

THE FRUIT ISSUE

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TEXAS

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TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

Galveston County

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

Dreaming of Spring



MG Kathy Maines

*"The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago.
The second-best time is now."*
— Chinese Proverb

It's winter and as I write this intro to the January issue of the Gulf Coast Gardening Newsletter, it is 70 degrees and feels like 72 degrees. But, as is common on the Texas Gulf Coast, it is expected to be in the 40's in three days.

This is also the time of year we look at our yards and gardens and think that they have seen better days. Did you ever go window shopping? This newsletter reminds me of window shopping. We can think and dream about what will be happening in our gardens in just a few months.

Trees play such a huge role in all our lives and the lives of everything around us. According to Texas A&M AgriLife, "Trees alter the environment in which we live by moderating climate, improving air quality, conserving water, and harboring wildlife." Who doesn't enjoy nesting birds in the spring and those first spring fruits? I plan to sit

in my warm home enjoying a cup of hot cocoa or tea, reading this January issue and dreaming of those first spring blossoms. Enjoy!

Kathy Maines

Kathy Maines
GCMGA President



Let this be a Year of Joy



MG Karolyn Gephart

Happy New Year!

Let this year be one that offers joy in all directions.

Enjoy the metal artwork of Tish Reustle. Her Friendswood landscape showcases her work and it is in Photo Gallery for your enjoyment. Photos are also in the issue highlighting interns at work, cookie contest winners, Junior Master Gardener certification ceremony and the annual Holiday Party.

Sun hats off to Jan Brick for her recent writing awards. Read about this amazing GCMG in Meet a Master Gardener by Trish McDaniel.

We hope the many articles on fruit trees will offer you new insights and information on which fruit trees do well in our area. Olives, figs, passion fruit, plums, citrus, apples, pears, avocados and more! How fortunate are we to have such wonderful varieties that we can grow successfully.

For the pear and apple lovers, this issue also offers recipes we hope you will try.

Seeds and transplants are waiting to be adopted and nurtured by YOU. Plan your garden. Spring is around the corner!

Karolyn Gephart

Karolyn Gephart



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Photo Courtesy of Stephen Brueggerhoff



Photo Courtesy of Pixabay.com

IN THIS ISSUE

LET'S TALK ABOUT FRUIT

- 4 Figs
- 6 Enjoy an Olive Tree
- 7 All About Avocados
- 8 GCMG Tomato Growers
- 10 Tips for Citrus Growers
- 14 The Biscamp Pear
- 16 Passion Fruit
- 18 Growing Apples
- 20 GCMG Cookie Contest
- 26 Fun Fruit Facts
- 31 GCMG Sales Poster

REGULARS

- 13 Plant of the Month: Mexican Plum
- 21 Meet an MG: Jan Brick
- 23 Seasonal Bites for the New Year
- 24 Book Review
- 25 Discovery Garden Update
- 27 Photo Gallery

MG NEWS

- 28 Photos from Holiday Party
- 29 JMG Certification Ceremony
- 29 Bulletin Board of News
- 30 Upcoming Events
- 32 Last Word
- 33 Judy's Corner



Cover photo of Apple Blossoms
Courtesy of Pixabay.com



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Figs – the Perfect Plant



Barbara Canetti
GCMG 2016

They are called the food of the gods – the sweet, honeylike, delicate tasting figs. They are delicious to eat, healthy, nutritious, and easy to grow. They are the perfect plant.

Figs, which are not really a fruit but a cluster of inverted flowers inside a fruiting structure known as *synconium*, are part of the mulberry family. There are about 800

species of figs, genus *Ficus*, very few are edible and the most popular figs that we grow are all varieties of *Ficus carica*, also known as the common fig tree. Figs can be grown on every continent except Antarctica and have been cultivated since before 7800 BCE in Egypt. Figs are mentioned frequently in the earliest writings, and were considered a sacred food in ancient Rome. More than 1,200 birds and mammals – including humans – eat figs. An unknown number of insects and other creatures also feast on this food.

So, what is it about these delicate and crunchy crops that makes them so appealing to eat and grow? One taste – just one fig – will answer that question. They are packed with flavor and nutrients (and sugar) and have antioxidants that can help with several health concerns, including blood pressure and digestion.

It is also one of the few trees that produce an edible crop in its first season.

For gardeners, figs are among the easiest plants to propagate, cultivate, raise, and harvest. They require little

attention. They need sunshine, warmth, water, and an annual pruning to keep them producing. When it comes time to prune, eliminate a minimum of 40 percent of a tree's branches. This will encourage production in the spring. Also, pinch the tips off young growth branches with less than five leaves to promote fig buds. This allows the trees to divert their energy into producing figs instead of leaves.

At the Discovery Garden in Carbide Park, we have six established fig trees in our orchard: LSU Purple, Celeste, Brown Turkey, Banana, Italian Honey and White Marseilles. We are about to expand our inventory to include Little Miss Figgy, Black Madeira, Golden Orphan and Adriatic.

Our long-range plan is to prune and propagate most of these trees. This summer we experimented with air layering and root layering and successfully grew cuttings that will be sold at the next Galveston County Master Gardeners sale. At our recent Fall Festival, we sold 10 White Marseilles that we propagated from our garden.

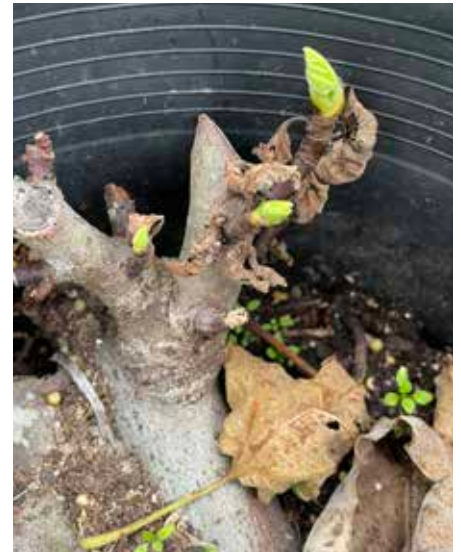
There are hundreds of varieties of figs and in our region we are lucky that our growing season is all year. Our trees don't produce figs all year, but they do grow new branches, where the figs develop through the spring, summer, and fall. Figs grown on the previous year's branches are called breba, but these are not as sweet as the new growth figs. The trees drop their leaves in the winter when they go dormant. Pruning should be performed in late winter and cuttings set aside for propagation.



Air layering



Brown Turkey



Little Buds forming on cutting

“the easiest plants to propagate, cultivate, raise and harvest.”

Remove all dead looking branches and those showing signs of disease. Also clip off low-growing suckers to guide the shape of the tree for ease of future harvest. The key in pruning is to open up the center of the tree to sunlight and air for the next season's crop. Make the cuts at 45-degree angles to avoid rotting in case it rains.

One of the easiest ways to grow a fig tree is to take a fresh cutting – with at least three or four nodes – dip it in a root stimulator and bury three-fourths of it in good, drainable soil. Keep it out of the sun and dole out the water infrequently. Within a few weeks, little green buds appear and the plant has started to grow. Once leaves appear, move it into a sunnier place and watch it mature. When it has outgrown its pot, either put it in the ground or transplant it into a larger pot. Figs will produce as potted plants in the sun.

As the figs start appearing, be patient. Do not pick them until they are ripe. They will be soft and the stem will bend. Remember: they are fragile and will bruise easily. Keep them chilled and covered so they don't dry out. They will stay fresh for a few days.

Figs are rather versatile. They can be eaten raw (37 cal-

ories each) or they can be roasted, poached, preserved, or dehydrated. The skin is smooth and edible. Each fig contains vitamin B6, A, C, calcium, iron, and manganese. They are fat free and cholesterol free. They are the perfect food.

One thing to be cautious about: the tree produces a milky sap called latex that can cause major skin irritations. It is best to wear long sleeves and gloves when harvesting and pruning these trees. While the latex expresses from cuts during any time of the year, it does not ooze during the dormant season.

We are hosting a class on fig propagation mid-January, an in-person opportunity to learn best practices cultivating figs as part of the Gulf Coast Gardening Urban Orchard Series. To register for this free program, browse online: <https://galveston.agrilife.org/urban-orchard>. GCMGs will also sell fig trees at the Galveston County Master Gardener Online Spring Plant Sale February 11-12 (noon to noon). <https://store.galvestonmg.org>

Reference:

<https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/fruit-nut>



LSU Purple ready for cutting



LSU Purple



MG Fig Trees in Carbide Park Discovery Garden



Roots developed in air layering

Enjoy an Olive Tree



Kathy Maines
GCMG 2017

Olive trees in Texas? You bet! In fact, Galveston County Master Gardeners have sold olive trees at some of our plant sales. In the flyer for our 2016 plant sale we state the following: “Arbequina European Olive. This beautiful 15-ft tree originated in Spain. Earliest to bear fruit, usually at three years. Olive trees are native to the Mediterranean with mild winters and hot, dry summers. Self-fruitful. The black fruit has excellent flavor and is used for oil or table fruit. Ripens in mid fall. Frost resistant. Requires excellent drainage.”

I bought one and planted it in my small Galveston yard. It did great and really was a beautiful tree. It even had fruit. Then, along came Winter Storm Uri. My olive tree froze. I cut it back and guess what? It grew back and is once again a very pretty tree. It's not as large as it once was, but I believe it will get there.

Dr. Larry Stein, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Fruit and Nut Specialist, has performed extensive research on olive trees in Texas. He states that olives can be grown in east, central, and south Texas, but not where it gets too hot (they will not bear fruit) and not where it gets too cold (severe winters will kill the trees).

Olive trees are evergreens and their cold hardiness improves with tree age and trunk size. Olive trees are unique in that they set flower buds in the winter after exposure to night temperatures between 35 and 50-degrees, and days less than 80-degrees (vernalization). Fruit set and harvest occurs in fall

between late September to mid-October. According to the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension publication *Texas Fruit and Nut Production: Olives*, olive trees have two types of flowers: staminate and perfect. Only perfect flowers can become fruits. Most olive varieties are self-fertile.

If you are thinking of trying to grow olives, here's what Dr. Stein recommends. Soil should have a pH 5.5 to 8.5. Olives trees have a shallow root system, but must have well-drained soil. They are drought tolerant, but grow best when irrigated. Olive trees can grow well in soils from sands to clays, but mature trees need one half to two pounds of nitrogen per year, preferably in the spring. Very little pruning is recommended; prune to their shrubby shape and to restrict height.

