the inevitable summer's sizzling temps.

Do you know when to prune your climbing roses? Mr. Google can give you 599,000 sites with the answer plus 'how-to' videos - what more could you want? The answer is: after they finish blooming.

You recently noticed there's a black sunken spot on the blossom end of some of those green tomatoes. What is it and how do you prevent it from happening to more of your precious fruit? If you ask Mr. Google about "black spot on tomatoes," you'll get 32,900 sites to peruse for the answer. You'll read that blossom end rot is a condition caused by calcium deficiency in the developing fruit. It's not a lack of calcium in the planting medium, but the plant is unable to access the calcium due to erratic watering schedules. Mulch helps to maintain even soil moisture.

It may feel pretty comfortable at the moment, but that miserable Texas summer is right around the corner - what to plant that can take the heat? If you put "Texas plants for hot afternoon sun" in Mr. Google's search box, you'll get 6,110,000 sites to help you landscape that sunny spot. In case you're wondering: lantana, cosmos, marigolds (I bet your grandma planted those. I know mine did. Don't forget salvia, one of the most attractive plants for those flying pollinators. Mr. Google will also tell you it's time to plant okra and sweet potatoes in the south forty. Now that you know what Mr. Google can do for you, you're probably wondering - Why do I need the author of this column?



Dead Heading



Fresh Scones



Tomato



Key Wording



Okra



Shallots



Spring Flowers



Sweet Potatoe Benifits

The Butterfly Garden: Setting Intentions for a Colorful and Inviting Space



By Sue Bain, Vicki Blythe
and Hedy Wolpa
Phot by Vicki Blythe

We three 2018 Master Gardener classmates are delighted to work together in the Butterfly Garden, and we appreciate the opportunity to continue the hard work of Joanne Hardgrove in this very special area in the Discovery Garden's North End.

The Coronavirus epidemic has slowed our days and restricted our social activities in the garden. This has given us time to explore the Butterfly Garden, learn about its history, and think about ways to continue its forward path toward a colorful and inviting space that butterflies and other pollinators will love. The beautiful spring weather has inspired us to aggressively weed; add soil, compost, and mulch; and reset the stone border. Admittedly, we've had some trouble identifying the weeds among the other new growth!

We've enjoyed discussing the merits of the many beautiful plants and flowers that are blooming in the BG now, such as salvia, porterweed, aster, butterfly weed, buddleia, Dutchman's pipe, giant sunflowers, and more. We've planted zinnias, red yarrow, bronze fennel, French marigolds, dill, native milkweed, salvia Mojave, echinacea 'Cheyenne Spirit,' and Lady of the Night (*Brunfelsia americana*) to help fill the empty spots. Now, we're turning our thoughts to native, perennial plants that will provide both larval food and butterfly food through summer and into fall to ensure that we have adequate nourishment for them. Plants we've considered include Blue Mistflower (*Conoclinium coelestinum*), Seaside Goldenrod (*Solidago sempervirens*), and Gulf Coast Pentstemon (*Pentstemon tenuis*).

There are plenty of interesting flying and crawling insects to entertain and (sometimes) surprise us in the Butterfly Garden. The Pride of Barbados tree is sheltering a Carolina mantis egg case. We've observed 21 pipevine swallowtail caterpillars and 13 monarch caterpillars. Bee activity is also plentiful. There are honey bees bouncing around the salvia, as well as carpenter bees and bumblebees. Milkweed bugs and lady beetles are plentiful. Even a cute cactus lady beetle passed through.

Planning and planting with intention is our goal for the Butterfly Garden. An intention is choosing something that you want to cultivate in yourself to help you grow while staying present "in the moment." Our intention for the Butterfly Garden is to increase our knowledge as we choose plants that will increase pollinator activity. Selecting new plants that are seasonally colorful, and that have the height, width, and climate tolerance for the space are all elements we'll consider as our knowledge of butterflies and pollinators continues to grow. Also important is planning enough diversity to attract a variety of insects that will provide the best educational "moments" for our garden visitors and guests, including the Greater St. Matthews Baptist Church summer campers.

We're excited to work in the Butterfly Garden, and hope that as our plans unfold and the garden flourishes, we'll be rewarded with an abundance of butterflies and pollinators. Come by and visit with us. Love to show you around!



Red Velvet yarrow



Bumblebee



Carolina Mantis Egg Case

Photos by Vicki Blythe



Aster



Pipevine Swallowtail Caterpillars



Pipevine Swallowtail Caterpillar



Monarch Caterpillar on Native Milkweed



Monarch Caterpillar



Butterfly Garden in the Discovery Garden

Plants for Sunny Places



By Elayne Kouzounis
MG 1998

All are considerably easy to grow, maintain, flower, and enjoy!

Gardenia (*Gardenia jasminoides*) - Classic warm-weather shrubs with rich evergreen leaves and linen white camellia-like summer flowers so intensely fragrant just one will perfume an entire room. While hardy only to Zones 8-10, they can grow anywhere from 1 to 6 feet in height. This shrub is worth the effort to grow wherever conditions allow. Where it is not hardy it can be

grown as a container plant. Mine is on the northwest side in a spot with morning sun and shade from the direct hot afternoon sun.

Plant gardenias in acid soil enriched with plenty of organic matter. They thrive in hot weather and require monthly fertilizing during the growing season. Mulch to keep soil moist and protect the gardenia's shallow roots. Propagate by cuttings. Plants will do poorly in overly wet or dry conditions. Prune after flowering. They are a good accent plant and are susceptible to pests and fungus.

Scarlet Sage (*Salvia coccinea*) - A native perennial with heights 24-36 inches. Their bloom cycle is spring to frost. Their square stems are a sign of belonging in the mint family. They are drought tolerable, but prefer moisture during our dry hot summers. The plant attracts bees and hum-

mingbirds and is very easy to transplant by stem or root. Salvias are one of the many perennials that should be divided and reset in September and October. I constantly pinch the red spent bloom spikes to maintain a more compact plant. Mine is in a raised flower pot on the northeast side and is very happy and content.

Lemon Verbena (*Aloysia triphylla*, *Lippia citriodora*) - An herb originally native to South America, particularly Peru and the Andes, where it is still used extensively in teas, as a skin wash and as a natural cosmetic ingredient. It was introduced in Europe becoming particularly popular in Victorian dried-flower envelopes and pillows. In France it has become one of the most popular herbal teas, "verveine," regularly served in cafes and restaurants. It is a handsome plant growing up to 5 feet tall with leathery, fern-like deliciously aromatic leaves and pinnacles of mauve or white flowers in late summer - although mine is now in bloom. Like most herbs, it does best in poor soil and should not be fertilized. It can be propagated by stem cuttings taken at any time during the spring, summer, or early fall. The leaves are often used to make an infusion (plant material steeped in boiling water) which is believed to have a calming effect. It has also been used to treat nausea, indigestion, spasms, and flatulence. This is my most favorite herb of all for tea and cold herbal water. I found that being on the north side is best.

