

FALL VEGETABLE ISSUE

# GULF COAST *Gardening*

ISSUE 251 • SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER 2025



TEXAS

MASTER GARDENER

TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

Galveston County

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



MG Kevin Lancon  
President,  
Galveston County  
Master Gardener  
Association

## Fall Vegetables

As I write this introduction article, it is the end of summer, and the heat and humidity are stifling. Oh, how we all long for those brisk cool days of fall. I'm a veggie guy at heart and the fall season is my favorite time. Not only is the weather much cooler but the insects, pests, diseases and a multitude of other gardening issues are much more manageable. Soon our Discovery Garden will be popping with the many sights, smells and colors of fall vegetables and fall herbs and flowers as well as a fall calendar full of free educational seminars.

We have one more plant sale in the Fall that we are very excited about. On Saturday October 18 we will host our Fourth Annual Fall Festival, which is a great time for the whole family. It will be held in our Discovery Garden in Carbide Park and will include Galveston County Extension educational booths and activities, various plants for sale, kid activities, garden tours and presentations, food, crafts and a pumpkin carving contest.

I hope you enjoy this issue of our newsletter, and invite you visit our website at <https://txmg.org/galveston>, our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/galvcountrymg/> and also our new Instagram page at <https://www.instagram.com/>

[galvcountrymg.org/](https://galvcountrymg.org/) for more information on upcoming events and activities.

As always, thank you for supporting the Galveston County Master Gardeners and hope to see you soon in our Discovery Garden or at one of our public events.

*Kevin Lancon*



Fall Festival MG Michelle Thompson



MG Karolyn Gephart  
Editor,  
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## Happy Fall, Y'all!

Fall gardens are the fun part of the new season. For me it's time to plant tomatoes in early September. Check out the 'Ruby Crush' tomato article. What a great variety to try. Find out how kale became so popular and how to be successful at growing rhubarb in Galveston County. Learn more about peppers, winter squash, potatoes and 'Green Magic' broccoli. Did you know there is a glow in the dark plant whose blooms are illuminated for the life of the plant? Read all about it. Gourds are easy to grow, and artists show amazing work using them in this issue. See the beautiful blooms that are occurring this time of year in the Discovery Garden pergola as well as at home. Please put the Fall Festival on October 18 on your calendar and bring your family for a fun day in the Discovery Garden in Carbide Park. A flyer is in this issue. Take a trip vicariously to two gardens: one in Hempstead and the other in France. The John Fairey Garden is so close and

so beautiful and the location of Monet's Garden in Giverny is breathtaking. This issue is full of great articles. When a cool front finally hits, take this issue outside and enjoy the fall weather and great gardening information.

*Karolyn Gephart*



Calendula MG Donna Merritt

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# It's Time for Fall Vegetable Gardening



Amaris Wendelburg  
GCMG 2024

Each year when the back-to-school ads start rolling in I know it's time to start planning my fall vegetable garden. Each year it seems like it's way too early for either of those. More than anything, I dread the cleanup from my spring/summer garden...especially in this heat.

To make things more enjoyable, I like to start with the fun stuff: what types of vegetables can I plant? If you look at the chart on the opposite page, you'll find a great tool for determining not only which plants work well in Galveston County, but also when to plant them. It's important to note that Galveston County spans a good distance. So, the people of Friendswood may have slightly different freeze dates than those on Galveston Island.

## Location

If your spring garden did well, then that's a great location to continue with your fall garden. Just remember that vegetable crops need at least eight hours of direct sunlight. A new garden site will require removal of grass. Same goes for any type of raised bed. The grass runners will grow and interfere with your garden if not completely removed.

Crop varieties will either be long-term or short-term. Generally, if it's a long-term plant it is more frost tolerant. Alternatively, a short-term plant is susceptible to frost. Plan to plant similar varieties together so that short-term crops can be removed after the first killing frost.

## Planting

Although planting seeds can feel more rewarding, transplants usually generate a more successful harvest, and the bigger they are, the better. Larger transplants have had more time to develop a stable root system, and a stable root system will adapt quicker, spread faster, and therefore produce fruit sooner, provided all other necessary conditions are met. One condition is watering: it is crucial in these hot end-of-summer months to water frequently, but not too much. When feeling the soil prior to watering, grab a handful and see if you can squeeze it into a ball. If it sticks together, it's wet enough. If not, add water.

If you are working with a plant coming from a peat pot or cell pack, allow two weeks for the root system to develop. During that time watering may need to be done every day or you risk losing the plant (or have stunted growth). Utilize the same method of squeezing the soil into a ball to determine saturation. Too much water will have negative effects like root rot and death of the plant.



Find a great location for your fall garden MG Amaris Wendelburg



A new garden site requires removal of grass MG Amaris Wendelburg



Children learn about gardening when you let them help you MG Amaris Wendelburg

Also consider the height of the plant at maturity. If it is on the taller side, plant some shade tolerant ones in between.

## Herbs

Herbs are also great plants for fall. Perennials will maintain their root system and grow back each year, and annuals live for only one season. Most do well in containers, but you can also plant herbs in your fall vegetable garden. Just make sure to plant the perennials along the edges since their root systems will stick around.

There are many variables when planning your fall vegetable garden, but the biggest factor to consider is location. This issue is going to dive into a variety of vegetables that grow well in Galveston County (USDA Plant Hardiness Zone 9b).

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Stein, Larry and Masabni, Joe. "Fall Vegetable Gardening Guide for Texas." *Texas A&M AgriLife Extension*. 2025. <https://agriflifeextension.tamu.edu/browse/featured-solutions/gardening-landscaping/fall-vegetable-gardening-guide-for-texas/>

# Vegetable Garden Planting Guide

for Galveston County

GC-125  
12-24

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Vegetable	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
Beans, wax bush & snap bush												
Beans, lima pole & snap pole												
Beets (fall crops best)												
Broccoli (transplants)												
Cabbage (transplants)												
Collards												
Corn												
Cucumber												
Eggplant (transplants)												
Kohlrabi (fall crops best)												
Lettuce												
Mustard												
Okra												
Peas, English & Snap												
Peas, Southern												
Peppers (transplants)												
Potato, Irish												
Potato, Sweet												
Pumpkin												
Radish												
Spinach												
Squash, Summer												
Tomato (transplants)												
Turnip (fall planting best)												

Average Last Freeze Date for Galveston County February 15

Average First Freeze Date for Galveston County December 17

Boone Holladay,  
County Extension Agent – Horticulture

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## Growing Winter Squash



Kevin Lancon  
GCMG 2018

Since this issue is focused on Fall vegetables, one would think that winter squash would be an appropriate vegetable to feature, and it is, sort of. Don't let the word "winter" fool you. Winter squash is a warm-season crop; the name refers to when it's typically eaten, not when it's grown. The name "winter squash" originated because most winter squash are grown in the summer, harvested in the fall and eaten throughout the winter, hence the term winter squash.

Fortunately for us, winter squash—or any squash for that matter—can be grown in late spring or even in the fall since our climate stays so warm for so long. Unlike summer squash, which is best eaten when it is freshly picked, winter squash takes much longer to mature and must also be cured for a minimum period of 10 days to two weeks before it's ready to be eaten.

