

THE PASSALONG PLANT ISSUE

# GULF COAST *Gardening*

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**TEXAS**

**MASTER GARDENER**

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Galveston County

WRITTEN BY GALVESTON COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS  
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## Passalong Plants



MG Kevin Lancon  
President,  
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The theme of this issue is passalong plants, and it reminds me of a personal story. My wife's grandmother had a beautiful large lily that was passed to her mother and ultimately given to my wife, Melissa many years ago when we lived in Baton Rouge. We never knew what the name of this lily was or what its origin was. In my wife's quest to find out the name of the lily, she sent a picture of the lily and the passalong history to our local TV station weekly gardening feature. To our surprise, the TV host and plant specialist, Louis Miller, contacted us directly and wanted to feature this plant and Melissa for their next episode. The next thing we knew, the cameras were rolling, and our lily was featured on television, while Melissa was interviewed about the passalong history. Since then, we have lived in numerous places but always brought a transplant with us to our next home. It has generated tons of interest with family, friends, and neighbors. We never knew what the actual name of the lily was other than it being part of the *Crinum* lily family until recently. I donated a few seedlings a few years ago to our Master Gardener Grown section of our plant sale. One of our Master Gardeners, Fran Brockington, was able to research this lily and identified it as the Giant Spider *Crinum* Lily (*Crinum x amabile*). It's very similar to the more common Queen Emma *Crinum* Lily but is larger and has solid green leaves. It is one of the largest spider lilies of its species with huge fragrant flowers that

can reach over one foot in diameter. A native of Asia, it can grow 6 to 10 feet tall and is especially beautiful when planted in mass. With this story in mind, and all of the other wonderful articles in this issue, we invite you to check out our Fall Festival plant sale on October 18 where we will have many unique and special passalong plants available for sale. I hope you enjoy this issue and invite you visit our web site at <https://txmg.org/galveston> and also our Facebook page a <https://www.facebook.com/galvcountrymg/> for more information on upcoming events and activities. We also thank you for supporting the Galveston County Master Gardeners and hope to see you soon.

*Kevin Lancon*



Giant Spider *Crinum* Lily MG Kevin Lancon



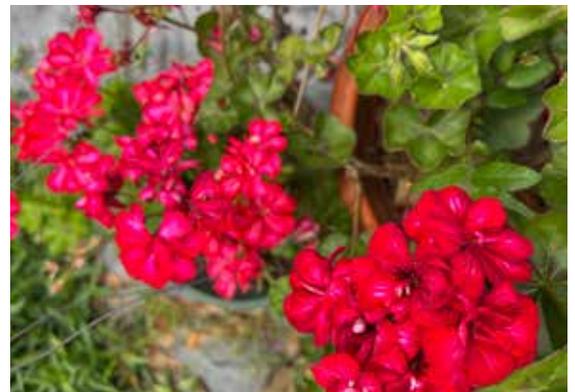
MG Karolyn Gephart  
Editor,  
Gulf Coast Gardening

## Passing Along a Great Issue

Geraniums were my mom's favorite passalong plants. She had hers in a perfect location and every aunt and neighbor asked for a few cuttings repeatedly. They have been my favorite because of the happy memories I have. Our master gardener Green Thumb Book Club read *Passalong Plants* by Steve Bender and Felder Rushing a while back. It is addictive in that after you read one tale of a passalong treasure, you turn the page and start reading another historical (and often hysterical) story. The stories you are about to read are also heartwarming and fun. They also suggest some GREAT plants for all of us to have and pass along. Check out the wonderful photos throughout of both plants and people. The GCMGA won state awards and the Class of 2024 'graduated.' A group of Junior Master Gardeners had a great year and shared some memories. Learn about composting as well as how to protect beneficial insects during the hot summer months. As you sit in the AC avoiding the July and August temperatures, enjoy an inspirational book recom-

mendation on the first two people (women!) in 1938 who mapped the botany of the Grand Canyon. The book review will lead you to wanting to read how they did this in such rough terrain in the thirties. So much is in this issue. Enjoy!

*Karolyn Gephart*



Geranium MG Karolyn Gephart

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Crocosmia is a great passalong *GCMG Database*



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Cover photo of a pink night blooming cereus is by *MG Stacey Phillips*



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# Passalong Plants, a Southern Tradition



Judy Anderson  
GCMG 2012

Many gardening traditions have evolved from life in the South. Some of them came from family, and others came from living in small communities with no nurseries to get plants. One of the most popular southern gardening traditions is sharing ‘passalong’ plants. Varieties were shared from one family member to another, or with the neighbor across the fence.

Often, members of garden clubs shared their plants with each other or swapped with community members. In his book *Maverick Gardeners*, Felder Rushing has a story from writer Eudora Welty about her mother who “stopped going to her garden club meetings when they stopped swapping plants.” Plants are meant to be shared; they spend their life growing and making seeds or runners, just looking for that opportunity to keep life going. With this continuous bounty, gardeners have an opportunity to share their plants with others.

I have been the fortunate recipient of a treasure trove of passalong plants. When I first became a Texas Master Gardener, I would help gardeners Harvey and Nell Shimek when they hosted their open gardens at their daylily farm in Alvin. You could easily identify their home as you approached it along the country road; the ‘Nacogdoches Pansy’ daylily (*Hemerocallis* ‘Nacogdoches Pansy’) grew along the border of the property next to the road. It was a colorful soft yellow with a purple eye and the flowers were an invitation to stop and see the garden. The Shimeks were generous with their daylilies for those of us who helped in the garden. I did get some ‘Nacogdoches Pansy’ daylilies, along with the hard-to-find Byzantine gladiolus (*Gladiolus* × *byzantinus*), and a darling little daylily called ‘Apple Dumpling.’ Now when the temperatures begin to warm, I look for these wonderful showoffs in my garden. They always bring a smile when I see their bright colors dancing in the sunshine. I have shared the ‘Apple Dumpling’ with Fran Brockington for the Bulb Bed in the Discovery Garden.

Rushing has identified the criteria for passalong plants in the *Maverick Gardeners* as Passalong Triarchy. A plant must possess value, be easy to grow, and be easy to propagate. In addition, tradition seems to require a story. Many plants have a history, sometimes unknown to gardeners. But how fascinating it can be to hear gardeners share the history of their plants. The Galveston County Master Gardeners have a tee shirt with the logo, “Knowledge not shared is knowledge lost.” That seems to be the secret of passalong plant stories. A few rules apply to passalong plant sharing. It is important to ask permission to take a plant, cutting, or seeds if a plant is wanted



Angel trumpet *Clyde and Ruby Holt*

and the owner is not offering it at that time. When thinking about sharing plants from one’s one garden, do not share invasive plants, or plants without value. Like in the past, some passalong plants are not typically found in nurseries or big garden centers.

Clyde and Ruby Holt were generous members of the Galveston County Master Gardener (GCMG) family. Before they moved to Utah, they shared many of the plants from their garden in South Shore Harbour area of League City. Clyde was a bonsai and orchid enthusiast, while Ruby worked with Red Ear Slider turtles. Their garden had a variety of plants they were happy to share. One of the plants I received from them was a pink Angel’s Trumpets (*Brugmansia* sp.). I make cuttings each year for plant swaps and the Master Gardener Grown Plant Sale.

We share many plants from the Earth-Kind® Garden during the Master Gardener Grown Sale or when we save transplants, seeds, and bulbs. Several of my favorites are the Cemetery iris (*Iris albicans*), paperwhites (*Narcissus papyraceus*), bluebonnets (*Lupinus texensis*), and Henry and Augusta Duelberg salvia (*Salvia farinacea* ‘Augusta Duelberg’). These plants were part of the original planting in the Earth-Kind® Garden and are now very well established. Each of them are shared every year or two; they are not invasive, but they do prepare for their future. Replication makes them candidates for sharing.

Another popular plant in the Gulf Coast area for sharing is

## “Plants are meant to be shared...”

plumeria. It meets the criteria established by Rushing as a passalong plant. Many of the named plumerias also have a fascinating history that make them highly desirable as passalong plants. The Earth-Kind® Garden displays several plumerias that have been shared by Galveston County Master Gardeners.

Hays Jackson, Director of Longleaf Botanical Gardens in Aniston, Alabama, recommends the following plants as passalong plants: red spider lilies (*Lycoris radiata*), narcissus (*Narcissus* spp.), crinum bulbs (*Crinum asiaticum*), and camellias (*Camellia* spp.).

Gardeners of all ages can appreciate passalong plants; they are easy to grow, easy to propagate, and require a minimum investment. It also reminds us of family and community ties, while preserving precious heirlooms. If we are fortunate, we can also collect those wonderful stories that illustrate the history of passalong plants and share them with future generations.



Cemetery Iris MG Judy Anderson



'Nacogdoches Pansy' daylily MG Judy Anderson



Plumeria MG Judy Anderson



'Apple Dumpling' daylily MG Judy Anderson

## Passing Along the Corms of Crocosmia



Bronia Michejenko  
GCMG 2015

There is nothing more exciting to me than receiving a new plant from a fellow gardener and gaining experienced information about growing it. Passalong plants can evoke fond memories from youth. According to authors Steve Bender and Felder Rushing in *Passalong Plants*, the criteria for a passalong plant is that it is hard to find in commercial garden centers and it is easy to propagate.



In bloom GCMG Database

The plant I pass along is *Crocosmia pottsii* commonly known as crocosmia, falling stars, coppertips, and montbretia. Originating from South Africa, there are eleven species of crocosmia. They are members of the iris family and are characterized by their long, sword-shaped leaves and bright orange, red, or yellow flowers. This plant reminds me of the cottage gardens of my youth. I found the plant through the internet. I started with 10 corms and now have hundreds. A corm is a swollen stem base that is modified into a mass of storage tissue. A corm is different from a bulb because it does not have visible storage rings when cut in half. Gladioli, crocus, and autumn crocus are other examples of plants that grow from corms. I have moved corms to other flower beds and have given many away. In some areas, such as California, certain cultivars are considered invasive. Named cultivars are less invasive. The most popular cultivars are 'Lucifer,' a blood-red variety; 'Bressingham Beacon,' a bicolor orange and yellow; and 'Citronella,' a lemon-yellow bloom.

Plant corms five inches deep in full sunlight or light shade in any well drained soil. Water to maintain even moisture in your soil, once per week in the growing season. When planting in a container, crocosmia flowers tend to be larger than in the flower bed. They usually grow from two to three feet tall. After blooming, cut the stems back to where they meet the leaves to promote new blooms. Once the leaves wither and die, cut to ground level. The corms are hardy in zones 5 and up. Propagation is best achieved through division in the early spring every 3 to 4 years to prevent overcrowding and aid in flower production. The corms and roots form a mat which is easy to pull up. (see photo). Separate the larger corms and replant. Spider mites can be an issue, but are easily managed by hosing with water to dislodge the mites

Crocosmia is an eye-catching plant with trumpet-shaped flowers that bloom from May to October, attracting hummingbirds, butterflies, and bees. Later, seed pods feed birds. Even when not blooming, its leaves add contrast among perennials. Crocosmias are easy to grow, vigorous, and long-lasting, making excellent cut flowers with a saffron-like fragrance after watering. I hope you can find a gardener who will share crocosmia corms with you, but if not, the plants can be found through online nurseries. Once established, you will have a fabulous passalong plant of your own to share.



Corms MG Bronia Michejenko

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## *Dracaena trifasciata*: New Name, Same Great Plant



Kathy Maines  
GCMG 2017

The first thing I learned when writing this article was that what I thought was *Sansevieria trifasciata* is now *Dracaena trifasciata*. The one I have was passed down to me from my mother in 1997. It is outside in a pot. I bring it to the garage when it gets below 40 degrees. It is repotted as needed and moved with me when I retired. This past summer I was going through chemotherapy, and my sister was visit-

arated with roots and planted in individual pots. It is mildly toxic if consumed in large amounts and can cause swelling and numbness to the tongue. This *Dracaena* can be kept as a house plant, placed outside in a pot, or planted in the ground in zones 10 through 12 (as long as it does not freeze). It is a great choice for those just starting out and those who say they cannot grow anything. Remember, do not overwater.

NOTE: The genus *Sansevieria* was originally recognized in 1794 by Linnaeus' student Carl Peter Thunberg. In 2017, after DNA research and analyses along with molecular phylogenetic studies, it was determined from evolutionary lineage that the snake plant was a distinct group within-*Dracaena* genus. It was then reclassified as *Dracaena trifasciata*. The genus *Dracaena* also includes such commonly known houseplants as Madagascar dragon tree, corn plant, and lucky bamboo.



From mother to daughter MG Kathy Maines

ing. We were walking in the back yard and my *Dracaena* was blooming. It was the first time it had ever bloomed! I felt that my mother was sending her support when I needed it most and I look forward to it blooming again this year.

The *Dracaena trifasciata* is a popular tropical perennial. The plant has many common names including mother-in-law's tongue, devil's tongue, bow string hemp, [snake plant](#) and snake tongue. Even the former scientific name, *Sansevieria trifasciata* has become a common name for some gardeners to use. My variety is a tall-growing marbled plant with stiff knife shaped leaves. It can tolerate direct sun but must have good drainage. It does not like wet feet. It is very heat and drought resistant and one of the best plants with minimal maintenance requirements. They are also easy to propagate from leaf cuttings. Just cut a leaf into two-inch sections and stick sections in soil. Cuttings must be right-side up, otherwise, they will not root. This variety also tolerates crowding and can be sep-



In bloom photo use by Billy Jenke

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## Esperanza: A Jewel in the Garden



Marilyn Haupt  
GCMG 2019

Like many folks, I derive a great deal of pleasure from my garden. Among these delights is sharing plants with family and friends. A favorite I pass-along each year to others is Esperanza (*Tecoma stans*). Also known as yellow bells and trumpet bush, this beautiful perennial shrub has many positive attributes that make it ideal for any garden. First and foremost, it is an extremely eye-catching shrub that can reach six feet in height and four feet in width. Clusters of bright yellow bell-shaped flowers bloom along the distal aspects of its branches. The leaves are striking with distinct veins and serrated edges. Their shape provides a stunning contrast to the soft curvature of the flowers. In addition to its beauty, Esperanza is remarkably resilient.