Spicy Jatrophia (*Jatopha integririma*) - A small evergreen tropical shrub. It takes direct sun to partial shade. It is very easy to care for, root hardy,



Photos by Elayne Kouzounis

Esperanza (*Tecoma stans* var. *angustate*)



Gardenia (*Gardenia jasminoides*)



Lemon Verbena (*Aloysia triphylla*, *Lippia citriodora*)

with clusters of brilliant scarlet to coral-red flowers from spring to fall. I have them planted all around my garden as bees and hummingbirds love them and so do I. The plant is listed as tender although mine has never frozen. No disease or insect issues over the 10 plus years in our garden. However, the plant is listed as poisonous. Its height is around 6 feet and width 3 feet. The leaves of this plant are 3-lobed, leathery and glossy. It is beautiful potted around the patio or pool as it does not lose its leaves and the blooms are dainty as if in a bouquet.

Esperanza (*Tecoma stans* var. *angustate*). When you see the bright yellow blooms of the esperanza aka yellow bells you can't help but smile. These beautiful shrubs are filled with the yellow bell flowers with flaring edges. Sun to partial shade is recommended although mine is totally in the full sun and is in bloom constantly from March until November. Do not over fertilize or you may get all foliage and few flowers. Potential pests include mealybugs, spider mites, and aphids. It is in front of a wall that gives it protection from winter which is located on the northeast side of my garden. I have another one that has no protection and has never frozen in the last 15 years. Esperanza does need moist, well-drained soil. The foliage is bright green with toothed edges. It may be grown in a pot with more care and fertilization. Mine are all planted in the ground; one is 18 feet tall and 10 inches wide while the other is 8 feet tall and 7 inches wide. I have not had an issue with pests.

Pineapple Guava (*Feijoa sellowiana*) - A very large evergreen shrub. The pineapple guava is a very easy shrub to grow. It prefers full sun and must have good surface-water drainage. Few insect or disease problems should occur. If its height must be controlled, periodic pruning during the year will be necessary to maintain its shape and density. This large-growing shrub can easily be converted into an exciting multi-trunked tree or beautiful espalier. The delicate beautiful red and white flowers that appear during spring attract hummingbirds. The white part of the flower can be tossed in salads. Feijoa is the fruit this shrub produces; they are about 3 inches long with white flesh which can be cut and eaten or made into a jam. The green fruit resembles an avocado and usually ripens in September - when it falls to the ground you know it is ripe for eating. The foliage is a gray green and is contrasted by interesting rough salmon-colored bark. In order to have fruits, several varieties should be planted in close proximity to each other to insure cross pollination. It is a native to Paraguay, Uruguay, and Argentina. We have had our pineapple guava for over 30 years. We do prune when necessary. It grows on the north side of our garage. There are no other varieties for it to cross pollinate so it has not produced any fruit. When the shrub blooms it is a sight to behold.

"Let us be grateful to the people who make us happy; they are the charming gardeners who make our souls blossom." - Marcel Proust.



Pineapple Guava (*Feijoa sellowiana*)



Scarlet Sage (*Salvia coccinea*)



Spicy Jatropha (*Jatropha integrerrima*)

Companion Planting

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



By Jan Brick
MG 2001

Companion planting or plant pairing is a popular technique used by garden designers and home gardeners alike. Creating a pleasurable aesthetic impression is an important aspect of garden design if one is a fan of an orderly array. Purely personal preference and perception - Mother Nature just throws it all out there and that certainly works well for her!

Two of my favorite plants for sharing space in a pot or in a bed are caladiums and kalanchoes.

The evergreen kalanchoe grows up and out with bright green foliage and vivid blooms in winter and spring. The caladiums sprout up as the blooms are fading on its companion. The combination creates a remarkable and striking blend as the brilliant green leaves of the kalanchoe compliments the soft variegated heart-shaped foliage of the caladiums.

KALANCHOE

The kalanchoe is a popular houseplant available for sale during the late winter and spring months. It is a durable flowering plant that requires very little maintenance as a potted plant in the home. It has dark green, thick waxy leaves with scalloped-edges and clusters of brightly colored blooms.

These plants are cultivated as ornamental houseplants but are often used in rock gardens or succulent gardens. Known to the Chinese as "thousands and millions of red and purple" it is a popular plant purchased during the Chinese New Year for decorative accents much like Poinsettias at Christmas in the U.S.

Flowering kalanchoes are available in red, pink, yellow, or white. They are not difficult to grow, and the flowering varieties are highly rewarding for their colorful and long-lasting flowers. Some people may discard the plants after the bloom is over, but it is recommended that one simply cut off the flowering head and reduce the amount of watering and patiently enjoy the foliage itself. The kalanchoe should flower again naturally in late winter or early spring especially in a mild winter season. Water moderately throughout the summer and reduce watering in the winter. Let the soil surface dry out between watering; in the winter months, the plant can almost dry out. Use any ordinary potting soil mix when re-potting. Plant diseases are rarely a problem. Too much or too little water and insects are the main problems. Root rot usually results from a soil mix that does not drain quickly or from overly frequent watering. Do not let plants sit in water.

Kalanchoe blossfeldiana:

Blooms during winter with small single or double flower clusters in bright shades of white, red, orange, pink and yellow - waxy dark green leaves - grows best in bright light and is tolerant of direct sunlight; it



Kalanchoe tomentosa



Kalanchoe yellow bells



Kalanchoe blossfeldiana



Kalanchoe blossfeldiana



Orange Kalanchoe blossfeldiana

Photos by Jan Brick

grows weak and leggy in areas of shade - sensitive to cold.

Kalanchoe lucky bells:

Grows to a height of about two feet with elongated serrated foliage and long flower stems - clusters of small, orange-red flowers - grows best in a well-lit area or with full sun - flowers every six to eight weeks - let soil dry between watering.

Kalanchoe tomentosa:

Grows to a mature height of about one and a half feet with a dense coating of "felt" on its foliage and brown notched tips - blooms rarely with greenish-white flowers - grows best in indirect, bright light - plant in well-drained soil.

CALADIUM

The caladium comes to us originally from Central and South America but has been in cultivation in Europe since the late 18th century. However, it is estimated that nearly ninety-eight percent of all caladium bulbs sold in the U.S. come from Florida. The caladium that is most popular among home gardeners is called "fancy-leaved," the traditional caladium with heart-shaped leaves marked in varying patterns in white, pink, and red. Caladiums prefer moderate watering - damp but not soggy. Most varieties of caladiums prefer partial to full shade, although there are several sun-resistant varieties being marketed as well. Although there are no flowers of any significance, the foliage of the caladium puts on a dazzling show!

Fancy-leaved Caladium Cultivars

Aaron - White with green margins, some sun tolerance

Caladium - White with green veins

Carolyn Whorton - Pink with red veins and green margin, some sun tolerance

Fannie Munson - Pink with rose-colored veins traced with light green

Fire Chief - Dark pink, limited sun tolerance

Florida Fantasy - White with red veins

Freida Hemple - Deep red (lighter than Postman Joyner) with green margins, not sun tolerant

Gypsy Rose - Pink veins with green blotches

June Bride - White with green margins

Kathleen - Pale salmon with green margins

Marie Moir - Whitish green with red spots

Pink Beauty - Pink with dark pink veins and green margins, lighter than Fannie Munson

Pink Cloud - Pink with green margins, some sun tolerance

Postman Joyner - Dark red with green margins

Red Flash - Dark red with fuchsia spots and green margins, good sun tolerance

Rosebud - Red with green margins

White Queen - White with red and green veins, some sun tolerance



Aaron Caladium



Carolyn Whorton Caladiums



Red Flash Caladiums



White Queen Caladium

The Story of Vanilla - Pure or Synthetic?



