THE PERENNIAL ISSUE

GULF COAST Gardening

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TEXAS MASTER GARDENER
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

It's the BEST time of Year

MG Kathy Maines

What's the first thing you think of when someone mentions the spring season? Maybe warmer weather? Rainfall? How about flowers? I would have to say, "All of the above." Spring is good for the soul. With the warmer weather and rainfall, perennials come back to life. We all have that plant or shrub that we think might not have survived the winter, but, all of a sudden, there are buds, leaves and flowers. Gardening is exciting and so much fun! Time to enjoy being outside. Spring is one of the best times of the year for working in your garden and yard. Not too hot, not too cold. Not too dry. I remember daffodils every spring as a child and they have always been a favorite of mine. In case you feel like you need a little motivation or ideas to get you going, you will find it in this newsletter.

Some old-fashioned things like fresh air and sunshine are hard to beat. Laura Ingalls Wilder.

Happy Spring!

Kathy Maines

(Pexels.com)

Welcome Spring!

MG Karolyn Gephart

Looking at the sunflowers (*Helianthus annuus*) on the cover makes me smile. It's spring; you can see the visitors on the cover flowers are also a sign of the season. Perennials persist for many growing seasons and as a gardener, that makes me happy to see their renewal. This issue is full of information on various perennials readers might like to try in their own gardens. Grow them from seeds, plant them in shade, the articles in this issue will help gardeners know what to do and what to choose. The Photo Gallery (page 29) has photos of GCMGs favorites and the three photos on the Contents page are part of the Gallery. Learn more about the preservation of Louisiana irises. Monica Martens informs readers on Page 18. Love orchids? Check out the book review of *The Orchid Thief: A True Story of Beauty and Obsession* by Susan Orlean. Enjoy the sunshine with a good book (page 30). Not sure what a plant is…you need a plant app for your phone (page 16). MG Briana Etie did the research for us. Thanks to all who contributed to this wonderful issue!

Karolyn Gephart

Four O'Clocks (*Mirabilis jalapa*) MG Pam Hunter

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Louisiana Iris

Caperberry

Geranium

IN THIS ISSUE

Cover photo by GCMG Intern Larry **Brizendine. Sunflowers** *(Helianthus annuus)*

(Top of page) Favorite perennials of MGs Monica Martens, Briana Etie and Karolyn Gephart: **Louisiana Iris 'Swords Out'** (*Iris ser. hexagonae*), Caperberry (*Capparis spinosa*), Geranium (*Pelargonium*) See Photo Gallery page 29.

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Seeding Perennials

Bettye Vogler
GCMG 2020

Looking to elevate your gardening game this spring? Starting seeds at home is a fun and affordable way to kick start your garden. Even so, gardeners are reluctant to start perennials by seed because of the mistaken idea that the plant will not produce flowers the first year. While it is true that a definite number of perennials grown from seed will only produce foliage the first year, there are plants that will reward you with a beautiful display of color if you start seeds early enough. We call those plants FYF or first-year flowering perennials.

Of course, first-year flowering plants may not be fully mature and might behave differently. They could also produce smaller flowers, or you might find that double flowering plants may have single count petals.

For me, Coneflower 'Cheyenne Spirit' (*Echinacea purpurea*) and Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*) are two of the best first year flowering plants that do well in our area.

'Cheyenne Spirit' is a deserving winner of the 2012 Fleuroselect Gold Medal (Fleuroselect is the international organization for ornamental plants) and a 2013 All-America Selection® award winner (AAS is the American equivalent). The plants need little water to thrive and bloom all season long without deadheading. 'Cheyenne Spirit' will delight and inspire you with its good plant habit, flower quality and uniformity, all of which are exceptional traits for a first-year flowering variety.

This picture is the first coneflower I grew from seeds and a perfect example of how a first-year flowering plant might behave differently. (Photo below)

Black-eyed Susan, also commonly referred to as rudbeckia, is easy to grow, resilient, salt and drought tolerant and an excellent choice for coastal landscapes. These plants will produce blooms the first year if you plant the seeds early. Starting seeds indoors and transplanting them as soon as the weather allows is essential in getting rudbeckia first-year blooms.

There are other perennials that will flower the first year, making them perfect for gardens in our zone (Zones 9a and 9b for Galveston County) as specified in the USDA Hardiness Zone Map.

Additionally, a list in the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension's Earth-Kind® Plant Selector (http://ekps.tamu.edu/) include gaillardia, lobelia, Shasta daisy, gaura, agastache, balloon flower, and the butterfly bush along with considerable other varieties.

I have included a picture of a Pink gaura (*Oenothera lindheimeri*) and a gaillardia from my garden that I started from seed.

After you select your seeds, it is important to remember that the sprout lives in the seed and germination will occur when a dormant seed springs to life through interaction with moisture, oxygen, light, and soil content. All seeds hold tiny amounts of moisture on their own, but your seeds need moist soil to sprout. Most seeds need the right temperature to germinate as well, and a cheap heating mat does an excellent job at supplying the bottom heat necessary for germination.

I evaluate the germination of seeds by pouring them in a bowl of water. Those that sink are good to sow, and those that stay on the surface are good to throw.

Photos by MG Bettye Vogler

Coneflower from seed

Pink Gaura

"Growing plants from seeds is highly satisfying…"

In general, seeds do not need light to germinate; however, seedlings should be exposed to light as soon as they appear.

As lights go, an efficient lamp expresses spectrums such as blue that promotes growth and red that help flowering and amplifies production. In fact, plants absorb all the colors except for green, which they reflect, giving the leaves that pretty hue in appearance.

When you are ready to start your seeds, you will need containers. Some gardeners use seed starting trays or seed starting pots. I reuse anything I can find that is at least two inches deep, including items like K-Cup® pods, toilet paper rolls, berry containers, plastic or Styrofoam™ takeout containers, rotisserie chicken containers, eggshells and eggshell cartons, paper or plastic cups, vegetable cans, and milk and creamer cartons. Regardless of your container, make sure the object is clean, and you can rinse out non-paper products with soapy water. Look around, the resources are endless. Plan ahead and start to squirrel away anything that can hold a little seed starting mix.

Think about using a media (soil) that give your seeds a jumpstart, since seed starting mediums help with faster root development. A general rule of thumb in planting depth is never plant a seed more than twice the depth of its diameter.

From personal experience, I recommend labeling your pots with the type of seed, the date of sowing, and average days to germination. My very first year of seed sowing, I planted a tray of seeds in 18 pots, three of each kind in a single row. I labeled the first pot in each row with the name of the plant. When the seedlings appeared, I picked up four of the best-looking pots and placed them under the grow lamp. At that very second, I thought I was going to hyperventilate … I had absolutely no idea what plants were in those four pots!

Gardening is exciting and growing plants from seed is highly satisfying and therapeutic. Seeding perennials will end the need to replant your garden beds every season, so start those seeds, and have gorgeous flowers that will live on to create enduring beauty for years to come.

Gardening is not only about growing a new plant, but I find it can keep me from being stressed, experiencing anxiety or loneliness, and it supports a more active and healthier lifestyle. Gardening is both science and art, mixed well to give a human hope, presence of mind, and clarity in life. Be available for your seeds as well as your gardening dream projects.

In agriculture, the language of the land whispers that nothing could be more gratifying than watching a plant spring to life from something as tiny as a seed that you planted.

References:

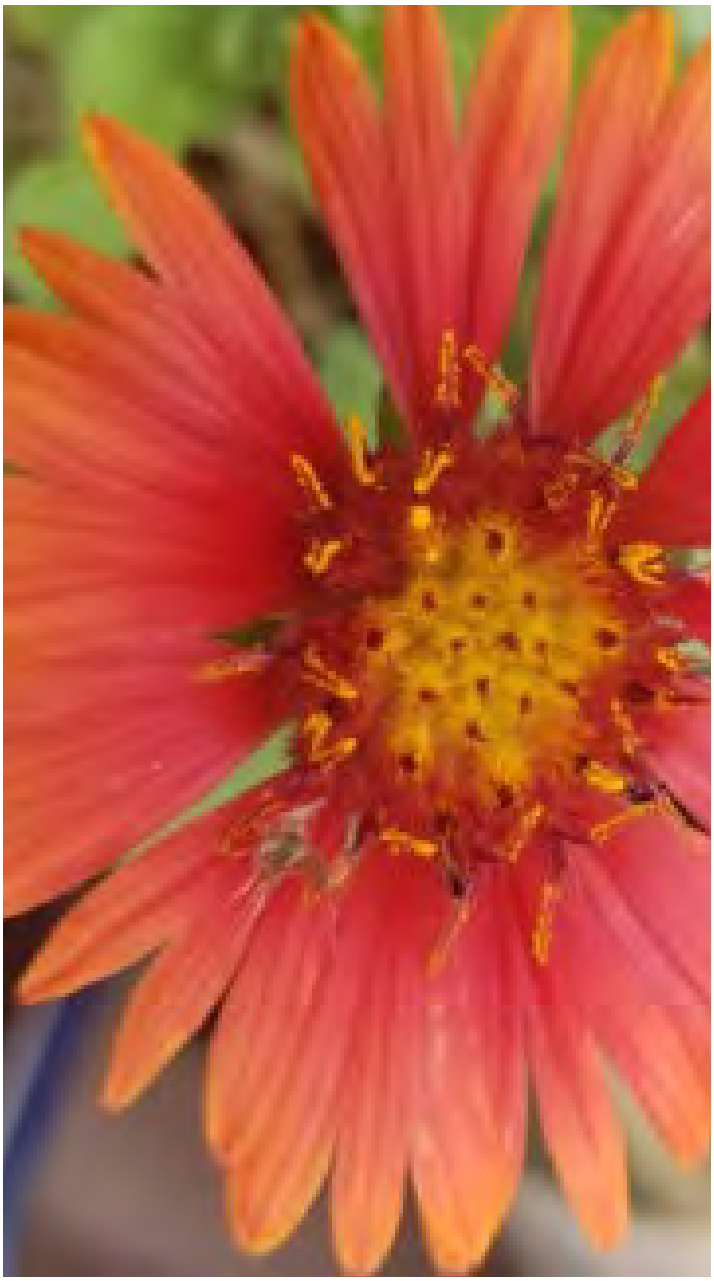
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

Earth-Kind® Plant Selector: http://ekps.tamu.edu/

Aggie Horticulture: www.tamu.edu/horticulture

The Gardens at Texas A&M University: https://gardens.tamu.edu/

USDA Hardiness Zone Map: https://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/



Photos by MG Bettye Vogler

Gaillardia

Perennials in the Pergola

Pam Hunter
GCMG 2018

The following plants are outstanding perennials that have been planted in the Galveston County Master Gardener Discovery Garden around the pergola where visitors first enter the area. These lively perennials add color and variety to home landscapes.

Dutchman's pipevine (*Aristolochia macrophylla*)

A unique plant for your perennial garden is Dutchman's pipevine. It is a woody, deciduous, vigorous vine that produces flowers shaped like curved pipes and has large heart-shaped leaves. Dutchman's pipevine is a host plant to swallowtail butterflies and provides habitats that are beneficial for insects. It has evolved producing chemicals that are, at a minimum, distasteful to those who would eat it. Pipevine swallowtail caterpillars are among the few creatures who can process these chemicals without harming themselves. Many species of Dutchman's pipevine are eaten by the caterpillar larvae of Pipevine swallowtail butterflies, thus making the caterpillars unpalatable to most predators.