Deemed a Texas Superstar, a designation for plants that excel in Texas landscapes due to their performance and adaptability, this shrub can thrive in hot, dry summers. While considered drought-tolerant, it does prefer a moderate amount of water on a regular basis and well-drained soil. This sun-loving plant blossoms its finest in direct sunlight. Interestingly, Esperanza can be found growing wild throughout Texas, including the dry and desert areas of the Hill Country and the western part of the state. The hardiness of this shrub makes it a wonderful addition to any garden. It also will thrive in containers, making it a vibrant addition to patios and balconies.

The USDA Plant Hardiness Zone for Esperanza is listed as 8-11. They die back during the winter but quickly bounce back in the spring. My Esperanzas have come back year after year—with one exception, that is. I lost one due to record-cold during Winter Storm Uri, 2021.

This is one shrub that will always have a place in my garden because of its summer show of beauty, minimal maintenance and great resilience. Although they can be propagated through cuttings, I share them with others by collecting seeds and growing the plants myself.



'Yellow Bells' MG Marilyn Haupt

At the end of the blooming season, long skinny seed pods will appear. Initially, they are green in color but they will turn brown and brittle. The pods should be carefully monitored at this point and once they begin to split along their sides, they are, with ease, to be picked off the shrub. The pods are to then be completely opened to collect the numerous, light, willowy seeds resting inside. Allowing them to dry out is a necessity and is accomplished by placing them on a paper towel in a cool dark place for a couple of days. Afterwards, they should be stored in an airtight container.

In early January, I sow multiple seeds in loose, moist soil. Barely covering the seeds with soil, I place them under a grow light. It takes approximately 14 days for the seeds to germinate. By springtime, the seedlings are large enough to begin hardening off and ultimately transplanted, once the risk of frost has passed.

Another wonderful feature about the Esperanza is its attractiveness to pollinators. Bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds can find plenty of nectar and pollen in its mass of yellow bells.

Its beauty, resilience and generosity make Esperanza the crown jewel of my garden—and a gift I love to share.

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Seeds MG Marilyn Haupt

# Mississippi Mother-in-Law Taught Love of Passalongs



Carey Little  
GCMG 2022

I first became familiar with the idea of passalong plants when I visited my in-laws in Mississippi many years ago. I was fortunate to share the love of gardening with my mother-in-law. When I first saw the book *Passalong Plants* by Steve Bender and Felder Rushing, I immediately tied the idea of sharing plants to my mother-in-law. She loved to share clippings and starts from seed or bulbs she had divided in her garden. Her tomato transplants and daylily bulbs were shared all over Prentiss County.

A passalong plant is just as described, a plant shared from one person to another. The practice, especially popular in the South, is said to have originated during the Civil War when a shipping embargo caused shortages of supplies to the South. Families depended on the sharing of cuttings and seeds for crops and plants. Since passalong plants typically are relatively easy to propagate from cuttings or seeds, it was a form of plant preservation for plants that were not commonly available in nurseries.

While the sharing of plants between friends and family became popular in the South, another form of plant preservation was recorded when people first began their journeys to new countries. In the 1600's, English colonists settling in Virginia brought seeds from England. They also cultivated crops grown by Native Americans such as corn, squash, and beans. Pilgrims arriving in the New World followed practices of the local tribe in growing barley, oats, peas, and a variety of herbs. Orchards and many flowers, such as roses, tulips, lilies, violets, and marigolds were introduced to the New York area by the Dutch.

A very popular passalong plant, 'Peggy Martin' roses have a remarkable story of survival. Peggy Martin is a rosarian who lived in the New Orleans area when it was devastated by Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Her property was under marshy salt water for two weeks. Once the mucky water subsided, only two plants survived, a crinum and a "no name rose" that had been shared with Martin. Today 'Peggy Martin' roses adorn fences in neighborhoods and on images throughout Facebook. They are now widely available by sharing as well as in plant nurseries.

The crinum is also a common passalong plant today. Seen throughout rural Texas, this bulb is a fast grower, quickly outgrowing containers. Its fragrance lingering in a warm southern breeze can bring a memory of times spent in a rocking chair on a front porch out in the country.



Daylily MG Carey Little



Lycoris MG Carey Little



Southern Shield MG Carey Little

Another popular plant with an amusing nickname of "naked lady," is *Lycoris radiata*. The perennial bulb is in the amaryllis family. The reason for the name is the flowers emerge on a tall, single stalk in August, without leaves which emerge in October. Due to the late summer timing the flowers are also called hurricane lilies as the blooms also emerge during a typical hurricane season.

One of my favorite passalong plants, introduced to me by my mother-in-law, is the Southern Shield fern (*Thelypteris kunthii*). A beautiful fern with long, graceful fronds, it does well in the hot summers and can take a little sun and drought. Steve Bender described it as the South's best fern. I share his enthusiasm about this native fern.

It seems appropriate that the idea of passalong plants is tied to the South. The practice of sharing a beloved plant with another person depicts the gracious and friendly ways often attributed to the South. Sharing plants is the perfect way to share joy.

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# An Unusual Prickly Pear Cactus



Patricia Martin  
GCMG 1998

While volunteering in our Master Gardener booth at the Galveston Herb Fair in May 2021, I purchased a single paddle of a Cochineal Nopal cactus or *Opuntia cochenillifera* 'Variegata' because of its unusual coloring. The elongated pads have irregular cream to greenish-yellow markings and small, white wooly areoles without spines, or nearly so. Thus began my passalong plant to friends and my donations to the Master Gardener plant sales.

The *Opuntia cochenillifera* is native to Mexico but is cultivated in tropical America and the West Indies. In the United States it is grown outdoors in Phoenix, Tucson, San Diego, Jacksonville and West Palm Beach, and even in Harlingen, in South Texas. These are desert cacti that need lots of sun, light, and very little water.

## Growth and Care

These cacti can be grown in pots. The soil requirements are a gritty, sharply draining mix of soil. Use about 1/3 cactus soil mix with 1/3 coarse sand, and 1/3 perlite or pumice. Small pieces of expanded shale could be substituted for pumice. To propagate by cuttings, cut the pads from a plant and let them dry for several days so the wounds heal or callous over before planting. This plant has spines, so definitely wear appropriate protective gloves when handling.

The Cochineal Nopal cactus needs at least five hours of direct sunlight with the correct temperature range. Daytime temperatures should be 65 to 75 degrees with night temperatures a bit cooler. It blooms in the late spring or early summer. The colorful pink-red flowers appear at the top of the uppermost joints. This plant is slow to bloom. (In four years, mine has not bloomed yet) Propagation can be done by seeds or cuttings.

This cactus needs protection in the winter. Bring your potted cactus inside when the temperatures routinely drop below 40 degrees.

## Diseases and Pests

This cactus is not prone to disease but can be susceptible to prickly pear leaf spot caused by the *Phyllosticta* fungus. Prickly pear leaf spot can affect other plants in the *Opuntia* family. The disease is brought about by tiny spores from the fungus. The suggested control is removing the infected pads because the fungus can spread. Avoid overwatering and excessive humidity.

Another problem could be caused by scale, a soft bodied insect



Cochenillifera 'Sunburst'  
Tom Martin



Cochenillifera 'Sunburst'  
Tom Martin

that feeds on the plant's juices. It does spread and may eventually kill the plant. If white fuzzy lumps are present on the pads, treat them with insecticidal soap. Always read and follow pesticide label instructions for usage. Note, avoid using dishwashing liquid on succulents. Then use a long-handled, soft bristle brush in the solution and scrub the pads. Wear gloves for hand protection. This removes the insects, will not scratch the pads, and leaves a soap residue to inhibit insect activity. Repeat this procedure about every six weeks in the summer.

## Final Thought

Enjoy sharing your variegated prickly pear with friends and other gardeners.

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# I Won a Kalanchoe



Karyl Mehlman  
GCMG 2022

My kalanchoe was not a real passalong plant. It was rather a “win it in a raffle, not know what it was, and write a paper about it” plant. It came from the instructor of my Texas Master Gardener class. Perhaps he wanted to share or get rid of it, I wasn’t sure which. I learned about this succulent and found it originated in Madagascar, an island country off the east coast of Africa. One of my classmates came from Madagascar, and this made it more interesting.

## *Kalanchoe blossfeldiana* and *Kalanchoe blossfeldiana* ‘Calandiva’

Commonly called kalanchoe, also written kalanchöe, this is a particularly eye-catching plant due to its colorful blossoms and deep green, succulent leaves. Kalanchoe flowers appear in clusters that include varieties consisting of many colors of the rainbow: red, pink, salmon, and yellow. ‘Calandiva,’ is a popular cultivar with large rose-like blossoms.

The genus kalanchoe contains about 125 species of tropical, succulent plants in the stonecrop family Crassulaceae, mainly native to Madagascar and tropical Africa. The plant grows naturally in the cool, arid regions. Because of these rugged conditions, it adapts to many indoor and outdoor settings making it a popular house plant. It can survive outside if given sun and, like most succulents, infrequent watering. It can over-winter in USDA Zones 10-12. Kalanchoe was one of the first plants to be sent into space, sent on a resupply to the Soviet Salyut 1 space station in 1971. The genus was first described by the French botanist, Michel Adanson, in 1763. It was brought to Paris in 1927 and was discovered by Robert Blossfeld, a German seed merchant who introduced the kalanchoe as a houseplant and named it *Kalanchoe blossfeldiana*. The cultivar ‘Calandiva’ was developed in Norway.

### Care

Both kalanchoes varieties and cultivars like sandy soil that is acidic and drains well. Plants should be allowed to dry out between watering. Feeding should be done during blooming periods.

Propagation is best done in spring or early summer using cuttings, leaves, or stems in a 50 percent peat moss and 50 percent perlite mixture. Allow the cutting to callus for several days before inserting into the rooting medium. If the cuttings are already showing roots growing at the joints, place them in the soil loosely covered and they will take root in a few days. Place the pot indoors in bright, indirect light and in a closed



*Kalanchoe Ted Landry*

large plastic bag to maintain high levels of humidity. Cuttings without roots should be established enough to transplant in 14 to 21 days. After flower buds are large enough to be seen above the foliage, day length is no longer crucial. Plants can be placed in any location regardless of lighting. Plants exposed to naturally short-day lengths in early October should begin flowering by January, approximately 12 weeks from start of long nights.

### Toxicity

The entire plant is considered toxic. In common with other succulents, particularly of the Euphorbia family, it can be toxic to humans causing a rash if the sap touches the skin. If ingested by small animals such as dogs and cats it can cause nausea and vomiting. More severe and even fatal effects include cardiac or pulmonary failure. Toxicity has also been reported in grazing animals.

Its shapely leaves and colorful blooms make the kalanchoe a popular plant gardeners enjoy growing or gifting to others.

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# My Mother's Louisiana Irises



Vickie Hall  
GCMG 2023

My Louisiana irises hold stories in their delicate petals, tales of bayou sunsets and southern rain. Each bloom seems to whisper secrets of a landscape both wild and tender, where the waters cradle their roots and the warm breeze stirs their vibrant hues. These irises are more than flowers; they are a legacy, a living memory of a place where nature and nurture come together.

My story of Louisiana irises begins in the sixties as a child remembering the beautiful billowing leaves of the plant that produced blue or purple flowers with white accents. These flowers showed up in early spring and were a favorite for cut flowers for deserving teachers. The blue and purple colors stood out in our small yard in a patio box against the old pecan tree.

In the spring of 1978, I moved into my first home. I spent many hours enjoying the warm days of summer in the yard with my toddler and realized my yard needed help. I did not have the plants I grew up with and absolutely nothing was blooming. I spoke with my mother often and asked about her flowers. Where did they come from? How do you make them grow so beautifully? How can I turn my yard into a garden?

The next time my mother visited, she arrived with a large blue plastic container filled with Louisiana irises. My first passalong plant! She included both the blue and purple flowers, and we talked about how to plant and care for them to ensure I had flowers just like hers. She told me to plant the iris rhizomes in the sun and to water well. I remember these plants disappeared in the fall and then sprouted again in the spring. She also told me they

would not bloom for two seasons because she divided them to give to me. I was so excited to start a garden at my first home and teach my son about the flowers he would soon see. Those irises grew very well, and I started sharing with neighbors and friends. I loved telling everyone that these flowers came from my mother's house and then watching the blooms spread down the street.

Fast forward five years; we are moving. As we were leaving our first home, I looked at the garden and couldn't bear to leave my irises behind. I hurried to the flower bed and started dividing the irises once again, this time coming with me to our new home. This became the routine. Five homes all planted with my mother's irises.

I like to start my iris bed beneath a crepe myrtle tree. The long slender fronds of the plant move delicately against the tan, peeling bark of the crepe myrtle, and then the vibrant blooms create a striking picture with color and texture. I know now that these plants don't mind having their roots wet, although I think they also do well in a maintained garden bed with routine watering and occasional fertilization.