Okay, you have purchased and planted your olive tree. You have followed all AgriLife recommendations. It's been four to five years. It's late September or early October and you have fruit. Now what? The Arbequina fruit will be dark brown when ready to harvest. Per the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension publication, “When fresh, the fruit is not palatable because it contains phenolic compounds and oleuropein, a bitter glycoside. To be used as food, olives must be processed – either pressed for the oil or treated with lye and salt to produce the canned or preserved table fruit ... Depending on the cultivar, it takes from 75 to 125 pounds of olives to produce one gallon of oil.” Whatever you decide, you still have a very pretty tree.

Reference:

<https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu> -

Texas Fruit and Nut Production: Olives (EHT-021)



Olives Photo by MG Kathy Maines



Monte Nesbitt, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service horticulture specialist, examines an olive tree. Photo courtesy of Texas A&M AgriLife.



Rows of olive trees planted in Texas for use in oil production. Photo courtesy of Texas A&M AgriLife.

Tree Stories: Guacamole Does Grow on Trees



Dr. Margaret Canavan
GCMG 2003

Have you ever been unfairly accused of something? That happened to the avocado, or “alligator pear.” For years we were supposed to avoid them because of their fat content, and now we are encouraged to consume them for their health benefits. They are a great source of potassium and vitamins; the fat is the healthy form and there is research into its role in lowering cholesterol and limiting certain forms of oral cancer.

The avocado (*Persea americana*) is a tropical evergreen tree native to south-central Mexico. Trees can grow to 40-plus feet with large deep green leaves that persist for 2 to 3 years. The fruit is a large berry containing a single seed. There are three types of avocados (West Indies, Guatemalan, Mexican) and many hybrids.

While Mexico is the leading producer of avocados, some areas of the United States have appropriate conditions for commercial production. Our Texas climate north of the lower Rio Grande Valley is generally too cold but the Mexican types can often survive locally, as some varieties tolerate temperatures to 20-degrees when mature. Trees bloom in late winter and fruits mature into 18 months depending on the variety.

Trees need full sun in well-drained soil on the south or southeast side of a house for protection from north winds. Plant at least 10 to 15-feet from the house and away from other large trees. Newly planted saplings may require staking and shade positioned 1-foot above the canopy. The sapling trunk is green, photosynthetic bark that may be damaged by full sun exposure, and a burlap-covered cage placed over the tree for approximately one year will help prevent sunscald. While avocado trees should be left to develop to their natural form, strategic pruning and training will help restrict the trees height for harvest. They enjoy fertilization during the fruiting season and appreciate consistent irrigation in dry weather.

Damage by freezes is a real threat so trees should be protected during cold snaps, especially when young. Few insects are problems for avocados grown in Texas, although mites may occur on the foliage. Fruit can be affected by fungal diseases especially in humid conditions.

Avocado trees can self-pollinate. In maintaining diversity, their unique flowering behavior, known as synchronous dichogamy, has male and female flowers opening at different times of day to encourage pollination from other trees. The European honeybee is the most common pollinator. Fruits do

not ripen on the tree; they must be harvested and then ripened for several days. Test maturity by picking a couple and leaving on the kitchen counter; if they do not ripen within a week, test again weekly until they do. Opossums may beat you to the harvest as they will climb trees to feed on their beloved snack.

Avocado trees are generally available in the nursery trade. You may have grown your own plants from seeds of super-market avocados, but grafted varieties will produce fruit more quickly and predictably, often within 2 to 3 years.

While we offer avocado trees for sale at the Galveston County Master Gardener’s fall online plant sale in September, consider attending Gulf Coast Gardening seminar *Growing Avocados* on February 4, 2023. GCMG Hazel Lampton presents timely information of best methods for growing avocados at home. *Growing Avocados* is part of our Urban Orchard series, free seminars offering timely advice for cultivating fruit, citrus and nut trees. For more information and to register, visit online: <https://galveston.agrilife.org/horticulture>.

References:

https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/fruit-nut/files/2015/04/avocados_2015.pdf

Nutrition source:

<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/avocados/>

This article is part of *Tree Stories* an ongoing series of articles about Galveston Island trees, tree care, and tree issues. If you have or know of a special tree on Galveston Island that should be highlighted, please email treesforgalveston@gmail.com. Margaret Canavan is a Galveston resident, a Galveston County Master Gardener, and a member of the Galveston Island Tree Conservancy Board.



Local avocado tree. Photo by MG Herman Auer

GCMG Tomato Growers



Kevin Lancon
GCMG 2018

During and shortly after the COVID-19 pandemic, we were looking for ways to keep our Master Gardener membership engaged in activities that they could perform on their own or in smaller groups. One such activity that we tried in 2021 was having members grow tomato plants from seeds, at their own home and using their own equipment and then selling them in our Spring plant sale. Historically, we usually bought some of our tomato seedlings from a local grower and we grew some of them in our greenhouse at the Discovery Garden, our demonstration garden located in Carbine Park in La Marque.

Tomatoes are a very passionate category of gardening. Many gardeners who plant a vegetable garden grow tomatoes and nearly everyone has a favorite to grow. There is also a sense of adventure for most tomato gardeners in trying new varieties, especially varieties that have been shown to grow well in our area. We thought that we could capitalize on this passion and also use the group knowledge of the GCMG membership on growing tomatoes to continue to support and educate our dedicated following in the Galveston County community.

Our plant sale customers have many choices on where to purchase their tomato plants: big box stores, local nurseries, feed stores etc. Most of these stores offer many of the same stan-

dard tomato varieties without any personalized knowledge of what varieties actually work well within our area. We wanted to offer a unique experience to the community and not only offer many of the well-known varieties but we also wanted to offer other unique varieties that aren't available in the big box stores, but which we have had great success within our annual Tomato Trial Programs. These trial programs are used by Texas Master Gardener interns as part of their class assignment and ongoing research for regional recommended varieties.

The biggest concerns that we had initially was how could we ensure success and consistency with so many different Master Gardeners growing plants in different home environments, using different equipment and all having varying experience or lack of experience growing tomato seedlings. To mitigate these issues, we developed a very detailed process built around known best practices consisting of container sterilization, soil media, grow light specifications, watering and fertilization and a planting schedule. Below is an overview of many of the specifics of the processes and best practices that are followed.

Growing containers – All tomatoes are grown in 4-inch pots, supplied by GCMG. Prior to planting, each container must be sterilized with a solution of 1 part bleach to 4 parts water.

Soil – All tomatoes are grown utilizing a sterilized peat moss-based seeding mixture, free from potentially harmful pathogens and supplied by GCMG.



Planting schedule. Photo by MG Kevin Lancon.



Young transplants. Photo by MG Kevin Lancon.

“In 2022 we sold almost 1,000 tomato plants.”

Grow Lights – All MG Growers must have grow lights, which can be fluorescent (T5, T8 or T12) or LED. For fluorescent lights, only bulbs labeled as cool white or daylight should be used and they should have a color temperature rating in the range of 6000K to 6500K. The height of the light must be adjustable above the seedlings as they grow. Timers are mandatory and should be on for a minimum of 18 hours per day. (See Pictures 1 and 2)

Fertilizer – A liquid fertilizer rated at 6-12-6 is recommended and should be applied once true leaves have emerged and every two weeks thereafter at a rate of 1 oz. or 2 tablespoons per gallon of water.

Planting Schedule – Seeds are planted 7 to 9 weeks prior to the targeted delivery date, accounting for each grower's individual planting environment. Those with indoor grow stations and controlled temperature environments, plant in the later part of the planting window and those in less temperature controlled environments, plant in the early part of the planting window.

In 2022, we sold almost 1,000 tomato plants during our Spring Plant Sale, which also included almost 40 different varieties of tomato plants. Our goal is to offer something for every tomato gardener, which includes paste tomatoes, cherry tomatoes, small, medium and large tomatoes as well as a few heirlooms and novelty tomatoes. We had many well-known varieties such as Celebrity, Better Boy, Early Girl, Patio and Roma and

we also offered some top performers from our annual GCMG Tomato Trials that are not as well-known, such as Fourth of July, Parks Whopper, Andiamo, La Roma III and Amelia. In addition, we had a few interesting heirloom varieties such as Mortgage Lifter, Cherokee Purple, Abe Lincoln, Big Rainbow and a Greek variety called Thessaloniki.

As you can see (Picture 3), our tomato plants were beautiful. All of our GCMG Growers did a fantastic job and we all had fun and learned many things. We also hopefully excited and satisfied our customers. Our goal going forward is to continue to expand our tomato offerings, increase the number of GCMG Growers that participate in this program, and most importantly share our knowledge and passion with the Galveston County community. Our 2023 Spring Sale will be online on February 10 and 11, and we plan to have over 1,200 tomato seedlings for sale and ready for a new home. We also spent a considerable amount of time and effort on our store website developing plant write ups for each individual tomato variety to make it easy to select the perfect tomato for everyone's unique interests.

Browse online to our website for the results of our Fall Tomato Trial program as well as recommended tomato varieties, offering research-based information to nurture your home grown tomato gardening: <https://txmg.org/galveston/resources/>. Don't forget to visit us online for our upcoming Spring Plant Sale featuring recommended tomato varieties: <https://store.galvestonmg.org/>.



Ready to sale. Photo by MG Kevin Lancon.

Tips for Growing Citrus



Robert Marshall
GCMG 2012

So you want to grow citrus in your yard.

There are several things you want to consider when growing any fruit tree. First thing to do is look for good drainage. Don't plant your tree where you have standing water for several days; look for an area where water is gone within a day. Citrus, like almost all other fruit trees, like a full day of sun so try to plant it in an area that gets sun all day. Save those afternoon shady areas for more sensitive plants.

Some of us like to plant our fruit trees in the winter, but citrus doesn't go fully dormant so the suggested best time is mid to late-October when the days are cooler. This allows the tree to recover from the transplanting shock without being subjected to scorching hot days to add to their stress. Also, since its roots continue to grow as long as ground temperatures are about 45-degrees, this helps the speed in which the tree establishes a good root system without a lot of top growth at the same time.

The next step is to dig a hole just large enough for the tree to be placed. Once the hole is dug, use the shovel to scar the wall of the hole to keep trapped roots from trying to grow in a circle and encourage them to grow outwardly. Now remove the plant from the pot, wash off as much of the growing media as possible and trim broken or dead roots. Set the tree in the hole (with an assistant holding it up), then start filling in the hole. Don't put any fertilizer or soil amendments in the hole, just return the native soil; preferably what came out last goes in first. Lightly tap the backfill soil in place and water a little to help the soil settle and drive out large air pockets. Water throughout the whole summer with just a few gallons at least every other day to help get the plant established.