Four o'clocks (*Mirabilis jalapa*)

Four o'clocks, also called Marvel of Peru, are lush and bushy, and grow to four-feet. The tubular flowers bloom in iridescent purple, white, red, yellow, with striped and blotchy details. Their name derives from the fact that their flowers open in late afternoon and stay open until the next morning, except on cloudy days when they open earlier. Their appealing fragrance is a major reason for their popularity. They attract hummingbirds and moths to the garden. Four o'clocks are very heat and drought tolerant. They flower best in the sun, but will tolerate partial shade.

Toad lily (*Tricyrtis hirta*)

This deciduous plant forms an attractive mound of green leaves. They have orchid-like white flowers with plum-purple spotting that can become blotchy and irregular toward the petal tips. They are excellent as a cut flower. Their mature height is 24-inches with a spread of 18-inches. The plant requires an evenly moist, well-drained soil for optimal growth, likes partial shade to full shade, and prefers a relatively sheltered location. It is not particular as to soil pH, but grows best in rich soils. They bloom in the summer and fall with flower colors of blue, pink, purple, white and yellow.

Pineapple lily (*Eucomis* sp.)

Whether planted in the ground or in a container, pineapple lily is a conversation starter. Native to the South African tropics, this lily forms a rosette of leaves in early summer with two to three-foot spikes of densely clustered, star-like greenish white flowers with pink or purple highlights. It blooms in mid to late summer. Each spike is crowned with leafy bracts that look like the tops of pineapples.

Purple prince (*Alternanthera brasiliana*)

This showy, heat-loving ground cover plant is perfect as a landscape edging plant or filler in containers. With inconsistent flowering, it is grown for ornamental foliage. It tolerates partial shade, but the most vivid color is produced in full sun. Other names for it are Brazilian joy weed, Calico plant, and Parrot leaf. Its mature height is approximately 14-inches and

Photos by MG Pam Hunter unless otherwise noted

Four O'clocks

Blue Daze (Texas A&M AgriLife Research)

Hidden Ginger

Mexican Sage
Pixabay.com

Pineapple Lily

"These lively perennials add color, variety"

its spread is 20-inches. Purple prince's attractive pointy leaves emerge olive green in spring, turning burgundy in color with showy purple variegation the rest of the year.

Hidden lily (*Curcuma* sp.)

Hidden lily, also known as Hidden ginger, is a stately and elegant summer-blooming flower that is easy to grow. This heat loving, long-blooming tropical plant produces gorgeous spires of pink, purple, or white flowers all summer long. Hidden lily makes an outstanding addition to garden beds and borders, as well as container gardens. It can also be an eye-catching tabletop centerpiece. This easy outdoor plant can be grown by itself, but also makes an excellent accent to blue salvia, hibiscus, and purple elephant ears in containers.

Triplet lilies (*Triteleia laxa*)

Planting Triplet lilies in your landscape is a great source of late spring or early summer color. They are commonly called Pretty face or Wild hyacinth. Blooms can be light blue, lavender, or white. Reaching 15 to 20-inches, planting Triplet lilies around plants that flower earlier adds a splash of color around foliage. The blooms can last two to three weeks.

Blue daze (*Evolvulus glomeratus*)

A time-tested Lone Star favorite, Blue daze has been added to the list of Texas Superstar® plants. Blue daze is a heat and sun loving, low spreading tropical plant used in summer to liven up a landscape. It provides summer-long flowers in a beautiful sky-blue hue. It blooms best in full sun and tolerates salty conditions, which make it a good option for coastal gardeners. Plants grow nine to 18-inches tall and spread up to 36-inches wide. They are generally grown as an annual in areas that experience heavy frost, but as tender subtropical perennials in the USDA Plant Hardiness Map zones 9-13.

Rangoon creeper (*Combretum indicum*)

This tropical vine is drought tolerant and root hardy. It needs support of a fence or trellis as well as height for future growth. Rangoon creeper will freeze back if temperatures drop into the 20s, but bounces back with no problems. The gorgeous flowers seemingly drip from the plant at every possible spot and resemble those of a plumeria, but aren't quite as large. They attract hummingbirds and butterflies.

Mexican bush sage (*Salvia leucantha*)

Mexican bush sage is an evergreen shrubby perennial that is a Texas native and Texas Superstar®. It is typically grown as an annual in the northern part of Texas, although it is native to Mexico and the tropical Americas. This sage is most noted for producing a very attractive late summer to frost bloom of showy bicolor flowers consisting of white corollas and longer-lasting funnel-form purple calyces. Flowers appear in dense, arching, terminal spikes to 10-inches long that extend above the foliage. Flowers are attractive to butterflies and hummingbirds.

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https://Aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu

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Purple prince
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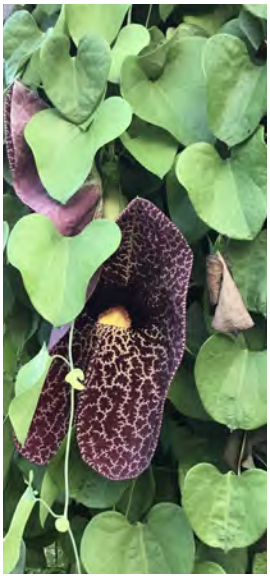
Rangoon creeper

Toad lily



Dutchman's pipe vine

Triplet lilies

Photos by MG Pam Hunter unless otherwise noted

My *Heirloom* Plant

Lisa Belcher
GCMG 2018

Back in 2015, I attended the Texas Master Gardener State Conference. One of the speakers was Felder Rushing, author of *Slow Gardening, Passalong Plants*, and his most recent, *Maverick Gardeners.* During his talk, Rushing discussed the topic of pass-along plants from neighbor to neighbor, friend to friend, and even amongst relatives. After the session there was a break and I found Rushing wandering amongst the vendors, approached him, and asked him a question. I posed this question: "Shouldn't plant cuttings from a family member, say a grandmother to grandchild, be considered an heirloom plant rather than just a pass-along plant? Isn't it something more special?" Rushing looked at me and replied "Nope, they are just plants, nothing else, just a cutting to pass-along." I pushed further. "But shouldn't it be something more special than just a pass-along?" Again, with great patience, he replied, "No matter who gave you that plant, lady, it's still just a plant." I thanked him and wished him well. And, totally disagreed with him.

Let's jump forward a few years when Dr. William Johnson, former Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Horticulture Agent, approached me and a fellow member of the greenhouse team and asked us to repot his mother's Christmas cactus. He told us this was very special to him as this Christmas cactus was given to his mother on her wedding day from a cutting from her own mother's cactus. I can clearly, to this day, hear him say "and they were married for over 60 years." Gulp. No pressure. No pressure at all. We repotted the cactus and he was very appreciative. When I brought the Christmas cactus to his office, I asked him the same question I asked Rushing, this time being "Shouldn't your mother's plant be in the category of heirloom plant vs. just a pass-along plant?"

I was told there is no horticultural name given or assigned to a plant when it is given from one family member to another. It just doesn't exist. "But it should," I thought to myself. I spent months searching websites in America and Europe trying to find heirloom plants and came up with zilch. Heirloom seed, yes. But what is an heirloom seed exactly? According to Bill Helper, his father, J.R. Helper, a horticulturalist and plant breeder at the University of New Hampshire, came up with that word. These seeds, dating back to the 1930's, were hand collected and were called "family treasurers" as they were passed on to the next generation. Today, to be classified as an heirloom seed, it must be collected and passed down between 50 to 100 years and be open-pollinated, meaning pollinated by birds, insects, wind, or other natural means.

I want to share with you a story about my heirloom plant. Yes, that is what I am calling it, an heirloom plant. Veda Mae was

Photo by MG Lisa Belcher.

Photo by MG Lisa Belcher.

"....a passalong plant or an heirloom plant?"

my great aunt and my absolute favorite person in the whole world. She was a remarkable woman with a remarkable story. At the age of 7, she was put on a train by her mother in Texas to go live with an uncle and aunt she had never met in Iowa. It was a three-day train ride. She vividly remembered meeting these strangers whom she grew to love. She told me stories of her life and with every unbelievable story I kept asking, "How did you get through that?" Her reply: "Kid, when life gives you lemons, it's up to you if you are going to make the lemonade." My Great Aunt Veda, my father's aunt, as far back as I can remember, had a strange looking plant on her kitchen counter. She didn't know what it was, only that she had received a cutting of it from her Aunt Ella (the aunt she was sent to live with). She stuck it in a pot with soil and watered it when she remembered. It was huge and had spikes and arm-like projections growing out the sides. When it reached the ceiling, she had to move it to the floor.

I was visiting from England, where I was living at the time, and removed three "arm cuttings" from the plant for my daughters. I couldn't take them through customs, so I asked my dad to put each in a pot and do what Aunt Veda did: water them when he remembered. He did that for a couple of years and, while they didn't die, they didn't grow much either. In 2017, I brought the three potted cuttings to my house in League City and saw they were placed in dirt. Yep, dirt. Many gardeners will know what this means. Those of you who don't know, it's a good thing. (Dirt is something that gets on your hands and clothes). I repotted them with good soil, watered them when I remembered, and tried to figure out just what plant I had. Off to my sidekick sleuth Google, who often helps me out when I'm stumped, and it didn't take me long to find the answer: African Milk Tree (*Euphorbia trigona*). Native to Africa, this fast-growing succulent can grow up to nine feet and makes a great house plant. It is easy to propagate by breaking off an "arm" of the plant, dipping in rooting hormone, and planting in moist cactus/succulent soil. Be patient and do not water until you see a tiny leaf appear. Below are my heirloom plants for my three daughters, cuttings taken for them from their great, great aunt's plant. They are thriving and my daughters know that soon they will each be the owner of one of these plants. I hope that when they care for their plant, they will remember all the time they spent with Veda Mae, remember all the laughter, and her stories. Hopefully one day they too can take a cutting or two, put it in a pot, give it one to their children, and share her stories.

Now, would you call that just a pass-along plant or an heirloom plant?

Photo by MG Lisa Belcher.

Pelargoniums

Elayne Kouzounis
GCMG 1998

In the plant family Geraniaceae, the largest genera include geraniums (430 species) and pelargoniums (280 species). Geraniums are hardy perennials and pelargoniums are tender tropical perennials that grow best in zones 9-12. Flowers of the geranium and pelargonium are not the same. Geranium flowers have five similar petals; pelargonium blooms have two upper petals which are different from the three lower petals.

Most pelargonium species come from South Africa, but through hundreds of years of breeding, the parentage of today's varieties is obscured. Commonly called geraniums, these plants are deservedly popular. Among the easiest plants to grow, they have a great deal of variation in flower shape, flower color, aroma, size, habit and leaf coloring. One of their outstanding attributes is the ability to flower for many months, even when the temperatures drop in winter.

Pelargoniums are divided into different groups. These groups are zonal geraniums, scented leaf pelargoniums, ivy leaf pelargoniums, fancy leaf pelargoniums, and regal pelargoniums.

Zonal geraniums (***Pelargonium*** x ***hortorum***)

Many gardeners consider zonal geraniums the epitome of summer flowers. They are named for the dark, horseshoe-shaped color in the leaves of most varieties. Zonal geraniums are cousins to perennial geraniums.

Zonal geraniums are upright bushes covered with red, pink, salmon, white, rose, cherry-red and bi-colored flowers on long stems held above the plant base. Flower clusters (or umbels) contain many individual flowers and give a burst of color. Plants from four-inch pots transplanted to the garden in spring will reach up to 18-inches high and wide by the end of summer.