By Kaye Corey
MG 2001

Working at the League City Garden Club's Garden Walk, my location featured a Vanilla Orchid vine that became a point of interest in that garden. My interest peaked to learn more....

Vanilla is one of the most expensive and highly demanded of all the flavorings.

Native to the tropical jungles of Veracruz, Mexico, it was there in the 1400s the Totonac and Aztec people harvested the long green bean-shaped orchid fruit for perfume, food and drink. In 1519 after Cortez invaded Mexico, the Spanish then held the monopoly on vanilla production in Mexico and supplied all of Europe with the popular flavoring.

The Spanish were unable to grow the orchids in their hothouses in Spain. Vines rarely bloomed and never produced fruit. Other tropical countries tried with little success. The answer was simply the orchid pollinator bees were in Mexico. Inside the orchid blossom is a flap of tissue called the rostellum which separates the male anther from the female stigma. The bees in Mexico pushed the flap aside and pollinated the orchid. Hand pollination was not discovered until 1841 resulting in a boom in vanilla production. However, it still was not enough vanilla to meet the demand. The orchid blooms in March, but it takes 9 months for the fruit to ripen for a December harvest.

In 1875, Germany isolated the vanillin molecule that led to the production of vanillin using the sap of spruce trees. A variety of components have been used but most recently synthetic vanilla production is from a beechwood derivative, guaiacol, and using the vanillin molecule.

Only 1% of all vanilla sold today is pure vanilla produced from quality vanilla beans. The FDA requires 35% alcohol in pure vanilla, either grain alcohol or sugar cane alcohol. In a gallon, 13.35% is vanilla bean extractives, 35% alcohol and the balance is distilled water. If the beans are poor quality, corn syrup and caramel are added. Know the bottle labels.

Vanilla Flavor – Requires 13.35% vanilla bean extractives but no alcohol.
Natural Vanilla Extracts – Blend of vanilla bean extracts and other plants.
Imitation Vanilla – 100% synthetic, ingredients unknown, made in laboratories. In the event inferior beans flood the market, synthetic vanilla may be preferable in quality and cost. This is the vanilla we buy in Mexico.

Recent taste tests conducted in prepared foods revealed most could not tell the difference. Experts concluded that vanilla-bean vanilla is a better choice in cold and creamy desserts in which the vanilla taste and fragrance are required. Synthetic, imitation vanilla in baked goods and desserts with competing flavors works as well. (Flavor and fragrance begin to degrade around 300 degrees Fahrenheit.)

Vanilla beans should be flexible with an oily sheen and have a rich fragrance. Store them in a glass jar in a cool dark place. Do not refrigerate or freeze.

Learn more about vanilla at www.vanillaqueen.com.

Make Your Own Vanilla Extract

Makes 3 Jars – 1/2 Pints

3 Vanilla Beans
3 Cups bourbon or vodka

- Split 1 vanilla bean and scrape seeds into a clean 1/2 pint jar. Repeat with remaining beans into 2 more 1/2 pint jars.
- Heat bourbon or vodka in a large saucepan over medium heat 5 minutes.
- Pour 1 cup bourbon or vodka into each jar. Cool to room temperature.
- Cover jars tightly and let stand at room temperature 1 to 2 weeks before using. Shake jars twice a day.
- Strain through cheese cloth into clean jars with tight fitting lids and discard solids.
- Store in a cool, dark place up to 1 year.

Southern Living, May, 2013



Susy's Iris

Slaughter at the Truck Stop



By Hedy Wolpa
MG 2018

A recent road trip inspired us to do some detective work as we crossed Texas on our way to Arizona. On most trips, we only stop at the biggest and best truck stops because that's where we find the most interesting insects, and this road trip was no different from countless others. I like to search the fronts of the 18-wheelers parked at truck stops to study the variety of insects that the truckers have picked up along their routes as they travel the country. I especially like noting the license plate locations to see where the drivers may have

originated their journeys.

I'll bet that many of you are seeing what I am seeing (or not seeing) along the road. If you do any traveling on the interstates, you probably notice that your windshield is just not very dirty after your travels. It's the same with many of the big rigs: fewer insects are splattered on the windshields and trapped in the grills.

On this trip, near Lordsburg, New Mexico, I found a truck from Indiana with a grill full of decimated insects that looked like our typical honeybee. Several other big rigs, from South Dakota and Colorado had numerous painted lady butterflies in their grills. Other than black flies and gnats on trucks from Texas, Kentucky, and Tennessee, these insects comprise all that we saw on our three days on the road from Houston to Phoenix. We were disappointed, but not surprised. This is not our first road trip that we've searched for insects, with similar findings.

I spent the first evening of our road trip re-reading a report from 2019. Two researchers, Francisco Sanchez-Bayo and Kris Wyckhuys, of the University of Sydney, Australia, presented their findings on the worldwide insect decline in several important science journals. They reported that the terrestrial species most affected are in the Lepidoptera (butterflies and moths), Hymenoptera (bees, wasps and ants), and Coleoptera (beetles) orders. Aquatic insect orders are also affected, including Odonata (dragonflies), Plecoptera (stoneflies), Trichoptera (caddisflies), and Ephemeroptera (mayflies). The absence of these aquatic insects is a good indicator of poor water quality in our lakes and streams.

They also identified the main drivers of insect decline, which may help explain the noticeable lack of insects on our windshields and grills. In order of importance they cite these factors: 1) habitat loss due to urbanization; 2) pollution, mainly that by synthetic pesticides and fertilizers; 3) biological factors, including pathogens and introduced species; and 4) climate change.

It is true that insect populations are declining. It's estimated that we have lost 75% of the biomass of flying insects in the last 40 years in areas that have been studied. Research indicates that as insect populations continue to decline worldwide, we will see 40% of all species become extinct in just a few decades. Think of the impact that this would have on our food supply and our environment.

Insects are the earth's dominant life form, representing about 80% of all known animals. In the world of nature, an insect is neither good nor bad. Each insect is considered to have an essential role in maintaining a balanced, healthy ecosystem. Maintaining that balance seems to be one of nature's primary objectives. Shouldn't we all be mindful and informed of insect habitat loss, of the impact of pesticides and fertilizers, climate change, and newly introduced or biologically engineered insects and plants?

We'll continue to stroll through big truck stops looking for insects as we travel. We know why we're seeing fewer insects-dead or alive. Even so, I think that seeing an increase in the number of dead insects on windshields would make me feel better, and provide an indicator that insect decline is less apparent.

P.S. I read about efforts by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture to control the spread of spotted lanternfly along the East Coast in 2014. Their plan to rein in this pest, which probably came into the U.S. via sea traffic, included roadside inspections of truck rigs to monitor/prevent its movement. Since this plant-hopping insect isn't a strong flier, it relies on people (transportation) to move about. Employees of trucking and warehouse operations are trained to spot and report the insects found on their windshields, grills, and inside trucks to track its movement when they stop at rest and fuel stops. The best on-going defense against spotted lanternfly is to destroy egg masses and adult insects, and to mindfully practice IPM.