When winter squash is harvested it has excess water. The process of curing causes the fruit to respire and eliminate much of the excessive water. This results in the fruit concentrating its natural sugars and making it taste sweeter. During the curing process, the skin becomes harder. The harder the skin is, the slower the respiration rate. As the respiration rate decreases over time, it dramatically improves its long-term storage capacity and reduces the chances of rotting. Typical storage times for winter squash are as follows:

Acorn squash: up to 4 weeks

Spaghetti squash: up to 5 weeks

Buttercup squash: up to 13 weeks

Butternut squash: up to 6 months

In Galveston County, winter squash can be planted in late spring (late March or April), but it's also suitable to plant a second crop in mid-summer (August or early September). Squash plants will not survive a freeze, so-keep your estimated first freeze date in mind if you are planting in the spring. If you are planting a mid-summer crop, consider choosing an early harvest variety. Winter squash requires grow time and is ready to harvest about 85–120 days (three to four months) after you sowed your seed. As a group, they are typically long vining plants that require considerable growing space like other members of the cucurbit family such as cucumbers and melons. They can also benefit by having them vine on a sturdy vertical trellis, which provides support for their long vines and allows for good air flow, which can inhibit various diseases

such as powdery and downy mildew.

Since squash are part of the cucurbit family, they are monoecious-plants, meaning that they have separate male and female flowers on the same plant and require pollination by bees. The male flowers produce pollen and the female flowers must receive the pollen to produce mature fruit. Both types of flowers produce nectar, which is what attracts bees to the flowers. Pollination is not just an on/off switch, when a bee just visits the flower and pollination is accomplished. It takes 9 to 12 distinct visits by the honeybees to completely fertilize a squash female flower, so if you lack bee activity in your garden you will get very few fertilized fruits. In addition, given the fact that squash flowers only open for one day and bees cannot transfer pollen effectively on wet, windy or extremely humid days, it's quite amazing what needs to happen to produce a squash fruit. It is truly one of nature's greatest miracles.



Squash flower MG Kevin Lancon

Winter squash has many different types and varieties. These include spaghetti, delicata, pumpkins, buttercup, and the popular butternut, just to name a few. We recently grew delicata and South Anna butternut squash in our Discovery Garden on the vertical trellis shown below. The South Anna butternut squash is a newly developed variety specifically bred for downy mildew resistance—a common problem for butternut squash in the Southern United States. It is also very resistant to the squash vine borer. A cross between Waltham butternut and Seminole pumpkin, it has the butternut squash shape with the vigor and disease resistance of the Seminole pumpkin. It is a popular choice for both gardeners and chefs.

## *“...a versatile culinary vegetable”*

As with all squash varieties, there are numerous pests and diseases with which one must contend. Two of the most common and destructive pests of winter squash are the squash vine borer and squash bugs. Squash bugs suck the juices out of the plant and inject toxins into the plant, causing injured tissue to turn brown and eventually wilt and die. They can be very destructive to winter squash and early detection and removal of their bronze eggs on the undersides of leaves is crucial as they are much more difficult to control once they mature. The squash vine borer can also be a very destructive pest. Although most winter squash varieties are more resistant to the borer compared to summer squash, it is still a formidable opponent. Two fungal diseases particularly troublesome to winter squash are downy mildew and powdery mildew. Growing your squash on a vertical trellis for additional air flow and choosing resistant varieties help mitigate these issues.

With many tasty and interesting varieties to choose from, winter squash is an excellent addition to any home garden. This versatile culinary vegetable can be prepared as a beautiful roasted side dish, a warm winter soup or the featured ingredient of a fine casserole.

Happy Gardening!



Growing Arch MG Kevin Lancon



Butternut Squash MG Kevin Lancon



Heavily producing MG Kevin Lancon

# Kale: The King of Greens



Karyl Norcross-Mehlman  
GCMG 2022

Kale, a tough, bitter plant, has been cultivated for more than 2000 years around the Mediterranean and Arab countries where it was used mainly to feed cattle or in modern times to decorate buffet tables before 2010. In 2007, a clever advertising campaign allegedly sponsored by the American Kale Association (AKA) resulted in kale becoming the go-to vegetable. By 2012, sales soared as did production, and entertainers

got on the bandwagon. National Kale Day was launched in 2013. Investigative reporter, Eve Turow, ultimately found that the AKA was created by Oberon Sinclair, a music and TV entertainer who loved kale and wanted to make kale's dietary benefits known to the public. Sinclair created the AKA and sales of kale skyrocketed. Recipes and uses of kale as well as its benefits of high levels of vitamins A, C, and K continue some ten years later. It is grown in numerous vegetable gardens across the country and found in the produce section of most supermarkets. It is reported that one cup of kale provides over 500 percent of the daily recommended amount of vitamin K.

Kale is a member of the *Brassica* family, which includes cauliflower, broccoli, cabbage, and Brussels sprouts. Kale has several common varieties including: Tuscan kale or Lacinato kale (*Brassica oleracea* var. *palmifolia*) leaves are blue-gray, narrow, and grow upright and therefore stay relatively free of dirt. It is used in stews and soups. Slightly sweeter and milder than most varieties, it is also known as dinosaur kale due to its bumpy leaves which resemble dinosaur skin. Red Russian kale (*Brassica napus* var. *pabularia*) has broad, lobed leaves with red veins and leaf stalks. Siberian kale (*Brassica napus*) is a popular tender kale that is used in stir fries and salads.



Red Russian Kale Courtesy of San Diego Seed Company



Kale in bloom MG Herman Auer

Redbor kale (*Brassica oleracea* var. *redbor*) is a vigorous hybrid kale with ruffled, deep maroon leaves. Winterbor kale, (*Brassica oleracea* var. *acephala*) a common curly kale variety, has bright green new leaves that turn blue with age. This is the kale usually found in grocery stores. Ornamental kale (*Brassica oleracea*) is edible but bitter and is used mostly as a garnish.

Kale grows well in most climates but prefers the cool temperatures of spring and fall. It tolerates frosts and light freezes. Leaves become bitter in hot weather and sweeter after a frost. It is fairly disease resistant but can suffer from a wind-borne fungus, *Alternaria*, which causes round brown spots surrounded by a circle that resemble a target, and are often surrounded by a yellow halo that appear mainly on older leaves. This fungus may persist in the plant as well as in the soil and is best treated with fungicide.

Kale is grown mainly from seed planted at a depth of about one-half inch in well-drained soil. Sprouts appear within a week and should be thinned to one foot apart. They will grow in height to two feet. Harvesting of older outer leaves should be done. Transplants can also be grown and placed a foot apart.

Most kale leaves are blue-green and have curly sides and a thick stem. Nearly all large kale leaves need to be cooked to

## “...cultivated for more than 2,000 years”

soften and season them before eating. After trimming the outer leaves, tender new leaves (baby kale) can be harvested and used in salads without cooking. Kale is also used in stir-fries, soups, and can be made into crunchy chips.