Zonal geraniums benefit from sun. They develop into shapely hanging baskets clothed with foliage and flowers. As window box plants, they excel and are ideal in full sun and moderate-to-rich, well- drained moist soil. Incorporate a slow-release fertilizer into the soil at planting time. Plant after all danger of frost has passed and the soil is warm. Space them 12-inches apart. The only other care requirement is deadheading spent blooms.

Propagation is by seed or by cuttings. So far, the only readily available semi-double flowered varieties are grown from cuttings. The cuttings root easily. Make cuttings 8 to 10 weeks prior to planting out for husky plants. Seed-grown varieties should be started 10 to 12 weeks prior to garden planting. Seeds germinate in 7 to 10 days at 70 to 75-degrees.

Zonal geraniums are among the best plants for formal beds. They can provide pockets of color in any sunny spot. Group three or more together for color impact in flower borders or along walks and pathways.

Geranium. Photo by MG Elayne Kouzounis.

Pelargonium 'Attar rose'. Photo by MG Elayne Kouzounis.

Texas Superstar® geranium baskets. (tamu.edu)

"These plants are deservedly popular…"

They are classics in containers, all by themselves or mixed with other kinds of plants. Geraniums are also grown as standards—a single stem is trained to the desired height with a bushy canopy of flowers and leaves. Zonal geraniums will bloom through the winter in sunny windows.

Many varieties are available at garden centers in the spring. A few popular semi-doubles are 'Tango™ Red', a bright orange-red with dark foliage; 'Forever Yours,' a vigorous red; 'Blues,' cherry blossom pink with unique rose and white markings near the center of petals; 'Schone Helena,' a two-toned salmon; and 'Snowmass,' pure white. Seed grown singles are generally found in series of many colors. Widely planted are 'Orbit™' series, 'Elite™ series' 'Ringo 2000 ™' series, 'Bandit,' and 'Hollywood' varieties.

These are mostly seen as bedding or outdoor container plants. This group contains the bright scarlet geranium, of which

White geranium . Photo by MG Elayne Kouzounis.

Texas Superstar pelargonium basket. (tamu.edu)

'Paul Crampel' and 'Gustav Emich' are the most familiar. Its members have a tightly packed cluster of smallish flowers, each about 2.5-inches wide, on a short stem originating from a leaf joint. They can be as tall as six-feet and more, with a wall to provide support.

Good varieties include 'Red Fiat,' salmon-red; 'Orangesonne,' orange; 'Queen of Denmark,' salmon-pink.

All geraniums do best when water does not sit on their leaves, when they are consistently deadheaded, and when allowed to just dry out between watering.

Scented leaf pelargoniums

Scented leaf pelargoniums each smell differently when lightly rubbed. Most of these are species, having much cut and divided leaves, their flowers are small and brightly colored, and their stems are thinner and tougher, woody rather than herbaceous. Among them are 'Attar of Roses,' lilac flowers with rose-scented leaves and *P. crispum* 'Variegatum,' pink flowers, with lemon-scented curled leaves. Scented geraniums have been used in cakes, jams, and teas for centuries.

Ivy leaf pelargoniums (*P. peltatum*)

Ivy leaf pelargoniums have a trailing habit ideal for hanging containers or for trailing down from shelves or other flat surfaces; 'L. Élegante' is one of the best. As well as being easy to grow, it has large, narrow-petalled white flowers with purple lines, and grey-green leaves edged with white and pink.

Fancy leaf pelargoniums (*P. peltatum*)

Fancy leaf pelargoniums grow on average to six-inches tall. Among them are 'Red Black Vesuvius,' with scarlet flowers, and dark red-brown, almost black flowers.

Regal pelargoniums (*Pelargonium grandiflorum*)

Regal pelargoniums form another group and are less free-flowering and with a shorter season. Their individual flowers are much larger and more attractive, being funnel-shaped with waved and frilled edges to the petals. Three or four blooms grow in a cluster on short stems attached to the top of a single stem. They flower from mid to late summer. Some attractive hybrids include 'Aztec,' pink with brown blotches; 'La Paloma,' white with purple markings.

Geraniums are said to symbolize positive things – Happiness, Friendship, Good Health.

References:

https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu

The Complete Guide to Conservatory Plants by Ann Bonar

Perennials for Shady Areas

Patty McElhany
GCMG 2022

Looking for perennials that will not only survive but thrive in your Zone 9 shaded garden? If so, then join me as we look at 10 hardy perennials that deserve your attention.

1. AJUGA, BUGLEWEED (*Ajuga reptans*) – a beautiful groundcover that looks good most of the year. When planted in multiples, they intertwine to form a carpet of glossy leaves of purple, silver, cream and burgundy with flower spikes of blue, lavender, pink or white in the spring/early summer. Can be used anywhere you need some attractive foliage with small flowers, but best maintained for specific defined areas as the plant can be aggressive.

Height: Two to six-inch foliage; flowers six to twelve-inches

Width: Indefinite, mat-forming

Sun: Requires shade in much of Texas

Water: Needs steady water supply but not constantly wet soil.

What you need to know: Easy to grow, high pest resistance, deer resistant

2. ASTILBE, GOAT'S BEARD (*Astilbe* sp.) – one of the easiest low maintenance perennial flowers to grow. Long blooming, plume-like flowers in soft shades of lavender, pink, and red rise above the shiny green airy foliage on tall, stiff stalks adding texture and depth to your garden.

Height: Six-inches to four-feet

Width: Six-inches to two-feet

Sun: Afternoon to day-long shade

Water: Moist, well-drained soil; not drought tolerant

What you need to know: Attracts butterflies, essentially pest free, varieties vary significantly in growth characteristics (check plant labels before purchasing)

3. BLEEDING HEART (*Dicentra spectabilis*) – a showy plant with delicate green lobed leaves and graceful arching stems adorned with dangling hearts. This plant is not only stunning to behold, but the flowers are a favorite among children. Folklore says that the parts of the flower hold the clues to a tragic tale of unrequited love between a princess and a prince.

Height: 18 to 36-inches

Width: 12 to 36-inches

Sun: Light shade; full shade tolerant but will result in less flowers

Water: Average water requirements

What you need to know: Attracts butterflies, plant contains alkaloids that are toxic to humans and animals.

4. HOSTAS (*Hosta* sp.) – attractive, lush, bright green, blue-green, or variegated broadly ovate foliage used in borders, groundcovers, and for privacy.

Height: 12 to 18-inches; flower scapes 18 to 24-inches

Width: 18 to 24-inches

Sun: Requires shade in Texas

Water: Needs ample rainfall or watering; tolerates wet soil; drought tolerant

What you need to know: Easy to grow, small lavender or violet flowers in some varieties, attracts slugs

5. LIGULARIA, LEOPARD PLANT (*Ligularia dentata*) – one to two-foot mounds of fantastic foliage used for shade groundcover. Large lily-pad type leaves with yellow splotches or glossy green foliage with yellow to yellow-orange daisy like flowers.

Height: One to two-feet with flowers three to six-feet tall

Width: Two-feet

Sun: Requires shade in Texas

Water: Water deeply as plant has deep roots.

What you need to know: attracts slugs and snails, very low maintenance, evergreen all year

Elephant ear
(Missouri Botanical Society)

Fern
(Pixabay.com)

Japanese flowering quince
(Pixabay.com)

Ajuga
(tamu.edu)

Astilbe
(tamu.edu)

"10 hardy perennials that deserve your attention"

6. YELLOW/GOLDEN CORYDALIS (*Corydalis lutea*) – sometimes referred to as scrambled eggs, it is a spreading yellow-flowered member of the poppy family used to edge borders or walkways. Great as a filler in a woodland or shade garden. Combines well with Bleeding heart plant.

Height: 12 to 18-inches

Width: 12 to 18-inches

Sun: part sun, shade

Water: Tolerates wet soil, average water requirements

What you need to know: Easy to grow, attracts birds, self-seeds readily

7. HARDY FERNS: Holly fern (*Cyrtomium falcatum*), Wood fern (*Dryopteris* sp.), Giant sword fern (*Polystichum munitum*), royal fern (*Osmunda regalis*), southern maidenhair fern (*Adiantum capillus-veneris*) – ferns are ancient plants with lush foliage that provide timeless beauty, depth and color to your garden. They are a place of rest for insects and amphibians.

Height: Varies from two to six-feet

Width: One-foot to indefinite spread

Sun: Partial shade

Water: Thrives in moist environment

What you need to know: Low maintenance, well adapted to use in Texas, water daily until well established

8. CREEPING JENNY, MONEYWORT (*Lysimachia nummularia*) – a beautiful, trailing evergreen plant with chartreuse greenery, coin-shaped leaves, and small yellow flowers used for its dense foliage. It can be used as a ground cover or in a pot as the spiller plant.

Height: Two to four-inches tall

Width: Twelve to eighteen-inches or more wide

Sun: Partial shade

Water: Needs a steady supply of moisture

What you need to know: Not drought tolerant, spread is indefinite for group plantings

9. ELEPHANT EAR (*Colocasia* sp.) – a popular plant that gets its name from resemblance in shape to an elephant's ear. The large leaves arise directly from the trunkless crown of the plant and may be shades of green or white, with pink or red veins. Contrasts beautifully with other greenery in the garden. Adds instant tropical flare to the landscape.

Height: Four to six-feet

Width: Four to six-feet

Sun: Sun, partial shade, shade

Water: Consistent moist soil is best

What you need to know: Plant is toxic to humans and animals; leaves and stems are the most toxic parts causing skin irritation and itching when touched.

10. FLOWERING JAPANESE QUINCE (*Chaenomeles speciosa*) – native to Japan; this popular shrub features fragrant pink, red, orange, or white flowers and edible quince fruit that attracts pollinating insects. Its fruit can be made into jelly or preserves. A relative of the rose bush, it produces knobby apple or pear-like pome, has thorns, and sits among deep green leaves. The shrub makes a stunning hedge, or can be trained to grow on a trellis or wall.

Height: Two to three-feet

Width: Two to four-feet

Sun: Sun to partial shade

Water: Low water use

What you need to know: High heat tolerance, high pest resistance, dense twiggy mass of thorny branches can make pruning and cleaning out the shrubs difficult

References:

https://txmg.org

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https://neilsperry.com/

Bleeding heart
(tamu.edu)

Creeping jenny
(txmg.org)

Hosta
(tamu.edu)

Ligularia
(tamu.edu)

Yellow corydalis
(tamu.edu)

Sunflowers

Jan Brick
GCMG 2001

The sunflower is a native plant of North America, originating in the prairie states of the U.S. across Kansas and the surrounding areas, cultivated by indigenous peoples thousands of years ago. It was eventually refined from its originally bushy multi-headed type to a single-stemmed style bearing one large bloom. Each central crown is made of smaller florets, with the outside few called ray florets that cannot reproduce. The disc florets in the center portion, where the seeds develop, yield both female (pistil) and male (stamen) sex organs and each of these will produce a seed. These seeds can self-pollinate or the pollen can be transported elsewhere by the wind or pollen-collecting insects like bees.