The Louisiana Iris Project



By Monica Martens
MG 2013

During January, we reported about our efforts in planting an exhibition area of Louisiana Irises at the Discovery Garden in Carbine Park. Different types of irises grow all across the United States, but in our gardening zone, only the Louisiana Iris thrives. There is a surprisingly wide range of colors and flower types available, thanks to the efforts of a relatively small group of people who began hybridizing this plant during the middle of the 20th century.

In essence, our project serves as a "living museum." A special effort was made to collect types of Louisiana Irises that represent the entire color spectrum and/or have interesting flower features. We were excited to see what came of our efforts.

For this first year of the project, the bloom season began with one

flower during late February. Then, most of the plants bloomed during mid-March to mid-April. Surprisingly during the second week of May, another flower appeared.

Of the 57 plants placed in two garden beds, 80% bloomed. This is a highly successful rate of bloom for the first season after transplanting, which occurred the previous September. Good soil composition and regular watering helped the irises to establish themselves.

We hope to share more information with you soon, because irises are a symbol of community and friendship. During my many years of studying this plant, one factor is constant. People I talk with associate this flower with memories of friends, family, and childhood. They tell me about trading irises with others, or about their grandparents' garden. Or they recall irises growing in the countryside where they grew up. Until we can meet again in person and share our own stories of growing irises, we hope you enjoy these photographs.



Bless Your Little Heart



Delta Star



Gulf Moon Glow



Longue Vue



Kay Nelson



Photos by Monica Martens

Professor Neil, Rae Rae and Bayou Fountain

Ups, Downs and Ups of a Garden Club



By Margaret Canavan
MG 2003

Great news for Galveston gardeners: After a long history of success, followed by a few years of decline, the Galveston Garden Club is staging a comeback! This venerable group has been around longer than anyone can remember. The Club even owns its own building, the historic 1847 Powhatan House. In recent years, membership decreased, attendance at meetings dwindled, and volunteerism dropped off, leaving the organization struggling.

This picture is changing as a new group of energetic volunteers stepped up in 2019. They took advantage of social media and increased membership from single digits to over 60 in a couple of months. Building/garden cleanups and monthly educational meetings were rebooted, and the traditional fall pansy sale was extremely successful. Much sweat equity has gone into repairing interior damage from a leaking roof, removing two huge deceased palms, and sprucing up the neglected garden.

The COVID shutdown has put in-person meetings on hold. But volunteers are still at work on the gardens and the building itself—using masks and social distancing—anticipating the day when meetings can resume. The spring caladium sale went online without a hitch.

When life reopens Master Gardeners will be able to secure continuing education credits for educational meetings, provide programs, and meet other interested local gardeners. Stated goals of GGC include encouraging scientific and educational purposes, supporting conservation and civic beauty, and advancing the art of garden and landscape design and horticulture.

Curiosity about GGC history inspired a dig into local newspaper archives. Garden clubs were popping up everywhere in the 20s and 30s. In 1923 the Galveston newspaper announced that prominent Galvestonian Mrs. George Sealy was influential in formation of a Houston branch of the Garden Club of America, through connections with national leaders of that organization.

Reports reflect that the Galveston Women's Civic League started two garden clubs, the "Oleander Garden Club" in 1926 and "Galveston Garden Club" in 1935. These groups worked to stimulate interest in home gardens, and to plant and beautify public spaces. They held educational meetings, contests, and trips to area gardens and festivals for years.

The "Galveston Garden Club" that appeared in 1938 seems to have taken root and survived. That September the group reported beginning its first year's work with a talk from the county agent M. B. Vieman, who spoke about "Soil Preparation and Commercial Fertilizers." In January 1939 the GGC reported the celebration of its first anniversary.

Club members met frequently at a variety of local venues and private homes. They held flower shows, sold plants, encouraged gardening, and

provided gardening advice in news media. Specialty groups emerged: Morning Glory, Dirt Dobbers, Pick and Shovel, Green Thumb. This club reportedly enjoyed scores—perhaps hundreds—of members. They held rummage sales, holiday markets, and even sponsored an annual antique show in addition to other ongoing activities. The annual spring flower show carried on for decades.

A bold move in 1965 was the Club's purchase of the 1874 Powhatan House. It was built as a 24-room hotel in Greek Revival architecture. In 1893 it was relocated—in three parts—to separate locations around the city because of plans for the land it stood on. One part later burned, another remains a private residence, and the Garden Club's portion was also a private residence until 1965. This was the largest part of the original house and many original architectural elements are intact.

The Garden Club has historically used it as headquarters, offered tours, and derived income from rentals. Recent years have seen it used only for Club meetings as other activities decreased. The challenge of ongoing maintenance continues to this day. The opportunity to view this historic structure is a delight and the current leaders are hoping to be able to preserve it.

The revitalized group is worth checking out. Follow developments at Galvestongardenclub.org and on Facebook.



Compost Tea for Vegetables



By Jon Johns
MG 2003

Since I began gardening I have heard about the “value” of compost tea but I never really gave it much thought as I never saw much data to support the “value.” But when I started to have interactions with nursery and landscape professionals, I noticed that they were using compost teas. Some of these gardening professionals used compost tea “...as an alternative to chemical fertilizers, pesticides and fungicides,” and even had what they considered “proprietary” and multiple special purpose compost tea formulations (recipes) for specific plants and applications.

I decided to do some further research on the value of compost tea. Subsequently, I discovered that “field studies have shown the (tangible) benefits of adding compost teas to crops due to the adding of organic matter, increased nutriment availability and increased microbial activity”(Fig.1) and that compost tea is “more efficient than compost or commercial fertilizers in benefiting the health of your plants and soil (Fig.2). It is also “...a soil organic matter builder, disease suppressant, and nutrient source.”

So, what exactly is compost tea? I like the following simple definitions “... a concentrated liquid fertilizer made from steeping biological active compost in aerated water. It “contains microorganisms that enhance plant health, suppress plant diseases, provide plant nutriments, reduce fungicide and fertilizer requirements.” Plus, it is nutritionally rich and can help provide plants with beneficial soil bacteria and fungi.

There are two kinds of compost tea — bacterial and fungal dominant compost tea. What is the difference? I found a simple answer for what is a complex system with lots of variables. Consider what happens naturally to fallow land: “An acre of land left fallow will begin to regenerate using annual plants (weeds), and then progress into more perennial species (grasses, vegetables) until it cumulates into a forest (perennial hardwoods). Over the course of this natural process, fungi gradually become more dominant than bacteria. This is evident in the fungal dominance of old growth forests.” It’s important to understand this distinction as it determines what kind compost tea is appropriate for a particular plant. Ideally, when making and using compost tea you try to match the right kind of compost tea (recipe) with the type of plant(s) you are growing. A bacterial dominant compost tea is best suited for annual plants, flowers, vegetables and grasses. A fungal dominant compost tea is best suited for perennial plants like roses, woody plants, shrubs, and trees.

How do you make compost tea? Making or “brewing” compost tea is a relatively simple process. I will share with you the process and the recipes that I use (to get you started) to make a 5-gallon batch of compost tea.

My process for making or brewing compost tea has just four simple steps. First you must acquire the equipment needed to make/brew compost

tea. You will need a 5-gallon bucket, an aerator (air) pump that ideally is capable of pumping at least 570 gallons per hour, and an air bubbler. The air bubbler can be aquarium air stones or a custom-made bubbler product. The air bubbler(s) will need tubing to connect it to the aerator pump. You will also need a compost “tea bag” — a porous bag with at least a 400-micron mesh that can contain at least 2 pounds of compost. The compost tea bag can be a paint strainer bag or a custom-made compost tea bag.