They bloom in early spring and as the flower wanes it forms seed pods. The plant gradually dies back through the summer and is finally gone by winter. This is the first plant in my garden to flower and each year I wait anxiously for the blooms to appear.

We moved to Texas in 2018, and my irises also moved with us, and I am now sharing these with new friends. Who knows where my mother's irises will end up next!



Photos by MG Vickie Hall

# How to Share a Rose



Karen Lehr  
GCMG 2008

Rose Cook had the prettiest yard on the block when I was a little kid in the 1940's. It was filled with color, sunshine, scents, and a swing just big enough for Mrs. Cook and a couple of little neighborhood girls. Her yard was filled with roses. I had no idea you could go somewhere and buy a rose plant. My wonderful elderly neighbor (fittingly, for this story, named "Rose") explained to me that she got her beautiful roses

by seeing a bloom she liked in a yard, then knocking on the door of the house, asking for a stem, taking it home, sticking it in the ground around the side of the house with a Ball canning jar over the cutting, and finally planting it in a flowerbed once it rooted.

Author and horticulturist Willam C. Welch offers a few tips in his book *Antique Roses for the South* (written while he was serving as Extension Landscape Specialist in the Department of Horticultural Sciences at Texas A&M) to use, in addition to my sketchy childhood memories, to ensure success. By the way, antique roses are perfect for propagating, since they are not patented. Recently introduced roses are often patented for seventeen years after introduction.

**Timing and Stem Selection:** Best Time: While you can take cuttings year-round, success is more likely during the cool months



Cuttings of recently flowered stems



Stems prepared for planting

(November through February).

**Stem Maturity:** Look for stems that have just finished blooming, indicating they've matured enough.

**Stem Length:** Cut stems to 6-8 inches in length.

**Cutting Preparation: Angle Cut:** Make a 45-degree angle cut below a node (where leaves emerge) to increase surface area for root development.

**Scrape the Stem:** Lightly scratch the outer layer of the stem where it will be planted in the ground.

**Remove Leaves:** Remove hips or withered blossoms and the leaves from the lower portion of the stem that will be planted in the soil, leaving a few leaves at the top. Keep cuttings from drying out.

**Planting and Rooting: Soil:** Use a well-draining potting mix, such as a mix of potting soil and perlite, or use sandy soil amended with 1/4 to 1/3 organic material, typically in the form of finished compost.

**Rooting Hormone (Optional):** Dip the cut end of the stem in rooting hormone to encourage root development.

**Planting Depth:** Plant the cutting with 2-3 nodes below the soil line and 2-3 nodes above the soil.

**Humidity:** Cover the cuttings with a plastic bag or jar to maintain high humidity, which is crucial for rooting. Place the cuttings in a bright location, but avoid direct sunlight, especially during the hottest part of the day.

**Watering:** Keep the soil consistently moist, but not soggy, until roots form.

**Rooting and Transplanting: Root Development:** It can take several weeks for roots to develop, so be patient.

**Check for Roots:** Gently tug on the stem to check for resistance, indicating root development.

**Transplant:** Once roots are established and new growth appears, transplant the cuttings into individual pots or directly into the garden. Dr. Welch suggests that cuttings taken and started in the fall should ideally be left in place through the summer, even though they may be well-rooted by April or May.

**Harden Off:** Gradually acclimate the new plants to outdoor conditions before planting them in a permanent sunny location (half day or more of sun) in the Fall.

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## Passalong Plants Are Part of My Family



Carol Hairfield  
GCMG 2020

*Passalong plants are those we acquire when another gardener shares a start, cutting, bulb, or seed. The passalong plant tradition is especially popular in southern states, having gained strength during the Civil War when a shipping embargo limited access to usual sources. The tradition is also strong in Texas. Early Texas settlers were spread far and wide so they relied on cuttings and seeds from family and friends*

*for their gardening needs. (Debbie Pochmann)*

My grandma could grow anything. On one visit I confided in her that I couldn't grow a thing. I was the "black thumb" of the family. She laughed and said, "You're not growing the right plant." Within minutes she had dug up several coleus, some pink polka dots, and a couple of elephant ears. Carefully she wrapped them up in a damp napkin and placed them in a Ziplock bag. After a ten-hour trip home, I planted them in my front yard. Guess what? She was right! They grew everywhere!

*Plant tip:* Coleus, polka dots (*Hypoestes phyllostachya*), and elephant ears (*Colocasia esculenta*) like bright, indirect light. They prefer rich, well-drained, slightly acidic soil.

My mom loved flowers. Her favorites always seemed to be the ones given to her from cuttings from her mom or her sister. One such flower was a night blooming cereus (*Selenicereus grandiflorus*) from her sister Verma. During one of my daughter's visits, an excited grandmother woke her up at midnight, "Kelly, wake up! Come see this flower!" Sleepily, Kelly followed to see a beautiful fragrant white flower which was gone by morning. One year mom's plant had 10 blooms!

At the first plant sale I had to work as a master gardener intern, they were selling cereus. I put it on my list to purchase. But as the day went on, I got busy loading plants and forgot. When a young man came to claim his items, I noticed he had a cereus in his cart. I asked if there were any left. "No, I'm afraid this was the last one." I sighed and said, "Rats, I was going to get one." "Not a problem," he said. Then he proceeded to break off a branch and hand it to me. "They propagate easily." And it did. But five years later, it still hasn't bloomed.

*Plant tip:* Because the night-blooming cereus is a cactus, use highly porous soil that will drain in seconds. This plant tolerates sun, shade, or filtered light, but not freezing temperatures. To propagate, choose a healthy stem and cut it about 4-6 inches long just above a node (where leaves or side shoots emerge). Let the end callous over for a day or two to prevent rot. Dip in



Cereus plants at a sale MG Karolyn Gephart



Coleus in a container with petunias GCMG Database



Cereus MG Carol Hairfield

## “My Grandma could grow anything....”



Coleus varieties MG Karolyn Gephart



Confederate Rose MG Carol Hairfield

a rooting hormone and place in a well-draining mix.

My mother and her sister made regular trips to the old family homestead. While their main purpose was sharing time together, they also enjoyed looking for flower bulbs that they divided and took home. One of their finds was a spider lily. On a summer visit, my daughter called to tell me about helping her grandmother in the yard. I asked her what her favorite flower was this year. She tried several times to tell me, but she would begin giggling so hard she couldn't get the words out. I could tell it was something called “ladies” but the first word was obscured by the giggles. Finally, I got mom on the phone. “They're called spider lilies, but because they don't have leaves on their stems, we always called them naked ladies.” I could hear Kelly still giggling in the background.

*Plant tip:* Spider lilies (*Lycoris radiata*) lie dormant during spring and mid-summer, so there is no need to water them during that time. They don't need to be pruned because the foliage dies back in spring before flowering begins. Red spider lilies can tolerate full to partial shade and prefer moist, well-drained soil that is rich in organic matter. Temperatures below freezing can damage or kill them. There is no need to fertilizer right after planting because the bulbs have not yet taken root. In early spring, you can use an 8-2-4 fertilizer to help the plant grow after its dormant period. Later, a fertilizer high in potassium and phosphorous, like 3-4-5, will help strengthen the plant after blooming and help it survive winter.

During a visit from Mom, she and I passed a neighbor's house that had a beautiful Confederate Rose (*Hibiscus mutabilis*) growing out front. Mom remarked that her grandmother had one just like that. She wished she had one. Unfortunately, she had flown here so getting a cutting didn't seem practical. That following summer since we were planning to drive to their house for a visit, I stopped to ask the woman if I could have a cutting. She was all too happy to share. For the next 30 years, we enjoyed seeing that “stick” become a lovely flowering shrub. During a morning it would bloom a lovely white flower that would turn pink in the evening.

The Confederate Rose is not a rose but a hibiscus. According to a Southern legend, it got its name when a soldier fell near a white blooming bush. As he lay bleeding the flowers turned pink, then red, and then dropped off when the soldier died. While Mom's plant survived the frosts and freezes in Mississippi, mine did not survive the extended freeze in 2021 here.

*Plant tip:* To grow one, there are several things to consider. First, choose a place that will get full sun. Because this plant

“...Something called ‘ladies’ but the first word...  
lost in giggles...”



Datura MG Carol Hairfield

grows up to 10 feet tall, make sure there is space to grow. It also does not like wet feet. Although it dies back to the ground after a hard frost, it will emerge from winter dormancy to shoot up to 10 feet the next season. The best time to take cuttings is in late fall. Collect cuttings about 12 inches long and remove all but the two uppermost leaves. Place the stems in a glass jar of water, and put the jar on a warm sunny windowsill, avoiding direct sunlight. In about eight weeks, the stems will have a nice set of roots and are ready to be planted. Keep your new plants in a sunny location indoors until later in the spring after all chances of frost have passed.

Recently, I finally got my chance to pass a long a plant myself. While on my morning walk, I noticed a neighbor was growing Devil Trumpets (*Datura stramonium*) in his side yard. Its lovely purple flowers reminded me of my mom’s Angel Trumpets (*Brugmansia*). Because my granddaughter loves purple, I asked my neighbor for a cutting. But instead of a cutting he grew my plant from a seed. It took a month, but it was worth the wait. My granddaughter Codie was thrilled. After the last freeze, I was worried hers had died. “No worries,” she informed me. “I saved the seed pods like you told me. Grammy, you’re teaching the next generation.”

That’s our Master Gardener motto: Knowledge not shared is knowledge lost.

*Plant tip:* This plant has high severity poison characteristics! It grows 3 to 4 feet tall and loves a sunny location. Trumpets prefer rich, moist, well-drained soil. It is winter hardy to USDA Zone 9-10.

Our family loves gardening and sharing. It’s no wonder we “pass along” what we love.

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Spider lilies MG Carol Hairfield

# Layering to Get a New Rose Plant



Karen Lehr  
GCMG 2008

Golda was my aunt with the green thumb. Mother marveled at her sister's gardening skills and was especially impressed when Aunt Golda bent the cane of a rose to the ground, placed a brick on the stem, and a few months later was able to move a newly rooted rose plant to a sunnier spot. In the little town where this miracle transpired, there was no garden nursery back in the 1940's, just friends who shared their plants using time-tested techniques. Many years later I learned that what my aunt had done is called "layering." While there are other types of layering, this method is called "simple layering" and is aptly named.

I've tried layering roses with success myself. I had a 'New Dawn' rose that I wanted to move to a different area of my yard. Since it had the first plant patent and the patent was issued in 1931, it easily qualified for patent expiration and ethical reproduction. An article by Wayne Myers from the Deep South District of the American Rose Society (ARS) clarifies that "Roses are prettiest when shared" is the motto of the Jacksonville Rose Society. As hobby gardeners and rosarians, we all love roses. We share our knowledge, and often we share our roses. When is sharing roses wrong? According to the US Patent Office, it is illegal to propagate patented plant material without express permission from the patent owner. This prohibition includes making rooted cuttings for your own personal use, as well as cuttings to give away. According to Myers, the free, online, rose database [www.HelpMeFind.com/rozes](http://www.HelpMeFind.com/rozes) offers information including alternate names and consistently complete and accurate patent information.

Since I knew it was okay to propagate 'New Dawn' but was a little vague on specific techniques used by Aunt Golda, I was happy to find layering for propagation mentioned in many sources that I suspect increased my possibility of success.

Iowa State University Extension and Outreach mentions that starting in spring or early summer to layer plants that have long flexible stems is ideal. Basically, the new plant is formed by pinning and/or burying a portion of the stem (in Aunt Golda's case using a brick), waiting for new roots to form in the point of contact with the soil, and then separating the newly propagated plant from the parent plant.

Iowa State also suggests bending a stem to the soil and burying it 2-4 inches deep with the tip of the branch above ground. Probably better than Aunt Golda's brick would be a sturdy bent wire or pin to hold it in place. One or more nodes (but no

leaves, which must be removed) should be buried. It can help to scrape the rooting area and to dust it with powdered rooting hormone. Oklahoma State University Extension suggest the "wound" can be made using slanting cuts on the bottom of the stem less than half the stem diameter. New roots develop in 6 to 12 weeks, and when the new plant seems to be firmly rooted, it can be cut away from the parent plant.

Layering is an easy way to get new plants that require little equipment or materials. Even the rooting hormone is an optional enhancement and one that neither I nor Aunt Golda used.