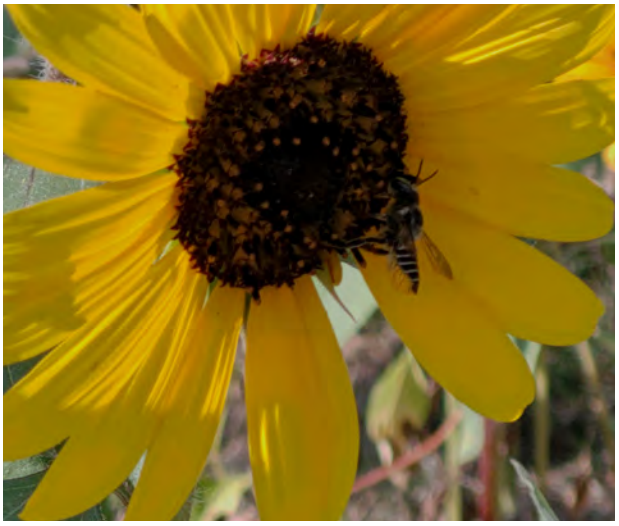
There are more than seventy species of perennial sunflowers from the scientific genera name *Helianthus*, from the Greek words for sun and flower. Sunflowers will thrive in sunny, semi-shaded or dappled shade areas, but do prefer six to eight hours of sun a day for peak performance; they grow best in moist well-drained soil. Those planted too close together will compete with one another for soil nutrients and may not blossom to their full potential. The average bloom and stem may soar to sixteen feet with the head over twelve-inches in diameter; however, many varieties have been cultivated for differing heights as some gardeners prefer blooms less intimidating. Sunflowers grown as ornamentals are appealing to young children who have an interest in gardening, since they deliver spectacular results in most soils and abundant sun. A wide number of cultivars in varying sizes and colors are available to grow from seed.

Sunflowers are more than a beautiful photo-op. Farmers grow them for the seeds that may be consumed by humans, birds and farm stock. The seeds are also crushed to make a low-cholesterol oil for cooking, as well as milled flour for breads or cakes. The seeds can be roasted, cracked, eaten whole or mixed with other grains and nuts for a type of granola. Native Americans were known to plant seeds on the edge of gardens as a type of fourth sister to their traditional combination of corn, beans and squash.

Sunflowers have been utilized in various ways for non-food applications such as the oils and pigments used as sunscreen or the basis of a purple dye for skin, hair or textiles. They also produce latex that can be used as an alternative crop in the manufacture of hypoallergenic rubber. Other applications involve soap and margarine rendering as well the formulation of biodiesel fuel.

Promising research continues on a list of probable improvements for future varieties including higher seed and oil yield, increased resistance to disease, drought tolerance, plant height and ray and disc colors. Sunflowers are also being studied for possible use as a natural

Sunflower. Photo by MG Larry Brizendine



Sunflower. Photo by MG Larry Brizendine

Sunflower. Photo by MG Pam Hunter

"Sunflowers are more than a beautiful photo-op"

Sunflower. Photo by MG Vicki Blythe

Trio. Photo by MG Larry Brizendine

Sunflowers go wild in summer. Photo by MG Karolyn Gephart

herbicide for weed control. Investigation has continued at the International Space Station when astronauts took sunflowers to space for gardening analyses.

The sunflower continued as a common staple within North America until the 1500s when Spanish sailors shipped great quantities back to Europe where cultivation began in earnest throughout Europe and Russia. Several millions of acres of sunflowers were sown in nearly every country each year, before the 19th century. Russia and Ukraine are the largest producers of sunflowers … as much as fifteen million tons annually, with fields that stretch for miles. A much larger sunflower with black seeds was developed in Russia and brought to the U.S. by immigrants. These black seeds are meatier and have a higher oil content with thinner shells making them easier for birds to crack and are used primarily for feed. The familiar striped seeds are more palatable, thus preferable for human consumption.

There are many benefits to growing sunflowers besides cut flowers and edible seeds; they entice pollinators like colorful birds, honey bees and bumble bees that are drawn to the high-quality nectar, and that in turn will pollinate other vegetation. The birds will devour pests and insects determined to destroy your crops whereas the roots can detox contaminated soil by removing heavy metals like lead, arsenic, zinc, chromium, cadmium, copper and manganese while improving your harvest when planted in your vegetable garden.

However, as hard to resist as sunflowers may be, there are some downsides that need to be considered. Annual sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*) is known to release toxins into the soil that suppress the growth of some nearby plants, known as allelopathy; squirrels love the seeds and will invade the area; sunflowers can attract aphids and whiteflies. Unlike other plants, the fibrous tissue of sunflowers do not decompose at the end of the season and must be torn down, chopped up and removed. Plant removal is also recommended to eliminate potential allelopathic chemicals that may cause problems with the spring crops. Even with the negative aspects, their beauty, grandeur and majesty are worth the potential hassle.

Yellow is the most common color and seen most often but sunflowers may also be red, orange, purple, pink or white as indicated by names…'Red Sun', 'Strawberry Blonde' or 'Italian White' and 'Sunbelievable Golden Girl'... a beautiful new cultivar featuring a bushy, multi-branching habit, yellow blooms with a distinctive dark eye and fresh green foliage. This is a sterile variety that is easy to grow in patio pots thereby brightening up any area.

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The Ultimate Sunflower Book - Lucy Peel

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Using Apps for Plant Identification

Briana Etie
GCMG 2017

When I was a young girl, my mother always had an answer for all my plant questions. What is this, what is that? I think she made up some of the flower names. I found out there really is a Brown-eyed Susan, but have you ever heard of a Sweet Sally?

As an adult I use a smart phone to answer my questions. I first started using plant apps for plant identification. Now I am using plant apps that remind me to water and help diagnose problems. Having many houseplants, an app to remind me of tasks is very helpful.

After trying out many different products, I have found apps that better identify native plants and others better developed to identify cultivated plants. Native plant identification requires the location of a plant and its natural distribution. The form of the plant can also be used to provide identifying clues. Important are the leaves, shape, size and other surface characteristics. The leaves are often the first features used to narrow to potential species. Preferences include leaf arrangement, bark and trunk, flowers, berries and cones. If you are trying to identify a native plant or non-native weed, using a flower image helps for a positive identification. While a lesson in botany to understand all of the terms used to describe different plant characteristics would be helpful, as a Texas Master Gardener intern I received great advice from Tom LeRoy, County Extension Agent – Horticulture emeritus. He told us to use the basic aforementioned structural descriptions in an online search. I have since been very successful using this method.

The following is a review several horticultural apps, is not meant for specific product endorsement but rather a means to start your journey for personal research. I look at all pictures and view similarities in leaves, flowers or fruit, and bark or stems. You will find there are applications that can identify cultivated foliage plants correctly but not consistently.

iNaturalist and *Seek*

My favorite free identification app I have used the longest is iNaturalist. I prefer this app to identify native plants. iNaturalist is a joint initiative of the California Academy of Sciences and the National Geographic Society, and is an app that is combination social media platform and citizen science tool. To use it, you must create an account to document not only findings of plants, but also insects, mammals, birds, fish, fungi, and shellfish. I love to keep photo documentation of trips to parks or nature walks in my iNaturalist account. It is not specifically designed as a plant identification app, but with a bit of a learning curve, it is a useful tool for this purpose. Start by uploading a picture to the website under the link *Suggest an identification*, or sharing a photo on your cell at the link *What did you see*. Click to get a cursor in the box and suggested matches will appear. Look through the suggestions, click view to get more information and find a positive match. If you establish the photo as one of your findings, other users will agree or disagree with your identification or suggest an identification. I found some of our local Texas Master Naturalists are members who respond to my searches and I follow them to see their latest finds. iNaturalist created a new app called *Seek* for people who like using it for plant identification. It is a much faster way to identify native plants in an area.

Picture This®

For cultivated plants, I like using *Picture This*® the most. This application also provides a personal account folder for *My Plants.* As you add your plants, the app reveals best light and water conditions. You can also find care in-

"Apps can be useful tools"

formation like fertilization and pruning and it includes common problems. You can add notes to keep track of the health of your plant and it will even allow you to name your plants. This app does not do a good job with native plants and weeds. It is best used with cultivated plants, and requires a yearly fee subscription.

Plant Net

The best thing about this app is that it is free. It asks you to choose leaf, flower, fruit, bark or habit before it lists suggestions. The first suggestion was not always right when I used it, but it does give you a list of suggestions. It was not my favorite.

Planta

This is a very detailed app. It even includes plant toxicity to animals. It is better described as a plant care application. It can remind you to water, fertilize and repot. It suggests where to place your plant, includes a light meter and offers best lighting advice. To identify plants, you have to take a picture. The other apps I have mentioned allowed me to choose a picture in my gallery or to use my camera. If you click on the identify button, it tells you the scan can only identify indoor plants. I was most impressed with the light meter with this yearly subscription application.

Google Lens

This app is already installed on most Android phones and can be downloaded on Apple iPhone, as well. "Search what you see" is their logo. The easiest way to use this and most of the aforementioned apps is to take a picture or open a picture, then share it with the app. Another way to use this identification application, open the app first, give the app permission to use your camera and take a picture. Or give the app permission to use your gallery, select a picture and it will identify the plant picture and most times where the item can be purchased. "A one stop shop!"

In conversation with our county Horticulture Agent Stephen Brueggerhoff, he admits apps can be useful tools for accurate plant identification. I downloaded many plant identification apps. The easiest way to use most of the apps is to take a picture, or open a picture and share it with the app and it will identify the picture. One app was not able to successfully identify plants better than others. Additional apps are available but I find the ones I have mentioned to be the best.


(Pixabay.com)

Saving Historic Hybrid Louisiana Irises for Future Generations

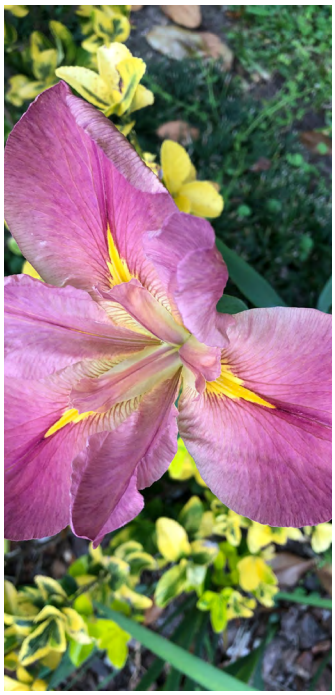
Monica Martens, Ed. D.,GCMG 2013

As a gardener who used to live in a dry climate suited to tall bearded irises—the most well-known member of the Iris Family (Iridaceae) — I can attest to the fact that it's just as fun to grow beardless, water-loving irises. And during the past decade, I have made it my goal to learn as much as possible about Louisiana irises, the best suited beardless iris for our growing zone. As a Texas Master Gardener and a member of two iris organizations, I also have embarked on a mission to help preserve historic cultivars.

What are Louisiana irises?

This family of irises refers to (1) a specific set of species found in nature, (2) collected hybrids of these species that have occurred naturally, and (3) the hybrids that have resulted from purposeful breeding programs that began in the 1920s. The five recognized species that comprise the Louisiana iris family have grown naturally to varying degrees in the southeast, southcentral, and Gulf Coast states. To this day, we are making new, occasional discoveries of their reach. We call this family of plants "Louisiana irises" for several reasons. The earliest known use of the phrase "Louisiana flag" was for a painting that John James Audubon co-created in 1821. It contained red irises (likely the species *I. fulva*) and warblers. (By the way, yellow "flags" are not Louisiana irises; rather they are a species called *I. pseudacorus* — important in its own right but also invasive in the home garden.) The second reason for the name "Louisiana iris" is that four of the five species of Louisiana irises are found in Louisiana, whereas in other states no more than two are found. The third reason is that nearly 100-percent of all cultivars come from stock collected in Louisiana, either from species or natural hybrids.

The five species are: *I. hexagona, I. giganticaerulea, I. fulva, I. brevicaulis,* and *I. nelsonii*. Each contributes something unique to the hardiness and exceptionality of hybrid Louisiana irises due to their notable characteristics, such as cold tolerance, bloom timing, height, drought tolerance, inherent color variation (even if rare and unpredictable), and ideal plant structure. One species is considered endangered, *I. nelsonii*, which grows in just a few square miles in a swampy area southeast of Abbeville, Louisiana. Other species could one day be in trouble if the extent of their growing area is diminished over time.