So now that your tree is planted, it is time to trim it back a bit. Since it lived in a nursery where top growth was encouraged, there is a good chance the tree has more foliage than the roots can support. Use the following methods to reduce the canopy load and also train future growth. Look for three or four lower limbs and cut at an angle above that point. Few people are willing to do this, but keep in mind you are shaping the tree by cultivating scaffold branches. And the tree will grow better if this is done since it allows the roots to get large enough to support future growth. If you don't want to prune the tree in this manner, then at least reduce foliage around the branches to help reduce wind pushing the tree over. If necessary, stake the tree for no more than one year. Make sure straps are slightly loose to secure the plant; this allows slight trunk movement to make a stronger tree structure.

Fertilizer

For the first year there is no need to fertilize the tree. If you see pale green leaves of new growth, an indication of nutrient deficiency, then wait until late May or early June and add a few tablespoons of a fertilizer with a balanced or 3-1-2 ratio, spreading the material under the planting but 10-inches away from the trunk. After the first year and annually, estimate the full application and divide into three times, starting around Valentine's Day, followed by Mother's Day and finish with Father's Day. During the first full year of growth the tree will need 0.15 pounds of nitrogen, the second year 0.33 pounds per tree, year three go for 0.40 pounds, years four, five and six use 0.65 pounds of nitrogen, and years seven and eight use one pound. For nine-year old and older trees use 1.5 pounds per year. Reminder that the full weight will be divided between the three feedings.

Now to lessen the confusing part of fertilizing, let's review a general ratio system listed on the product. The first number listed on the bag is the percent of nitrogen in the bag; a 40-pound bag of 46-0-0 means 46 percent of that 40-pound bag is nitrogen. For ease of use just consider it means one pound of 46-0-0 has one-half pound of nitrogen in it. Organic fertilizers usually only contain about 6 to 8 percent of total weight of the bag, so more product may be required. In this example, for a one-year-old tree you would need about 0.15 ounces total split into three applications for the first year feeding.



Citrus. Photo by MG Michelle Thompson.

“Citrus doesn’t go completely dormant...”

Winterizing your citrus

Lemons and limes are very cold sensitive and need to be protected when temperatures are predicted below freezing for more than a short period.

Grapefruit and oranges need protection at about 25-degrees, while the mandarin family, which includes satsumas can go down to around 22-degrees. Meyer lemons seems to handle the cold like satsumas. For freeze protection, you can wrap the tree with freeze cloth, old blankets or sheets but avoid plastic. Building a frame-work to keep covering material off the tree helps also. Wrapping the tree with the old C9 Christmas tree lights works to help keep the inside area warm enough to protect it. Don’t make it too warm inside the protected area. You just need to keep it above freeze damage level. Small trees can have their trunks wrapped in black foam insulation to help protect the main trunk. We seldom have long periods of cold here in our area, but protecting the young trees helps keep them growing the next year instead of trying to cultivate new growth killed by freezing.

Pruning

Citrus is not pruned like most other fruit trees. You prune off dead or diseased wood, cross or rubbing limbs, limbs that are in the way of your path and training for height. You also are encouraged to prune to keep the lower limbs at least 18 to 24-inches above the ground to prevent water splashing fungal pathogens onto leaves and fruit. You can perform minor pruning like removing limbs from walking paths and shaping any time of the year. If you are undertaking major pruning, such as reducing the height of a tree, then wait until any chance of a hard freeze has passed. It is best to keep the tree pruned for height annually so you don’t have to take off too many large branches.

Use of pesticides

Due to TDA regulations for controlling the devastating disease Citrus Greening, all commercial greenhouse-grown citrus in Texas are required to be treated with insecticides that target the Asian citrus psyllid, an insect vector of the disease. As a home-citrus grower and to lessen spread of the disease, consider monitoring your citrus trees and using an appropriate systemic insecticide to treat for this pest as needed. There are organic-rated insecticides to use for treatment. Best practice for your treatment choice is to carefully read the pesticide label to confirm that it is rated for use with food crops/citrus, and that the Asian citrus psyllid is listed as one of the targeted pests. Soil-applied systemic pesticides can translocate to the

flower nectar, and topical-applied pesticides can have residual material on flowers and vegetation. Make sure to make pesticide applications to your citrus after fruit set so you don’t harm the pollinators who visit your citrus flowers.

I recommend watching for sucking insects under the leaves. Aphids are present if you start seeing a black or dark coating on the top of the leaves. Aphids can be treated by mixing commercial horticultural soap with water and spraying the tree late in the evening after all the bees and beneficial bugs have become dormant for the night. A water hose with an attached sprayer works well because there is enough pressure to make sure the bottom and top of the leaves get hit. The soapy water will kill most sucking insects, but it may require several treatments with an interval of about a week between treatments. Do not spray sensitive plants with the soapy water during the day: it can cause leaf scorch on our hot summer days.

If you notice your citrus fruit is becoming dark-skinned then you have spider mites. They make the fruit look ugly but won’t affect the fruit inside. To treat, start spraying a summer weight/light-grade horticultural oil or Neem oil in mid-July and spray through the end of September to keep the mites under control.



Keep citrus trees pruned to a size where you can pick all the fruit and not have top fruit no one can reach. Photo by MG Karolyn Gephart.

“Citrus is not pruned like most other fruit trees.”

Harvest

Citrus is picked by time, not by color. I recommend to note when the fruit tasted best last year, then start picking this year's samples a few weeks before. Extreme weather conditions seem to affect ripening so the fruit may ripen earlier or later than usual in some years. As a rule, satsumas start to ripen around the end of October and can still be green-skinned but ready to eat. Don't wait until satsumas are fully orange-colored before starting to sample because they don't hang on the tree as well as some other citrus, and will start tasting dry and mealy sooner than other fruit. Oranges seem to start to ripen around November and December, but there are some early ripening varieties that start in September, and some like the 'Lane Late Navel Orange' may not ripen until around February. Grapefruit tends to ripen around early December and will hang on the tree for several months. However, in our region citrus can start setting fruit in late January and February, so it is best to try to pick ripe fruit so the tree doesn't deplete all its resources trying to keep both crops viable. Start testing ripeness early and continue to taste on a weekly basis until it reaches what you consider to be peak flavor.

Citrus tends to produce a good crop most years so once it is ripe remember to share with your friends and neighbors.

NOTE: Fertilizer Chart by Dr. Monty Nesbitt, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Specialist – Pecan, Fruit and Citrus

Resources:

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service – Aggie Horticulture: <https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/fruit-nut/>. Includes links to citriculture (Texas Citrus); container-grown citrus (Patio Citrus) and fact sheet resources for oranges, grapefruit, limes and lemons.



Citrus. Photo by MG Michelle Thompson.

Nitrogen Fertilizer Per Year

Year	Lbs Nitrogen Per tree	Urea 46-0-0 46% N	Ammonium Sulfate 21-0-0 21% N	Cottonseed Meal 6-1-2 6% N
1	.15 lb tree/yr	5 oz tree/yr	11 oz tree/yr	2.5 lb tree/yr
2	.33 lb tree/yr	11oz tree/yr	1.5 lb tree/yr	5.5 lb tree/yr
3	.40 lb tree/yr	14 oz tree/yr	2 lb tree/yr	6.5 lb tree/yr
4-6	.65 lb tree/yr	1.4 lb tree/yr	3 lb tree/yr	11 lb tree/yr
7-8	1.0 lb tree/yr	2.0 lb tree/yr	4.75 lb tree/yr	16.5 lb tree/yr
9+	1.5 lb tree/yr	3.2 lb tree/yr	7 lb tree/yr	25 lb tree/ yr

Divide numbers above by number of feedings. Example 1.5 lb tree/yr = 3 feedings per year of .5 lb



Citrus. Photo by MG Michelle Thompson.

Plant of the Month: Mexican Plum (*Prunus mexicana*)



Pam Hunter
GCMG 2018

Bigtree or Mexican plum is a single-trunked, non-suckering tree, between 10 and 35-feet tall, with fragrant, showy white or pink flowers displayed before the leaves appear. Mature trunks become satiny, blue-gray with darker, horizontal striations. Plums turn from yellow to mauve to purple as they ripen from July through September. The fruit is eaten fresh and can be made into preserves. The fruit is also consumed by birds and mammals. This species has served as a stock for grafting cultivated varieties of plums.



Photo courtesy of Lee Page,
Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center



Photo courtesy of Joseph Marcus,
Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center



Photo courtesy of Lee Page,
Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center



Photo courtesy of Wynn Anderson,
Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

Common Name(s)

Mexican Plum, Bigtree Plum, Inch Plum

USDA Hardiness Zone(s): 6-9

Plant Characteristics

Duration: Perennial

Leaf retention: Deciduous

Habit: Tree

Family: Rosaceae

Height: Up to 35-feet

Spread: 20 to 25-feet

Bloom Information

Bloom color: Numerous clusters of white or pink, five-petaled flowers

Bloom size: 0.75 inches

Bloom time: February, March, April - before the leaves

Fruit: A plum that ripens in late summer. Approximately 1.25 inches in diameter, dark, purple-red at full ripening with a smooth stone under juicy flesh

Culture

Light exposure: Sun, Part Shade

Cold tolerant: Yes

Tolerates deer: No

Soil moisture: Low

Soil description: Dry to moist, well-drained soils. Sandy, sandy loam, medium loam, clay loam, clay, limestone-based

Native habitat: Dry to moist, thin woods, river, bottoms, and prairies. Mostly in north east and north central Texas

Propagation

Softwood cuttings. Seeds

Benefit

Ornamental use: attractive, aromatic, showy. Accent tree or shrub

Wildlife use: Flower nectar – bees; ripe fruit – birds and mammals

Larval host: Tiger Swallowtail, Cecropia moths

References:

Wildflower.org

Texastreeid.tamu.edu

The Beauty of the Biscamp Pear



Herman Auer
GCMG 1983

The Biscamp pear is a large pyramidal shaped, green and smooth-skin pear for Southeast Texas used for cooking, canning, and eating fresh. While a pollinizer is not needed, other low chill pears planted in its vicinity may increase fruit set.

Rated at 400 chill hours, Biscamp is what many of us have been searching for all of our life. The fruit just picked from the tree is great, and given some counter time to ripen gets better with a soft smooth texture and flavor very close to the Bartlett pear.

I planted my first Biscamp pear tree 10 years ago. In 2013, I had the opportunity to receive a Warren pear grafted on a Quince BA-29C rootstock. The Quince rootstock is known for the ability to dwarf a grafted tree, keeping the top stock smaller in stature. I got the Biscamp scion (graft wood) from Bonnie Childers in Lumberton, Texas and then grafted it on top of the Warren pear. I also planted three Pineapple pears on *Pyrus calleryana* rootstock about 60-feet from the Biscamp tree because they are also good pears for Galveston County. Twenty years from now we can compare and evaluate the Biscamp.

My four pear trees were planted in unimproved semi-permeable clay soil near Highland Road and south of Highway 6 in Santa Fe. I pulled down some of the tall upright branches for a summer to create many more linear feet of fruit producing wood.