Now we can begin the four simple process steps of brewing the compost tea.

1. In the first process step you start by selecting the right kind of compost tea recipe for the plant(s) that you intend to grow. There are three basic compost tea recipes: Bacterial dominant, Fungal dominant, or a combined (equal ratio of) bacterial and fungal compost tea. For all the compost tea recipes there are three key ingredients:

Water: Use only dechlorinated or reverse osmosis water. You do not want chlorine in the water as it will kill the bacterial and fungal microbes in the compost tea. Chlorinated water can be used if you let the water sit exposed to the air for about 24 hours or if you aerate the water with the bubbler for 90 minutes.

Compost: Use a good quality finished compost. As previously mentioned, there are primarily two kinds of compost: bacterial compost which is produced by mostly green materials and found in fresh compost piles, and fungal compost which is produced by mostly woody materials and may become more prevalent in the final stages of composting.

Food sources and nutriments for microorganisms: “Food sources determine the microbes grown. Sugar sources like molasses encourage bacterial growth and kelp or fish encourage fungal growth.” Humic acids and other ingredients act as both beneficial and enabling (help the microbes digest their food) food and nutriment sources for the compost tea’s microbes.

Here are three suggested compost tea recipes to make a 5-gallon batch of compost tea.

Bacterial Dominant Compost Tea.

- 5 gallons of dechlorinated or reverse osmosis water.
- 3-4 tablespoons of liquid black strap (unsulfured) molasses.
- 4 teaspoons of dry soluble kelp (seaweed) or 2 teaspoons of liquid kelp.
- 3-4 teaspoons of fish emulsion.
- 1.5 pounds of bacterial compost or vermin-compost (worm castings).
- Brew for 12-18 hours at 65-75 degrees Fahrenheit.

Fungal Dominant Compost Tea.

- 5 gallons of dechlorinated or reverse osmosis water.
- 4-5 teaspoons of fish hydrolysate. Let it sit in the water for 10-20 minutes.

- Then add 3-4 tablespoons of humic acids.
- 2 teaspoons of yucca extract.
- 4 teaspoons of dry soluble kelp or 2 tablespoons of liquid kelp.
- 2 pounds of fungal compost.
- Brew for 16-24 hours at 65-75 degrees Fahrenheit.

Equal Ratio of Fungal & Bacterial Compost Tea.

- 5 gallons of dechlorinated or reverse osmosis water.
- 3-4 tablespoons of humic acids.
- 4 teaspoons of dry soluble kelp or 2 teaspoons of liquid kelp.
- 3-4 teaspoons of fish emulsion.
- 1.5 pounds of a mixed 1:1 ratio of bacterial and fungal compost.
- Brew for 16-24 hours at 65-75 degrees Fahrenheit.

These compost tea recipes will cover most gardeners' needs. There are many other compost tea recipe formulations. These recipes are just suggested to get you started.

In the second process step you start the actual process of brewing the compost tea by placing 5 gallons of dechlorinated or reverse osmosis water into a bucket. You then mix the specific (bacteria or fungal dominant or equal ratio of each) recipe's microbial food and nutriment ingredients into the water. Do not add the compost as this will be added in the next process step.

Now the third process step. You insert the bubbler(s) connected to the aerator pump with tubing and the compost tea bag containing compost into the bucket of water. Try to suspend the compost tea bag containing the compost in the center of the bucket of the water to enable the bubbles produced by the aerator pump and bubbler to bubble through the compost tea bag.

Finally, in the fourth process step you will now turn on the aerator pump and start brewing the compost tea by bubbling air bubbles through the water and the compost tea bag for between 12-24 hours, per the specific compost tea's recipe. While brewing the compost tea foaming may occur. Some ingredients (like molasses) will initially make foam but this will go away. A few hours into the brewing more foam may be present. This indicates a bacterial bloom has occurred. This is a good sign. The brewing compost "...should have good earthy or sweet smell. If it smells rotten or putrid it has gone anaerobic (loses oxygen) and should be discarded." If the compost tea mixture has fish ingredients it may smell fishy, but this smell will go away as the microbes ingest the fish.

When brewing compost tea, do not brew in the sun. Avoid brewing for more than 24 hours as the compost tea may develop organisms (protozoa and ciliate) that will eat the good bacteria and fungi. Use the compost tea as soon as you brew it, as it will go bad (turns anaerobic). If it goes bad as indicated by a bad smell – do not use.

How and when you use the compost tea depends on your gardening needs. The compost tea can be used:

At every watering or just weekly. Ideally, it should be applied early in the morning and/or when the temperature is below 80 degrees Fahrenheit. It can be used undiluted or diluted (only with dechlorinated water).

For soil preparation as a soil drench. This is performed by soaking the soil prior to planting or around the root zone of growing plants. You should determine which compost tea is appropriate for the plant to be planted.

Suggestion: Use 1 gallon of compost tea mixed in enough water to drench about 100 square feet of growing area or a gallon of compost tea mixed in 20-50 gallons of water.

As a foliar feed by being sprayed onto the plant's leaves. Make sure that you cover all the foliage. You can use a pump sprayer or a hose end sprayer. Be careful not to atomize the compost tea as this can damage the fungal hyphae (microbes). "For some crops, foliar nutrition may be the most economical and reliable method of providing some nutrients, especially with micronutrients."

Suggestion: Dilute 1 gallon of compost tea to 4 to 6 gallons of water. Specifically for vegetables, use a bacterial dominant compost tea. Drench the soil prior to planting. Soak bare root plants in the compost tea. Foliar feed (especially plants with disease) with no dilution. For maintenance feeding, drench the soil around the plant with 1/4 to 1/2 gallon of compost tea diluted 1:1 with water every one or two weeks just before and during the growing season. Avoid over watering. Spray the vegetable beds after any defoliation.

Let me summarize this article by using some quotes from the reference materials. "You can't overdose with compost tea unless you are simply over watering." And inadvertently "... using fungal dominant tea on an annual or bacterial dominant tea on a perennial will not harm it in any way; it's a better/best scenario."



Green Genes



By Karolyn Gephart
MG 2017

Every Master Gardener has a story to tell about how they arrived in the horticulture program and once there what they really love about it. As different as the stories can be, there seems to be a common thread among them all: there was a relative or mentor in their past that introduced them to gardening and started them on a journey that led them to becoming a Master Gardener in Galveston County.

For **Sue Bain** who became an MG in 2018, the path to get there started with the wonderful experiences she had with her mother and the magical experiences she had with flowers.

"I remember as a little girl, I would help my Mom plant bulbs and flower seeds. I can still smell the sweet fragrance of Morning Glories, Purple Irises and Four O'clock flowers," Sue said. "As a child, I thought the Morning Glories and Four O'clock flowers were magical as they opened and closed."

Her mother's parents were sharecroppers and moved frequently for work. She also had relatives who were farmers. Her childhood in Oklahoma and then Texas was filled with fun outdoor activities.

"I've always enjoyed being outside with nature. I was a tomboy as a child and loved to climb trees, play with pill bugs and lizards, catch lightning bugs, chase butterflies and race frogs with my friends. Even though this may not be gardening, nature has influenced the joy I have now for planting in the vegetable bed and Butterfly Garden as well as in my home garden," Sue said.