Aunt Shirley

Blue Mountain Mist

Cajun Whirl

Clyde Redmond

All photos by MG Monica Martens

Why are hybrid Louisiana irises important for our area?

Because of our specific climate and relatively warm winters, Louisiana irises are the perfect hybridized irises to grow in the home garden. If you have lived anywhere north of I-10, you might have experience growing tall-bearded irises. Many of us have attempted to do so down here and are usually dis-

"Louisiana irises are the perfect hybridized irises to grow"

appointed after a season or two. Bearded irises are just not naturally suited to this area, especially closer to the coast. But Louisiana irises are, and they offer just as much color variety. They also have beautiful open flower forms and attract bumble bees.

Also, if you have friends and family who live in cooler climates, in many cases you can share your rhizomes with them. Louisiana irises multiply and eventually have to be split. Ideal growing conditions have a lot to do with the soil acidity, which can be modified by the home gardener. Louisiana irises like a pH range of 6.5 to 7.2; contrary to popular belief, they do not need or like very acidic soils. For people in cooler climates, mulching is key to making sure the rhizomes survive the winter. We mulch the irises in our demonstration garden Discovery Garden if a cold snap is predicted, just to be on the safe side. Gardeners in the far northern United States need to take extra precautions, but I am aware of gardens with Louisiana irises in western New York, and even very cold regions such as in Montana. Because the natural growing region of the five species extends into the northern United States along rivers, over time natural hybridization has resulted in some degree of cold tolerance.

Gulf Moon Glow

Laura Louise and My Friend Dick

Swords Drawn

Author's garden surpirse

All photos by MG Monica Martens

Why are we concerned about preservation?

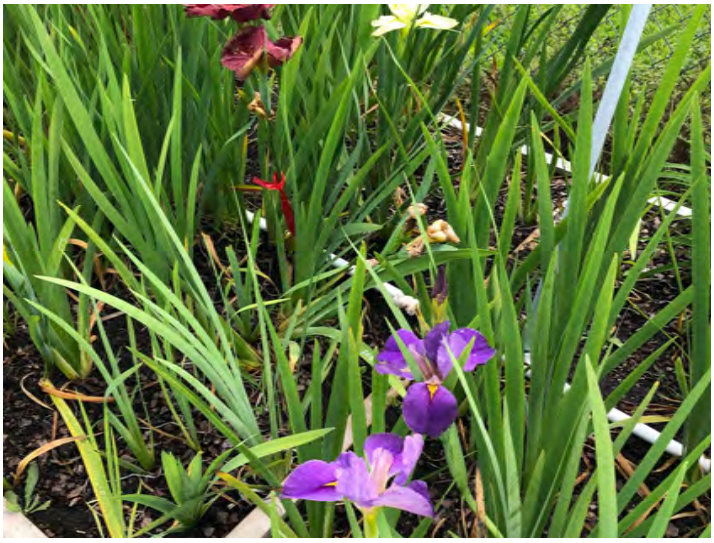
The Louisiana iris world is smaller than the iris world at large—fewer hybridizers, fewer commercial and public gardens, fewer growers, and a shorter history of breeding. As older hybridizers retire, their work is not necessarily replaced to the same extent by younger generations, though some people do take up iris hybridization in early retirement or take over a family business.

A lot of systematic work has been done to protect the five Louisiana iris species by members of the Society for Louisiana Irises (SLI) and partner organizations. But as far as the hybrids are concerned, the work that has been done by dedicated growers and gardens has not been systematic in terms of acting as a network. We know that many hybrids have been lost and do not yet have a complete picture of the extent of preservation and loss. It takes a lot of work, and even when protected and tended, the names of preserved plants are sometimes lost over time. But many of us persevere, trying to do small scale preservation, such as here at the Galveston County Master Gardeners' Discovery Garden.

What more can we do?

In 2019, we planted a demonstration garden of Louisiana irises based on donations of historic hybrids and species. The garden has flourished, and the rhizomes multiplied enough to enable us to sell a few in our plant sale last September. One of the goals of this project is to help get Louisiana irises into the

"Historic iris preservation can start small"



In the Discovery Garden

Strong contrast in color in Discovery Garden

hands of home gardeners in Galveston County.

The next steps are (1) to help gardeners, flower lovers, naturalists, and garden managers to see ways to get involved in iris preservation, and (2) to report the preservation efforts of our Master Gardener group to organizations that keep track of such things.

If you are a home gardener, naturalist, or manager of a public/private gardening area and are interested in becoming involved in Louisiana iris preservation (species or hybrids), I invite you to watch an excellent webinar about Louisiana iris history and preservation. It was produced for the American Iris Society in 2021 and is titled *Louisiana Irises: The Wild and the Tamed*. The speaker, Patrick O'Connor, is an expert in Louisiana irises. You can find the link here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ZF_1NzfZDA.

At our Discovery Garden, the irises will begin blooming as early as late February into early May, depending on our weather during winter. Mid-March through April is usually peak bloom time. You can stop by the Discovery Garden any Thursday from 9 to 11 am (or by appointment) to enjoy the flowers. If you happen to be at the Garden for a seminar, feel welcome to peruse the irises in bloom. And on Saturday, April 1, I will give an iris seminar and tour of the beds. I will also offer tips if you want to do some iris hunting of your own. You might be amazed at what you will find once you know what to look for.

As a Texas Master Gardener chapter, our next step is to communicate what we are doing so that we are networked into larger iris preservation efforts. We will participate in surveys and programs of two organizations leading efforts in hybrid iris preservation. They are the aforementioned SLI and the Historic Iris Preservation Society (HIPS). For our demonstration project, we have begun to report to HIPS what we are growing to add to their database. HIPS in particular offers ways for the novice to experienced iris gardener to get involved. It is a good example of how to do networked preservation. Also, as a board member of SLI, I am helping to create an initial list of historic Louisiana iris hybrids to target for supply permanency.

Final thoughts

The most important thing to remember is that historic iris preservation can start small, and anyone with an interest can be of help. There are many important reasons to do so. I feel particularly aware that the work of a small number of people has brought me such joy in flower gardening, and that their work might disappear for lack of preservation. I also love to witness a bumble bee pollinating the irises, creating a surprise iris for the following year if I leave the seed pod to do its work. Please feel welcome to enjoy the irises this spring and tell us your stories about growing irises. Ask us about iris preservation if you are interested. And we are always happy to share the names of our favorites!

References:

Historic Iris Preservation Society - https://historiciris.org

Society for Louisiana Irises - https://www.louisianas.org

Video: *Louisiana Irises: The Wild and the Tamed* by Patrick O'Connor: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ZF_1NzfZDA

Plant of the Month: x*Biltanthus* 'Red Burst'

Patty McElhany
GCMG 2022

If you are looking for a plant that you could give to a friend or family member with very little plant experience and a plant that is also virtually indestructible, then the x*Biltanthus* 'Red Burst' bromeliad might be just the one!

Formerly known as x*Cryptbergia* 'Red Burst', x*Cryptbergia* 'Rubra,' it is one tough plant. It has moderate watering requirements but can survive drought conditions. In fact, you could forget about it for a while or go on vacation for a short time and the likelihood that this plant would survive would be greater than average.

x*Biltanthus* 'Red Burst' is a bigeneric plant in the Bromeliad (Bromeliaceae) family. The Bromeliaceae are a family of monocot flowering plants of about 80 genera and 3,700 known species. Found mostly in the tropical Americas, there are also several species found in the American subtropics as well as one lone species found in tropical West Africa. It is listed as being in cultivation since prior to 1952.

This evergreen plant is in the same family as the pineapple. It forms rosettes of flattened, stiff eight to twelve-inch long pointed green to bronzy-red leaves, with the color intensifying in strong light. Spreading freely in clumps, it is great for drought tolerance, shade or container gardens.

Part of the charm of this plant is its messy appearance. Unlike many of its bromeliad relatives who have a more symmetrical appearance, the individual leaves criss-cross like a head of messy hair first thing in the morning. While the closely related *Dyckia* species flower grows in a tall spike from the plant, the 'Red Burst' has a short flower rising from the center of the plant that grows only about one inch in height. This is one of the major differences between this hybrid plant and the *Dyckia* species of bromeliads.

Common Name(s):

Cryptbergia, x*Cryptbergia* 'Red Burst'

Parentage:

Billbergia nutans x *Cryptanthus bahianus*

Plant Characteristics:

Plant type: Monocot

Life Cycle: Perennial

Sun Requirements: Full Sun (morning sun or filtered sun) to partial shade

Hardiness: Hardy to 26-degrees-

Water Preferences: Mesic (moderate amount of moisture)

Soil pH: Slightly acid to neutral (6.1 – 7.3)

Plant Height: 8 to 12-inches

Plant Spread: 8 to 12-inches

Leaves: Evergreen turning reddish/copper with light

Flowers: Inconspicuous (white to green/pink)

Bloom Size: One inch or less

Suitable Locations: Houseplant, groundcover, understory

Resistances: Humidity tolerant

Propagation: Offsets

Containers: Needs excellent drainage in pots

USDA Hardiness Zone(s): 9b – 11

Pollinators: Attracts hummingbirds

References:

David Whipkey, Secretary, Bromeliad Society of Houston

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San Francisco Daily News, August 16, 2012, "*Shade-loving xCryptbergia*" by Erie Nickel

(BSI.org by Noelle Kebby)

Photo by MG Patty McElhany.

Photo by MG Patty McElhany.

Aphids: Tiny Troublemakers

Marilyn Haupt
GCMG 2019

It is always amazing to me that the tiniest insects can cause much damage to a plant or garden. Aphids are one such troublemaker. There is an estimated 250 species of aphids found in a variety of colors and shapes. Some have wings and others do not. Common to all aphids, however, is the presence of the following features: heads that are separate from their soft bodies, antennae, long legs in relation to their body size, two mouthparts, and they are no bigger in size than 1/16 to 1/8 of an inch. They also occur in large numbers. Their small size and large numbers lead many to refer to aphids as plant lice.

Let's take a look at the negative effects that occur due to the presence of these insects. To start, aphids use their mouthpieces to pierce phloem and suck out sap from plants. Phloem is vascular tissue responsible for the transportation of critical nutrients and water in plants. The action of aphids can damage this system. A symptom of this problem may include yellowing and curling of leaves. Aphids are typically found on the underside of plant leaves or around new growth. Depending on the type of aphid, they will suck fluids from plant leaves, stems, and even roots. Additionally, some aphids can carry viruses that infect plants. The resulting disease can be devastating to certain crops.