Kale leaves can be sautéed after trimming the vein. I prefer the microwave method which is quick and easy. Tear the leafy greens into bite-sized pieces; place them in a quart-sized plastic bag with olive oil to coat lightly. Seal the bag and massage the olive oil into the leaves for several seconds then let it stand for a few minutes. Add salt and pepper or garlic powder before sealing and then microwave the closed bag for two to two-and-a-half minutes. Carefully remove the bag and let it cool before serving as a nutritious side dish.

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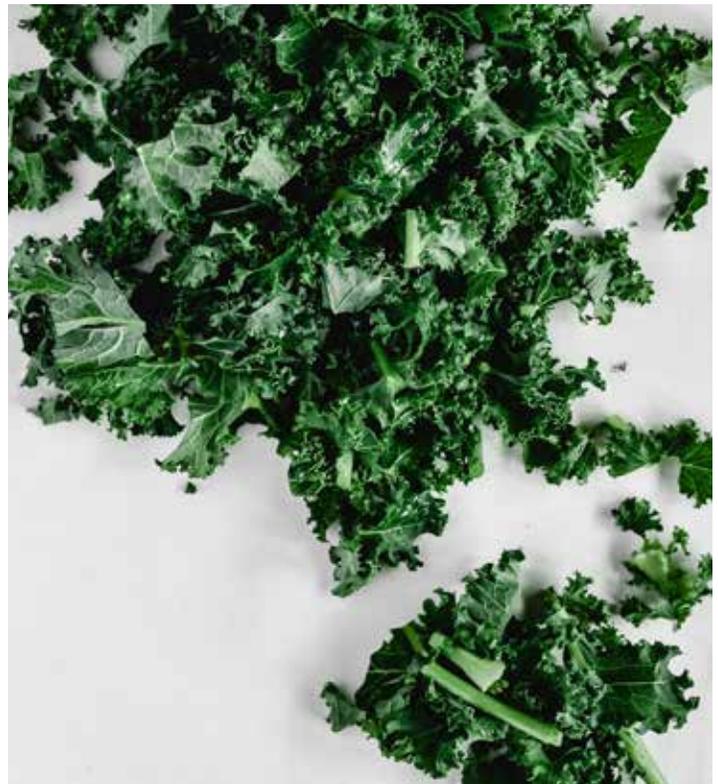
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[Paul Thompson](#), Horticulture Extension Agent, York County, Clemson Extension



Winterbor kale GCMG Database



Chopped kale ready to cook Pexels.com



Ornamental kale MG Herman Auer

# Chile Peppers for Fall Gardening?



Gene Speller  
GCMG 1997

Prime time for chile pepper gardening in Galveston County is mid-March through June. Transplants start in mid-March and harvest their first crop of most peppers in June. Production will slow down from the stressful heat in July and August. However, in mid-September through November they perk up with a rejuvenated second life until the first frost which, for Galveston County, is usually December 17. Gardeners can spice up Thanksgiving and even Christmas Day dinner with freshly harvested chiles.

Just a couple of pepper plants will provide all you need for most purposes. They are easily grown in raised beds or containers. Start transplants in early September, but I recommend carrying them over from the spring plantings. To get the best selection, start them from seeds in an indoor area under fluorescent light about eight weeks prior to transplanting.

Which varieties should you plant? It's a matter of personal preference and tolerance for hot peppers. The level of heat/spiciness in a hot pepper is related to the amount of capsaicin type compounds secreted by the pepper. Although capsaicin does not actually have any flavor, it does provide another dimension with its heat and adds character to the dish. Over 3,000 different pepper varieties exist with new ones added annually.



Basket of harvested peppers *MG Gene Speller*

Let's narrow down choices to three types by heat levels: **Sweet** (zero heat), **Spicy** (low to medium level heat), and **Hot** (high end of heat scale). On the Scoville Heat Units (SHU)<sup>1</sup> scale, sweet peppers have 0 to < 500 SHU, Spicy peppers with low to medium heat levels range from  $\geq 500$  SHU to approximately 10,000 SHU. Hot peppers with the higher end SHU range from > 10,000 SHU to 100,000 SHU. Anything greater than 100,000 up to > 2,000,000 SHU are in the super-hot category of peppers and are not included in this article. Super-hot peppers also have a longer maturity time ( $\geq 100$  days) and are not recommended for starting in the fall.

For **Sweet** peppers, my favorites are the 'Red Knight'<sup>3</sup> Bell and 'Giant Marconi'<sup>2</sup> (a red Italian long pepper). Both are very flavorful and productive peppers. Red ripe maturity is approximately 75 days from transplant to harvest for each variety. They can be harvested green about 10 days earlier, but they are not nearly as flavorful or nutritious. These peppers taste better when red ripe and they contain more vitamins and antioxidants. I like to eat them raw, in salads, and/or sauteed with other vegetables in an omelet.

For **Spicy** peppers, I like the 'Sahuario' – an Anaheim type chile (SHU ~ 1,000), the 'Emerald Fire' jalapeno (SHU ~ 2,000)<sup>2,3</sup> and the 'Flaming Jade' serrano (SHU ~ 3,000).<sup>2,3</sup>

Mature 'Sahuario' chiles measure nine inches long by two inches wide on three-foot-tall plants. They mature green in 68 days but wait another 10 days or so for them to ripen red for better flavor. They are great for sautéing and are even better when grilled. 'Emerald Fire' is an excellent jalapeno pepper and an All-America Selections (AAS) winner. It produces numerous four-inch long by two-inch wide glossy green pods on



Charred chiles *MG Gene Speller*

## “Over 3,000 varieties exist...”

a compact three-foot-tall plant. It matures into ripe green in 65 days. The fruit is great for stuffing, pickling, and sautéing. ‘Flaming Jade’ is also an AAS winner with four-inch long by one-inch-wide dark green pods grown on three-foot-tall plants. It is a favorite for pickling and making salsa and pico de gallo. Serranos are usually harvested green approximately 75 days after planting. Wait another 10 days or so and harvest the red ones for a little variety in your pepper dishes.

For **Hot** peppers (SHU from 10,000 to 100,000), I recommend the ‘Japanese Hontaka’<sup>3</sup> and ‘NuMex Twilight’.<sup>3,4</sup> The Japanese ‘Hontaka’ (SHU ~30,000) pepper plant is valued for both ornamental and culinary uses. It has beautiful clusters of green then red ¼ inch by two-inch Thai type hot chile. They are great for using fresh to spice up a pot of soup or beans. Or you could dry and grind them for the spice jar. Green and red peppers in clusters can also be used for holiday décor – provided they do not freeze. The ‘NuMex Twilight’ (SHU ~50,000) is also valued for its ornamental and culinary uses. It has clusters of ¼ inch by ½ inch tear shaped peppers in four different colors changing from purple to yellow to orange then red ripe. All colors at different stages are on the plant at the same time which makes for a very attractive pepper plant. I like to use these multicolor peppers for making bottles of pepper vinegar as a decorative condiment.

When growing any of these plants, their vigor and pepper production can be increased by fertilizing at first bloom or fruit set. I have had good success using ammonium sulfate (21-0-0) at a rate of about one or two tablespoons / linear foot side dressed approximately four to eight inches from the base of the plant. Apply again three and six weeks later. You will have nice green plants with larger peppers. Enjoy!