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'New Dawn' rose Texas Agrilife Extension

## Peggy Martin, the Katrina Rose



Jan Fountain  
GCMG 2012

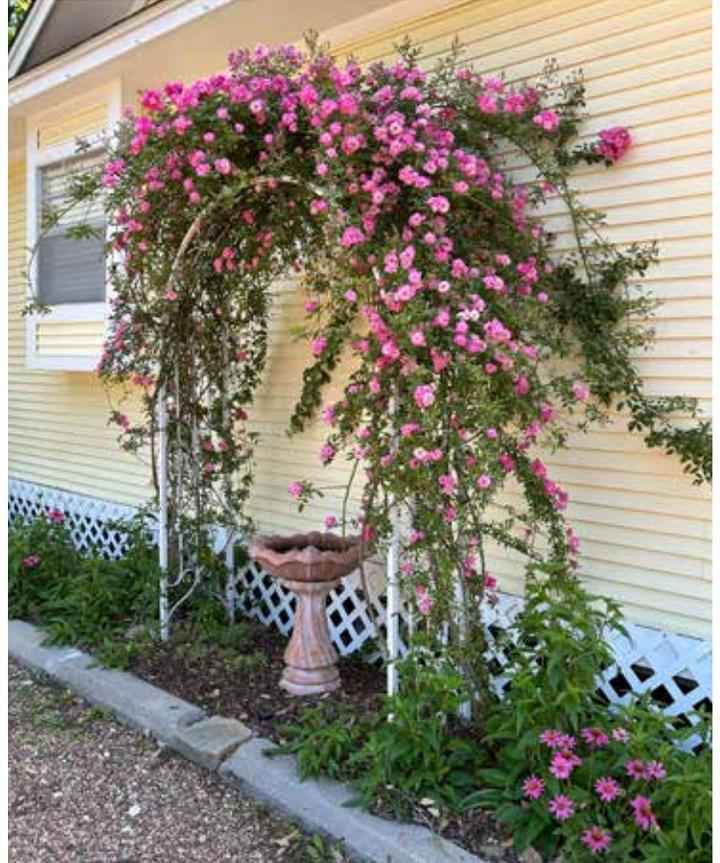
The story of the amazing Peggy Martin rose is told in the book *Heirloom Gardening in the South* by William C. Welch and Greg Grant, along with photographs. Dr. Welch, a professor and Extension Horticulturist, Emeritus at Texas A & M AgriLife, has a passion for heritage gardening. Locating and identifying “found roses” and other forgotten plants is his specialty. In 1979, he and his wife purchased

a Washington County farm where he began planting his acquisitions. His searches for “no-name” plants took him across Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and other areas. He visited vacant lots, old buildings, cemeteries, traditional gardens, and garden clubs where he obtained plant cuttings and pass-alongs from gardeners. He shared many of the roses he discovered with the Antique Rose Emporium in Independence near Brenham and also planted them at his farm for observation. Dr. Welch was a mentor to Greg Grant, a young college student who worked on his farm. Grant, who is now the Smith County horticulturist for the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service in Tyler, joined Welch as a “rose rustler.” Together they authored a book recounting their adventures in propagating roses that had become passalong plants.

Word travels quickly in gardening circles, especially among those who are passionate about roses. In 2003, Dr. Welch was invited to speak to the New Orleans, Old Garden Rose Society (NOOGRS). During his visit, he was a guest of Peggy Martin at her home. She and her husband lived on 12 acres in Plaquemines Parish across the Mississippi River from New Orleans. Her parents lived there also, as they had purchased the property many years earlier.

Martin, a well-known rosarian, loved roses and cultivated many varieties on her land. She had been the recipient of a cutting of a beautiful “no-name” rose, having bright green insect-free and disease-free foliage. Along the canes were dark pink cascades of roses. According to Martin, the rose was given to her by Ellen Dupriest, who had received it from her mother-in-law, Faye Dupriest. Faye had been given it by a relative. Decades ago, the same rose was passed along in the New Orleans area as a “no-name” rambler. While Dr. Welch was visiting, Martin gave him cuttings of the thornless climber.

After returning home, Dr. Welch found that the cuttings rooted quickly. He planted the rose along a fence row. On the third year it bloomed from September through November, and there were still scattered blooms on it after a two-day ice storm in December.



Showy flowers in Friendswood MG Tom Fountain

In 2005, Hurricane Katrina, a Category 5 storm, struck New Orleans and surrounding areas. The storm’s tremendous winds and flooding salt water ravaged Martin’s 12-acre property and destroyed over 450 roses. Her elderly parents, who chose not to evacuate, perished in the storm. Martin was devastated. When she returned home two weeks later, nearly everything was gone—except two surviving plants: the robust “no-name” rambler and a crinum lily. Both were still thriving despite the toxic saltwater mix.

It took two months for Dr. Welch to reestablish contact with Martin. She told him that she was encouraged by the flush of growth on her thornless climber. She felt it was a testament to strength and resilience.

Dr. Welch was convinced that the beautiful, hardy rose with bright pink flowers and graceful vining form should be shared with other rosarians. It produces roses for two months in the spring and then again in the fall. Its thornless canes can be trained or woven onto a lattice, fence, trellis, or wall. It thrives in the extreme heat of the deep south or cooler temperatures in the northeast.

## “...a testament to strength and resilience”

The aftermath of Katrina left many green spaces, parks, and public gardens in complete ruin. A Zone IX Horticulture Restoration Fund was established to restore spaces in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas. One night, Dr. Welch got the idea to name the rose after Peggy Martin. She agreed, and the rose bearing her name was used as a fundraiser. A separate fund was set up through the Greater Houston Community Foundation. Heirloom rose growers were contacted, and Dr. Welch provided the first batch of cuttings to the Antique Rose Emporium. Other participating nurseries were Petals from the Past in Jemison, Alabama; Chamblee Rose Nursery in Tyler; and Treesearch Farms in Houston. Each pledged to donate one dollar per rose sold to the Restoration Fund. Thousands of Peggy Martin roses have since been sold.

Because they're so easily propagated, Peggy Martin roses have become a beloved passalong plant.

As a cherished Southern rose, the Peggy Martin rose can be seen as more than a symbol of endurance. The spirit of hope, friendship, enduring beauty, and romance with a hint of mystery are all connected to this lovely heirloom.

Numerous articles about the Peggy Martin rose can be found online. The most accurate version of the story appears in Welch and Grant's book. Martin now lives in Gonzales, Louisiana, and in recent years has continued to speak with rosarians, garden clubs and other organizations, sharing the remarkable story of the Peggy Martin rose.



Propagation MG Tom Fountain

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'Peggy Martin' roses frame a lake view GCMG Database

# The Basket of Seeds



Bettye Vogler  
GCMG 2020

I grew up helping my mother in her garden. She taught me the glory of growing plants, and I loved it. Well, mostly, I loved the fruit and vegetables that the plants produced. Mom, aware that we would need more plants, suggested looking for seeds. On hunting and fishing trips with my brother, I started collecting seeds all along the trails. I found that the

woods, the forests, the creeks, and riverbanks were a source of beautiful plants and bountiful seeds of endless opportunity. My brother came home with supper in a burlap bag, and I came home with a basket of seeds. That basket became a big part of our family history. We passed it along freely, trading and sharing seeds with our neighbors and friends.

To my delight, many of the seeds even passed themselves along. As plants matured, seeds ripened and germinated in the dirt with each new growing season. Gardens grew bigger and food became more plentiful.

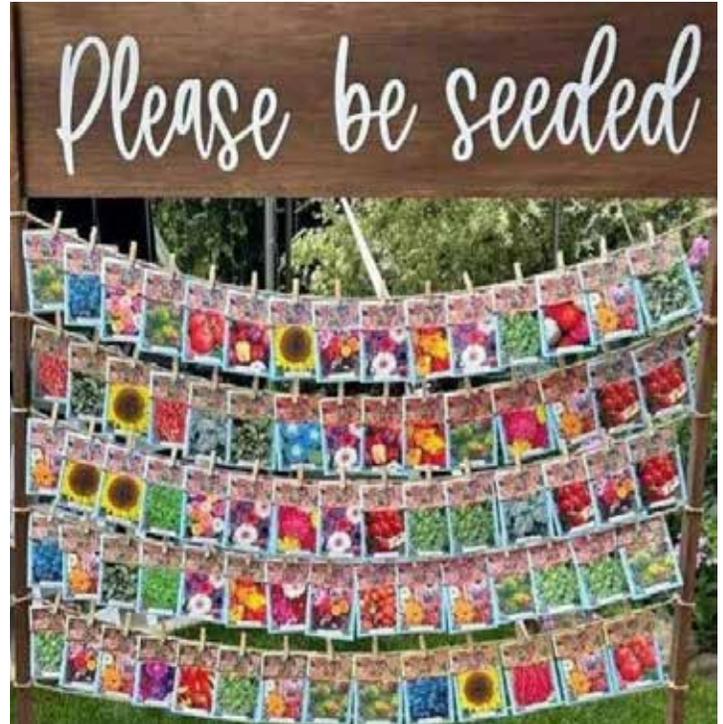
But it did not take long to realize that I had to keep an eye out for hitch-hiking seeds. Many of those seeds became so invasive in the garden that it made pushing up daisies more than just a figure of speech.

The power of passalongs starts when a gardener shares a young plant, a cutting, a bulb, or some seeds of a beloved plant with another individual. The passalong tradition became popular during the Civil War when a shipping embargo limited access to usual sources. The tradition gained strength when early Texas settlers, spread everywhere, relied on cuttings and seeds from family and friends for their gardening needs. One of the oldest forms of gardening, folks were swapping seeds and trading plants long before a plant nursery even existed. It was the only way to get new plants.

Today, gardeners have found a new and innovative way to pass along seeds and plants using over-the fence sharing, porch pickup plant trades, social media posting and trading, parking lot meets and plant swaps. The diverse ways plants move from one backyard to another encompass not only a certain amount of generosity toward the plants themselves but also to one another. Make friends with plant lovers, they are happy people. Having a friendship garden is one of my greatest joys.

In July each year, the Galveston County Master Gardener Association hosts a fish fry and plant swap for its members and guests. I bring a basket of seeds heaped up and running over. People rummage through it like a discount bin at a thrift store.

Included are packets of peppers, eggplant, tomatoes, okra,



Crafty way of offering seeds. MG Bettye Vogler

broccoli, tomatillos, and basil because they are extremely easy to grow from seeds. So are herbs such as dill, chives, cilantro, parsley, oregano, and fennel.

Further, carrot, radish, kohlrabi, beet, and turnip seeds, beans, corn, peas, spinach, leaf lettuce, kale, pumpkins, melons, and squash all do very well directly seeded in the soil.

Flowers like marigold (*Tagetes*), *Zinnia*, *Cosmos*, sunflowers (*Helianthus*), nasturtiums (*Tropaeolum*), bachelor's buttons (*Centaurea cyanus*), *Alyssum*, morning glory (*Ipomoea purpurea*), *Calendula*, columbine (*Aquilegia*), and Shasta daisies (*Leucanthemum × superbum*) grow quickly from seeds.

Growing flowers and plants from seeds will mean a greater variety of flowers in your garden and food for your pantry

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# Texas Superstar Plant of the Month: Peppermint Flare



Judy Anderson  
GCMG 2012

In the Gulf Coast area, tropical hibiscus (*Hibiscus rosa-sinensis*) is one of the most popular plants found in home landscaping. Many tropical beauties with multicolor and ruffles grow well here but need extra care to survive any winter with freezing temperatures. However, there is a hardy hibiscus with the clever name of ‘Peppermint Flare’ (*Hibiscus moscheutos* ‘Peppermint Flare’) that is an amazing beauty that can return after a freeze.

This plant is sensitive to cold, but the good news is the die back is above the ground. In the spring, cut the plant back to about 6-10 inches and be patient. These plants will grow slowly as the soil warms. The plant looks best when the summer temperatures increase. While other plants are beginning to look stressed with the heat, the ‘Peppermint Flare’ will be like a can-can dancer out in the garden saying “Hey, look at me.”

The blooms are overlapping petals that open flat to a slight cup with five individual petals. They are about as big as the palm of a hand or up to 9 inches, with a very pale pink or creamy white with Barbie pink pin stripes on the petals, and a fuchsia center. ‘Peppermint Flare’ makes a clump from 4 to 6 feet. The plant has a broad soil tolerance and can be planted in containers, rain gardens or bog areas. In addition to the amazing flower, the plant displays beautiful glossy green foliage that is often overlooked when the ‘Peppermint Flare’ is in bloom.

The plants are considered almost sterile hybrids producing no viable seeds. Instead of seed production, all their energy is put into blooming.

Propagation can be done by cuttings, but it is also easy to divide the plant. Think of this plant as “pull-apart bread.” If you dig up the clump by roots you will see the flowering branches of the clump have developed root masses. From that one plant you may find a dozen new transplants that can be pulled apart and the clump can be replanted back in the garden. This is a good way to thin the plant and share the transplants with others.

‘Peppermint Flare’ is not always available at nurseries. Often the Master Gardener Grown division of their sales will offer this favorite passalong plant.

In 2010 the plant was selected as a Texas Superstar®. According to [texassuperstar.com](http://texassuperstar.com), a Texas Superstar® designated plant means the variety has been rigorously tested



Peppermint Flare MG Judy Anderson

and proved to thrive in the state’s wide range of growing conditions. Texas Superstar® plants are chosen for their beauty, performance, and ease of propagation. Further, they must be available and reasonably priced.

This hibiscus is very hardy, pest resistant, full of energy and grows well throughout Texas. It is a rose mallow, which attracts hummingbirds as well as being a host plant for the Gray Hairstreak butterfly.

Planting around other attractive plants highlights its beauty, including rock rose (*Cistus* sp.), American beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*), or gaura (*Gaura lindheimeri*). In the Earth-Kind® Garden in the Discovery Garden in La Marque, ‘Peppermint Flare’ is in two different locations; one is next to ‘Belinda’s Dream’ rose (*Rosa* ‘Belinda’s Dream’) and a ‘Cancun’ plumeria (*Frangipani* ‘Cancun’); in the other area it is in front of the Arabian lilac vitex (*Vitex trifolia*) and ‘Henry Duelberg’ salvia (*Salvia farinacea* ‘Henry Duelberg’).

‘Peppermint Flare’ can be a feature plant in the garden or a singer in the choir to create a harmonious landscape.

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# Iris Clones: A Plant That Can Be Shared for Generations



Monica Martens  
GCMG 2013

Iris clones are making them a perfect passalong plant. The process begins with the rhizome.