Fire Blight Disease

Fire blight is a bacterial disease that can kill pear trees. I have not seen fire blight as of yet on any of the four pear trees. Time will tell if the Biscamp, as well as the Pineapple pears are susceptible to fire blight. In my opinion, that would make them the best locally grown varieties to be free of the killer disease.

After five years of growth (2018), the Biscamp bloomed and set some fruit. Every year more fruit has been produced and in 2021, the fruit was very large. On August 24, 2022 the tree was heavy with fruit. As I looked at it and approached the tree, I knew this was what I was hoping to see. I took four at five-gallon buckets of fruit home and gave half of it away.

Photos show how abundantly the tree produced pears.

There are many hard pears growing in Galveston County. The Biscamp can be used as a hard pear right after it is picked. It will ripen soft with almost no grit. Some of the hard pears that grow in the county are Keiffer, Ayers, Le Conte, Orient, Pineapple, Warren, and Fan-Stil™. All of these pears can be used in the kitchen.

For more information about Texas pear tree culture, browse online to Aggie Horticulture's Fruit and Nut webpage: <https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/fruit-nut/> for local information, browse to Galveston County AgriLife Extension's Urban Orchard webpage: <https://galveston.agrilife.org/urban-orchard/>.



Biscamp variety is one that can be cooked early when hard or eaten fresh when more ripe.
Photo courtesy of UF/IFAS Leon County Extension.



Pear Branch. Photo by MG Herman Auer.

“What many have been searching for all of our life”

Jackie Auer (GCMG 2007) has provided her recipe for a very moist and delicious Pear Cake to try.

Fresh Pear Cake (Very moist)

4 cups fresh soft pears (I have used canned pears)
2 cups sugar
1 cup chopped nuts
3 cups flour
½ teaspoon cinnamon or nutmeg
½ teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons baking soda
1 cup vegetable oil
1 teaspoon vanilla
2 well beaten eggs

Preheat oven to 350-degrees. Have eggs at room temperature.

Peel and core pears, chop into small pieces.

Mix with sugar and nuts. Let stand for one hour. Stir often as mixture makes its own juice.

Add dry ingredients to pears. Add oil, vanilla and eggs. Do not use a mixer; stir by hand.

Pour batter into greased and floured tube pan or bundt pan. Bake 1 hour and 15 minutes.

David Eskins (GCMG 2020) and his wife Barbara enjoy a large amount of hard pears from their Keiffer tree each year. Barbara makes pear sauce (similar consistency to applesauce) and typically prepares approximately 40 quarts that the family enjoys all year. According to the Eskins family, pear sauce can be used to replace cranberry or applesauce and is delicious in oatmeal. It goes well on pork tenderloin or chicken breasts. It also makes a great pear bread. Barbara shares her pear sauce and bread recipe below:

Barbara Eskins' Pear Sauce

50 Texas hard pears
¼ cup brown sugar
8 tsp lemon juice
½ to ¾ cup white grape juice
2 tsp cinnamon (to taste)

Soak the pears in water for at least 2 hours; Core and cut into one-inch pieces.

Put in a food processor and puree; the texture will remain lumpy.

Add brown sugar, lemon juice, grape juice and cinnamon.

Cook down into uniform texture similar to applesauce. Use an immersion blender to get the texture where you want it to be. Cooking time varies due to the hardness of the pears but it is usually 2-3 hours.

Pear Bread

Makes two standard loaf pans

Ingredients:

4 eggs
½ to ¾ cup brown sugar
3 c. pear sauce (1 quart jar)
1 c. of butter (2 sticks)
3 c. flour
1 tsp baking soda
½ tsp cinnamon
½ cups nuts finely chopped (optional)

Using a mixer, blend the sugar and butter, then add eggs and pear sauce. Next, blend in the flour, baking soda and cinnamon. Mix well. Fold in nuts. Spray or grease two standard loaf baking pans. Divide the mixture between the two pans. Bake at 350-degrees for almost 1 hour checking at 45 minutes. Loaves will be heavy.



Jackie Auer surrounded by pears. Photo by MG Herman Auer.



Photo by MG Herman Auer.

Passionflower Fruit Vine



Jan Brick
GCMG 2001

Passiflora (known as passionflower, passion vines, or passion fruit vines) is a genus of over five hundred tropical and sub-tropical species of flowering plants, mostly tendril-bearing vines although there are tropical species with shrub and tree-like growth as well. Passionflowers produce spectacular showy blooms.

In sizes from one-half inch to six inches with vibrant colors and some with a heady fragrance, they flourish naturally from South America through Mexico. Most passionflower vines are perennials in Zones 6-10 and will thrive if planted in a bright spot with four hours of sun each day; however, they are also delicate so a partially protected location out of the wind is preferred. A well-draining soil rich in organic matter is favored with the use of mulch for the roots. Keep the plants well watered in summer months to promote robust and vigorous flower and fruit production. There are two types of passionflower based on fruit color, yellow and purple.

Passionflowers are grown for their fruit and their exotic beauty. Most species have round or elongated fruit from two to eight-inches long and two-inches across, depending on the cultivar. Poro poro (*P. pinnatistipula*; sub-tropical highlands of Peru) has a round fruit while the banana passionflower (*P. tarminiana*; uplands of tropical South America) and Curuba (*P. mixta*; Venezuela to Bolivia) have elongated tubular fruit and sport bright red and rose-colored petals. Maracuja (*Passiflora edulis*) generates a guava-like pink to yellow fruit used

in commercial passion fruit production. Sweet granadilla (*P. ligularis*; South America) is another popular fruit bearer, while Maypop (*P. incarnata*) is a common native species in the southern United States that is grown for its yellow fruit, about the size of a chicken egg and sweet in flavor. This species is very hardy and can withstand temperatures to minus 20-degrees. Also called the purple passionflower, it is a fast growing perennial, is easy maintenance and nearly pest free.

Cultivated along walls, fences, and trellises, the passionflower vine may grow up to 20 feet in a year. Some gardeners prefer to plant their passionflower vines out of doors in containers that can be moved inside to a more protected area. Pruning the vines in spring or after a harvest will control growth and promote lush foliage with increased bloom production. A fruit will develop when the flower have been pollinated by bees, wasps, or hummingbirds. Upon ripening, the fruit will change in color to brown or brownish-purple and soften somewhat. Harvesting the fruit is easily accomplished by cutting with trimmers...if left on the vine, the orbs will drop to the ground when fully ripened.

Research suggests that common pests such as mites, scale and other insects may be treated with applications of insecticides or with Neem oil or other pesticide applications. Avoid fungal infections by watering beneath the plant rather than from above or by spraying with a fungicide in the spring.

Consider the following that produce fruit:

Blue Bouquet - blue, purple and ivory flowers, low-maintenance, fast growing, scented blooms, fruit producer.

Blue Velvet (*P. incarnata* x *P. cincinnata*) - award winning, purple-blue three-inch flowers with halos of blue, white and purple filaments, will produce edible egg-sized orange fruit, evergreen from the roots.

Victoria (*P. x violacea*) - three to five-inch deep pink blooms with dark green foliage and stamens, edible carrot-colored fruit, container grown if moved inside in winter months.

Ruby Glow (*P. alata* var. *phoenicea*) - five-inch maroon cranberry-colored, nutmeg-scented blooms, lavender and deep purple filaments with contrasting white band, lush leathery green leaves, yellow fruit; protect base with mulch for return in spring, hearty vine.

Passionflowers producing no edible fruit:

Aphrodite's Purple Nightie™ - dozens of 3-inch purple flowers are produced all summer long on a vigorous free flowering vine. The flower filaments are purple and white splashed. This



Cut Passion Fruit



Fruit bearing Blue Bouquet.
Photo GCMG Database

“Harvesting the fruit is easily accomplished...”

vine has three-lobed dark green leaves and is sterile so that it does not produce fruit.

Blue Crown (*P. caerulea*) - “A striking crown of deep sapphire blue filaments against white petals,” attracts bees and butterflies, fragrant, fast growing, perennial in the ground, blooms from July until hard frost, easily container-grown as an annual or if moved indoors in winter months. Attractive three-inch blooms are followed by egg-sized, deep orange fruits from late summer through fall. The fruits are reported edible, but not very tasty with a vague flavor reminiscent of blackberry.

Clear Sky (*P. caerulea*) - five-inch blue and white blooms, fragrant, cold hardy in sunny locations, easily container-grown.

Pure Vida Red - four-inch, star-shaped red flowers with purple filaments and white throat, may grow to eight feet, prefers some shade in hot climates, can be container grown.

Scarlet Flame (*P. vitifolia* x *P. coccinea*) - five-inch, scented scarlet blooms with bronze leaves, fast grower, full sun, perennial evergreen, easily grown in patio containers. It can set fruit if another type of passionflower is close by, but frequently requires hand pollination.

With fruit or without, their vibrant flamboyant hues and heady fragrance make the passionflower vine a welcome addition to any garden.



Fruit bearing Ruby Glow. Photo GCMG Database.

References:

Passion Fruit Farming Christopher Makomere

Passion Fruit: Growing Practices and Nutritional Information
Agrihortico

Tropical Fruits Robert E. Paull and Odrilo Duarte

Fruits of Warm Climates Julia F. Morton



Fruit bearing Ruby Glow. Photo GCMG Database.



Passion fruit. Photo courtesy of Pexels.com

Growing Apples in Galveston County



Robert Marshall
GCMG 2011

Growing apple trees in this part of the state has some interesting challenges, and the following is information aimed at improving your apple growing skills.

Chill hours

Chill hours (32 to 45-degrees) are the cumulative number of hours fruit tree varieties require to develop fruiting and leaf buds. Chill hours not reached can delay both fruit buds and leaves opening at their normal time. A fruit tree that requires 1,000 chill hours will never do well in our area. Another example: the same goes for taking a tree that requires 150 chill hours to Dallas. Such a tree would reach its chill hour requirement early into winter, and while budding could suffer potential freeze damage. Also be aware that increased heat and humidity can affect next year's bud development, which can result in little to no fruit bud development even after meeting chill hour requirements.

Examples of trees that require chill hours are stone fruit such as peaches, plums, cherry and almond, as well pome fruit like apples and pears. For successful fruit production, always research chill hours before buying a fruit tree. Note that while USDA Hardiness Zone maps are great for ornamental and vegetable gardening, the maps are not a specific indicator of chill hours. Example: Galveston County is located in Zones 9a and 9b. The Woodlands area is also located in Zone 9a and gets higher chill hours most years than Friendswood and League City (also 9a).