Notes:

Capsaicin is the chemical in hot peppers that produces its spiciness/pungency. The Scoville Heat Units (SHU) scale is determined by the equivalent number of sugar water dilutions required to render a pepper’s capsaicin extract to a non-pungent level.

These peppers are All-America Selections (AAS) winners.

These pepper plants were planted in March, 2025 at the GC-MGA Discovery Garden in La Marque, Texas and should be there through the Fall of 2025 in Bed 40 for viewing.

The NuMex Twilight pepper plant is a Texas Superstar®. It was developed by The Chile Pepper Institute of the New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, New Mexico.



Giant Marconi MG Gene Speller



NuMex Twilight MG Gene Speller



‘Red Knight,’ ‘Sahuaro,’ ‘Hontaka’ MG Gene Speller

# Potato Fruit Was a Surprise to Me



Debby Brady  
GCMG 2022

The potato has an interesting history. It was the first domesticated root vegetable in the region of modern-day southern Peru and northwestern Bolivia between 8000 and 5000 BC. Cultivation of potatoes in South America may even go back 10,000 years. European explorers brought the potato to Europe in 1536. It arrived in the US in 1719 with Irish immigrants. It was Thomas Jefferson who made the vegetable popular when he served them to guests at the White House. More than 200 varieties of potatoes are sold currently throughout the United States. In October 1995 the potato became the first vegetable grown in space.

Now many varieties are easily grown in home gardens. The preferred method of growing is with potato slips, or pieces of potatoes of a chosen variety. After they have sprouted little “eyes,” let them dry before planting. They are easy to grow in the ground, but can also grow in containers or grow bags.

I planted the ‘Yukon Gold’ variety which takes 75-90 days to harvest. I came outside one day to check on my potatoes and...what is that growing on my potato plant? Is that a tomato? It looks like little green cherry tomatoes. But they are not tomatoes. They are potato fruit. Potatoes do produce small fruit on occasion.

When the potato plant flowers, producing lovely little white or sometimes pink flowers, even if pollinated, they usually fall off before the fruit can form. In optimum conditions of cooler weather and adequate rain/water, the potato will produce a cluster of small, round, grape-like fruits. These are the seed pods, also called the “true seeds” or “botanical seeds.”



Potato fruit on potato vine MG Debby Brady

As the potato plant matures, the little

fruits will turn brownish in color. I collected them and put a small net bag over them to keep pets from eating them. When they have turned brown and become a little dry, they can be cut in half and will have around 300 seeds per pod. Dry them on a paper towel and save them to plant. However, while it might be interesting to plant them, they will not produce a true variety from seed. In other words, my seeds will not produce ‘Yukon Gold’ potatoes. What will it produce? I don’t know, but I’m going to try to germinate some seeds. It will be interesting to see what happens. Seeds are sometimes used to produce new varieties.

Potatoes and tomatoes are in the same family, the nightshade, or Solanaceae family, so it’s not that surprising that the fruits would resemble green cherry tomatoes. But unlike tomatoes, these pods are slightly toxic, containing a substance called solanine, a glycoalkaloid.

Glycoalkaloids can cause numbness in the tongue and burning in the throat along with a severe headache. While not deadly to humans, they can be more toxic to animals.

So, if you are growing potatoes and have the good fortune to experience potato fruits, experiment with them to see if they grow, but keep animals, kids, and yourself safe. I am curious to see what my potato seeds will produce.

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Fruit and seeds of fruit grown on potatoes.

(*Solanum tuberosum* L.) *Ohio State Weed Lab, The Ohio State University, Bugwood.org*

# Grow ‘Green Magic’ Broccoli



Karen Nelson  
GCMG 2020

‘Green Magic’ is a hybrid variety of broccoli (*Brassica oleracea* var. *italica*) from the Calabria strain that originated in the southern area of Italy. It is a cool weather crop with high yield that can be grown in our southeast Texas gardens in early spring and fall.

It is also a designated Texas Superstar® plant known for outstanding consistent performance in our gardens. It can be grown by direct seed or by seedlings.

‘Green Magic’ likely got its name from the dark green color of the large compact head and the “magic” ability to produce multiple side shoots that extends harvest. The heads are approximately 14 ounces in weight. This variety is heat tolerant and matures early with 90 days for direct seeding and 60 days from transplant. It also has a high tolerance to downy mildew, a problem for this type of vegetable.

Plants like full sun exposures in a well-prepared garden soil. It will grow to one to two feet tall and wide.

Fall planting is 10-12 weeks before the first frost date. When harvesting the large head, cut at an angle to avoid water collecting in the stem causing premature decay.

Broccoli can be found in many cuisines from Italian to Asian. It can be eaten raw, steamed, boiled, stir-fried, or roasted.



Broccoli grows well in Zone 9b MG Karen Newman

Some fun facts about this vegetable:

The word “broccoli” comes from the Italian plural *broccolo* which means “the flowering crest of a cabbage.”

The United States is the third largest broccoli producer in the world with 1.8 million tons grown mostly in California due to the climate. China is the number one producer with 10.7 million tons per year. India is second with 8.8 million tons. Both China and India have climates that allow year-round harvesting.

It was declared not a favorite vegetable by 41<sup>st</sup> President George H. W. Bush while he served in office. Days after the declaration, the United Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Association sent a large broccoli bouquet to First Lady Barbara Bush along with 10 tons of broccoli. She kept some of it, but donated the majority to a food bank in the city.

The ancient Etruscans created edible broccoli from wild cabbages in the 6<sup>th</sup> Century B.C.

Third President Thomas Jefferson was an avid gardener and grew broccoli from seeds in the late 1700s. As a food item, it did not become popular until the 1920s due to the introduction of it in recipes by Italian immigrants.

The heaviest broccoli head was reportedly grown in Alaska and weighed 35 pounds.

When eating broccoli, you consume hundreds of immature flowers that make up the head called an inflorescence. If left uncooked and uneaten, the small buds would open into yellow flowers, a favorite of bees.

Broccoli is a good source of fiber, contains Vitamins A, C, and K, and contains sulforaphane, a compound that has been linked to cancer fighting properties.

Not only is this vegetable a healthy choice, but it also has a fun history to share with others.

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# For the Love of Farmers Markets



John Jons  
GCMG 2003

A farmers market is usually a lively, open-air marketplace where local farmers, market gardeners, and food producers sell their goods directly to local consumers. It's often a bustling hub of activity filled with the sights, sounds, and smells of fresh, local produce, artisanal goods, and a strong sense of community. For both the consumer and the gardener, farmers markets offer a multitude of benefits.

For the consumer, the benefit may include:

**Fresh, Local Produce:** The heart of a farmers market is its abundance of fresh, seasonal, locally grown produce. By directly buying from a local farmer and/or market gardener, consumers often enjoy fresher produce, better taste, and higher quality.

**Support for Local Economy:** Farmers markets play a vital role in supporting local farm and food producers. When you purchase from local farmers, you're investing in your community by helping sustain the local agriculture and ensuring the availability of fresh, local produce in the future.