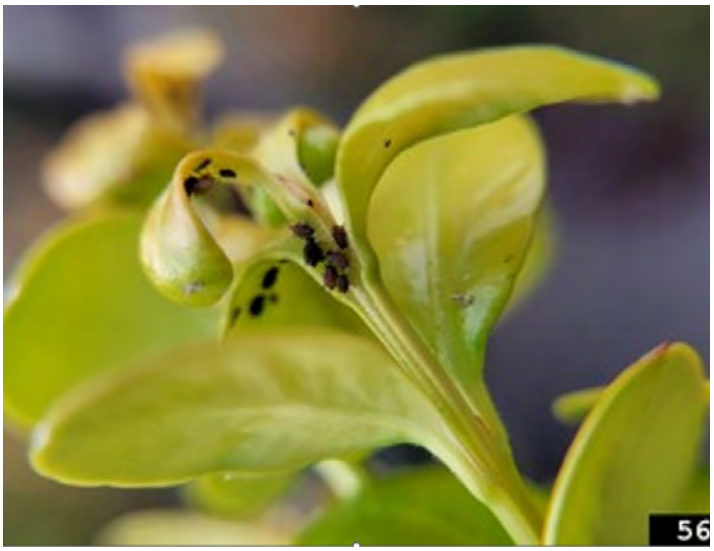
Aphids secrete a sticky fluid that is rich in glucose and fructose. This fluid is referred to as honeydew. The honeydew drips down onto other leaves or other parts of the plant and attracts a fungus known as sooty mold (*Capnodium* spp.) The mold does not harm the plant but it blocks sunlight from reaching the leaves. As a result, it blocks photosynthesis from occurring in that area of the plant. If the sooty mold affects too many leaves, the health of the plant is in jeopardy. Sooty mold can be removed simply by water or naturally by the rain.

The sugars in the honeydew attract other insects including ants and wasps. Ants can be beneficial to the aphids by protecting them from predators. Ants are also helpful to aphids by transporting them to other parts of a plant or to other plants in the area.

Aphids will make themselves at home on a variety of ornamental plants such as crepe myrtle, oleander, hibiscus, and roses. They can also be found on a variety of trees including pecan, pear, and oak. Aphids have an affinity for vegetables and particularly lettuce, cabbage, and tomatoes. The preferred food source will depend on the species of aphid.

Finally, aphid infestations occur in very large numbers due to several reasons. Aphids have a short lifespan of approximately one month. In that time, they reproduce prolifically. They become sexually mature within four to ten days of life. Some aphids require mates to reproduce while others do not. Depending on the environmental conditions, aphids will reproduce in a way to yield the most offspring. Some aphids will utilize two plants depending on the season, with one serving as the host for eggs and the other for a food source.

During their lifetime, aphids will shed their exoskeletons



Black citrus aphid (Toxoptera aurantii) adult(s)
Rebekah D. Wallace, University of Georgia, Bugwood.org

Aphids multiple life stages
Gerald Holmes, Strawberry Center, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, Bugwood.org

"Aphids are attracted to plants by smell…"

and leave white debris on the plant. With a large number of insects going through this process, an accumulation of these white, discarded, molted skins can be found on the plant. This can be a telltale sign that an aphid infestation is present.

An example of a very common species of aphid is the cotton/melon aphid (*Aphis gossypii*). It is common in the southern regions of the United States. Due to warmer temperatures, they can reproduce throughout the year. In the northern states, eggs are laid on host plants and will hatch in the spring. In addition to its affinity to its namesake, it also found on cucumbers, squash, eggplant, hibiscus, and crepe myrtle. They range in color from yellow green to dark green. Gray wings are present on adults. Infestation of these insects results in leaf wilting and the transmission of viruses.

Rose aphid (*Macrosiphum rosae*) biological control
Whitney Cranshaw, Colorado State University, Bugwood.org

How can an aphid infestation be prevented? Aphids can make their way to your garden by flying in or by piggybacking on ants. They are difficult to avoid. They are attracted to plants by smell. It may be helpful to plant flowers such as marigolds or herbs like mint or dill near at-risk plants. This may interfere with the scent of your plants and deter aphids from targeting your area. As a gardener, you can reduce the risk by carefully checking any new plants you bring into your garden or greenhouse. Your plants, especially ones that are aphid favorites, should be carefully assessed at least twice a week.

There are beneficial insects such as adult ladybugs and their larvae, wasps, and spiders that will help control the population of aphids. Natural predators and environmental conditions such as cold and rain may help reduce the numbers.

If you find aphids on a plant, separate it from others if possible. Check other plants in the area for signs of infestation. Removal of the insects from the affected plant should be attempted first. You may use a water hose to spray the aphids off the plant using a strong stream of water. If needed, the use of an organic treatment such as neem oil may be useful, taking care to spray only the leaves and avoid fruits and flowers to protect other insects, such as honey bees.

Avoiding the use of pesticides in the garden is ideal. What's more, certain insecticides may not be effective with infestations as aphids quickly develop resistance. This can be attributed to their continuous, rapid birth and death rates.

Happy gardening and keep a close watch on your plants for these tiny troublemakers.

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Discovery Garden Update

Tom Fountain
GCMG 2008

Freezing cold wet weather ended our hot and dry year. Temperatures fell into the teens across our area December 22 through 24, 2022. At the garden a low of 18-degrees was observed and the temperature remained below freezing for over 40 hours. Whew! It was impactful! Despite the devastating cold weather our average temperatures continued one to two degrees above normal. Rainfall this winter has been slightly above normal, so our area is out of the drought for now. The extended forecast from NOAA indicates temperatures will likely be above normal into summer with rainfall near normal.

The freezing weather was devastating for the produce we had in the garden, but the devastation was not as bad as two years ago, thanks to the co-leadership of Kevin Lancon and Kathy Maines and all the Master Gardeners who pitched in to help winterize the garden. Due to their efforts. the losses were kept to a minimum. This time all the fish in the Aquaponics facility survived as Briana Etie was able to add a couple of extra heaters and she also insulated the plant beds. Pictured in Fig. 1, Kevin Lancon was talking to Briana regarding some of the needs of the greenhouse.

There have always been many cleanup projects in the garden, but this freeze more than doubled that need. Most of the garden beds were already in need of work. Tish Reustle and Wendy Stratton (Fig, 2) are but a couple of the many Master Gardeners who were busy cleaning the garden within a week or two after the freeze. Despite all the problems the freeze created, it also created opportunities to learn. One question that came up was, "What is the best method to keep or ripen green tomatoes?" There were many green tomatoes on the vines due to the Fall Tomato Trial. David Eskins made sure the interns pulled the plants before the freeze. Maria Abad, Gene Speller and Alysha Davila pictured in Fig. 3 are discussing the best way to conduct a survey on a bed of Brussels sprouts so they could show which variety had performed the best through the freeze.

One of our ongoing big projects is the redevelopment of the orchard. We lost many trees due to a combination of freeze, wind, and disease. Some of the latest information on how trees are grown and watered is being implemented. Robert Marshall, Patty McElhany and David Eskins are busy in Fig. 4 replumbing the irrigation for the stone fruit row. They also had to remove most of the mulch. The following garden workday Herman Auer used the row of stone fruit to teach a class on grafting and planting peach trees. Pictured in Fig. 5, Herman is teaching Patty McElhany how to plant one of the Tropical Snow peach trees that they grafted while Carey Little and Tina Woods were watching and waiting their turn to plant a tree.

Thursday garden workdays are a much more interesting and enjoyable time because of our kitchen crew who prepares lunch. This provides a time to visit, enjoy good food, and even learn a little about gardening. On this day (Fig 6) our kitchen crew was Debbie Brizendine and Linda Steber. We hope to see you in the garden soon.

All photos by MG Tom Fountain

Meet a Master Gardener - David Eskins

Barbara Canetti
GCMG 2016

For Master Gardener David Eskins, it is all about the learning and experience. Eskins, a Galveston County Master Gardener since 2020, is one of the leaders in the Discovery Garden's orchard. His interests are the apples, peaches, persimmons, figs, plums and everything else that grow in that acreage. In fact, his interests are everything gardening.

A quiet leader, David said he became interested in the local Texas Master Gardener program after attending a lecture and meeting former Horticulture Agent Dr. William Johnson. But because he was working in management as a process engineer, he was unable to join the program until he retired. He wanted more information and knowledge to keep his eight acres of farmland in Texas City producing.

"I kept attending the seminars and kept it in the back of my mind while I was still working that I wanted to join the program. Dr. Johnson was a very smart man," he said. "It made me curious about things and I was able to ask questions."

What he got from those seminars was information and a better understanding of growing conditions in this area. David, who was from West Virginia and grew up in North Carolina, always had a garden – mostly tomatoes. He moved to Houston to attend college at University of Houston, and worked for a landscape company when he was a student. He was hired by a firm after graduation and stayed in Texas during his career.

Soon after he moved to his present home 20 years ago with his wife Barbara, he started planting: a vineyard, varieties of figs, peaches, pears and rows and rows of tomatoes. He installed a watering system to help care for his crops and even used part of his acreage to make hay bales as a composter and weed barrier for his plants. Early training by his dad in the art of digging proved to be a useful skill. "I got that down," he said, as he was turning soil in the Discovery Garden to fix the sprinkler system.

He still thinks like an engineer: plan ahead, develop a plan, document progress and do things right the first time so they don't have to be redone. At the Discovery Garden in Carbide Park (La Marque, TX), he is involved in the irrigation, draining, planting, pruning and plant selections. He regularly corresponds with team members, with updates and assignments.

"I contribute where someone needs assistance," he said. "If you do enough things, you learn. But it is important to listen to others and learn from their experiences."

"I have an open mind and am ready to learn," he said.

When he is not volunteering in the Discovery Garden or riding his bike in his neighborhood, David said he is working in his garden at home. He has three tractors on his property, which helps him haul things around and keep his garden maintained.

He is interested in the trials performed by Galveston County Master Gardeners – solarization, tomatoes, cantaloupes – because he uses the knowledge at home.

"Any time there is an opportunity to learn and then pass it on to the public, that's a good thing," he said.

David with MG Debbie Valdez

David Eskins and Sharon Zaal at Class of 2020 graduation.
Photos by MG Karolyn Gephart

Welcome Marilyn Hakim and Diva Houlette

Trish McDaniel
GCMG 2001

Marilyn Hakim

Meet Master Gardener Class of 2000 Marilyn Hakim from York County Master Gardeners, a program administered by Clemson Cooperative Extension Service in Rock Hill, South Carolina; gardening Zone 7.

Marilyn's activities with York County MGs included being the newsletter editor, serving as treasurer, creating their website, and helping produce the annual gardening symposium. Their MG team is also active in providing know-how and encouragement for several community and school gardens.

Marilyn is a retired surgical nurse who also worked in labor and delivery. She moved to League City in October 2021 to be close to one of her sons, a mechanical engineer at a nearby chemical plant. Altogether, Marilyn has three sons, one daughter, and three grandkids.

Marilyn learned about the Galveston County Master Gardener program upon joining the Bay Area Welcome Neighbor Club, where she met members Judy Anderson and Sue Bain, MG class of 2012 and 2018, respectively. After being accepted into the GCMG program, she audited the 2022 Intern Program for her recertification hours.

Marilyn's first impression of her new MG home was how incredible the *Gulf Coast Gardening* newsletter is. "It's a magazine!" she declared. She admires the publication's generous and in-depth content, and the highly professional look. She immediately shared it with her former MG crew in South Carolina.

She also enjoys membership in the American Rose Society and the African Violet Society of America. Other favorite activities include biking and playing Canasta and bridge.

In South Carolina, Marilyn had an extensive garden filled with her many "babies." One is a 40-year-old Nikko Blue hydrangea (*Hydrangea macrophylla*), a Mother's Day gift from her son that "keeps on giving." She was able to pot an offshoot of the mother plant and today it sits on her son's porch in League City, waiting to come back after the freeze.

To ebb her gardening withdrawal, she looks forward to spending many hours in the GCMGA Discovery Garden. At home, she enjoys nurturing a windowsill garden filled with collections of various African violets.

Marilyn's adventurous life includes being married to her late husband, an Iranian man she met in college. She says it took her "five years to catch that man", as he was determined to finish his degree in chemistry before marriage. She and her husband lived in Iran from 1969 to 1977, where she says, "she loved every moment of it." During their marriage, her husband's job with Baker Hughes provided them with extensive world travels.