Varieties

Varieties of apples that do well in our area are Dorsett Golden, Anna, and Carnival, and there are other possibilities for low chill hours that might work here. At this time there are several varieties of apples being evaluated for growing in our area at our demonstration garden Discovery Garden. However, fruit tree research is a long game, and it will take years of data collection before we know if any can be added to the list of apples for Galveston County. Most apples require a pollinizer, and the Dorsett Golden provides cross-pollination for all the apples listed.

Diseases and pests

Because not many apple tree varieties are grown in this area, we do not have some of the problems apple growers experience in regions where orchards are plentiful. We do have insects such as Leaf-footed bugs and Plum curculio



Anna Apple. Photo GCMG Database.



Anna Apple. Photo by MG Billy Jenke.



Apple Blossom.
Photo GCMG Database.



Apples 4 weeks old.
Photo by MG Luke Stripling.



Dorsett Golden. Photo by MG Billy Jenke.



Dorsett Golden. Photo GCMG Database.

“All fruit trees benefit from pruning.”

that can damage crops. The Leaf-footed bugs are sap-sucking insects and are the scourge of all fruit and vegetable growers in this area. They eat anything! Juvenile Leaf-footed bugs are seen on maturing tomatoes in the spring. These small orange and black nymphs can be treated with insecticides with some success. Spraying with soapy water or Neem oil can smother them and is not harmful to plants, but can take multiple applications depending on weather. Pyrethroid-based products can also be considered and work best on the juvenile stages. Monitor your plants so you can catch the outbreak early. Once they are adults, pesticides are mostly ineffective.

Fire blight is the greatest threat to apple trees. It is a bacteria transferred to the budding tree by pollinators that have come from an infected tree. Once infected, leaves turn black and the stems will die while the leaves are still attached. The best treatment is pruning as soon as you see symptoms. It spreads readily so make sure all pruning tools are sterilized. Dip the tool in a 90 percent alcohol solution before each cut. Make the cut 12 to 18-inches below the affected area, bag the diseased cuttings and throw away with trash. Trees with excessive new growth are more susceptible to fire blight infection. Annual growth can be managed using low nitrogen fertilizers on apple as well as pear trees, and only if they are growing less than 12 to 18-inches per year.

Cotton Root Rot and Collar Rot

Apple trees in our area can be productive for many years. At peak production, some may start to rot at ground level. This can be the result of Cotton Root Rot or Collar Rot. Both diseases are a type of fungus that can be found in our soil. Well-draining soil helps to control Collar Rot, so make sure to plant trees in an area that does not have standing water and make sure to not over water the trees.

Cotton Root Rot is found in soils where cotton was grown and there is no treatment for this fungus. The Texas Plant Disease Handbook reports that the fungus is prevalent in calcareous clay loam soils with a pH range of 7.0 to 8.5, and in areas with high summer temperatures. One practice used to suppress this pathogen in home and commercial fruit production is to lower the soil pH to below 6.5 by using approximately 1-pound of granular sulfur to a 10-foot square around a tree. If applied, you would have to closely monitor the soil pH and add more sulfur the following year and as needed. Keep in mind this is not a sustainable practice or long-term solution, and best to research previous agricultural practices on your property and monitor for the pathogen.

Pruning

All fruit trees benefit from pruning. The recommended method for apples by commercial farmers is allowing the central leader to grow and prune scaffold limbs in an alternating pattern of north/south limbs with east/west limbs. A better method for homeowners is to prune in a bowl shape by cutting off the main leader and allowing four or five scaffolding limbs to grow out, forming more of a bowl shape. In the second year, all scaffolding limbs will be pruned at the tip to encourage the new limb to grow out and up. This is done by cutting just above a bud that is facing the direction you want the limb to grow. Keep the tree trimmed to a height you can harvest fruit while standing on the ground. Major pruning of apples is done when they are dormant and minor pruning is done any time for broken limbs, crossing limbs that are rubbing, and diseased limbs.

Harvesting

Each variety of apple ripens at different times of the year so you have to research when your tree should start to ripen. This will require paying attention to the color of the fruit and tasting until you reach your desired level.

Aggie Horticulture provides an excellent reference on fruit cultivation at the following website: <https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/fruit-nut/>. For local folks, try using Galveston County AgriLife Horticulture's Urban Orchard webpage, including links to an online resource to research chill hours: <https://galveston.agrilife.org/urban-orchard/>.



Dorsett Golden ree. Photo by MG Herman Auer.

GCMG's Host Cookie Contest

It was not only a contest with three categories but also a cookie exchange in December in celebration of the holiday season. Winners were announced, cutting boards were given as prizes and three judges had their holiday fill of homemade treats.

Cookie Category Winners With Entries

Best Presentation

- 1st Briana Etie
Fruit Pizza Bar
- 2nd Sharon Zaal\
Mint Chocolate Chip Snowball Cookies
- 3rd Kevin Lancon
Cranberry Bliss

Best Creativity

- 1st Hazel Lampton
Cranberry White Chocolate Oatmeal Cookies
- 2nd Linda Barnett
Hello Dollies
- 3rd Linda Steber
Creamsicle Cookies

Best Tasting

- 1st Stacy Mills
Cranberry Lemon Bars
- 2nd Kay Sandor
Italian Pignoli Cookies
- 3rd John Mitchener
Cowboy Cookie
(Bandana version with cranberry & white chocolate chips)



Cookie Judges Ira Gervais, Kathy Maines, and Stephen Brueggerhoff were ready to begin the process.



Group winners.



Creamsicle Cookies.



MG Janie Carter gets the cookies and their presentations ready.



Mint chocolate chip snowball cookies.
Photo by MG Sharon Zaal



Intern Stacy Mills shows a closeup of her cutting board prize.

Meet a Master Gardener: Jan Brick



Trish McDaniel
GCMG 2001

On a warm day in October, I found Jan Brick waiting in the front garden of her lovely home in Galveston's East End. Jan graciously met me with a coveted neighborhood parking pass to insure against the ominous parking ticket. Her husband, John, waved hello from the front porch gallery. Jan and John's marriage in 1985 produced a blended family of five children, which has since grown with 10 grandchildren and one great grandchild.

Their home, a graceful 1895 dormered cottage, was owned by John's grandparents. Come the year 2000, John searched for the current owner to make an offer to purchase the home. Serendipitously, the owner, who noted the rejection of several previous proposals, was completely delighted to find just the right party to sell – someone who was sure to cherish the home as she did.

After residing thirty years in Jamaica Beach, fifteen years of which were dedicated to restoring the cottage on weekends, they made the cottage their permanent residence in 2015 where they continue to enjoy their status as "townies." The home has been featured in Galveston Historic Homes Tour, once as an in-progress property, and years later, in splendid restored glory.

Jan began the tour of her garden through a charming side path going to the back yard and to her office atop the alley cottage. At the path's entry is a well-patinaed children's tea party vignette, providing a hint of upcoming magical discoveries. The passage is lined with colorful Croton (*Codiaeum variegatum*) specimens and vivid green caladiums splashed with pink. Extending down the path at eye level are cleverly framed collections of epiphytes which lead through a lattice trellis to a backyard filled with assorted garden marvels.

A turn to the right reveals a decorative water feature overseen by "Charlotte," a strapping yellow garden spider, whose impressive orb web provides a shimmering overhang for the tiny pond. A covered side porch is home to Jan's finches and an aging back porch kitty.

Canny space planning affords the back yard many practical and welcoming features. A raised pergola with generous and comfortable seating, the raised garden and surrounding containers host tomatoes, okra, peppers, herbs and many other edibles. Jan says the climbing passionvine (*Passiflora incarnata*) produces a yummy sweet and sour fruit come summertime, and startling flowers when in bloom from late summer to fall.



Jan in her office.



Jan opens the gate in welcome.



The Chickens.

“Canny space planning affords...welcoming features.”

A soft clucking serenade brings attention to a small flock of seven colorful hens. The tidy chicken run and adjacent coup occupies the rear side yard and is protected by a mature Confederate rose tree (*Hibiscus mutabilis*), which Jan says is a spectacular showstopper when in bloom. The ladies are an eye-catching collection of various breeds. The esteemed eldest, Little Red Hen, has ceased producing after nearly nine years, and is now in “henopause,” according to the musings of Jan’s grandson. The remaining egg makers include Frizzle, Phyllis Diller, and Ruth (as in RBG).

Jan’s office on the top floor of the alley cottage provides a stunning overlook of the back garden. Her office is a shared space with her stained glass and quilt studio. It was a pleasure to see several examples of both arts on view and in various stages of completion.

Jan was introduced to the Texas Master Gardener program after meeting Mrs. Lou Fish, a founding member of Galveston County’s MG program organized in 1982. Jan, with her husband and daughter’s encouragement, entered the internship in 2001. She considers this move to be one of the most rewarding things she has done herself.

The idiom “good things come in small packages” is easily altered to “mighty things” in Jan’s instance. Topping off at an energetic 60-inches, Jan is a seriously driven woman with a seemingly endless store of enthusiasm, interests, and longtime commitments - all adding up to a long and ever-growing list of community honors and accomplishments.

With encouragement from the late Dr. William Johnson, former Galveston County AgriLife Extension Horticulture Agent and GCMG program coordinator and dear friend, Jan became an oft requested public speaker by garden clubs in the region. This led to a popular gardening column, *Island Gardening*, published in the GCMG *Gulf Coast Gardening Newsletter* and *Galveston Monthly Magazine*.

Through the years Jan has received numerous awards, including statewide recognition from the Texas Master Gardener Association for her publications, *Renewal and Renovating of Landscapes After a Hurricane* (2009), and her book *The Island Garden* (2011).

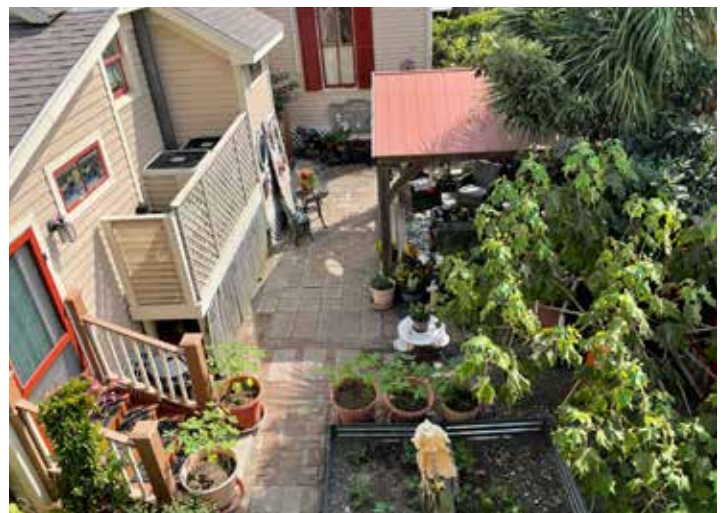
In the aftermath of Hurricane Ike (2008), Jan was honored as town hero of the Jamaica Beach Fire and Police department for her tireless weeks of feeding the city’s first responders after the storm. She has served on the board of the Ronald McDonald House for 30 years and has held each board position, including president, multiple times.