**Community Building (Common Locations):** Farmers markets often foster a strong sense of community. They're frequently held in accessible spaces like parking lots, and they offer a setting for neighbors to connect, learn about food, and enjoy shared experiences.

**Food Education:** Many farmers markets offer opportunities to learn about different foods, food preparation, cooking techniques, and nutrition.

Many farmers markets feature a variety of other products such as baked goods, crafts, and prepared foods. They may also host live music, cooking demonstrations, and other community events.

For the gardener, farmers markets are more than just places to purchase fresh produce. They can be a treasure trove of gardening ideas and resources. They may offer gardeners the unique opportunity to:

**Discover New Plant Varieties:** Farmers and market gardeners often grow a wider range of produce (edible plants) than what you typically find in grocery stores. This is a chance to taste and discover new varieties of fruits, vegetables, and herbs that can be locally grown and that you might consider growing.

**Source Quality Seeds and Plants:** Many farmers markets feature vendors selling heirloom seeds, seedlings, and mature plants. This is a great way to diversify your garden.

**Learn from Experts:** Farmers markets are filled with knowledgeable plant and food producers who can offer valuable localized gardening tips and advice.

**Build Relationships:** By regularly visiting the same market, you can develop relationships with farmers and fellow gardeners exchanging knowledge and experiences.

**Find Unique Products:** Beyond produce, farmers markets often offer a variety of value-added products like jams, honey, and artisanal foods, which can inspire new gardening projects.

In my travels to many countries, I often seek out and enjoy visiting the local farmers market. At these farmers markets, I have had delightful opportunities to observe the best of locally grown, fresh, seasonable produce, unique local plants, and plant varieties. Depending on the country, many of these plants sold in the farmers markets are often totally unfamiliar to me. If they are familiar to me, they often look different in shape, color, and size. I have also had the opportunity to taste plants that I have only read about, have only seen in packaged form, or are now beginning to appear on my local grocery store shelves. If you would like to see some photos of farmers markets in different countries, consider looking at my YouTube video called "For the Love of Farmers Markets." <https://youtu.be/s9Pv1unelJA>.

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Market in Peru MG John Jons

*“...a bustling hub of activity”*



Market in England MG John Jons



Market in Malaysia MG John Jons



Friendswood Farmers Market Benette Rowley

## Local Farmers Markets

### Galveston's Own Farmers Market

Every Sunday at The Depot on Market  
(3304 Market)

9 am to 1 pm (Oct.-May) and 9 am to Noon  
(June-Sept.)

### Friendswood Farmers Market

(A Texas Certified Market)

First Saturday of the Month

Excluding January (too cold) & July (too hot)

1000 S. Friendswood Drive (Stevenson Park  
Parking Lot)

9 am to 1 pm

[friendswoodmarket.com](http://friendswoodmarket.com)

### Bay Area Farmers Market

Every Sunday 11 am to 3 pm

500 Baybrook Mall Dr in Friendswood

[www.bayareafarmersmarketgroup.com](http://www.bayareafarmersmarketgroup.com)

### Piquet Fence Marketplace

Third Saturday of each month

14610 Hwy 6 in Santa Fe

10 am to 4 pm

[Piquetfence.com](http://Piquetfence.com)

### Market on the Bayou

Texas Certified Farmers Market

2nd & 4th Saturdays 9 am to 2 pm

2421 S. Gulf Freeway Frontage Rd

League City

[MarketOnTheBayou.com](http://MarketOnTheBayou.com)

### Kemah Farmers Market

Every Saturday 9 am to 5 pm

204 FM 2094

[www.kemahfarmersmarket.com](http://www.kemahfarmersmarket.com)

Reported by MGs Briana Etie, Cheryl Watson,  
Judy Anderson, Alice Rodgers

# Rhubarb in Galveston County? Yes!



Norma Torok  
with John Ely  
GCMG 2022

There is nothing like a strawberry-rhubarb pie. I found out firsthand when Master Gardener John Ely brought me a slice of one. After my first taste, I told him I thought rhubarb is to strawberry pie what wine is to braised beef. It adds depth and gives it an elevated refined taste.

Marco Polo advocated for rhubarb in the 13th century as a vegetable with medicinal properties. Today it is used in medicines for gastrointestinal and liver diseases. Rhubarb is being studied for its effect on inflammation, blood pressure, cholesterol, eye care, and brain health. Rhubarb is packed with minerals and vitamins. Michigan State University (MSU) reports that cooking rhubarb can increase antioxidant properties. Ongoing studies at MSU, Emory University's Winship Cancer Institute and University of Carolina Medical School are also being conducted to determine its possible benefit in cancer treatments.

As noted, rhubarb is a vegetable—but is usually used as a fruit. Rhubarb's acidity is comparable to a lemon. The part of the plant that can be eaten is the petiole or stalks; the leaves, containing oxalic acid in toxic concentrations, are not to be eaten. Rhubarb can also be used in chutney, beverages, and savory dishes.

Rhubarb (*Rheum rhabarbarum* L.) is a herbaceous perennial in the buckwheat family. It is native to the Siberia-Mongolia-China region, thus its ability to endure very cold winters. The finest growing culture for rhubarb is provided in the north where it grows as a perennial. Therefore, rhubarb is not often planted in Galveston County because it cannot endure our blistering hot summers.

## Perennial Rhubarb

When grown as a perennial, this vegetable needs two growing seasons to yield a harvest, usually in June. If you plant the vegetables from seed, it will take three seasons to get a good yield.

Rhubarb requires well-drained soil rich in organic matter (compost), full sun, and should be watered only enough to keep the soil moist. It can be grown in the garden from seed and also from a start or cutting. The starts are taken off an existing plant at the crown. Once a plant is five years old or more, additional plants can be propagated by division of the original plant. As a perennial, the plant can live, while continually yielding petioles, up to 15 years.

## Texas Gulf Coast Annual Rhubarb

The challenge for growing perennial rhubarb in the South is that it requires much cooler weather than the region can provide. Texas' high temperatures usually persist from May through mid-October.

Texas A&M AgriLife has conducted rhubarb trials and points out that when growing rhubarb in the South, one must change the plant's culture. Rhubarb grown in Texas must be treated as an annual with its growing season being from August to May—August to start seeds and grow indoors under lights until mid-October when seedlings are planted.

John Ely followed, with slight modifications, this planting and maintenance schedule for a rhubarb trial he conducted from 2023 to 2025. His goal was to confirm this method would be successful in Galveston County. The rhubarb variety Ely planted was 'Victoria.' The petiole of this variety is pink, fading to green at the top. The yield is abundant.

Ely planted rhubarb seeds indoors in mid-August; the growing plants were planted outside in mid-October. The location had ample organic matter, drained well, and was in full sun. The rhubarb transplants were fertilized with a liquid 6-12-6 at planting and then again, a week later.