Before we finished, Marilyn wanted to see my garden … in all its deflated, freeze-ravaged glory. It was here I learned that she is quite the woman of vision. During our little walk-about it was funny and lovely to hear what a beauty she thought my little patch was. A generous soul, her!

Nikko Blue Hydrangea. Photo by Pexels.com

Marilyn Hakim with her African violets

"2 MGs transfer to GCMGs group"

Diva Houlette

Welcome newcomer Diva Garza Houlette, who transferred to GCMGs from the Bluebonnet Master Gardeners Association, class of 2012. BBMGA serves the entire four county area of Austin, Fayette, Colorado and Washington, Texas; gardening zone 8b.

Diva's former Master Gardener program covers an immense territory with most members focusing their work on projects in their home counties. The project dearest to Diva's heart was the restoration of the public prayer garden at Immaculate Conception Catholic Church in Sealy, Austin County. The BBMGA provided guidance and funds for the plants, and the local Boy Scout Troop provided labor, soil and mulch. One Boy Scout earned his Eagle Badge for leading the project.

Diva's first impression of her new Galveston County MG home was the grand scope of work they have accomplished. She enjoyed working at the check-out station during the first Annual Fall Festival, and looks forward to joining a work team in the Discovery Garden.

In May of 2022, Diva and Bud, her husband of 12 years, moved from 5.9 acres in the city of Brazos Country (near Sealy), to a League City apartment. Her son and daughter live in Houston, and there are also family members nearby in Pearland. Her eldest son, 52, passed away in 2020. She has seven grandchildren and three great granddaughters. While enjoying their new proximity to family, they are actively searching for a home to buy near Bud's other love, the *Acadian Gypsy*, a 36-foot trawler which he keeps nearby at Legend Point Marina.

Before moving, Diva tended her garden where she enjoyed a vast area for planting, including a heated and irrigated greenhouse for overwintering potted plants. In a series of raised beds, she grew herbs, eggplant, sweet potatoes, tomatoes and snap peas, which her granddaughter loved sampling fresh off the vine. In an open field she also grew watermelon, cantaloupe, pumpkins, corn and grapes. Bud's garden gig involved a tractor and hay.

To honor her parents, she grew roses such as 'Don Juan', a hardy hybrid climber for her late father Juan, as well as a 'Grandma's Yellow' bush, in honor of her mother. In Houston, her mother grew an althea bush (*Hibiscus syriacus*), also known as Rose of Sharon, in Diva's favorite color, lavender. As a tribute and before she sold her mother's house, she took cuttings of the plant to grow in her yard and to share with family and friends. Together with her favorite climbing rose 'Peggy Martin' and another 30-plus rose varieties, Diva grew Prickly pear cactus (*Opuntia* sp.; Plant Family Cactaceae), also called nopal, which she loves to include in her scrambled eggs.

Diva is a very astute and successful businesswoman. In 1977 she established her own bilingual staffing company in Houston, At Your Service. She became well known in regional business circles in the US and Mexico and she later started Diva Garcia Personnel Services. Lastly, she opened International Team Consultants, which she has since sold. Today she is the sole bilingual recruiter for her daughter's firm, 3rd Generation Staffing, LLC, where her grandson, a UH student, also helps out.

While in business, Diva was extremely active in the Houston business community. At one point and for fun, she started the social club, The Association of International Professionals, where Houston's global crowd enjoyed great attendance and fellowship in its heyday.

I think we can expect to enjoy getting to know this dynamic new kid on the block.

Peggy Martin roses are Diva's favorite climbing rose. (Photo by MG Diva Houlette)

Diva Houlette

Seasonal Bites: Simply Delicious!

Sandra Gervais
GCMG 2011

It's SPRING and gardeners have better things to do than stand in a kitchen cooking for hours. Just unloading the car of the many new plants one has bought can take time, especially since you went for one and now have to determine where you will put the many extras that came home with you.

Here are two super easy recipes. Sports fans will enjoy making and eating the first one, especially if watching a good game on TV with friends. The second uses readymade tortellini but amps it up with Italian sausage. Again, nothing complicated but comforting on a busy day of spring gardening with little time to cook.

Chicken in Chips

350° oven

2 to 2.5 cups of cooked, diced chicken with skin removed;
leftover or rotisserie chicken work fine
1 at 10.5 oz. can condensed cream of chicken soup
1/2 cup sour cream
1/4 to 1/3 cup picante sauce or salsa; hot or mild, your choice
2 cups shredded cheese (Monterey Jack or Cheddar)
2 cups tortilla chips, coarsely crushed

Be creative!
Add cilantro, sliced jalapeños or other peppers or try other cheeses

1 bag tortilla chips for serving

Grease a 9 x 13-inch baking dish.
Combine chicken, soup, sour cream, salsa.
Pour a layer of half of this mixture into baking dish.
Cover with a layer of half the tortilla chips.
Cover with a layer of half the grated cheese.
Repeat layers ending with cheese on top.
Cover with foil.
Cook for 20 to 25 minutes.
Uncover and bake another 5 to 10 minutes until cheese is bubbly and slightly browned.
Enjoy with extra tortilla chips.

Easy Pasta Meal

1 tablespoon olive oil
1 lb. Italian sausage (mild or hot casing removed)
2 garlic cloves thinly sliced
4 cups reduced sodium chicken broth
12 ounces dried cheese tortellini
Salt and pepper to taste
Fresh basil and grated Parmesan, added if desired

Heat oil in a large pot.
Cook sausage until no pink remains, about 4 to 5 minutes.
Add garlic to pot and cook until fragrant, about 30 to 40 seconds.
Set aside.
In another pot, bring chicken broth to a boil.
Add in tortellini pasta.
Bring back to a boil, stirring occasionally.
Cook until pasta is tender, about 15 minutes.
Drain but keep 1/4 to 1/2 cup of pasta water.
Gently stir pasta into the sausage mix.
If too thick, add pasta water 1/4 cup at a time, stirring gently.
Season to taste and top with fresh basil and Parmesan.

Note: Add in bacon bits, mushrooms, other fresh herbs.

Photo Gallery: Favorite Perennials

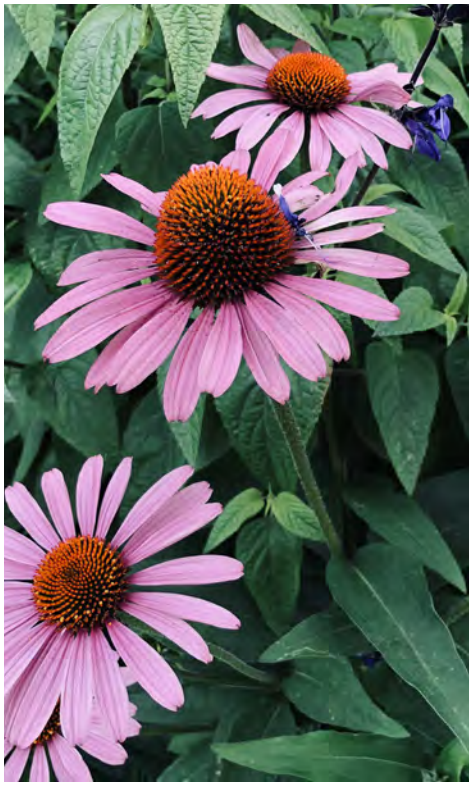
Photographs of favorite perennials are being shared this month by MGs. Special thanks to Linda Steber, Stacey Phillips, Camille Goodwin, Norma Torok, and Michelle Thompson for sending in pictures of favorites that make them smile.

The next issue's Photo Gallery will feature **Water**. Anyone can contribute to this page by sending in a photo with water or water related topic along with the name and scientific name of plants. 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 April 1, 2023.
Send to kbgephart@comcast.net.

Ajuga by MG Linda Steber



Coneflower (*Echinacea*) by MG Stacey Phillips

Camellia by MG Camille Goodwin

Bird of Paradise (*Strelitzia*) by MG intern Norma Torok

Calendula (*Calendula officinalis*) by MG Michelle Thompson

Book Review: *The Orchid Thief*

Lisa Belcher
GCMG 2014

The Green Thumb Book Club rounded out 2022 with Susan Orlean's *The Orchid Thief: A True Story of Beauty and Obsession.* It began as an article Orlean wrote for *The New Yorker* in the magazine's 1995 issue. That investigative article on John Laroche was so popular that readers wanted more on his story. Naturally a more in-depth book needed to be written on this fascinating story.

The story begins in court where Orlean meets with a very contrite Laroche who is arguing to the judge that he and his three Seminole native friends did absolutely nothing wrong in searching for and collecting the rare Ghost orchid, *Dendrophylax lindenii*, as it was done on native land. He should know, claims Laroche, because "he is the smartest man he has ever met." We are introduced to John's early life and his obsession with collecting anything until he is bored of what he is collecting - until he discovers orchid collecting with his mother. That discovery changes John's life forever.

Orlean intertwines Laroche's background and the hunt for the elusive Ghost orchid with the vast history of orchid hunters of the past. There are such interesting stories of past orchid hunters and the feats they went through to attain orchids in the 1700 and 1800s. The author does this very well without the reader realizing they are getting a history lesson on the side of John's outlandish escapades in the hunt for the Ghost orchid. This orchid, Laroche believes, will be the way to prove naysayers wrong of the impossible task of propagating, let alone it living outside the Florida swamps. This orchid grows in only two places on earth: in the Florida swamps on Seminole native land and Cuba. There is only one moth, the Giant sphinx moth (*Cocytius antaeus*) that has a proboscis long enough to reach way down inside the orchid. I don't want to give away too much of John's story, but John himself cannot remove this orchid from the swamp; however, remember those three Seminole native friends I mentioned, who were in court with him? They can.

Our book club read this book at a very timely month. In October, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced it would consider granting Endangered Species Act protection to the Ghost orchid. This came in response to petitions filed by the following: The Institute for Regional Conservation, Center for Biological Diversity, and National Parks Conservation Association. The decision will come sometime this month.

Did John Laroche and Susan Orlean contribute to this orchid being sought by orchid collectors? Perhaps, but you'll need to read the book to have a better understanding of what Laroche and his friends did in the swamps of Florida.

Resources:

Center for Biological Diversity - www.biologicaldiversity.org

National Parks Conservation Association - www.npca.org

The Institute for Regional Conservation - www.regional-conservation.org

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service - www.fws.gov/program/endangered-species

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.

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

TEXAS MASTER GARDENER
TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

https://txmg.org/

Horticulture

March Events

In-Person Plant Sale

3/23/23 9:00am - 1:00pm

March Madness in the Discovery Garden

Shop for Master Gardener grown, perennials, spring vegetables, peppers and herbs.

Location: Carbide Park, 4102 Main St. La Marque, TX 77568

Gulf Coast Gardening Seminar

3/11/23 9:00am - 11:30am

Veggie Garden Series: Tomato Stress Mgmt, Pt. 3

Identifying tomato diseases and insect stress, and how to minimize them to increase yields.

To register, visit: https://galveston.agrilife.org/horticulture/

Gulf Coast Gardening Seminar

3/18/23 9:00am - 11:00am

Earth-Kind Landscaping for Garden Success

Basic landscape design methods you can use in planning your home landscape. Includes tour of Discovery garden.

To register, visit: https://galveston.agrilife.org/horticulture/

Gulf Coast Gardening Seminar

3/18/23 1:00pm - 3:00pm

Veggie Garden Series: Cucumbers, Squash & Melons

Best methods to grow cucumbers, squash and melons in your home garden.