Before COVID-19, Jan was also a valued volunteer at UTMB’s NICU department, where she held and rocked the tiny premature patients. She is looking forward to restoring her coveted position as soon as the department can once again open its doors to volunteers.

In closing my visit with Jan, I asked what she was currently reading. I’m not surprised when she told of her personal mission to read all of the Pulitzer Prize winning novels. That’s eight decades of fabulous fiction, folks! Sounds about right.



A well planned backyard.



Skyview of Jan's yard.

All photos by fMG Trish McDaniel

Seasonal Bites: Simply Delicious!



Sandra Gervais
GCMG 2011

The holiday season is over and Old Man Winter is tightening his grip on the Upper Texas Gulf Coast. What little vibrant fall color we had is gone. Typical for this time of year, plants are colored in shades of brown or have lost their leaves --- trees, shrubs and grass. And dead leaves are everywhere, blowing in

swirls of wind or sticking damply to shoes. This time of year is good for indoor projects, such as looking at seed catalogues and dreaming of spring planting and the glorious shades of flowers to come. So here are a couple of hearty recipes to get us through dreary colorless and gray days until spring once more warms our faces and our souls.

GCMG Debbie Brizendine brought the first recipe to our chapter November meeting; she calls it a Chicken Cobbler. Strange name but a great, easy dish. The next is a cake from Linda Barnett. It was enjoyed by so many at our weekly volunteer day Thursday lunch in the Discovery Garden that she made it again for our annual Thanksgiving Holiday Lunch celebration. Editors note: commercial products listed are not meant as an endorsement.



Chicken Cobbler

1 stick of butter, melted
1 rotisserie chicken, shredded
1-2 cups mixed peas and carrots
2 cups Red Lobster® Cheddar Bay Biscuit Mix
2 cups milk
1 can cream of chicken soup
2 cups chicken stock

Pre-heat oven to 350-degrees.
Put melted butter in bottom of 9 x 13 baking dish, then add the shredded chicken and mixed vegetables.

Stir together the biscuit mix with its seasoning packet and milk in a bowl, then drizzle the mix over the chicken. Do NOT stir.

Use now empty bowl and mix together the cream of chicken soup and the chicken stock.

Pour over all contents in the baking dish. Do NOT mix.

Bake uncovered for 45-minutes or until top looks golden.

Cool and serve.

Note: Great to make using leftover chicken or turkey.

Feel free to add black or red pepper, favorite herbs, Worcestershire sauce, etc. to cream soup/chicken stock mix to get even flavoring. Then pour on as above and remember NOT to mix. Bake as directed.

Serves 6-8.



Frosted German Apple Cake

3 cups all-purpose flour
3 teaspoons ground cinnamon
1 1/2 teaspoons baking soda
3/4 teaspoon kosher salt
4 eggs
3 cups sugar
1 1/2 cups vegetable or canola oil
1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla
6 cups apples, peeled, cored, and chopped (Granny Smith apples work well)
1 1/2 cups pecans

Pre-heat oven to 350°
Line three round 9-inch cake pans with parchment paper. Spray paper with cooking oil spray. Set aside.

In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, cinnamon, baking soda and salt. Set aside.

In a large bowl, add together eggs, sugar, oil, and vanilla.
Use mixer on medium speed to combine.

Add in the flour mixture and mix again until just combined.
Fold in chopped apples and pecans (batter will be thick.)

Divide the batter between the three round 9-inch cake pans.

Bake 50 minutes or until toothpick in center comes out clean.

Cool cake on wire rack.

Cinnamon Cream Cheese Frosting

8 ounces cream cheese, softened
3/4 cup butter, softened
4 cups confectioners' sugar
3/4 teaspoons kosher salt
1 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon

Blend together the cream cheese and butter with a mixer.

Slowly add the confectioners' sugar, one cup at a time.

Add in the salt and the cinnamon.

Mix until well combined and the frosting is fluffy.

Put first layer on plate and frost top.

Put second layer on top and frost top.

Add final layer and frost top and sides of all layers.

Garnish with thin slices of apple and pecans.

If not served immediately, store in refrigerator. Bring to room temperature before serving.

Serves 18.

Book Review: *Rules for Visiting*



Lisa Belcher
GCMG 2014

In October the Green Thumb Book Club read Jessica Francis Kane's *Rules for Visiting*. In this fiction book we meet May Attaway, a university gardener living at home with her father in the house she grew up in and is content with her life.

When the 40 year old gardener receives a surprise one month off for vacation, May decides to visit four friends with whom she has lost contact as May believes she is not "good" at friendship and begins the journey to prove herself either right or wrong. Each of these friends are from different times in May's life and she is reminded that, like plants, friendships need tending to keep them flourishing and blooming. It is at first difficult for May, as she is quite happy being alone tending her plants and is not on social media keeping up with all her friends' lives.

As she visits each friend: a struggling sophisticate living in Manhattan and adjusting to her new life as a second wife, another being a landscape architect living a simple life in London, another being a very active progressive in the middle of a divorce living in Seattle, and lastly a Connecticut housewife breaking under the strain of creating the perfect life on her social media account,

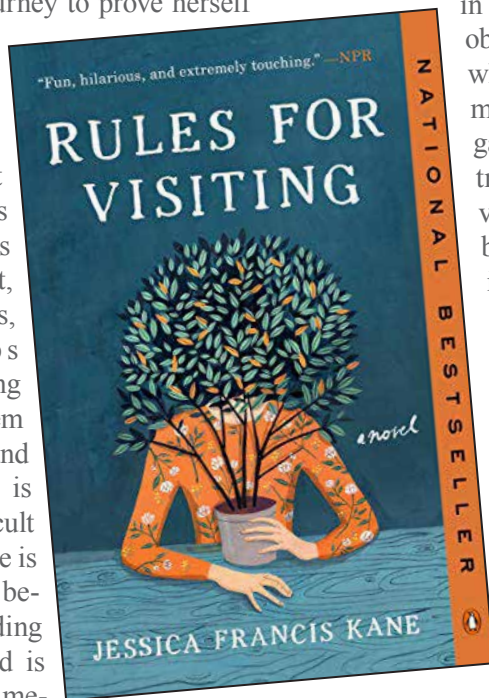
May tries to improve her long-neglected friendships her short stays. As she glimpses into each of her friends lives, she soon realizes that these friends have tended their relationships, and those relationships are still alive and thriving today.

May is surprised as each share that they have missed her. "Missed me" muses May during one visit. Shortly after arriving at her first stop on her month-long friendship journey, a postcard from home arrives addressed to May from a man who holds a secret crush — a crush in which May was totally oblivious and needs to think what each postcard truly means. Could it be just a gardening update on the trees and plants on the university campus, or could it be something more hidden in the words that May is so unfamiliar with receiving?

You may be thinking to yourself "I thought this was a gardening book club, where is the gardening aspect?" Throughout the novel the author shares stories and information of a variety of trees pri-

or to each visit, an important allegory in May's journey. It is May Attaway's growth and her newfound strength described in the book that helps the reader understand her journey.

This is a book about loneliness at times during the digital age, celebrating lost friendships revived anew, and how a lonely root-bound character has blossomed and become (quite unexpectedly) a better gardener and friend, and is embarking on a new romantic relationship.



The Green Thumb Book Club is happy to share the books selected for next year's reading! We will be reading seven books, the most our group has read in a single year. When you read and attend a book club meeting, the time spent counts towards Continuing Education hours. As of October, Green Thumb Book Club readers have logged 23 continuous education hours all the while enjoying interesting and lively discussions.

This year's books include a variety of gardening/nature topics as well as two garden-themed fiction books.

January/February

A Southern Garden
by Elizabeth Lawrence

March/April

Bicycling with Butterflies
by Sara Dykman

May

The Seed Keeper by Diane Wilson

June/July

Bees in the America; How the Honeybee Shaped a Nation by Tammy Horn

August/September

Down to Earth Gardening Wisdom
by Monty Don

October/November

This is Your Mind on Plants
by Michael Pollan

December

The Forgotten Garden by Kate Morton

The Green Thumb Book Club meets the fourth Wednesday of the month in the conference room at the Extension office. If you have any questions regarding the books, club, time, etc., please contact Lisa Belcher at:

hydrangeababe@gmail.com

Discovery Garden Update



Tom Fountain
GCMG 2008

There is a common weather change we experience each winter - one day it's summer, next day winter and back again. That's just Texas coastal weather for you. The cooler temps this past fall have had more members coming out to the Discovery Garden. Everyone has been enjoying being outside, doing some gardening, and catching up with friends.

Despite some colder wet weather this past fall, average conditions were slightly warmer and drier than normal. We received almost twice the normal rainfall over our area last November; our drought was abated, even though we were 6 to 9-inches below normal rainfall for the year. The National Weather Service expects La Niña to continue throughout the winter, providing warmer than average temperatures and dryer than normal conditions along the Gulf Coast.

This last fall, member gardeners were busy planting fall and winter crops and taking care of other projects. Pictured are (Fig. 2) Vicki Blythe, Hazel Lampton, Aulvey Campbell, Ira Gervais, and David Eskins are busy planting onions and cabbage in some of the beds. In (Fig. 1) Kevin Lancon, David Eskins, and Ronnie Corley putting the windows up on the greenhouse before we get a frost or freeze.

In early November, we completed our first Texas Master Gardener fall classes, producing enthusiastic interns. They were checking on their tomato trials and working in different areas of the garden. This gives them the opportunity to get an overview of the different areas of the Discovery Garden and integrate into our GCMG family. In the orchard (Fig. 3) Galveston County Extension Horticulture Agent Stephen Brueggerhoff is talking with Robert Marshall, David Eskins, Debbie Espinosa, and Herman Auer. In the greenhouse (Fig. 4) Briana Etie is with Kay Sandor, and Ronnie Corley is helping Pam Hunter and intern John Ely propagate plants for the 2023 spring sale.

One of the garden highlights for our GCMGs is our annual Thanksgiving luncheon. As usual, this year was great. We are always thankful and appreciative for all the cooks and our kitchen team. Ed Klein and intern Larry Brizendine are pictured in (Fig. 5) frying turkeys while John Jons and Phil Cone are looking on. (Fig. 6) Hedy Wolpa, Emil Woods (husband of intern Tina with Tina not far behind him) and others were busy filling their plates with some great food. It was so good to visit with those who have not been to the garden for a while. We have much for which to be thankful! See you in the garden soon!