Petioles without leaves mid-March 2024 MG John Ely

## “...2 seasons to yield harvest...”

Maintenance procedures consisted of weeding, feeding, and checking for pests and diseases. Weeding is key for healthy plants. Rhubarb is a heavy feeder, so plants were fed once a month with 21-0-0. Pine bark mulch was added to maintain soil acidity at a pH 6.6–6.7. Some pests that can possibly damage rhubarb are rhubarb curculio and stalk borers. Monitoring for plant diseases, such as root rot, was also carried out. Attentive care yielded healthy rhubarb plants.

The outcome of the trial proved rhubarb can be successfully grown as an annual vegetable in Galveston County. Two harvests had been accomplished. Of the seven plants cultivated each year, 38 pounds of rhubarb were harvested between March and May 2024, and 34 pounds were harvested between March and May 2025. Five pounds of petioles was the yield per plant.

Now you know the secret to growing rhubarb in Galveston County. Ely will be planting rhubarb seeds, and the plants will be on sale at the Galveston County Master Gardener Fall Festival and Plant Sale on October 18, 2025. Come see us at the Discovery Garden in La Marque at Carbide Park.

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Rhubarb bed mid-March 2024 MG John Ely



Ely with leaf MG John Ely



Rhubarb crown mid-May 2024  
MG John Ely



Rhubarb leaf mid-March 2024 MG John Ely

# The Joy of Gourds



Marilyn Haupt  
GCMG 2019

Gourds are hard-shelled fruits from the Cucurbitaceae family, closely related to pumpkins, squash, and melons. I was introduced to bottle gourds (*Lagenaria siceraria*) 30 years ago by my father-in-law. He used them as birdhouses and for decoration. Finding them to be fascinating, I've grown them ever since. The bottle gourds I grow are also known as Calabash gourds, white-flowered gourd, long melon, birdhouse gourd, New Guinea bean, New Guinea butter bean, Tasmania bean, and opo squash. Its genus name was derived from the Greek word, *lagenos*, for "vase." An interest in gourds is not new. Gourds have been utilized for thousands of years and thought to have originated on the African continent. They were used mainly for utilitarian purposes, such as containers, instruments, pipes, rattles, and water receptacles.

Gourd plants are very easy to grow in all planting zones from 2a to 11b but adequate space for their expansion is an absolute necessity. They are vining plants that can easily extend 20 feet or more in length. The use of a trellis or fence is ideal for several reasons. To help save space in the garden, keep the gourds off the ground, and allow the gourds to hang downwardly from the vines. One of the main reasons I grow these plants is to add structure and interest to my garden. They are beautiful and provide an attractive backdrop to the other plants around them. I built an archway in the center of my garden for the specific purpose of growing gourds.

Gourds are warm-weather plants. Seeds can be started indoors four to six weeks before the last frost date. The seedlings can be transplanted outside once true leaves emerge. Seeds can also be sown directly in the garden. Either way, the soil's temperature in the garden should be at least 65 degrees. As the weather and soil warms, the plants will grow rapidly.

Numerous leaves and tendrils are all along the vines. The leaves, very soft to the touch, are



Dad's birdhouse MG Marilyn Haupt



Gourds growing MG Marilyn Haupt

light green in color on the top side and the underside is off-white. The tendrils are important as they attach the vines to underlying structures, providing support as the vines climb. Flower buds are on the entirety of the vines. Gourd plants have both male and female flowers. During the day, the flowers are closed but they open at night to allow nocturnal insects, such as moths, to pollinate. When they open, the flowers are up to two inches in width and yellowish white in color. Once pollinated, the female flowers produce the gourds, taking 80 to 120 days to fully mature. Multiple gourds can grow on a single vine. The size and shape of the gourds can vary. Typically, they will range between eight and twelve inches in length.

These plants should receive at least six hours of direct sunlight a day and be planted in well-drained soil. They require at least one inch of water per week. Gourd plants are highly susceptible to fungal growth, so it is best not to water in the evening or at night. Planting them three to four feet apart allows for good airflow between them. Gourd plants are vulnerable to several insects that can create damage. A few of the most common culprits are cucumber beetles, cutworms, aphids, and squash vine borers. Watch out for these potential problems, so they can be addressed early.

Gourds are ready for harvest once they become hardened. They should be removed from the vine, leaving at least five inches of stem attached, and placed in a well-ventilated area

to allow them to dry out and harden. It can take at least six months to dry completely before use. The moisture

“...utilized for thousands of years”

inside will dissipate over time and during the process the fruit should be placed on newspapers or other absorbent material and kept in a dry place with no chance of dampness. Turning the drying fruit periodically will help stop any chances of soft spots forming. Mold might occur over time on the surface, but it will not cause a problem. Once dry, the hardened surface can be soaked and washed to return to a clean skin.

The dried gourds make great birdhouses for cavity nesting birds such as bluebirds, swallows, chickadees, wrens, woodpeckers, and purple martins. The size of the opening depends on the needs of whichever type of birds will use the house. Gourds can also be used as decorations and can be artistically painted or exquisitely etched. There are an endless number of creative ways to decorate gourds. Enjoy!



Halloween decorations MG Marilyn Haupt



Santa gourd Neva Cauley

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Gourds up close MG Marilyn Haupt

## Glow-in-the-Dark Plants



John Jons  
GCMG 2003

As a lifelong student of gardening, rose growing, rose exhibiting, but mostly rose hybridizing, I've often wondered: "What's truly possible when it comes to modifying (hybridizing) plants (roses)?" The current challenge for rose hybridization is disease resistance and low maintenance.

That question took an unexpected turn for me recently. A gardening friend asked, "Want a glow-in-the-dark plant?" Although I've been scaling back my rose beds and rose hybridizing projects, my curiosity lit up like a grow light. Within an hour, I found myself holding what looked like an ordinary white petunia. But this was no ordinary bedding plant. It was the Firefly Petunia (*Petunia* x 'Firefly'), the first genetically modified, bioluminescent plant to be approved for widespread home garden use by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

I planted the Firefly Petunia in a one-gallon container and placed it in a sheltered spot in my garden. During the day it looks just like a regular white petunia. After a day of full sun, I brought the petunia into a completely dark closet. Yes, it is real. And yes, it truly glows in the dark. Not brightly, but unmistakably. The sight was stunning.

The bioluminescence in the Firefly Petunia was created through a process of gene integration. Scientists inserted genes from a naturally glowing mushroom (*Neonothopanus nambi*) into the petunia's DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid). The

result? A living, glowing flower. No need for UV light, phosphorescent paint, or optical illusions, just cellular chemistry at work. The glow is soft, concentrated around new growth and blooms, and most visible in total darkness following a sunny day.

The concept of gene integration dates back to 1928, when microbiologist Frederick Griffith discovered that bacteria could adopt traits by absorbing genetic material from other strains, a pivotal moment in molecular biology. Over the decades, what began as a mystery evolved into a method. By 1983, scientists had created virus-resistant tobacco through gene integration, proving that the genetic "code" could be intentionally rewritten. Tobacco was successfully modified to glow using firefly genes as far back as 1986. The glow persisted throughout the plant's entire life cycle, from seedling to maturity, proving that glowing plants were not just a sci-fi fantasy, but a viable scientific reality. It is not just a novelty. It is a public demonstration of what's possible when biotechnology meets ornamental horticulture. That is what makes the Firefly Petunia such a breakthrough.