The rhizome is the base of the iris and its energy storage area. It is thick, and from it, roots extend into the soil and the iris blades (leaves) grow upward. It also produces the flower stalk, with 3-5 blooms. Each rhizome creates a flower stalk once, and eventually the rhizome rots away. In the same year that it blooms though, the rhizome sends out offsets which produce new identical plants (Photo 2). Near the original plant, another iris will pop out of the soil; it's connected to the mother plant by an extension of the rhizome. These offsets usually grow directly next to the original rhizome (Photo 3). Over time, the new plants begin to create a c-shape or clump. Some iris cultivars are so prolific, however, that the mother rhizome will send an offset further away from itself, being the reason, an identical iris will be in the vicinity, but not directly next to the one originally planted. This has been the case in my garden, where I grow Louisiana irises, which are the best type for our 9b gardening zone (Photo 4).

The family of Louisiana

irises refers to (1) a set of five species found in nature along the Gulf Coast states and up the river deltas to the north, (2) the collected hybrids of these species that have occurred naturally, and (3) hybrids purposefully bred from the five species and their crosses since the 1920s. In the Discovery Garden, master gardeners grow many varieties of older hybrids in the full range of color.



Cultivated irises



Offsets  
Photos by MG Monica Martens

Nearly 30 years ago, I was introduced to irises as a passalong plant. I moved to the Rocky Mountain region with my new husband and had a new garden, new family, and new friends. I began to receive tall-bearded irises, popular in that area. It was common for friends to split their iris clumps in early autumn and pass along single rhizomes, occasionally through the mail. Another practice I discovered

was that friends would intentionally save money on new introductions by being very patient. A new introduction is an iris that has just hit the marketplace. In this case, two friends would purchase a different iris selling for as high as \$30-50 per rhizome. Within five years, or perhaps a little less, the friends would be able to share offsets with each other. Because this was a dry, high-altitude climate, rhizomes reproduced more slowly than the ones we grow in Galveston County.

There are two primary ways to share irises. The most common way is to wait until the original iris has reproduced enough clones

## “...helpful tip...tag irises”

that you have some plants to divide and give away. It is easy to determine when your irises need to be divided. For instance, you'll notice that they begin to look crowded. The rhizomes start bulging above the soil for the same reason. In this case, dig up the clump (Photo 5), separate the irises into single plants, and reshare, making sure to save one to replant. Avoid sharing the mother iris that has bloomed that year; it will have a visible thick bloom stalk. That iris will need to create offsets on its rhizome to create new plants that will bloom, and that will take a season.

In the Rocky Mountain region, the rhizomes and soil were drier, and an implement was sometimes necessary to cut apart the irises. In our region, irises and the soil are damp, and the process seems simpler but using a gardening implement can make a clean split. Once cut, it's best to keep the rhizome moist until it is replanted. To give it away, replot it or wrap a wet paper towel around the rhizome and place it in a bag. Share the iris as soon as possible, rather than keeping it in a wet, soggy bag for several days.

The other primary way for sharing is to make rhizome cuttings—best explained at the website of the Society for Louisiana Irises. In this case, the rhizome is cut into several sections and then sterilized. With no leaf matter on it, the rhizome



Offsets on rhizome



Louisiana iris



The clump  
Photos by MG Monica Martens

pieces are then planted into a soil mixture in a pot and kept moist and covered until they produce new shoots. For the full directions, visit <https://louisianas.org/propagation/>.

It is best to divide the irises in autumn. Another helpful tip is to tag irises. When irises are mailed from nurseries, they come with a nametag and are usually wrapped in a moist paper towel or otherwise kept very slightly damp. Tagging your irises in some fashion is helpful, if for nothing else to tell a friend what color they are. Once the bloom is gone, it will be impossible to tell them apart.

It is common for someone to tell me they are growing their grandparents' irises, which bring them happy memories. Often the original name of the hybrid is lost, however, the joy of growing that flower is alive. Because people share irises, we've collectively managed to preserve many old hybrids long after they have disappeared from the marketplace. At that point we consider them endangered, and one iris society is devoted to the purpose of keeping old hybrids in circulation, the Historic Iris Preservation Society, <https://historiciris.org>.

Passing along these plants is great for friends, family, and the fan base.

# Tips for Sharing Your Favorite Seeds



Doris Heard  
GCMG 1990

What a joy it is to share seeds with fellow gardeners! Introducing others to plants you love is always fun, and it is especially rewarding to share seeds with someone new to gardening, offering tips to help them succeed and, hopefully, get hooked themselves.

One of the simplest and most effective ways to share seeds is to collect them, package them into small individual envelopes or containers, and include a printed description with planting instructions and, ideally, a color photo of the mature plant. The planting instructions should clearly explain when, where, and how to plant the seeds, along with any helpful tips to encourage successful growth. You can easily create the labels on your computer, print them out, and staple one onto each envelope. For example, with yellow cosmos (*Cosmos sulphureus*), I fit three instruction cards per page, cut them to size, and then they are ready to go.

Over the years I have used several different types of packages. The simplest and most inexpensive option is using small paper envelopes which are easy to find online or at hobby and craft stores.

One year, I decided to make seed balls filled with wildflower seeds specifically selected for the Houston/Galveston area.



I ordered the seeds online and followed a simple process to make the seed balls. There are plenty of great video tutorials online for anyone who wants to try it. I included a note with instructions on when and how to sow the seed balls, along with fun ideas for where they could be dispersed. I also emphasized the importance of getting permission before sowing seeds on property that wasn't theirs. To package them, I used small, inexpensive burlap bags ordered online and tied the instructions onto each bag. This was a bighit with kids and adults alike.

## Some of My Favorite Seeds to Share

### Yellow Cosmos (*Cosmos sulphureus*)

These seeds are some of my favorite to share with new gardeners because they are so easy to grow, bring beauty to any garden, and attract pollinators. Though they're annuals, the seeds are easy to collect and sow the following spring.

### Bluebonnet (*Lupinus texensis*)

Years ago, a gardening friend from Dickinson gave me bluebonnet seeds she said were adapted to the Houston/Galveston climate. She was absolutely right, I became hooked! Now I sow bluebonnet seeds at school habitat gardens and in our alley, sharing them widely with other area gardeners. I collect the seed pods in late spring or early summer once they have turned brown and begin to crack open. The pods store well in a paper bag until you have time to break them open and place the seeds into envelopes. I share the seeds in early fall, the best time to plant them, along with instructions sourced from reliable gardening websites.



“...wonderful way to connect with community”



Bluebonnet Seed Pod MG Doris Heard

### Peter Pepper (*Capsicum annuum*)

One of the most challenging and unusual seeds I've shared over the past few years is an heirloom pepper that my mother once grew in our New Orleans garden, peter peppers. These peppers always generated a few laughs once their oddly shaped seed pod appeared. Several years ago, I found and purchased seeds online from a Louisiana grower. I shared the seeds with several friends who were all great gardeners. Only one had any luck growing them, and she shared a plethora of seeds with me. I again shared these seeds, but with a much larger group of gardening friends, explaining the challenge of getting this pepper plant to thrive. All took on the challenge and many were successful.

Whether packaging heirloom seeds, crafting seed balls, or just filling up a few envelopes, sharing seeds is a gift that keeps growing. It's a wonderful way to connect with community and keep gardening traditions alive. Who knows? You might just help someone fall in love with gardening, just as you did.

### Directions for Planting Bluebonnet

How to Plant Texas Bluebonnets in the Fall

Choose a sunny location with well-drained soil for planting your bluebonnets. In early fall, gently rake the soil to loosen the top layer. Scatter 8 to 10 seeds per square foot, making sure they are evenly distributed and in good contact with the soil. Press the seeds firmly into the ground using your hands or by lightly walking over the area. Do not mulch.

Water the area lightly and infrequently. While bluebonnets need some moisture to sprout and grow, they dislike soggy conditions. If rainfall is scarce during fall or winter, occasional watering will support healthy growth.

Texas bluebonnets are annuals—they complete their life cycle in one year. Seeds germinate in the fall, with plants growing slowly through the winter. They typically bloom from late March to early May. After flowering, the plants form green seedpods that gradually turn yellow and then brown. Once the pods begin to pop open, you can collect the seeds for next season. After harvesting the seedpods, you can remove the spent plants.



The **Peter Pepper**, *Capsicum annuum* var. *annuum*, is an heirloom chili pepper that is best known for its unusual shape. The pepper is considered very rare and its origin is unknown.

It is adaptable to a variety of growing conditions. The best growing conditions involve a sunny spot in the garden, moderately rich soil and the same amount of water you'd give any other pepper plant when drought threatens. It is recommended to use a seed starter for a better result, but if a seed starter is not available, the seeds could be planted in a plastic or clay pot in a sunny window.

The Peter Pepper has both ornamental and culinary use.

Enjoy!  
Doris



### Orange Cosmos

Annual

Plant in Spring (March-April)

Height: 2-3 feet

First Blooms: 60 – 90 days

Blooming Period:  
May – November

Sow directly into the soil in a sunny location

Not too deep, about 1/16”

DO NOT FERTILIZE (all plant and no blooms)

Cosmos don't mind being crowded. Don't thin

Collect seeds and replant next spring.

Cut and bring into your home.

These are samples of what is provided when a seed order is completed.

# A Composting Interview with MG Becky Jaschek



Christie McGrath  
GCMG 2023

## Getting Started with Composting. What inspired you to start composting at home?

My husband and I have tried to be environmentally conscientious. Putting compostable materials in the landfill is just not right. We have always mowed over leaves to mulch them instead of collecting them. When we consider the amount of kitchen waste we generate, it really makes sense to keep that out of the landfill and make a useful product of it.

## What type of composting system(s) do you use?

We started with just a wood pile, a place to put broken or trimmed limbs. Our first real composter was a homemade totally enclosed barrel composter. We had many visiting critters like raccoons and opossums that were always interested in what was for dinner. But since we just had one barrel and we were always adding to it, the compost never matured to a usable state. Next, we tried a raised screened bin which allowed the broken-down material to drop to the collection pad underneath where it could be collected and further treated in a pile with lawn waste from the wood pile. That worked for a while, but we ended up overloading it, which upset the system, and we stopped for a few years. My favorite system was vermicomposting using composting worms. It started as our son's science project for school, showing the efficiency of vermicomposting versus routine composting. The worms made very impressive work of compostable material until the heat of the summer and watermelon season when the bin became too hot and too wet for the worms. We released them into the unstructured compost pile. Their descendants are still there today. I have now started a compost bin that I haven't fully implemented because as I introduced kitchen materials, we had a strong and determined opossum break into the structure. I need to fortify it with mesh to keep scavengers out, so it is currently just being used for some of the yard materials.

## Composting Process

### What kinds of material do you add to your compost?

Unused portions of fruits and vegetables like damaged produce, peels, trimmings, teabags, eggshells, etc. We do not add dairy, meat scraps or cooked materials that should not be composted. From the yard, we compost green non-weed plant material like garden plants that have served their purpose, excess leaves the lawn crew does not mow into mulch and small branches and leaves from non-invasive trees or shrubs.

### How do you balance greens and browns?

We try to maintain a 3:1 mixture by volume of browns to greens, but currently that is hard since we are not adding fresh kitchen material. The bed temperature is also not getting as hot as it needs to achieve a good composting environment. We have been adding some organic compost and compost with manure to the bin to help the system.

### Do you measure your compost temperature?

Yes. We bought a long probe thermometer.

### How often do you turn or mix your compost?

I turn it 4-5 times in the first two weeks of starting the bin or adding substantial amounts of fresh material. It oxygenates the bed and encourages decomposition. It also helps to distribute materials if things have gotten too wet or hot.

### Do you have a regular schedule for these compost activities?

It is driven by the bed conditions.

## Results and Benefits

### How long does it usually take for your compost to break down into a usable soil amendment?

Our primary focus is to reduce the amount of kitchen scraps and lawn waste going to the landfill. Being able to use the material as a finished product in the garden is a plus, but not the driver. Our composting systems have been single stage units with finishing taking place outside of the bin. We are always adding new kitchen scraps to the bin, so the compost never reaches a finished product stage. Over time the volume reduces so much that we seldom remove the unfinished compost.

### How do you use the compost you create in your garden or plants?

We have used the unfinished compost as we cleaned the bin at the start of a new "compost season" in the spring only a couple of times. We have used the semi-finished material as a fill in the bottom of a new raised bed and as an amendment under established hedges at the edge of the yard. Since the material was not yet "finished", we utilize it in areas where it can continue to break down or finish without competing with tender vegetation. For the unfinished compost to finish, it will draw needed nutrients, such as nitrogen from the soil. By using the compost where it can continue to finish, it will eventually add nutrients and structure to the soil without directly impacting surrounding vegetation.

## *“Every little bit helps...”*

### **Have you noticed any improvements in your plants or garden since you started composting?**

We still purchase some compost, but concerning either source, we have noticed a difference when we use it consistently in the garden and in the flower beds.

#### *Personal Reflection*

### **What do you enjoy most about composting?**

Knowing that we are keeping the material out of the landfill, so even if it isn't great supplement material, it is at least not filling up a landfill. It is icing on the cake if we generate usable material.

### **Would you encourage others to compost? Why?**

YES! For the reasons mentioned above.

### **Do you have any tips for beginning composters?**

Keep trying. There is some system, or maybe combination of systems, that will work for you. Every little bit helps.

### **Is there anything else about composting you would like to share?**

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Aggie Horticulture Earth-Kind Landscaping website has valuable information on composting.



Getting started with composting. The Jaschek's composting bin *MG Becky Jaschek*

# Supporting Insect Life in the Hottest Summer Months



Hedy Wolpa  
MG 2018

We hear and read about the importance of protecting insect habitat in our yards and gardens over the winter. Then, in springtime, with or without human efforts to safeguard their habitats, most insects safely emerge as adults or larvae to feed, mate, reproduce, and continue their species' cycle of life. This process continues even through the hottest months of the year.