All photos by MG Tom Fountain

Learn About a Unique Fruit!



Lisa Belcher
GCMG 2014

Take a look at these unique fruit and learn a tidbit or two about each variety.

1. Smaller than an average lime, the Calamondin (*Citrus mitis*) was brought to the United States circa 1900. Native in China, this fruit arrived in Florida via Panama and was first called “Panama oranges” for a time. Best grown outdoors, this thin-skinned citrus is grown more as an ornamental shrub due to its very tart taste, and the fruit can take up to a year to ripen.

2. Cacao, commonly referred to as Cocoa beans, is not a legume but is classified as a fruit as it grows from the *Theobroma cacao* tree and contains seeds. The pod-shaped fruit contains 35 to 50 seeds, and the pulp surrounding the seeds can be consumed. Typically, fruit is a term considered as the edible part of a tree, but in this case it is the seeds that are roasted and processed into chocolate liquor and cocoa powder.

3. Buddha’s Hand (*Citrus medica* var. *sarcodactylis*) resembles a lemon with long hands. Known for its intense citrus fragrance, the fruit is used by grating the rind or pickling. Beneath the peel is bitter white pith and there is nothing to juice or consume. Left at temples as offerings in East Asia, it is thought to symbolize happiness and longevity.

4. Bergamot Orange (*Citrus bergamia*) was first described in 1708 in Mediterranean countries. This fruit is grown for its rind but not for its pulp. The fragrant oil is used in many perfumes and soaps as well as flavoring Earl Grey tea. The

first bergamot-based cologne water (eau de cologne) was developed in 1676. The producers of Earl Grey began using the bergamot oil essence in their tea in 1824.

5. Finger Lime (*Microcitrus australasica*) is a native Australian citrus grown in rainforests along two coastal regions. Tasting like a combination of lemon, lime and grapefruit, it comes in multiple colors including pink and green. It is prized for its “fruit caviar” inside as the pulp has a bubble-like appearance. Anti-aging creams and cosmetics use this fruit due to its high oil content. They are considered a super food with three times the Vitamin C found in mandarins.

6. Taking 15 years to develop and launched in 2020, Del Monte’s Pinkglow Pineapple, (*Ananas comosus*), is genetically modified tasting less sour than a traditional pineapple. This fruit is only grown in Costa Rica and it has lycopene, a natural pigment found in watermelon and tomatoes, which gives it the pink tint. These pineapples are juicier and sweeter than yellow pineapples. It takes 20 to 24 months to grow a pink pineapple and the cost is approximately \$39, shipping included.

References:

<https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/>

<https://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder/>

Japanese Trade Organization, Agriculture Department

Australian Native Food and Botanicals

<https://www.pinkglowpineapple.com/>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/14/dining/del-monte-pinkglow-pineapples.html>



Photo Gallery: Metal Art



Tish Reustle
GCMG 2008

Photo Gallery for the new year features the work of MG Tish Reustle. Not only is she a great gardener but she is also a metal artist. These photos are pieces she designed and created. They inspire visitors in her wonderful backyard in Friendswood.

"All the metal comes from the scrap yard and the wind chimes were made from dead bamboo poles from the Discovery Garden," she said. Tish oversees the Serenity Garden in the Galveston County Master Gardeners' Discovery Garden at Carbine Park in La Marque. She works with bamboo in this part of the large instructional garden area.

The next issue's Photo Gallery will feature

Favorite Perennials. Anyone can contribute to this page by sending in a photo of a favorite perennial that they photographed along with the name and scientific name of the perennial. Any other information about it can be included and will be used space permitting.

Please send photo in a large size, any information you want to give and your name and general location of art.

Deadline is February 1, 2023.
Send to kbgephart@comcast.net.



GCMG Christmas Party

The annual holiday get-together/December meeting was held December 13 at the home of Mikey and Allen Isbell in Galveston. VP Kevin Lancon announced the 2023 board and officers at the party.



2023 Board of Directors

Frank Resch
Chairman 12/31/25

Judy Anderson
Board Member 12/31/24

Ira Gervais
Board Member 12/31/23

Tish Reustle
Board Member 12/31/23

Linda Steber
Secretary 12/31/25

Association Officers

Kathy Maines
President 12/31/23

Kevin Lancon
Sr. Vice President 12/31/24

Debbie Brizendine
Treasurer 12/31/23

Sharon Zaal
Asst. Treasurer 12/31/24

Briana Etie
Secretary 12/31/23

Pam Hunter Asst. Secretary
12/31/24

TMGA State Delegates

Jan Fountain
Delegate I 12/31/23

Tom Fountain
Delegate II 12/31/24

Galveston County Master Gardener Bulletin Board

Learn about gardening on Floral Fridays. Join horticulturist Stephen Brueggerhoff for Floral Fridays, an ongoing Facebook live presentation every Friday at 11 am.

The event is hosted by Galveston County Texas A&M AgriLife Extension and Galveston County Master Gardeners. Topics are related to Horticulture. Previously live videos can also be viewed.



New website continues to be improved, and check out the 'resources' page example - <https://txmg.org/galveston/beneficials-in-the-garden-and-landscape/>

2023 Texas Master Gardener Training starting January 31!

All MGs are welcome to attend. schedule will be distributed via direct to members email.

Welcome to new members transferring to Galveston County:

Diva Houlette
(Austin County Master Gardeners) and

Marilyn Hakim
(South Carolina Master Gardeners)

Good Morning Master Gardeners,
The next Libbie's Place Green Thumb Club will be on Friday, January 6, 2023, 10-11 a.m.

Libbie's Place Green Thumb Club meets every Friday, except the 2nd Friday of the month, when the Beautification Bunch meets, from 10 to 11 am. We meet outside in the garden with the Libbie's Place clients. The next Beautification Bunch at Libbie's Place will be on Friday, January 13, 2023, from 8 -11 am. Libbie's Place Beautification Bunch cleans up the outside garden area. You are welcome to come anytime you like after 8 a.m. and stay as long as you like. Be sure to bring your water bottle and hand tools. The area is a beautiful handicapped accessible garden for the clients of Libbie's Place to enjoy. We trim trees and weed just like we do at home to keep the area looking beautiful. If you are unfamiliar with Libbie's Place you can read about it here: <https://www.moody.org/libbie-s-place-senior-day>

Libbie's Place is located at 5402 Avenue U in Galveston. Parking is available at Moody Methodist Church. Enter Libbie's Place through the side gate to the left of the front door.

Looking forward to seeing you there,
GCMG Mary Leonard

Five Heritage Junior Master Gardeners received their certification for completion of the three-year course taught by GCMG Kaye Corey and Assistant Paula Matranga. Both are members of Heritage Gardeners Garden Club in Friendswood. Galveston County Extension Agent/Horticulture Stephen Brueggerhoff conducted the graduation ceremony December 1 at the regularly scheduled meeting of Heritage Gardeners in Friendswood. The JMGs include Jasper Dengel, Liam Shelley accepting for his sister Caroline Shelley who was ill, Avery Dengel, Chase Dengel and Savannah Alley.



Post-graduation, the JMGs enjoyed a pizza party in celebration of the event.

January 2023 Galveston County Master Gardener Gulf Coast Gardening Calendar

Unless otherwise noted, all Gulf Coast Gardening programs are conducted at Galveston County AgriLife Extension office inside Carbide Park at 4102-B Main Street (FM 519), La Marque, 77568

URBAN ORCHARD SERIES: WEDGE GRAFTING

Saturday, January 7, 2023

9 - 11:30 am

Master Gardeners Herman Auer, Hazel Lampton and Debbie Espinosa will discuss the how, when, & why of wedge, whip and tongue, and chip bud method grafting. This hands-on program will give you choices to graft stone fruit, pome and evergreen fruit trees. The possibilities are endless when you know how to graft your own fruit trees!

NOTE: Class is limited to 20 persons participating. You must pre-register in order to attend. Other persons may attend for observation only.

Register online: <https://galveston.agrilife.org/horticulture/mgseminars/>, or call 281-309-5065.

URBAN ORCHARD SERIES: GROWING PECANS AT HOME

Saturday, January 7, 2023

1-3 pm

Learn best practices for planting, maintaining and cultivating pecans with Horticulture Agent Stephen Brueggerhoff. Weather allowing, we will visit a remnant pecan orchard in Carbide Park. Register online: <https://galveston.agrilife.org/horticulture/mgseminars/>, or call 281-309-5065.

VEGGIE GARDEN SERIES: GROWING GREAT TOMATOES, PART 2

Saturday, January 21, 2023

9 - 11:30 am

Part two of three programs Growing Great Tomatoes by Galveston County Master Gardener Ira Gervais. Ira reveals his secrets of successful production of great tomatoes. Learn about various varieties that do well in this area, when to transplant your seedlings and best growing techniques. Information on soil requirements, nutrients and temperature range for best tomato fruit set. With this knowledge, you can become the tomato king on your street and be challenged by your friends. Register online: <https://galveston.agrilife.org/horticulture/mgseminars/>, or call 281-309-5065.

URBAN ORCHARD SERIES: PROPAGATING FIG TREES

Saturday, January 21, 2023

1-3 pm

Explore best methods propagating and pruning fig trees with Master Gardener Barbara Canetti. Barbara will cover fig growth habit and fruiting varieties, as well as maintenance. We will visit our Discovery Garden Orchard for hands on experience with our fig collection. Register online: <https://galveston.agrilife.org/horticulture/mgseminars/>, or call 281-309-5065.

GCMG interns dismantle their tomato trial bed

Photos by intern Patty McElhany and MG Pam Hunter



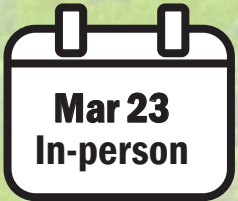
Galveston County Master Gardeners

2023 Plant Sales



Ready, Set, Spring! Sale

Fruit & citrus trees, tomatoes, potatoes, peppers, bulbs & perennials



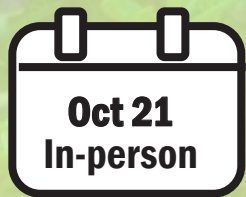
March Madness in the Discovery Garden

Master Gardener grown, perennials, spring vegetables, peppers & herbs



Summer Sundown Sale

Fruit & citrus trees, fall tomatoes, perennials, tropical hibiscus & plumeria



Fall Festival & Plant Sale

Master Gardener grown, fall vegetables, herbs, bulbs & Louisiana irises



Online sales at: <https://store.galvestonmg.org>

In-person sales at: Discovery Garden
4102 Main St (FM 519) La Marque, 77568



If you need special accommodations, please contact the Extension Office no later than seven days before the program so we can consider your request. 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.