The Firefly Petunia became the first USDA-approved bioluminescent plant in 2023 and hit the consumer market in 2024. Light Bio, the company behind it, shipped over 120,000 units in its debut season, many of which sold out within hours. During 2025, Light Bio plans to distribute up to a million plants to meet surging demand. A three pack of Firefly Petunias each in 1.75" pots costs around \$40 or more plus at least \$20 for shipping.



Day MG John Jons

*“It truly glows in the dark...”*



Night MG John Jons

As a rose hybridizer I wondered, “Is a glow-in-the-dark rose possible?” Science says yes, or at least, not impossible. Rose breeders (hybridizers) already chase color vibrancy, petal form, bloom frequency, unique fragrance, improved disease resistance, and varied temperature tolerance. Why not luminosity? Roses, while more complex genetically, present no theoretical obstacle to bioluminescent engineering. However, practical challenges do exist.

Could I hybridize a glow-in-the-dark rose? Not yet. Traditional (rose) hybridizing that I practice is a game of patience and phenotypes observing what emerges through nature’s shuffle. Genetic engineering is a scalpel, not a shuffle. Both aim for the same goal: to make something extraordinary grow. This kind of work still belongs to molecular biologists. But remember, so did many of the tools and methods that (rose) plant hybridizers now take for granted.

Beyond their novelty, glowing plants showcase the potential of genetic engineering to enhance everyday gardening experiences, offering beauty, wonder, and scientific intrigue in one small flowerpot.

Sometimes, all it takes is one glowing petunia to remind you that the future of gardening is brighter than ever.

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# Great Fall Tomato: Texas Superstar® ‘Ruby Crush’



Karen Nelson  
GCMG 2020

If I had room for only one tomato plant in my fall garden, it would be the Texas Superstar® ‘Ruby Crush’ (*Solanum lycopersicum*).

This determinate grape tomato is both versatile and low maintenance. The plant produces abundant grape-like clusters, approximately six inches long and three inches wide. Individual tomatoes are about two inches long and one inch wide. The flavor is sweet, though not as sweet as the ‘Cherry Surprise’ tomato.

‘Ruby Crush’ earned Texas Superstar® validation in 2023, after extensive trials and evaluation, and won the taste award naming it the Rodeo Tomato at the San Antonio Rodeo in 2021. It was also trialed in our Discovery Garden at Carbide Park in La Marque last spring with impressive results: a yield of approximately 17 pounds from three plants, with no signs of disease and only a limited number of leaf-footed stink bugs at the end of the harvest.

This tomato is delicious eaten straight from the vine, roasted, or cooked into sauces and salsas with minimal use of an immersion blender. It is canned easily and can even be frozen whole.

The fruit appears about 65 days after seedling planting. Seeds are readily available through seed companies and germination is easy.

The plant can grow to a height of four feet and will most likely need a little support due to the heavy clusters. It’s well-suited to be grown in containers, making it perfect for small-space gardens or the patio. The plant likes full sun and garden soil that drains well, benefiting from routine watering and fertilizer. It is also re-

sistant to many common viral, bacterial, and fungal diseases. This little tomato wonder will be in my fall garden this year—and on my holiday tables.



A day’s harvest MG Karen Nelson



Large producer MG Karen Nelson

**Note:** The Texas Superstar® program is a partnership between the Texas A&M University Agriculture Program (AgriLife Extension and Research) and the Texas nursery industry. It identifies outstanding plants with proven performance in most Texas regions, yielding superior performance under Texas’ tough growing conditions. Plants put through field trials receive little soil preparation, reasonable watering, and no pesticides to identify which are low maintenance and hardy. To qualify, a Texas Superstar® plant must: (1) be attractive and useful to the gardening public; (2) be unique and offer desirable and ornamental characteristics not usually available in commonly sold plants (i.e., able to perform in the heat of Texas summers); (3) consistently perform for most Texas gardeners regardless of their expertise and growing locations; (4) be as pest resistant as possible; (5) be able to be propagated and mass-produced in sufficient numbers to meet consumer demand; and (6) be so attractive in the sales container that it “sells itself” to consumers who have never heard of the attributes.

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# Plant of the Month: Calendula



Pam Hunter  
GCMG 2018

Calendula (*Calendula officinalis*), also known as pot marigold, is a multi-use annual or sometimes a short-lived perennial in USDA Plant Hardiness Zones 9 through 11. In addition to adding beauty to your garden, it also serves as a beneficial companion plant, enriching the soil, deterring pests, and attracting pollinators.

Calendula is an herbaceous plant that produces cheerful, showy flowers. Deadheading spent blooms helps the plant continue to flower. It is great when planted with tomatoes, cucumbers, carrots, broccoli, or cabbage. The blooms attract beneficial insects, such as hoverflies, which prey on aphids and other garden pests. Its scent can deter pests like nematodes and tomato hornworms.

Calendulas produce bright yellow to orange flowers that resemble chrysanthemums or daisies, blooming from spring through the fall, with aromatic, slightly hairy leaves. The flowers and leaves are both edible. The petals can be used fresh or dried and are often added to salads and other dishes for both color and flavor. The leaves are often used in salads as well, though their bitterness is more pronounced. The plant can grow to 1 to 2 feet tall and wide.

Growing from seed is easy, with nearly 100 percent germination rate. The seeds are relatively large compared to other edible flowers. Calendula is cold-hardy, drought tolerant, and deer resistant.

Plants can be plagued with powdery mildew in damp conditions or in areas of high humidity. To prevent this fungal disease space plants 8 to 12 inches apart for proper airflow and ensure they receive adequate sunlight. Having 18 inches between rows is also suggested to allow for more air circulation and give blooms extra space. Powdery mildew can also easily be controlled with labeled fungicides containing baking

soda, sulfur, or neem oil. Spraying on leaves at the first sign of mildew will eradicate the fungus and keep it from spreading.

Calendula is believed to have originated in southern Europe and the eastern Mediterranean. While its long history of cultivation makes pinpointing its exact origin difficult, it is now widely naturalized farther north in Europe and other warm-climate regions.

## Benefits of Calendula in the Garden:

**Soil Health:** Calendula improves soil health, making it a good match for various vegetables. It acts as a cover crop, improving soil structure with its roots and potentially suppressing certain soil pests. The plant's thick, fibrous roots help to break up compacted soil and improve its structure, allowing for better water infiltration and aeration. It prefers well-draining soil and is not too fussy about soil fertility.

**Pollination:** Calendula flowers attract beneficial insects, such as bees and hoverflies, which can improve pollination in vegetable gardens.

**Pest control:** Its strong scent deters nematodes, aphids, tomato hornworms, and white flies. It can also act as a trap crop, drawing aphids away from more vulnerable plants.

**Growing calendulas:** Calendulas thrive in full sun but can tolerate partial shade, especially in hotter climates like ours. Providing 6 to 8 hours of sunlight will yield more blooms. Regular pruning and removing spent flowers encourage continuous blooming throughout the growing season.