She and her husband Robert live in League City where she is active in the League City Garden Club. Liking to work with her hands, she enjoys carpentry, macramé and sewing. Sue was in the field of education for 39 years; 15 years was spent teaching special education at the elementary and secondary levels with the last 24 years working as a school counselor, being 20 years with elementary and 4 years at the intermediate level.

"I enjoy building and making things. I remember in intermediate school, I had to take an aptitude test. The results stated that I should have been a car mechanic. I might have made more money that way than being an educator but I've always liked helping others," Sue said. "So being a Master Gardener fits the three criteria. I like: working with my hands by gardening; enjoying the peacefulness and knowledge gardening brings; and helping and working (playing) with others."

She is a regular in the Discovery Garden where she and her gardening buddies Hedy Wolpa and Vicki Blythe manage the Butterfly Garden together. The three have recently taken on that project along with sharing a vegetable bed. Sue is also the Team Lead for the MG Grown Plants Team and works with Judy Anderson's Hospitality Team.

"It's a joy to see Master Gardeners who come to the monthly meetings. I have met so many people who do other things other than Discovery Garden activities," Sue said. "I can't say I have a specialty in gardening because I am constantly learning. Let's just say becoming a Master Gardener has planted a seed and now I'm growing with knowledge and friendships."



Sue

Like Sue, **Vicki Blythe** too has a childhood memory of purple flowers associated with gardening.

A BOI, Blythe grew up in Texas City. Her grandmother as well as her mom instilled in her a love of growing things.

“My Grandma always grew purple petunias and my Mama had purple irises, so they are among my favorites,” Vicki said. “My maternal grandparents were farmers in western Oklahoma, and a lot of my relatives there are farmers and ranchers. My Grandma had 10 children (and the family was poor), so she grew and canned vegetables. In Texas City, my Mama always had a garden (mostly tomatoes), and my Daddy and I would help.”

With a degree from University of Houston, Vicki worked as a hospital pharmacist. Her first job was at St. Mary’s Hospital where she was born and she retired from Shriners’ Hospital five years ago.

She owned horses in La Marque when the garden bug bit. After her 28-year-old horse died and her other horse who lived to be 38 years old got too old to ride, she fenced off an area by her corral to make a 30x30 vegetable garden.

“That’s when I learned to till and grow lots of different veggies. With the aged horse manure as fertilizer, my tomato plants would get 8 feet tall,” Vicki said.

She became an MG in 2018. Living in Galveston in her Grandmother’s house, she has a small garden plot in her back yard as well as one in the San Jacinto Community Garden, nine blocks from her house. Her main crop is tomatoes. She also grows green beans, cucumbers, kale, carrots, broccoli, potatoes, onions, and lettuce.

When she’s not gardening, she also enjoys exercising (walking, cycling, running, and hiking), birding, nature photography, chicken farming, pets, and UH sports.

“I compete in Senior Games in Track and Field throws (discus, hammer, and javelin). I am a big animal lover, and I walk a Sea Turtle Patrol route from April to July (but not yet this year). I actually found a nesting sea turtle 3 years ago,” Vicki said. “I would also like to become a Master Naturalist one of these days.”

Anyone who has ever visited her Facebook page can see incredible photos she posts from her hikes. Her keen eye for detail and beauty is seen in each of the photos. She has captured fantastic animal photographs and provided readers joy in each of her posts.

Both Sue and Vicki can look back to a childhood where the beauty of nature was all around them and they are reminded of it when purple flowers bloom each year.



Seasonal Bites

easy recipes



By Sandra Gervais
MG 2011

I cook because I really, really like to eat. So does my family. And it's no surprise that we're from South Louisiana, where a meal is not fully digested until it's been discussed and critiqued—why is it so good this time, what could be done to make it better next time, and my favorite, what variations could we make? With these thoughts in mind, here's a quick recipe from a friend that happily takes to changes and still tastes great. I like it even better the next day. So don't be afraid to add, omit or adjust the ingredients.



Sausage, Tomato and Spinach Tacos

8 oz. of pasta (penne, linguini, and angel hair all work well)
1 lb. loose Italian sausage (mild or spicy depending on your taste)
1 onion (chopped)
2 garlic cloves (chopped or smashed)
1/2 medium green & 1/2 medium red sweet bell pepper (chopped finely)—adjust to your taste
4 oz. fresh mushrooms (sliced)
8-12 oz. fresh spinach (depends on how much you like spinach)
1-2 cans of Italian diced tomatoes with liquid (we like tomatoes so I use 2 cans)
1/4 teaspoon each basil & oregano (to taste; fresh or dried both work nicely)
salt, pepper, red pepper flakes, garlic powder, onion powder—to taste (I use salt sparingly so use other spices first. Sometimes no salt is needed.)
2-4 tablespoons of Vermouth
1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese
4 tablespoons of Parmesan cheese

Cook pasta according to directions and drain. While pasta cooks, scramble sausage in large skillet or pot on medium high heat until cooked. Remove sausage. Sauté onion, garlic and peppers in sausage grease until soft. Drain grease if necessary. Put sausage back in the skillet and add mushrooms, spinach, canned tomatoes and seasonings. Cook until mixture bubbles and spinach wilts, 2-5 minutes.

Adjust seasonings and add Vermouth.
Add hot pasta and mix well.
Top with cheeses while still hot so they can melt.

Serves 4-6 at my house.

Freezer Coleslaw

Here's another recipe for coleslaw from MG Yvonne Enos. Besides being both easy and tasty, she says that it can be frozen. Since the cabbage crop can be overwhelming most years, I thought this was a great idea to pass along. My only problem? ...We never have any leftover to freeze

1 medium cabbage, finely sliced or shredded, rinsed and drained
1/2 cup celery, finely chopped
1/2 of a medium green sweet bell pepper, finely chopped
1/4 cup onion, finely chopped
4 carrots, grated
3/4 cup sugar
1 teaspoon salt
1/4 cup vinegar
1/2 teaspoon mustard seed
1/2 teaspoon celery salt

Mix all ingredients together well and adjust seasonings to taste. Refrigerate and let sit for a few hours or overnight for best flavor.

Remember, this slaw can be frozen. So leftovers will be no problem.

We can continue learning even under quarantine conditions!



By Hedy Wolpa
MG 2018

Hello MG friends! I miss seeing you all in the Discovery Garden and in the Extension Office. We may be keeping a safe distance from each other in the garden, but I assure you that there are plenty of insects there who are not doing the same! They're enjoying our absence while they munch their way through our veggie beds. The beneficial insects are there, too, trying to keep up with the aphids, stink bugs, and caterpillars that are appearing with the warmer weather.

I'd like to thank everyone who is sending photos and videos to me of the insects they find, seeking identification, or asking if they should squash or keep them. And thank you to Dr. William M. Johnson, Laurel Stine, Herman Auer, Kathy Maines, Pam Hunter, Fran Brockington, Vicki Blythe, and many more MGs who are helping me identify some of these characters!

The photo at right is a common insect we've seen recently that happens to look similar. Photo #1 is a spotted cucumber beetle, Photo #2 is a milkweed leaf beetle, and Photo #3 is yellow Asian lady beetle.