To register, visit: https://galveston.agrilife.org/horticulture/

TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

Galveston County Texas A&M AgriLife Extension
4102-B Main Street (FM 519) La Marque, TX 77568
https://galveston.agrilife.org/horticulture/ 281-309-5065

JMGS: Update on the Robinson Garden Club JMGs

Gayle McAdoo
GCMG 2005

GCMG Gayle McAdoo oversees a Junior Master Gardener group as a volunteer lead assistant at GW Robinson Elementary School in Clear Creek ISD. There are 22 children in the group this year. This is an after-school program which meets approximately twice a month for one hour. Leaders use lessons from Texas A&M AgriLife Extension's *Learn, Grow, Eat & Go*, a Texas Junior Master Gardener Level 1 book as well as online resources and other books.

Students participate in after-school learning activities and maintain an onsite garden. A new raised garden box and soil improvements were added this year through assistance from Gayle, her assistant (and husband) Stewart, a teacher and a community member. The raised garden box was based on an article written by Stewart McAdoo and published in the July/August 2022 edition of this publication.

The Robinson Garden Club is not a certification program but the children receive participation pins or certificates at the end of the school year, Gayle reported.

"The children are excited about participating in the educational activities and working in the garden. They love being able to take home something that they have participated in growing. They are curious about how plants grow and what different plants look and taste like. Some of the hesitant shy kids are gradually becoming more active in the group and adult participants also improved their gardening knowledge and skills," teacher sponsor/leader Heather Honeycutt said. Honeycutt is assisted by Rebecca Parish.

Gayle also assisted with a children's craft booth at the first Fall Festival held at the Discovery Garden in Carbide Park. Other JMG leaders helping included GCMG Kaye Corey and her assistant Paula Matranga from Heritage JMGs in Friendswood.

The Junior Master Gardener program is an international youth gardening program of the university cooperative Extension network. In Texas, it is through Texas A&M AgriLife Extension.

2023 Master Gardener Recertification Hours

Date	Name of Program	Speaker	MG CEUs
1/5/2023	Lunch & Learn - Tree Update to Garden North End	Ira Gervais	0.25
1/7/2023	Wedge Grafting	Herman Auer, Hazel Lampton, Debbie Espinosa	2.50
1/7/2023	Growing Pecans at Home	Stephen Brueggerhoff	2.00
1/10/2023	MGA Jan. Meeting - Looking Ahead in 2023	Kathy Maines, Stephen B.	1.00
1/11/2023	League City Garden Club Speaker	Rosarian Baxter Williams	1.00
1/12/2023	Lunch & Learn - Plant Freeze Damage	Ira Gervais	0.25
1/21/2023	Growing Great Tomatoes, Pt. 2	Ira Gervais	3.00
1/21/2023	Propagating Fig Trees	Barbara Canetti	1.50
1/26/2023	Lunch & Learn - Cantaloupe Trials	David Eskins	0.25
2/7/2023	Seed Potato Cutting Workshop	Kevin Lancon	1.00
2/11/2023	Growing Peaches in Galveston County	Heman Auer	2.50
2/14/2023	MGA Feb. Meeting - Aliens vs Invasives (TEAMS)	Laurie Lomas Gonzales, USFWS	1.50
2/18/2023	Growing Avocados	Hazel Lampton	1.00
2023 Recertification Hours for MGs		**Total CEUs (Hours)**	**17.75**

Last Updated: January 21, 2023

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.

2022 intern Linda Crowston took a photo of this beautiful pansy that was in the Earth-Kind Garden in January. "Everything around it was hit by the freeze and it looks as if it was not even phased by old man winter," Linda said.

Join Horticulturist Stephen Brueggerhoff for his Floral Fridays on Facebook Live at 11 am.

Congratulations to the 2023 Master Gardener Emeritus members:

Terry & Velda Cuclis (1987)
Glenn Diket (2015)
Horace & Mary Lou Kelso (2000)
Elayne Kouzounis (1998)
Bill Verm (2010)

Libbie's Place Green Thumb Club & the Beautification Bunch
meet every Friday except the 2nd Friday of each month from 10 to 11 am.
Location: 5402 Avenue U in Galveston
Enter through the side gate to the left of the front door.
Parking is available at Moody Methodist Church
More information about Libbie's Place at
https://www.moody.org/libbie-s-place-senior-day.

Intern Class of 2023

Sven Bors-Koefoed	Becky Jaschek
Ralinda Fenton	Sandy Klaud
Tina Fincher	Christie McGrath
Tiffany Forester	Donna Merritt
Linda Grigsby	Sulaiman Mohammed
Vickie Hall	Lynne Slaton
Jamie Hart	Claudia Trujillo
Nancy Hiefner	Dan Walker
Mike Jaschek	Mary Gordon

Welcome the NEW Intern Class of 2023

Texans are Truly Wild about Wildflowers

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

While I write articles for *Last Word* at least one month in advance of publication, by late March through mid-April our Texas wildflower season is in full swing. You will be refreshed with glimpses of eye-catching colors of spring as you sightsee down the highway or gather your breath at a roadway rest stop. Some flowers are more distinctive and easy to recognize, like the bright red clusters of Indian paintbrush (*Castilleja indivisa*). You might see masses of pastel Pink evening primrose (*Oenothera speciosa*), an annual wildflower that reminds me of my playful youth; we would call them *buttercups* from the flowers yellow pollen my cousins and I would smear on each other's faces. And of course, I'm always looking out for fields and fields of Texas bluebonnet (*Lupinus texensis*) to complete my destination experience.

While it is convenient to enjoy nature at a distance as an accidental tourist, I propose planning a purposeful wildflower destination, finding a natural area to enjoy up close the beauty of Texas flora. Texas Department of Transportation magazine *Texas Highways* (https://texashighways.com/wildflowers) supports an online resource offering maps of well-known scenic drives as well as natural areas to visit across the breadth of Texas. The main highway drive for any Galveston County resident travels west on US-290 toward Brenham, as well as east on I-10 toward Beaumont. Brazoria County hosts scenic drives that include a 70-mile loop (FM 1462 to Texas 36, to FM 2004 to Texas 288) through West Columbia, Angleton, Lake Jackson and Brazoria. Points of interest include natural areas such as Brazos Bend State Park, Brazoria National Wildlife Refuge and San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge. While at a natural area, I encourage you to stop and smell the wildflowers. Don't just breeze through a hike and call it a day: take in the subtle beauty offered at your feet. What initially may be an aesthetic activity can turn into broadening your knowledge about Texas native plants, their function in the environment and the importance of biodiversity. See if you can identify some of the following wildflowers:

Blue-eyed grass (*Sisyrinchium* sp.) – Not a grass at all and a member of the Iris Plant Family (Iridaceae.) I will often see blue-eyed grass in clusters of single blue to purplish petals

Blue eyed grass. Photo by Stephen Brueggerhoff.

Bluebonnets. Photo by Stephen Brueggerhoff.

Indian paintbrush. Photo by Stephen Brueggerhoff.

"Plan a purposeful wildflower destination..."

White gaura Photo courtesy of Carolyn Fannon Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center.

Wine cup. Photo courtesy of Stephanie Brundage Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

Indian blanket. Photo courtesy of WD and Dolphia Bransford Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

surrounding a golden center. The flowers measure 1/2-inch in diameter and are borne atop 5 to 8-inch long flower stalks arising from tufted clumps of grass-like leaves.

White gaura (*Oenothera lindheimeri*) – Sometimes called Butterfly gaura, sporting petite, pinkish buds open to pure ½-inch wide white butterfly-shaped flowers that nod at the end of a 2-foot tall flower stalk. The herbaceous plant offers a bunching growth habit. Attracts pollinators.

Winecup (*Callirhoe involucrata*) – The common name best describes this beauty, offering chalice-shaped two-inch wide flowers with deep maroon petals off-set by a whitish spot toward the flower center. Vegetation appears to crawl along the ground up to three-feet long. Even though the flower is small, it may look familiar to you: this plant is a member of the Hibiscus Plant Family (Malvaceae.) Attracts pollinators (butterflies, bees.)

Bluebonnets! These lupines are the beauty we would like to bring to the ball. While you may see smaller pockets of seeded bluebonnets at local vistas, you will see higher populations as you travel west. Another route is an estimated 80-mile loop from Brenham to Burton, Independence, Washington and Chappell Hill. If you are travelling northwest of Houston, try the 105-mile loop from Brenham along FM 1774 and includes Navasota, Plantersville, Magnolia and Hempstead. Then there is the mother load often seen at the foot of the Texas Hill Country. Roads between Marble Falls, Burnet, Lampasas, San Saba, Mason, Llano, Fredericksburg and Johnson City can cover almost 300 miles and should be best enjoyed over several days. You can pick and choose your stops by true Texas hospitality offered at some of the towns and cities along your route. Research popular tourism destinations from local chamber of commerce or convention and visitor bureau to keep an eye on Texas regional flowering and best places to stop along your travels.

Resources:

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension's Aggie Horticulture - https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu

Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center – www.wildflower.org

Texas Department of Transportation; Beautification Campaigns - https://www.txdot.gov/about/campaigns-outreach.html

Texas Highways; Wildflowers - https://texashighways.com/wildflowers

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Judy's Corner: Galveston County Monthly Meetings

Judy Anderson
GCMG 2012

April 11: GCMG Monthly Meeting: Seeding Galveston

Spring begins the GCMG outdoor meetings. We are excited to visit Seeding Galveston hosted by Debbie Berger and John Sessions with MG Cheryl Watson (2018). Seeding Galveston is a community garden located at 3318 Avenue N where they host a sale of their fresh grown produce on Saturdays from 8 till 10 am. Seeding Galveston sponsored the 100 Kitchen Gardens to educate Galveston residents desiring to grow their own vegetables; the project assisted with supporting those seeking help by creating a garden for them. Many homes in the Galveston area do not have access to fresh produce; the Farmer's Market at Seeding Galveston and the 100 Kitchen Gardens are good answers to this need.

Shaded area - Seeding Galveston.

The property consists of a covered seating area where the produce is sold. Raised beds and fruit trees are plentiful there. A composting station, herb bed, and chickens in a large enclosure are also there. A collection of goats makes their home there with some baby goats anticipated during the spring. The baby goats may be the entertainment at the GCMG meeting.

Master Gardeners are welcome to walk around the property and say hello to the animals. Be sure to check out the fragrant herb garden and the many raised beds. Big shade trees with easy chairs are popular; there are just a few, so be prepared to share. For this event, please bring a chair for you and your guest along with a potluck dish to share.

May 9: GCMG Backyard Meeting Hosted by Ira and Sandra Gervais

Expect great Cajun hospitality when Ira and Sandra Gervais host the May meeting at their Friendswood home. Like everyone else, they had damage from the January freeze, but it will be fun to see how their landscaping looks in May. They love their plants and are frequent contributors to the Master Gardener Grown Plant Sale so it will be an adventure exploring their backyard. They were both in the 2011 MG Class, the last class at the Hwy 3 location, and they have both been active members since. Sandra writes the food column for this publication and Ira was the kitchen commander for several years, followed by service as the Association President. We can all look forward to some tasty treats from these two Master Gardeners.

Photo of Ira & Sandra Gervais

Gervais house

June 13: MG Graduation and Recognition Celebration

Hosted by Mikey and Allen Isbell

As we look ahead, the June GCMG meeting will be a graduation for the 2022 MG Class and recognition of the 2023 MG Class. For everyone else, it will be a visit to our very own tropical island where we enjoy a balmy Galveston evening at the historic home of the Isbells. Look for more details in the future.

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