Insects still benefit from occasional human support and attention that keeps them coming back throughout the summer as they provide pollination services, aerate our lawns and flower beds, and eat other pest insects using their predatory instincts.

As outdoor temperatures increase in June, July, and August, there are also drought conditions, thunderstorms, and hurricanes to contend with. Insects seek shelter from storms and intense heat, protection for eggs and larvae, and seek sources of nourishment including pollen, nectar, yeast-like foods, and, of course, water. Our outdoor picnics are sometimes hijacked by insects looking for sweets (sodas), yeasts (beer and wine), and proteins (your ham sandwich). Be vigilant as you watch for stinging insects but try to be tolerant of this animal behavior.

Honeybees are especially impacted during the hottest months, since regulating their body temperature and the temperature inside the hive is important. Honey bees modify their behavior so that instead of constantly foraging for pollen, they seek water sources to cool themselves and their hives. They also reduce the amount of time they spend out of the hive during mid-day, and look for cooling nectar sources. While inside the hive, honeybees move air around by constantly fanning their wings, to keep it cool.

There are things we can do as gardeners and nature enthusiasts to help wildlife in our yards and gardens this summer.

## Plant and grow:

Provide plenty of colorful native plants and flowers with different flower sizes, petal shapes, and height.

Strategically plan bloom times, if possible, so your garden has plenty of diversity to offer feeding insects. Texas native plants can tolerate hot and dry conditions, and many natives will bloom continuously through summer and fall, encouraging insects to hang around the area longer.

Plant a diverse mix of compatible species densely to help suppress weeds and create a cooler, more inviting microclimate for insects. However, be intentional about leaving some patch-



Fruit feeder with banana, apple, orange MG Hedy Wolpa

es of bare soil exposed. These open areas are essential nesting habitat for many native ground-dwelling bees.

“Color-clump” with same-color flowering plants to create a visual landing pad for flying insects, making it easier for them to quickly find nectar and pollen.

Grow plants and vines that display blooms vertically and provide hanging baskets of flowering plants. This type of planting is serviceable for insects that hover or get their nourishment “on the fly.”

Nourish and hydrate:

Puddling dishes are a good idea for butterflies. Add clean sand and gravel, or some fine soil, along with fresh water, in dishes to provide minerals, salts, and other nutrients. These bits of matter help butterflies produce pheromones to attract mates and stay hydrated. Puddling activity typically occurs in the heat of the day throughout summer. Remember to keep these dishes clean and supplied with fresh water.

Provide several water sources in shallow bowls or dishes throughout your garden and yard. These should have rocks and perches so insects won't drown as they drink. Bubbling fountains and baths are enjoyed by lots of wildlife, but should also have landing areas if the water is deep or fast-moving.

Provide a dish of sweet-smelling, fermenting fruits (a “fruit feeder”) like apple slices or an overripe banana, still in the peel with some holes poked into it, to attract butterflies, bees, ladybeetles. Discard fruits in the evening so you won't attract unwanted animal life.

Nectar-producing flowers are especially desirable as a source of sweet hydration. You may notice more insect activity

## “...help wildlife this summer”



Puddling dish with rocks and sand MG Hedy Wolpa



Monarch butterfly and larvae on milkweed Rob Routledge, Bugwood



Yellow "landing pad" for swallowtails MG Hedy Wolpa

around nectar sources during the hottest part of the day to satisfy the need for hydration.

Let your summer veggies and flowers “bolt” and go to seed as production slows down, providing more food choices and availability for all types of wildlife, including migrating birds.

### **Maintain:**

Leave dead tree limbs, hollow stems, and stumps year-round in your garden and yard as insect habitat. There’s always a lot of interesting insect life under these decaying, woody discards.

Provide insect houses and “hotels”. These are somewhat helpful as shelter for insects, but most insects prefer burrowing under leaf litter to keep cool or to lay their eggs. If you have insect houses, they should be replaced or cleaned annually as they can mold or mildew and may also harbor parasites.

Water your trees and herbaceous shrubs regularly and deeply in summer. They provide shady perches and hidden leaf cover for insects and birds.

Mow less frequently. Taller grasses sequester moisture and encourage deeper root growth. This also gives insects and birds more coverage and protection. Consider replacing some of your grass with ground cover plants. Plant taller native grasses that grow in clumps and don’t need to be mowed.

Use leaf litter instead of traditional commercial mulch products. Leaf litter keeps the soil layers underneath soft and moist and will provide nesting areas for pupating and solitary insects. Also, it’s easier for insects to emerge from leaf litter instead of heavier woody mulch. You don’t need to shred leaves before using them in your beds since shredding may destroy insect eggs and larvae.

It’s possible (maybe just remotely) that insects regard people as “beneficial humans” in much the same way that we consider insects beneficial. We can always hope that our efforts during the hottest summer months help sustain insect life.

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# The Heritage Junior Master Gardeners Have a Great Year



Kaye Corey  
MG 2001

The Heritage Junior Master Gardeners (JMG Kids) are led by MG Kaye Corey and her assistant Paula Matranga. The group meets at the Heritage Gardener Clubhouse in Friendswood for meetings and many activities.

Activities enjoyed by the Kids this year included operating a rock painting booth at the Galveston County MG Fall Festival, field trip to the Butterfly Museum, participating in the Heritage Gardeners Flower Show, Youth Division and releasing lady beetles in Friendswood's Pollinator Garden. Annually, the Kids operate their refreshment and plant sale booth at the Heritage

Gardener Christmas and Spring Vendor Markets which is part of the Annual Tour events. This past winter the Kids learned that tomatoes they grow in a raised bed across the street from the garden center could be picked before a freeze and eaten as fried green tomatoes or helped to turn red. The Kids are now looking forward to a nature tour canoe trip and a swim party. Classes begin again in September.

Kaye Corey has led Heritage JMG Kids for over 25 years, with over 130 Kids being certified as Texas Jr. Master Gardeners. The JMG program is adapted from the adult Master Gardener curriculum taking three years to earn certification.

*All photos by JMG database*



## Discover the Kaleidoscope of Colors Mid-Summer Brings

# Summer Blooms: What's Flowering in my Yard

As a fair-weather gardener, I find mid-summer to be an enchanting time in my yard, where hardy survivors thrive and flourish. The garden transforms into a vibrant tapestry of colors, showcasing a variety of plants. Among these resilient beauties are Obedient Plant (*Physostegia virginiana*), Yellow Bells (*Esperanza*), Zinnias, Indian Mallow (*Abutilon ssp.*), Purple Cone Flower (*Echinacea*), Chinese Fringe Flower (*Loropetalum*), Chinese trumpet vine (*Campsis grandiflora*), and the bottle brush tree (*Callistemon*). Each one contributes its own unique charm to the summer season.



All photos by MG Linda Steber

# Gardening Help Desk: Acquaint Your Fire Ants to the TAMU Two Step



Norma Torok  
MG 2022

Fire ants are a persistent nuisance in Texas landscapes. At the Gardening Help Desk, one question that crops up time and again is, “How do I get rid of fire ants for good?” The Master Gardener’s response may not be the cut and dry answer expected, often needing a discussion, starting with identifying the ants in question.

The notorious imported red fire ants (*Solenopsis invicta*) cause a person the most pain of all varieties of ants. They deliver bites and stings at the same time. The ants are motivated to bite and sting when they sense movement while in contact with human flesh. According to Texas A&M AgriLife Extension on identifying imported fire ants, “Sterile female fire ant workers can sting repeatedly; they first bite, and while holding on to the skin with their jaws, inject venom with stingers at the end of their abdomens. This unique venom produces a fire-like burning sensation. Most people develop a whitish pustule or fluid-filled blister at the site of the sting after a day or two; some people are hypersensitive to stings and should be prepared for a medical emergency if stung. Many people can tolerate multiple stings but may have problems with secondary infections at the sites of the stings.” These painful stings make controlling fire ants an important priority.

Texas A&M offers a “Two-Step Method” for managing ants in the landscape. The first step is to broadcast granules specifically formulated for imported red fire ants. The second step is to treat individual mounds with dust, granules or liquid insecticide. Alternatively, you can pour very hot water over the mound, though this is less effective than insecticides. Regular broadcasting granules helps reduce the mounds we see and don’t see.

The best time to broadcast granular insecticide is from August through October during the morning hours when temperatures are between 65 and 95 degrees. Usually, this timing will help minimize ants by early spring. You could use small food baits to attract ants prior to applying insecticide products. Baits are intended to kill the queen. Broadcasting should be done whether there are visible mounds or not. Dry and higher temperatures drive ants deeper into the ground and may not be seen—but they’re still there. If mounds re-appear, a spring broadcast help bridge the gap until the fall application.

So, what kind of product should you use to treat fire ants effectively? An article by Texas A&M University informs that products with indoxacarb as an active ingredient will begin to achieve control in about two weeks. Hydramethylnon will gain control in three to six weeks. Insect growth regulators

methoprene, pyriproxyfen, or fenoxycarb applied in late fall may not be effective for several months but may restrain the fire ants. Another product which is a blend of hydramethylnon and methoprene, provides quicker and longer-lasting results. It is possible that with diligence, 80 to 90 percent fire ant control can be achieved. For additional product specifics and detailed information, please see <https://fireant.tamu.edu/controlmethods/products/> and factsheet: [Red Imported Fire Ant Management Guide - Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service](https://fireant.tamu.edu/controlmethods/products/)

Gardening Help Desk is available to anyone who has a question or concern. Call 281-309-5061 or email [gcmghotline@gmail.com](mailto:gcmghotline@gmail.com).

## References:

“Fire Ant Frequently Asked Questions.” Texas Imported Fire Ant Research and Management Project. Texas AgriLife Research. <https://fireant.tamu.edu/manage/faq/> Accessed April 2025.

“Products.” Texas Imported Fire Ant Research and Management Project. Texas AgriLife Research. <https://fireant.tamu.edu/control-methods/products/> Accessed April 2025.

Brandenburg and Villani. “Red Imported Fire Ant.” Texas AgriLife Extension Field Guide to Common Texas Insects. 1995. <https://texasinsects.tamu.edu/red-imported-fire-ant/>



Ant mound [tamu.edu](https://tamu.edu)



Fire ants [tamu.edu](https://tamu.edu)

# Discovery Garden Update



Tom Fountain  
GCMG 2008

Spring continued to be a little warm but moist, producing fabulous floral displays in the Discovery Garden along with great-looking produce. The average temperatures still ran two to three degrees above normal this spring even breaking a few temperature records. Rainfall averaged a little over an inch below normal each month. Yet, the ground maintains moisture and prevents drought for now. The National Weather Service extended forecast indicates that temperatures will likely continue above normal with rainfall near normal throughout summer. It's hurricane season so stay tuned and be prepared.

Walking through the pergola area the other day I couldn't resist taking a picture of beautiful flowers and an MG working on a project in the herb garden. (Photo 1) Beauty all around me is what I always enjoy about the garden.

MG Jan Fountain took a wonderful picture of MG Karen Nelson who was busy weighing Celebrity and Tycoon tomatoes from her and Steve Holliday's tomato project in the vegetable garden. (2) All the plants in their bed are designated Texas Superstars and look great.

We have some amazing Master Gardeners who come to the garden each week cleaning up the beds, planting and harvesting. They also do much maintenance. Recently, MGs John Mitchiner, Larry Brizendine and Rachel Montemayor were pulling up and replacing new memory bricks in the entry. (3)

We celebrated our 2024 Master Gardeners Graduation and Recognition Ceremony in Galveston recently. The Master Gardeners present between Association President Keven Lancon on left and Extension Agent Horticulture Boone Holladay on right were newly certified MGs May Casagranda, Reagan Mears, Robert Rodriguez, Lucy Brown, Tanya Padgett, and Phil Starks. On the back row are Roxann Kriticos, Donna Woodbury, Joan Koritni, Connie Berthiaume-Diaz, Doreen Hughes, and Weez Doherty. (4)

Gardeners are never too busy to visit. On a Thursday workday between 9-11 am, all visitors are welcome to stop, visit, and share thoughts and information. A family from East Texas had heard about our garden and the grandmother insisted that they stop for a visit on their trip to Galveston. They visited the garden on her birthday recently. MG Kevin Lancon gave them the grand tour. (5)

The HOT summertime is here so be sure to drink plenty of water, wear a hat, and take frequent breaks. See you in the garden soon, stay safe and keep on practicing good gardening habits.



# Plant of the Month: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow (*Brunfelsia pauciflora*)



Pam Hunter  
MG 2018

Are you looking for a unique plant? The yesterday, today and tomorrow plants are perennial members of the nightshade family, getting their name from the color of the blooms ever-changing from deep purple to lavender, to white as they mature, all in a three-day period. All three colors can be seen on one shrub at the same time! Lightly deadheading will encourage more blooms, as flowers appear on new growth.

This Brazilian native plant is available in many varieties, growing anywhere from 4 to 10 feet tall. These tropical evergreen shrubs have glossy green leaves with a full bushy form, making them a good choice for foundation plantings, borders, or containers. The flowers are large, being almost two inches across. While the biggest show of flowers appears in spring, the shrub will also bloom intermittently throughout summer until the first frost. It can handle light frost, but may suffer damage from a very hard freeze.

Morning sun or dappled sun all day is ideal. They look great when mixed with other tropical-looking plants like elephant ears or ferns. These shrubs prefer moist, fertile, acidic soil. Reduce watering during dormancy. Yesterday, today and tomorrow is relatively low maintenance and should only be pruned after flowering to avoid removing any of the current season's flowers. It is a good plant selection for attracting bees and butterflies to your yard.