Briana found some insects in the Aquaponics Unit and thought they were aphids, but she was not sure about what appeared to be little white bugs. She also sent a photo of a fly she thought was pretty.

Dr. J responded that what appears to be little white bugs in the photo among the aphids are the cast skins (exoskeletons) left behind after aphids molt (Photo #4). Newly born aphids will feed and molt four times before becoming an adult. When immature aphids molt, they leave behind their old skins on the surface of the plant, which look like white flakes. This can easily be mistaken for whiteflies or other pests, so use a 10x hand lens to confirm identification.

The iridescent fly in Briana's photo (#5) is a Texas long-legged fly (a beneficial insect).

https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/beneficials/beneficial-25_long-legged_flies.htm

<https://texasinsects.tamu.edu/long-legged-fly/>

Fran submitted a request for identification of unusual cocoon (Photo #6) she discovered in her home landscape.

Dr. J identified it as a cocoon produced by the Polyphemus Moth, *Antheraea polyphemus*. The larval stage feeds on a wide variety of broad-leaved plants (especially trees) in our growing area.

http://entnemdept.ufl.edu/creatures/MISC/MOTHS/polyphemus_moth.htm

While Master Gardeners and other residents shelter-in-place during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, Mother Nature still affords learning opportunities in gardens and landscapes for those with an alert eye!



The Discovery Garden Update



By Tom Fountain
MG 2008

Spring came to the garden and so did the COVID-19 Pandemic, closing everything to the public and prompting social distancing and the stay-at-home advisory. Like the flowers and fruit trees that were blooming, some Master Gardeners continued faithfully going to the garden, keeping the beds weeded, watered, and taking care of business while socially distancing.

On a recent trip to the garden I caught some of our Master Gardeners tending to their plants and practicing social distancing. In Fig. 1 Kevin is watering a bed while Clyde is mulching the next bed. During another visit to the garden Jim, Jenni, and David (in Fig.2) were putting a rabbit fence around one of the beds. Julie (Fig. 03) was busy fertilizing daylilies. Then there was Bobbie (Fig. 4), all smiles because she had someone to talk with for a moment or two even at social distance while she weeded her bed.

Spring has always been an exciting time in the Discovery Garden and this spring is just plain Wow!! Yes there are lots of flowers around the garden and the vegetables are a brilliant green. But, if you haven't been to the garden lately, you will be completely stunned by the changes to the MG Discovery House (AKA Kitchen) building. Amazing! Sharon, Kevin and Kathy have been working with contractors to remodel the interior of the building and they have done much of the renovation work themselves. Pictured in Fig. 5 are some of the contractors putting together the kitchen cabinets and notice the wonderful ceiling lights and fans. In Fig 6 Kevin and Sharon are working on getting one of the cabinets in just the right spot as one of the contractors puts the finishing touches on another cabinet. They have been real troopers on this project and deserve our whole-hearted thanks.

Weather wise during the past two months the temperature has averaged 5 degrees above normal across our area and rainfall has been 2 to 3 inches below normal. This combination has pushed the area into drought conditions. The extended forecast from NOAA indicates temperatures will likely continue above normal into summer and rainfall could become slightly above normal. The drought conditions will likely continue but could improve some.

Aren't we all looking forward to that exciting time when we have visitors and tours and workshops? So when that time comes, come out to the garden, visit, learn, and enjoy and until then stay safe.



Members in the News

My Trip to Costco



By Lisa Belcher
MG 2014

A few weeks ago, I went to Costco just to pick up six items. I was hoping to zoom in and out in under twenty minutes. I was wearing a garden-themed mask sewn by my dear friend Connia Webb and my latex gloves. I grabbed three items here and there and made my way towards the middle of the store. I usually peruse the center section to see if they have any seasonal plants for sale. While taking a glance at the plants I notice a couple looking at the hibiscus varieties. As I walk by, I am asked if I know how to plant a hibiscus and have any tips to help them grow. I proceed to tell the couple to take the plant out of the pot, loosen the roots, dig the hole with certain dimensions, and finally, do not plant deeper than where the soil is currently in the hibiscus pot. They both thank me and I go merrily on my way to the Dairy section.

Whilst getting my eggs a man approaches me and asks, "Is this a good time to plant an oak tree, and which oak tree is best for Galveston County?" I gently ask him if we can discuss this outside the dairy counter as it is freaking cold in here. I grab the eggs and walk out and talk trees. Looking at my watch and quickly realize I'm approaching the "in and out in twenty minutes mark," I begin with, "No, it is not the time to plant trees. Wait until the fall, as summer is coming and the newly planted tree will suffer from our Texas heat." We are now at the 36-minute mark in Costco. "Which variety of oak is best?" he asks. Hurriedly, but kindly I suggest he Google "AgriLife Galveston County" as well as "What oak trees grow best in Galveston County." He thanks me and I go to grab some avocados.

By now my avocados are safely in the cart and I proceed to check out with my full cart. Anyone who has gone to Costco can attest that one does not buy just six items. As my items are put on the conveyor belt, I hear a question from the Costco employee, "My citrus did not do well last year, any idea why this would happen?" At this point I'm speechless. I'm thinking to myself "what the h...?" I don't say anything for a while and the cashier looks at me and asks, "Well, you are a Master Gardener, aren't you?" "Yes, but how did you know?" I ask. They both begin to laugh and point at my shirt. I forgot I grabbed my polo shirt Judy Anderson sold last year with our GCMGA logo. I quickly remembered what Robert Marshall has repeated over and over, "You fertilize citrus three times a year: Valentine's Day, Mother's Day and Father's Day." "But it's past Mother's Day, what should I do?" replied employee. I'm now at the 51-minute mark since I've entered Costco. I quickly explain since it is late March and you have never fertilized, do it this weekend, and tell them to go and purchase 21-0-0 fertilizer, wondering if I have to explain what those cryptic numbers mean. "No problem, I've seen it at the store," remarks the inquisitive employee. At this point I quickly place my credit card in the reader and now the cashier asks, "Can I prune my Orange tree this weekend?" I did the short answer, again from Robert's sage advice, "Yes you can prune now if it is minimal, but if radical pruning you will not see fruit until next year." I jokingly tell them the first three questions are free and

any other question will cost them, thinking this will help me escape Costco soon. Before another query is asked, I suggest they both look at our Galveston County Master Gardener Facebook page, along with our Greenhouse page. There, I explain, they can learn all about our free upcoming seminars on a variety of topics. They are very happy, so thankful of this news, and tell me to have a great day. At this point I've reached the 67-minute mark and am exiting the store. As I'm walking to my car, I think back on the first time I heard Dr. Johnson's well-known motto "Knowledge not shared is knowledge lost." It was a proud day to be a Master Gardener. Perhaps, upon reflection, the next time I go to Costco, I'll wear a different shirt—then again, maybe not. March Galveston County Master Gardener Monthly Meeting

March Minutes



By Joanne Hardgrove
MG 2016

The March meeting of Galveston County Master Gardeners was held at the Galveston County Extension office on Tuesday, March 10, 2020. Members gathered at 5:30 pm for snacks and a social.