Texan Pride Growing Pecans



Stephen Brueggerhoff
Extension Agent - Horticulture
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension
Service - Galveston County

There are a few iconic trees that Texans identify with. The majestic pecan tree is one that has claimed a place in our hearts and going so far as being designated the State Tree. Folks I have met take pride in growing different varieties of pecan trees for fun and

for a little bit of profit. Families living in urban areas may decide to plant pecan trees for personal harvest and ornamental value. I will use this article to highlight a few aspects of pecan history, flowering types and resources to provide guidance for successfully growing pecans.

Pecan (*Carya illinoensis*) is a native nut bearing tree to southern North America and Mexico. These stately trees can grow to 100-ft in height, with native and improved varieties hardy from USDA Zones 5 to 9. Historically pecans were not commercially grown until the 1880s and with the advent of improved varieties. Commercial production is now a global effort, with the United States producing an estimated 80% of the world's pecans from Georgia, Texas and New Mexico at cumulative 330 million pounds at end of 2021.

Their majestic stature and natural growth habit should provide a clue for planting in the landscape. Provide minimum of 50-feet apart at center when considering orchard planting, and certainly far enough away from the house to avoid issues with limb intrusion. Pecan trees can be planted annually as bare root from December through March. When choosing a variety, one must consider their flowering structure. Pecan trees are monoecious, meaning they produce separate male and female flowers on the same plant. Male flowers are produced on 5-inch long catkins, and female flowers are discrete and yellowish-green, produced at the tips of emerging shoots. Varieties are described by flowering type; Type I are those shedding pollen before the female flowers are receptive, and Type II are varieties that shed after the female flowers are receptive. While some varieties are described as self-pollinating, it is always best to consider planting both types of trees in your orchard to enhance the chance of adequate cross-pollination.

Each grower that I have talked with have their own varietal preference. Texas A&M AgriLife Extension provides a regional map indicating pecan varieties that perform well in one third of our state. Cheyenne, Desirable, Caddo, Forkert and Kiowa are just a few of the named varieties recommended for our region. Desirable is a Type I scab resistant

variety, producing a medium sized nut with a soft shell and ripening late October. This variety is promoted as self-fertile, and you may wish to increase the chance for production by planting a late pollen shedding variety like Choctaw. Choctaw produces large and long nut with thin shell. Forkert is another Type II variety, producing a large nut with thin shell.

There are a few pathogens and insects that need to be monitored during annual growth. Pecan scab is a fungal plant pathogen that causes lesions and affects the tissue of twigs, leaves, shucks and nuts and can affect production. The pathogen begins in early spring and can persist through summer from repeat infection cycles. The pathogen is spread through wind and rain events. Commercial management may include repeat fungicide applications for prevention. This kind of treatment may not be practical for the home orchard and is dependent on the expense and equipment needed for comprehensive foliar coverage. I recommend using practical scouting tools to manage the home orchard for any pathogen, including disease history for established orchards, choosing scab-resistant pecan varieties, keeping an eye on rainfall forecasts and temperature variables. Other sustainable practices are selective pruning to allow adequate air movement through the canopy and keeping the orchard floor clear of infected or fallen leaves.

Aggie Horticulture is your one-stop shopping guide with FAQ sheets covering fruit and nut tree culture, with comprehensive information on growing pecans: <https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/fruit-nut/>. You can also learn more about growing fruit and nut trees through our Gulf Coast Gardening Urban Orchard Series, the first is Wedge Grafting Fruit Trees on January 7, followed by Fig Propagation on January 21. Find out more and register for these free programs online: <https://galveston.agrilife.org/horticulture/>. Have a happy New Year and I'll see you in the garden.



Photo by Stephen Brueggerhoff.

Judy's Corner: Galveston County Monthly Meetings



Judy Anderson
GCMG 2012

Galveston County Master Gardeners 2023 Monthly Meeting Schedule

January

The Year Ahead
Kathy Maines
GCMGA President
Robin Collins
Texas State Master Gardener
Past President
Stephen Brueggerhoff
Extension Agent-Horticulture,
Galveston County
Extension Office

February

Laurie Lomas Gonzales
Trinity River National Wildlife
Refuge Biologist
War of the Worlds
Aliens vs Invasives
Extension Office

March

Tool Time
Tim Jahnke, GCMG 2011
Extension Office

April

Seeding Galveston
Potluck at the Seeding
Galveston home
Cheryl Watson (2018)

May

Backyard Meeting, hosted by
Ira and Sandra Gervais
(both 2011)
Friendswood

June

Graduation and Recognition
Mikey and Allen Isbell, (1992)
Galveston

July

Fish Fry
Briana Etie (2017) and Family
Potluck
Composting Chat with
Jim Waligora (1998)
Discovery House

August

TBA

September

Backyard Meeting hosted by
Tom and Jan Fountain
(2008 & 2012)
Santa Fe

October

Backyard Meeting hosted by
Pam and Darrell Hunter, (2018)
Santa Fe

November

Annual Meeting
Extension Office

December

Holiday Party
Mikey and Allen Isbell, (1992)
Grinch Christmas
Toy Donation
Galveston

February GCMG Monthly Meeting

Laurie Lomas Gonzales

Aliens VS Invasives



Laurie Lomas Gonzales is the Wildlife Biologist at Trinity River National Wildlife Refuge in Liberty, Texas. She has lived in Liberty since 2005, but before that she lived in Florida, New Mexico, California, and South Texas. She is from the Rio Grande Valley and attended Texas A&M University-Kingsville where she double-majored in

Animal Science and Biology. She holds a master's degree in Wildlife Science from New Mexico State University.

At Trinity River National Wildlife Refuge, she is responsible for habitat management, wildlife research, volunteer coordination, environmental education, hiking trail maintenance, and putting out whatever fires her boss needs to tackle to run the office. She and her husband are the proud parents of twin six-year-old sons.

One of the projects she coordinates is an environmental grant from Entergy and the Conservation Fund. The reforestation project is part of a multi-year initiative to restore 100 acres of bottomland hardwood forest with 45,000 trees. The goal is to plant oaks, elms, and pecans to give them a head start and out-compete invasives like Chinese tallow and trifoliate. While providing useful shade and shelter for animals, Gonzales said the trees help improve air quality and water quality and sequester carbon from the atmosphere. Their roots stabilize soil and help slow floodwaters. Also, acorns are a major food source for more than 100 species.

Recently, Gonzales was recognized for her work with the Crossroads to Boardwalks linking the city of Liberty with the Trinity River National Wildlife Refuge through a network of hiking, biking, and paddling trails; these trails would be accessible and provide outdoor recreation opportunities for locals and visitors. She reached out to partners and secured resources to build the observation decks, benches, kiosks, bike racks and boardwalks. Her goal is to bring the Wildlife Refuge to people as well as wildlife, water, and habitat conservation.

For this successful work she was recently recognized and awarded the American Recreation Coalition's prestigious Legends Award at a ceremony in Washington D.C. She plans to continue to work with the community and the many

2023 Master Gardener Association Leadership

President

Kathy Maines

Sr. Vice President

Kevin Lancon

Treasurer

Debra Brizendine

Assistant Treasurer

Sharon Zaal

Secretary

Briana Etie

Assistant Secretary

Pam Hunter

State Association Delegates

Tom and Jan Fountain

State Association Alternate Delegates

Ira and Sandra Gervais

VP for Programs

Vacant, Education Programs
Judy Anderson, Monthly Meetings

Speakers Bureau Coordinators

Vacant

Plant Sale Chairmen

Kathy Maines and Kevin Lancon

Discovery Garden Coordinator

Kevin Lancon

Discovery Garden Area Leaders

**Judy Anderson, Sue Bain,
Linda Barnett, David Cooper,
Briana Etie, Pam Hunter,
John Jons, Kathy Maines,
Monica Martens,
Rachel Montemayor,
Tish Reustle, and Jim Waligora**

VP for Volunteer Development

Nancy Greenfield

MG Intern Course Team Leader

Pam Hunter

VP for Media Relations

Nita Caskey

Newsletter Editors

**Karolyn Gephart and
Robin Stone Collins**

Fellowship

Penny Bessire

MG Volunteer Hour Recorders

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

Jr. Master Gardener Programs Leaders

Kaye Corey and Gayle McAdoo

Photography Team Leaders

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

Webmaster

Stephen Brueggerhoff

Board of Directors

**Judy Anderson, Ira Gervais,
Frank Resch, Tish Reustle,
and Linda Steber**

CEA-HORT and Master Gardener

Program Coordinator

Stephen Brueggerhoff, M.S.

partners that helped make her vision a reality.

Laurie will join the Galveston County Master Gardeners with a ZOOM presentation about the invasives challenging our community. She is an engaging, knowledgeable presenter who will entertain you with her many experiences.

March GCMG Monthly Meeting

Tim Jahnke, GCMG 2011

Bringing Back Tool Time



Now that winter is winding down and we are beginning to think about getting back in the garden, it is a good time to think about making sure our tools are clean and ready for the work ahead. Have you ever wondered how to clean your snippers, loppers, pruners, and saws? After you get them clean, they will still need to be sharpened. Before COVID-19, Tim Jahnke often did "Tool Time" presentations and even gave demonstrations on the Discovery House patios- before it was a Discovery House. I remember being part of a group sitting around the table, watching Tim take apart the pruners, clean them, and sharpening them then put them back together, and there were no parts left over! If you inventory your garden tools and realize they may need some attention, you may need some help. YouTube is always there, but how about some in person training. Preparing for spring gardening with clean, sharp tools will make that investment of time and labor more productive.

April GCMG Monthly Meeting

Seeding Galveston



The Galveston County Master Gardeners partner with several groups on Galveston Island meeting different goals of the organization. Several years ago, the GCMG became a partner with Seeding Galveston, a 501(c)(3) organization, when they sponsored the 100 Kitchen Gardens of Galveston. Cheryl

Watson, MG 2018, coordinated with Debbie Berger and John Sessions, of Seeding Galveston, to educate, build and support 100 Kitchen Gardens. They mentor individuals and groups to share the bounty of homegrown produce. Besides building the raised beds, they teach the gardeners when and how to plant; how often to water and other tools to be successful. Galveston has areas where fresh produce is not available, and the 100 Kitchen Gardens was created to provide healthy, home-grown food readily available through home gardens or farmer's market.

Seeding Galveston is located at 3318 Avenue N where their produce is available for sale on Saturday from 8 to 10 am. The location has raised beds and fruit trees growing behind a fenced area. They have a composting station, chickens, and goats. A favorite area for the volunteers is the Circle of Trees, an area with deep shade and comfy chairs for relaxing. A beautiful herb garden is nearby.

The Seeding Galveston team has invited the GCMG to visit the gardens for our first Backyard Meeting in 2023.



Photos courtesy of Seeding Galveston