Essential to know, all parts of the plant are poisonous. Even just a little taste can cause problems. When planted safely away from pets and children who might ingest it, yesterday, today and tomorrow will provide fragrance and breathtaking beauty of long-lasting blooms that are a wonderful addition to your garden.

## Common Name(s)

Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

Morning, Noon and Night

Kiss Me Quick

Brazil Raintree

USDA Plant Hardiness Zone(s): 9-11

## Plant Characteristics

Kingdom: Plantae

Propagation: Seed and from softwood cuttings using rooting hormone

Plant type: Evergreen perennial

Family: Solanaceae



MG Linda Steber

Height and spread: 4-10 feet tall, 4-6 feet wide but dwarf varieties are also available

Water requirement: Consistently moist but not soggy

## Bloom Information

Bloom color: Purple, lavender and white

Bloom time: Spring, intermittently throughout summer, fall

## Culture

Light exposure: Filtered sun, partial shade. Preferably morning sun

Soil description: Rich, acidic, well-draining

Native habitat: Brazil

## References:

"*Brunfelsia pauciflora*." NCSU Extension. [www.plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/brunfelsia-pauciflora/](http://www.plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/brunfelsia-pauciflora/) Accessed March 2025

"Yesterday-Today-and-Tomorrow." UF/ifas Extension. 2024. [www.gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/plants/ornamentals/yesterday-to-day-and-tomorrow/](http://www.gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/plants/ornamentals/yesterday-to-day-and-tomorrow/)

Buchanan's Native Plants [www.buchanansplants.com/?s=brunfelsia+pauciflora](http://www.buchanansplants.com/?s=brunfelsia+pauciflora) Accessed March 2025

# A Peek in the Pergola



Pam Hunter  
MG 2018

Enjoy the wonderful summer colors of these flowers. They welcome all to the Discovery Garden.

All photos by *MG Pam Hunter*



Blue Daze (*Evolvulus nuttallianus*)



Foxglove (*Digitalis*)



Gloriosa Lily (*Gloriosa*)



Hyacinth



Belliding Heart (*Lamprocapnos*)



Liatis

## Book Review: *Brave the Wild River, the Untold Story of Two Women Who Mapped the Botany of the Grand Canyon*



Cheryl Brueggeman  
GCMG 2014

letters of the members of the expedition. She has woven them all together in a narrative that gives us insight into not only the personalities of the crew members, but also a history of the river itself and the indigenous people of the area.

Clover earned her Ph.D. in botany from the University of Michigan in 1935. Even though the head of the botany department, Harley Bartlett, advocated and recommended her for a more prestigious position, she was turned down due to the prevailing notion at the time that women were not suited for arduous field trips and exploration. She was able to stay on staff as an instructor and as assistant curator for the botanical gardens. She loved cacti and other plants of the southwestern deserts. No one had yet surveyed the

Grand Canyon and she was determined to be the first. Bartlett helped her get funding for this project and put her in touch with Norm Nevills, the owner of the first Grand Canyon expedition company. She chose one of her best graduate students, Jotter, to help her.

In the summer of 1938, botanists Elzada Clover and Lois Jotter embarked on a journey down the Colorado River hoping to map the botany of the Grand Canyon. Science journalist, Melissa L. Sevigny, has crafted an interesting and informative account based on oral histories, manuscript collections, botany references, diaries and

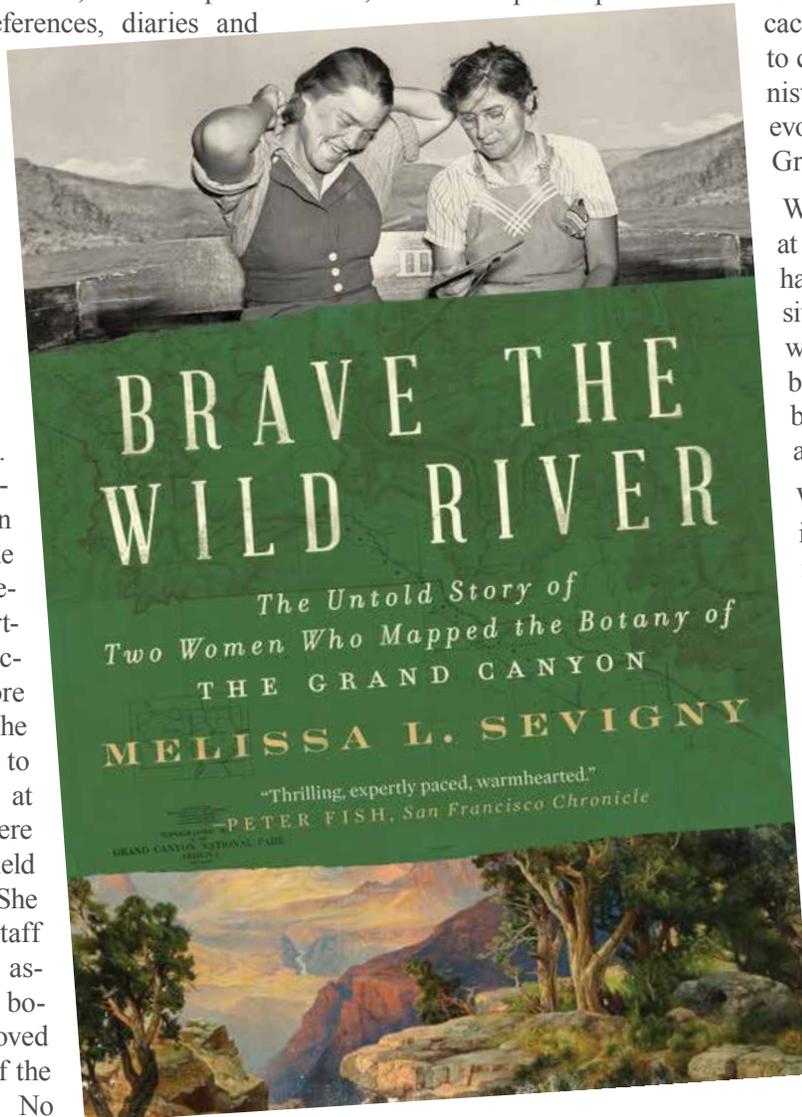
do River in three wooden boats, began in Green River, Utah, and ended at Lake Mead. At this time, the Colorado River was not like today's river. It was full of dangerous rapids that had to be carefully navigated. They had to contend with the harsh elements and yet were able to meticulously catalog the plants of the Grand Canyon region. All in all, they identified more than 400 plant species in the area and even discovered four new cactus species. Their work helped to change the way that other botanists thought about how plant life evolved and spread through the Grand Canyon.

When they made scheduled stops at towns such as Lee's Ferry, they had to deal with overly aggressive reporters. Clover and Jotter worried they would be remembered not as serious scientists, but merely daring women on an adventure.

When the expedition was finished, Clover returned to Michigan until her death in 1980 at the age of 89. Jotter finished her degree and eventually moved to the University of North Carolina-Greensboro, where she taught about the beauty of the canyon until her retirement. She continued to correspond with river runners and wrote letters to federal agencies stressing the importance of conservation. She died in 2013 at the age of 99.

I highly recommend this book. The writing kept me engaged and interested, al-

most as though I was in the boats. I learned much about the evolving science of botany, early efforts at conservation, and much about the early history of making the canyon the tourist attraction it is today. Many of the themes are as relevant today as they were when Clover and Jotter made their journey. This book will make you feel, think, question, and, perhaps, do some research of your own on the topic. Isn't that the mark of all good books?



plant life of the

# Seasonal Bites: Lemon Pie and Tomatoes and Okra



Briana Etie  
GCMG 2017

The weather is ideal for okra and while I still have some tomatoes, I love to make okra and tomatoes. Master Gardener Barbara Lyons, a vegetable specialist, taught me to simmer the okra without stirring to reduce the mucilage okra exudes.

1 tablespoon of bourbon  
1 tablespoon of vanilla  
Or 2 tablespoons of Vanilla Crown Royal (I used this)  
In a stand mixer with whisk attachment and bowl place all of the egg whites, and other ingredients ready. In a saucepan combine sugar and water, bring to a boil and let simmer for 5 minutes, do not stir. Once bubbles form on the bottom of the pan for 3-5 minutes place a thermometer in the syrup increase heat to medium high once the thermometer reaches 230°F. Turn on the stand mixer and whisk the egg whites to peaks. Leave the stand mixer on. Once the sugar syrup reaches 240°F. allow to come to a slow bubble before slowly pouring the syrup into the egg whites. Add the Bourbon and vanilla and whisk for an additional 3-5 minutes.  
Here is a great link to instructions for a No Fail Italian Meringue <https://entirelyelizabeth.com/no-fail-italian-meringue/>  
Arrange meringue on top of the Lemon pie in pattern you enjoy and bake for 10 minutes.



## Lemon Meringue Slab Pie

Lemon Meringue Slab Pie with Brown Butter Graham Cracker Crust and topped with Bourbon Infused Italian Meringue

I put three recipes together to build this recipe. I brought it to our Monthly Association meeting. I promised this recipe to a few people. Here it is.

Preheat 350°

**Crust**  
3 cups of graham crackers, processed into fine crumbs  
1/3 c. granulated sugar  
2 sticks plus 2 Tablespoons of real (salted) butter  
Combine graham crackers and sugar in a bowl. Cook butter over medium heat until butter solids turn brown and nutty aroma grabs your nose. Stir the brown butter into the graham cracker mixture and pat the mixture into the bottom of a 13 by 9-inch pan. Using a straight sided measuring cup steady the sides of the pan with the mixture.  
Bake the crust for 10 minutes. While the crust is cooking mix the filling.

**Pie Filling**  
2 cups of freshly squeezed Lemon juice  
10 egg yolks (whites are used in the meringue)  
2 cans of sweetened condensed milk  
(or)  
Homemade Sweetened Condensed milk- simmer and reduce the following ingredients by half.  
2 ½ cups of whipping cream  
2 ½ cups of half and half  
1 cup of sugar  
Remove the crust from the oven and allow it to stand for 5 minutes.  
Mix egg yolks and lemon juice, temper eggs with a whisk into the home-made sweetened condensed milk or whisk the canned sweetened condensed milk until well combined. Add the filling to the baked crust. Return the pie to the 350°F. oven and bake for 40 to 45 minutes, or until the filling is set and only a little jiggly in the middle.  
400°F.

**Meringue**  
10 egg whites  
2 cups of sugar  
2/3 cups of water



## Tomatoes and Okra

### Ingredients

Okra and Tomatoes

Half of a lb. or less of bacon  
1 small chopped onion  
2 cloves of garlic (minced)  
1.5 lb. of fresh chopped or frozen okra  
2 cans or 4-6 large fresh tomatoes cut into pieces

Salt and pepper to taste

Slice bacon into bite size pieces. In a deep sauté pan or iron skillet, fry bacon until lightly brown. Leaving all bacon drippings in the pan, add chopped onion to the pan. Cook over medium heat for about 3 to 4 minutes or just as they are wilting, add garlic, stir until fragrant. Add chopped okra, stir until all okra is coated with bacon drippings. Place lid and turn down to medium low allow to simmer without stirring or removing lid for 10 minutes. This will reduce the slime or mucilage. Remove the lid and add tomatoes with their juices. Add salt and pepper. Turn the heat up to medium and simmer without a lid until the juice has thickened. Serve as a side dish or over rice. I have seen this dish combined with corn as well. I hope everyone enjoys it as much as my family. We like it best with simmered pork chops.



# Horticulture

## July Events

### Amazing Succulent Plants

7/12/25 9:00am - 11:00am

#### Gulf Coast Gardening Seminar

These plants delight us with unique shapes, vibrant colors and ease of care. Learn about soil preparation and planting, as well as disease and pest management.

To register, visit: <https://galveston.agrilife.org/events/>



### Tropical Hibiscus

7/12/25 1:00pm - 3:00pm

#### Gulf Coast Gardening Seminar

Learn about the hibiscus family of plants and how to grow them in our subtropical area. Discussion will include propagation techniques, grafting and hybridizing plus fertilizers.

To register, visit: <https://galveston.agrilife.org/events/>

### Herbs for the Health of It

7/26/25 9:00am - 11:00am

#### Gulf Coast Gardening Seminar

Learn how to use everyday herbs to boost immunity, reduce stress, and enhance vitality. Attendees will take an exploratory journey where ancient wisdom meets modern wellness.

To register, visit: <https://galveston.agrilife.org/events/>



### Open Public Garden Days

Every Thursday, 9:00am - 11:00am

#### Gardening with Master Gardeners

The Discovery Garden will be open to the public for visitors and gardening questions.

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

TEXAS A&M  
AGRI LIFE  
EXTENSION

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



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# Horticulture

## August Events

### Onions & Garlic

8/9/25 9:00am - 11:00am

#### Gulf Coast Gardening Seminar

Learn best practices for growing bulb onions and garlic. Get tips to maximize results including varieties that perform well in our county. In addition, information on health benefits and recipes will be presented.

To register, visit: <https://galveston.agrilife.org/events/>



### Fall Vegetables

8/9/25 1:00pm - 3:00pm

#### Gulf Coast Gardening Seminar

Learn to grow cruciferous and other leafy vegetables typically grown during the fall and winter months. A discussion for suitable pest management practices is also included.

To register, visit: <https://galveston.agrilife.org/events/>



### Culinary Herbs & Edible Flowers

8/23/25 9:00am - 11:00am

#### Gulf Coast Gardening Seminar

Discover how bringing herbs from your garden into your kitchen can produce flavorful and lovely dishes. Attendees will also be introduced to delightful possibilities of edible flowers in salads and desserts.