President Sharon Zeal opened the meeting at 6:30 pm, afterwards Clyde Holt lead the members in prayer before enjoying a wonderful potluck dinner. Our guest speaker, Eric Wilson was introduced at 7:00 pm. Mr. Wilson is Chief of Staff of Gulf Coast Water Authority in Galveston. Mr. Wilson explained the canal systems in Galveston and how the water gets to the reservoirs and flows to customers within the counties they serve. He also explained water conservation with 10 ways to reduce outdoor water use and save money. Meeting was adjourned at 7:45 pm by President Sharon Zeal.





bulletin board



Volunteer Opportunities

For the **Master Gardener Hotline** contact Ginger Benson by email at galvcounymgs@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: 10:10 AM Friday, May 15, 2020

81°F

HIGH: 82°F at 10:03 AM
LOW: 74°F at 12:41 AM

Wind: 5 mph SE High gust 13 mph at 09:25 AM
Humidity: 77% Feels like 87°F
Rain: 0.00 in Seasonal Total 12.44 in
Barometer: 29.88 in Hg Steady

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>

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/>

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 galvcounymgs@gmail.com 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



June's gardening checklist to help during start of summer

Editor's Note: This is a reprint of Dr. William M. Johnson's article in the *The Daily News*.



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

Even though we are a few weeks away from the "official" start of summer, 11:54 a.m. June 21, as every Texan knows, when June arrives so does summertime.

Even though our summers tend to be on the warm side, productive home gardeners can still gather colorful bouquets from the landscape and fresh vegetables from the garden.

The productive landscape and garden will call for early summer care, and important and timely gardening chores.

Here are a few tips for your garden and lawn during June.

WIND DAMAGE

Home gardeners also can be at the mercy of windy weather. The severe thunderstorms that developed during the late afternoon on May 27 were impressive. The sudden drop in air temperature was quite pleasant and the rainfall was much needed.

However, the wind damaged many trees in the landscape in addition to tall-growing vegetables in the garden. Tomatoes growing in cages were blown over. Stalks of sweet corn were knocked down (see photo) at the Discovery Garden.

VEGETABLES

Tomatoes are nearing the end of their production period with the onset of warmer temperatures. Peppers will benefit from a side dressing of fertilizer (mainly nitrogen) to keep them vigorous and productive throughout summer.

The extra nitrogen stimulates leafy growth on peppers, which will help prevent sun scald on the fruit. Okra, Southern peas and other garden plants will also benefit from a side dressing of nitrogen fertilizer.

SQUASH

A common vegetable problem at this time of year is with squash not setting fruit. This is because of a lack of pollination. Squash plants have separate male and female flowers. Often, the first blooms to appear are mostly all male blooms. These have skinny bloom stalks, and, of course, male flowers do not produce fruit. Female flowers have a swollen stem that is actually the unpollinated fruit.

Once pollen is transferred by bees from the male flowers to the female flowers, the fruit will develop normally. If the female flower is not pollinated, the swollen base can continue to swell for a day or two, but then shrivel, giving the false appearance the fruit is growing but rotting.

Squash flowers only open for one day, mainly in the morning. If mornings are windy, cloudy or rainy, bees may not be out and about, and flowers will not get pollinated.

VACATION PLANNING

Before going on vacation, group plants in containers together near a water source and out of the afternoon sun. Grouping them will help plants conserve water, and shade will help reduce the need for water. If plants are located together near a hose, it will make it easier for a neighbor or friend

to water all the containers in one spot.

Mow and edge the yard just before leaving for a neat and tidy appearance, and then give the lawn and garden a good soaking if the soil moisture level becomes dry. Don't give the appearance you are away so stop the newspaper while you are gone.

Harvest garden vegetables prior to leaving, and if you'll be gone for a longer period, invite neighbors to help themselves to the produce.

LAWNS

Hotter weather with ample rainfall means grass will grow faster. Keep up with the mowing so you don't have to bag the clippings. That may mean mowing every 5 or 6 days instead of every 7 to 10 days.

Letting the clippings fall back into the lawn recycles nutrients. Keep the mower blade sharpened. Ragged ends indicate a dull blade. Mowing frequently at the correct height promotes a healthy, thick turf that is resistant to weeds.

SUMMER COLOR

June is a great month for setting out colorful summer annuals. For large areas, directly seed zinnias, cosmos, gomphrena or portulaca. Many types of annuals can be set out as transplants including angelonia, marigold, salvia, gaillardia, vinca, purslane, dusty miller, ageratum, amaranthus, cuphea, gomphrena, celosia, Texas bluebells, cockscomb and trailing petunias.

Don't overlook the great color that tropical plants provide throughout the summer. You get much visual bang for your gardening dollar using tropicals like mandevilla, copper plants, tropical hibiscus, bougainvillea, crotons, ixora, jatropha and many others that provide season-long color through flowers or foliage.

BLACKBERRIES

Once blackberry plants have completed their current crop, they should be fertilized. The "stalks" (called fruticanes) that produced this year's crop will soon die back and should be removed to reduced disease problems. A new set of green "stalks" (called primicanes) should be present and these will produce next year's crop of blackberries.



The high winds that accompanied last week's thunderstorms inflicted damage on trees as well as many tall-growing vegetables including sweet corn (pictured), okra, peppers, etc.

2020 GCMG Monthly Meetings

CANCELLED



By Judy Anderson
MG 2012

You're Invited Monthly Backyard Meetings

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.

As I write this, the state of Texas is beginning to relax the restrictions we have been living under for the past month. But as these changes take place the rules are still in place for the vulnerable in the population. Though it is hard to believe that means most of us – seniors. It is still too early to say if we will have a June or July Master Gardener meeting; please read your emails for information about the upcoming meetings. Dr. Johnson, Sharon and Ginger are good about keeping us informed. The schedule for the 2020 MG meetings is printed to the left.

As we wait to see what the plans will be, I thought it would be fun to look back at some of the Master Gardener meetings from the past. Ladies and Gentlemen, we have visited all over the county. We have been to Seabrook and across to the West End of Galveston, from Friendswood to the East End of Galveston and many places in between.

We have eaten bar-b-que, fried chicken, Mexican food and burgers. We have eaten seafood in the Historic Moody Mansion and watched the sun go down over the Moody Gardens pyramids from the Viewfinder Terrace. We have visited orchards, greenhouses, chicken coops, prairies, wetlands, vegetable gardens, perennial gardens, butterfly gardens and herb gardens. Our Master Gardeners are a creative bunch who likes to try new things.

As we do this reflection on the MG monthly meetings, it is a wonderful opportunity to recognize the Master Gardeners who hosted a monthly meeting. Our Backyard meetings are

truly an opportunity for members to meet socially and enjoy the camaraderie of each other. The hospitality of our homeowners is as big as Texas. Each one of them provides a memorable evening for us to enjoy their backyard. They welcome us to their homes and show us all the features that make their garden special.

I could not recognize the homeowners without a big light shining on Mikey Isbell who has been hosting the June Graduation and the December Holiday Program for over 25 years. Mikey and her husband, Allen, have welcomed the Master Gardeners to their Galveston home through the wars and after hurricanes. Through all these years these events have been a highlight on the calendar for Master Gardeners.

To all our Backyard Meeting hosts, please consider this a recognition of the contributions each of you made to our Galveston County Master Gardeners. When we do meet again as a group, I hope all of you will gather for a group photo. It would be fun to have a newsletter back page with that photo recognizing our great GCMG hosts.

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

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.

FEEDBACK



Galveston County