To register, visit: <https://galveston.agrilife.org/events/>



### Be a Superstar with Annuals

8/23/25 1:00pm - 3:00pm

#### Gulf Coast Gardening Seminar

Explore how Texas Superstar® plants thrive in our tough Texas environment to produce steller blooms and fruit. Novice and experienced gardeners will be able to choose the right plants for their gardens beds.

To register, visit: <https://galveston.agrilife.org/events/>



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# 2025 Master Gardener Recertification Hours

Browse online to the members only webpage to review all hours: <https://txmg.org/galveston/membersonly/>

Date	Name of Program	Speaker	MG CEUs	# MGs
1/4/2025	Designing & Growing an Herb Garden	Donna Merritt, Briana Etie	2.00	12
1/4/2025	Wedge Grafting	Hazel Lampton	2.00	5
1/14/2025	MGA Jan. Mtg: Looking Ahead	Kevin Lancon, Sue Bain	1.00	76
1/14/2025	Citrus Quarantine presentation	Janis Teas - TDA Inspector	1.00	64
1/16/2025	Lunch & Learn - Roselle, Unusual Culinary Herb	Donna Merritt	0.50	28
1/18/2025	Growing Great Tomatoes, Pt. 2	Ira Gervias	2.00	13
1/18/2025	Anyone Can Grow Roses	John Jons	1.50	10
1/30/2025	Controlling the 10 Most Common Weeds	Brock Sanford, CEA - ANR	0.50	41
2/4/2025	MGA Feb. Mtg: Figs	Donna Merritt, John Mitchine	1.00	62
2/6/2025	Lunch & Learn - Microgreens	Briana Etie	0.50	30
2/8/2025	Herbs for Beauty	Donna Merritt, Briana Etie	2.00	20
2/8/2025	Backyard Citrus	Robert Marshall	2.00	15
2/13/2025	Lunch & Learn - Grapevine Propagation	David Eskins	0.50	40
2/20/2025	Lunch & Learn - Garlic Trial	Micheal Reed, Kevin Lancon, John Mitchiner	1.00	31
2/22/2025	Growing Avocados	Hazel Lampton	1.00	7
2/22/2025	Irish Potatoes	Kevin Lancon	2.00	9
3/6/2025	Lunch & Learn - Tool Time	Tim Jahnke	0.50	28
3/6/2025	GCMGA Board of Directors Meeting	GCMGA BOD	1.50	15
3/8/2025	Tomato Stress Management, Pt. 3	Ira Gervias	2.00	5
3/8/2025	Spring Vegetables	Gene Speller	3.00	9
3/11/2025	MGA March Mtg: Bees	Ed Boyer	1.00	52
3/13/2025	Lunch & Learn - Sea Grant	Brandi Keller	1.00	35
3/22/2025	Chile Peppers from A to Z	Gene Speller	2.00	7
3/22/2025	Herb Propagation	Donna Merritt, Briana Etie	3.00	17
3/27/2025	Lunch & Learn - Pineapples	Ann Ross	0.50	26
4/3/2025	Lunch & Learn - Home Food Preparation	Ginger Benson	0.50	24
4/5/2025	Making Herbal Teas & Tisanes	Donna Merritt, Briana Etie	2.25	16
4/5/2025	You Too Can Be a Superstar Gardener	Sue Bain, Karen Nelson	2.00	5
4/8/2025	MGA April Mtg: Pollinator Garden Area Open House & Native Plants presentation	Pollinator Garden Area Team & Lauren Simpson	2.00	38
4/10/2025	Lunch & Learn - Building Earth-Kind Soil	Steve Holliday	0.50	25
4/24/2025	Lunch & Learn - Research Beds, Squash (Vine Borers)	Research Bed Team	0.50	32
4/26/2025	Blackberries & Blueberries for Small Yards	Monica Martens	1.50	5
5/3/2025	Aromatherapy & Cleaning with Herbs	Donna Merritt, Briana Etie		11
5/8/2025	Lunch & Learn - History of Hot Pepper Scoville Scale	Gene Speller	0.50	35
5/10/2025	Be a Superstar w/ Perennials & Per-Annual	Sue Bain, Karen Nelson	2.00	8
5/10/2025	Plumeria Propagation	Loretta Osteen	2.00	3

## GCMGA Wins 3 State Awards



Kevin Lancon  
MG 2018

Galveston County Master Gardener Association submitted three entries for 2024 and received two first place awards and one second place award. The winners were announced recently. What a tremendous accomplishment for all.

**1st Place - Outstanding Association**

**1st Place - Outstanding Individual (Sue Bain)**

**2nd Place - Youth Activity (Galveston Ball High School - Environmental Science Call at the Discovery Garden)**

Congratulations to everyone, and to Sue Bain for being selected as the Outstanding Individual MG. What a well-deserved and great honor.

I'd also like to thank Kathy Maines for her diligent work completing the awards submissions and her past leadership as well as Sharon Zaal for her support and consultations within the State awards committee and her past leadership.

We have much of which to be proud and this is just a confirmation of how special our organization truly is. We have a great team that begins with a great Horticulture Agent Boone Holladay and Administrative Assistant Jill Jesson along with a wonderful membership of talented, passionate and motivated individuals working as a team.

As great as 2024 was, we have much to look forward to in 2025 with many outstanding projects and activities well under way.



Galveston County Master Gardeners proudly display their large plaques signifying State Award winners. In this photo are Master Gardeners Kathy Maines, Jackie and Herman Auer, Sue Bain, Sharon Zaal, Kevin Lancon, Briana Etie, Loretta Osteen, Pam Hunter and Lynn Shook. *Photo by Robert Bain*

# Graduation Recognition Ceremony Held

The annual graduation and recognition of awards ceremony was held May 13 on the lawn at the Galveston home of MG Mikey and Allen Isbell.

The Master Gardener Class of 2024 had 17 people certified. The class includes Connie Berthiaume-Diaz, Jim Bridgett, Lucy Brown, May Casagrand, Weez Doherty, Doreen Hughes, Joan Koritni, Roxann Kriticos, Sam Kusick, Reagan Mears, Tanya Padgett, Robert Rodriguez, Shelly Scime-

ca, Phil Starks, Beth Strobe, Amaris Wendelburg and Donna Woodbury.

MG Mikey Isbell was awarded Emeritus Member Status.

TMG Milestone Awards for 2024 included 15 Year Award to Tabatha Holt, 20 Year Awards to Carol Jean Mulrain and Nancy Lee Peterson, 30 Year Award to Joyce McMillan, and 35 Year Award to Ann Lyon.



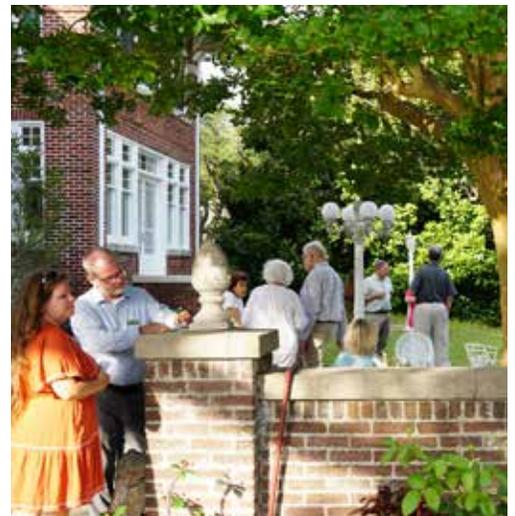
GCMGA President Kevin Lancon, Class of 2024 members May Casagrand, Robert Rodriguez, Tanya Padgett (Row 2): Reagan Mears, Lucy Brown, Phil Starks, Extension Agent Horticulture Boone Holladay (Row 3): Roxann Kriticos, Donna Woodbury, Joan Koritni, Connie Berthiaume-Diaz and (Row 4): Doreen Hughes and Weez Doherty *MG Linda Crowston*



MG Carol Jean Mulrain accepted her TMG Milestone Award of 20 years from Extension Agent Boone Holladay and GCMGA President Kevin Lancon *MG Linda Crowston*



MG Mikey Isbell (Class of 1992) received Emeritus Member Status awarded by Extension Agent Boone Holladay and GCMGA President Kevin Lancon. *MG Linda Crowston*



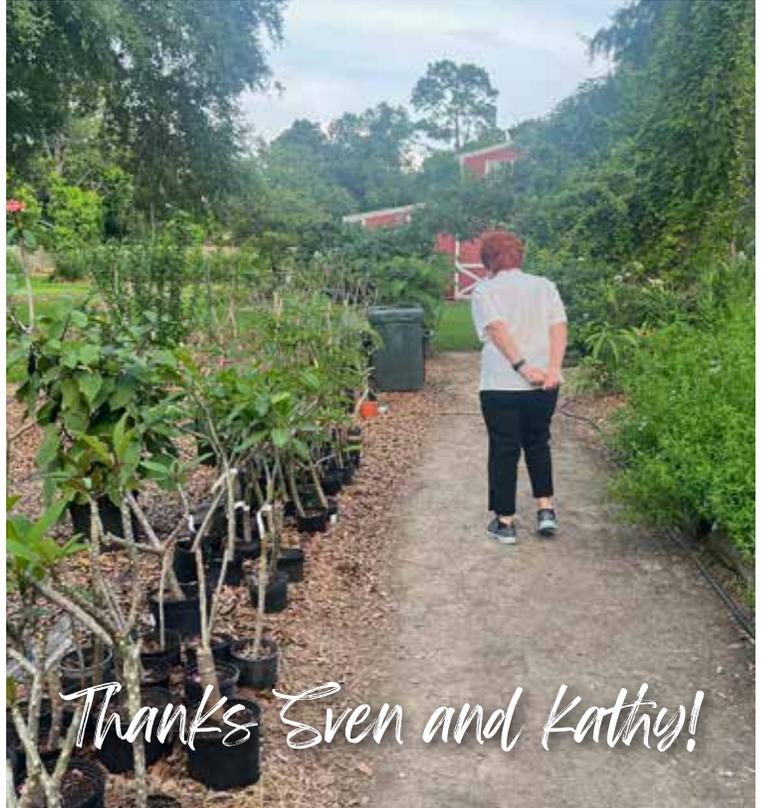
Mixing and Mingling  
*MG Linda Crowston*

# GCMGA Meets at Home of MG Sven Bors-Koefoed

An indoor/outdoor meeting was held June 10 at the home of Sven and Kathy Bors-Koefoed. in Friendswood. Approximately 50 people attended and enjoyed the beautiful acreage filled with plumeria, roses, fruit trees, a big red barn, composting area, rabbits, flowers and much more.



Plumeria in bloom *MG Karolyn Gephart*



Joanie Cummins takes a walk down a path filled with plumeria *MG Karolyn Gephart*



Sven gives Robert Rodriguez a tour of the huge yard. *MG Karolyn Gephart*



Sandra Gervais, Loretta Osteen and Robert Rodriguez point out favorite plants *MG Karolyn Gephart*



The large patio was a favorite spot for dining *MG Karolyn Gephart*

# Judy's Corner: Galveston County Monthly Meetings



Judy Anderson  
GCMG 2012

## Tuesday July 15 Discovery Garden

July brings the “dog days of summer” but it also finds the GCMG happily enjoying the comfort of the air-conditioned Extension Office for their meeting on July 15. Briana Etie and John Mitchiner will be leading the MG Fish Fry team. Master Gardeners are asked to bring a potluck dish to share for this occasion. Salads, sides and desserts are welcome. Briana will be providing her traditional family red sauce.

Bettye Vogler will be leading the GCMG Passalong Plant Swap. She will be providing more information for those wishing to participate closer to the event. It is never too soon to get passalong plants ready for the swap. Look for the Passalong Swap near the entrance to the Extension Office.

Following the Fish Fry buffet, Becky Jaschek and Lynne Slaton, the Discovery Garden Safety Leaders, will present a Gardening Safety program along with safety concerning the plant sales. Plus, they will be providing guidelines for the improved safety response programs in the Discovery Garden. This program will be for continuing education.

Join the GCMG in air-conditioned comfort for the July Fish Fry!

## Tuesday August 12 Galveston County Extension Office Jay Maddock, Ph.D.



On August 12 the GCMG Monthly Meeting will feature Dr. Jay Maddock presenting *How Spending Time in Nature Improves Our Health*. Dr. Maddock will be presenting this program at the International Master Gardener Conference later in the month. Dr. Maddock is a Regents Professor in the Department of Environmental and Occupational Health at Texas A&M University. This program will reinforce what many Master Gardeners know about gardening and the health benefits it provides.

Dr. Maddock will be visiting the Discovery Garden prior to the evening program.

A potluck will begin the meeting. The entrée will be provided. Please bring a side, salad or dessert to share. This will be a good opportunity to meet Dr. Maddock before his presentation.

This meeting will provide continuing education for Master Gardeners.



MG Karolyn Gephart



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# Galveston County 2025 Monthly Meetings

July 15 PM  
August 12 PM

Fish Fry and Plant Swap  
How Spending Time in Nature Improves  
Our Health Jay Maddock Ph.D. FAAHB Houston  
Methodist Institute & Texas A&M Environmental  
Health/Public Health

September 9 PM  
October 14 PM  
November 10 Lunch  
December 9 PM

Caruthers Garden and Dinner in Seabrook  
Backyard with Stacey Phillips and potluck  
Annual Meeting and potluck  
Holiday Party hosted by Mikey and Allen Isbell