“Calendula Flower: Companion Plants, Benefits & Care Information.” *Kellogg*. 2024. <https://kelloggarden.com/blog/gardening/calendula-flower-companion-plants-benefits-and-care-information/>  
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Close vies *MG Donna Merritt*



Calendula growing in Discovery Herb Garden *MG Donna Merritt*

## Preparing for Fall: Gardening and Insect Pests



Hedy Wolpa  
GCMG 2018

Are we ready for fall gardening and cooler temperatures after the heat and humidity of our coastal summer months? Fall seed catalogs are brimming with delicious potential and plant sales have us lusting for trays of our favorite vegetables. The more tolerable weather, however, does NOT mean fewer insect pests in the garden. We still need to be vigilant about garden hygiene, soil nutrients and amendments, and the placement of plants in the right locations and conditions.

There's no substitute for keen observation as new fall seedlings begin to leaf out and, later, as fruit begins to ripen on mature plants. The insect pests we most commonly talk about in the Discovery Garden in fall are cabbage loopers, army worms, stinkbugs, and aphids. Watch for signs of chewing on leaf margins, holes in leaves, eggs on leaves, rolled-up leaves, and bruising on fruit that signal insect damage. The damage doesn't always occur overnight, although it might appear so. Watch your plants daily for clues that their growth is suffering. Early intervention can save your harvest. Simply picking off caterpillars and hosing away aphids keeps you ahead of the development of conditions that can quickly devastate plants. Adult insects, beetles for example, usually have a harder exoskeleton that is difficult for insecticides/pesticides to penetrate. This is another good reason to try and catch pest problems at the larval and nymph stages of development. Two products to try when you notice soft bodied caterpillars and some types of beetles are Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*)-based products and spinosad-based products. Integrated Pest Management (IPM),

as recommended by Texas A & M AgriLife, includes using products that are the least risky for humans and the environment at the right time on insect pests. It's important to identify the pests you're targeting to insure you're using the correct product. Always follow label instructions, including wearing protective clothing and eyewear when mixing and applying product.

Mindful **sanitation practices** are important year-round in the garden for tools and equipment to prevent diseases and pathogens from contaminating both soil and plants. Wash the soil and garden litter from your garden tools after using them, and keep them oiled and rust-free. Alcohol in a spray bottle is useful for spraying your cutting tools when trimming foliage and dead-heading plants. This practice avoids spreading disease from plant to plant.

Consider **soil management** before planting, including soil testing, preparing, repairing, and cleaning your beds, and adding recommended soil amendments. Favorable soil conditions can help give a good start for healthy root systems and for the movement of nutrients and water into the roots. Plants may thereby develop better resistance to insect pests and diseases. Research by Dr. Joe Masabni, Texas A & M AgriLife Extension Service vegetable specialist, is helpful when considering tilling soil (or not) before planting. In an article by Katharine Cook in *AgriLife Today*, Dr. Masabni favors no-dig gardening, a low-effort form of gardening, which means adding compost on top of soil and letting microorganisms give plants the nutrients they need. He also recommends fertilization of garden beds on top of compost for optimal results. Gardeners can de-



Aphids Charles Ray, Auburn University, Bugwood.org



Armyworm Frank Peairs, Colorado State University, Bugwood.org

“No substitute for keen observation...”



Cabbage Looper Alton N. Sparks, Jr., University of Georgia, Bugwood.org



Stinkbug Joseph Berger, Bugwood.org

velop beds over time that yield good results by adding compost and fertilizer without digging, tilling, or otherwise disturbing soil before planting. Dr. Masabni's research and recommendations can be found in Cook's article at <https://agrilifetoday.tamu.edu/2024/03/19/foundational-tips-for-no-dig-gardening>.

Fall is also an ideal time to seriously consider **crop rotation**. If you grow the same vegetables in the same place every year, moving them to another location within the garden will reduce the likelihood of infestation in the soil from pathogens such as fungi, viruses, bacteria, or nematodes. While these are not insects, they can bring rot, slow or deformed growth, blight, or leaf or stem damage. Pathogens survive in the plant debris left behind in the soil and the seeds from the previous crop. Plants weakened by soil pathogens attract insects that can further devastate your garden. The benefits of rotating crops include reducing the likelihood of soil pathogens and preserving the quality of soil nutrients, and may lessen the growth of weeds.

Whether you plant fall garden beds or let them go fallow, it's generally a good idea to **remove plant debris** from the previous planting season. Some insects overwinter in plant debris, emerging in spring to quickly begin eating and reproducing. Fungal blight, mildew, rot, and viruses may also be present. As you clean garden beds, it's fine to compost plant material that you know doesn't contain diseased material. Otherwise, bag contaminated plant debris and rotted fruits and vegetables and discard. Remember that beneficial insects also overwinter in our landscape beds, and protecting their habitat while

cleaning your yard is important.

Remember to remove the plastic coverings used for solarization at the end of the summer to kill weeds and soilborne pests. A covered bed can still harbor disease and resistant pests through the winter. Go ahead and take care of the soil testing process at the end of the summer growing period to determine what nutrients are depleted.

Fall gardeners can be as tenacious as fall insects! We can count on the most common insects to be present during fall and winter months. But vigilant planting with quality plants and seeds and good observation skills in the garden will reward you with a healthy garden and some good eating!

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# A Composting Interview with Friendswood Resident Chris Sam



Christie McGrath  
GCMG 2023

## *Getting Started with Composting*

### **What inspired you to start composting at home?**

A few years ago, my mother, who was very sick, moved in with us and well-meaning family members would bring over food. We couldn't eat all of it. Instead of throwing it away, we decided to try composting.

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

I purchased a 12 cubic foot compost tumbler from Tractor Supply. Around the same time, I started looking into soil health and stumbled upon a video of a guy in Houston using worms instead of fertilizer. I bought some red wiggler worms and added them to the tumbler. Wanting to see how the process worked, I also put some in a five-gallon food grade bucket and added scraps to that as well. It was pretty amazing to watch the worms break down the food scraps. I also buried a five-gallon bucket with holes drilled in the bottom and sides and added materials to that also, but it doesn't produce nearly as much as the tumbler.

## *Composting Process*

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

Kitchen scraps, plant trimmings, dead leaves, coffee grounds, and cardboard. I don't add meat, dairy, eggs, or fish. To help the worms out, I try to make sure not to add anything too large and I don't overfill the tumbler. The worms really love banana peels.

### **How do you balance greens and browns?**

Mostly, by eye. I keep buckets of materials to add to the tumbler later as needed.

### **Do you measure your compost temperature?**

Yes. I use an infrared thermometer gun to check the surface temperature. I don't want it to get too hot (above 130 degrees) and cook the worms. I always cover the top of the materials in the composter with wet cardboard and haven't had any issue. I also have the tumbler in a shady area.

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

I look for worm activity and if I don't see it, I'll turn the bin.

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

I don't follow a strict schedule, but I check in on the worms

3-4 times a week.

## *Challenges and Solutions*

### **Have you faced any challenges (e.g., pests, smells)? How did you handle them?**

The tumbler can get hard to turn when it's full, so I try not to let it get overloaded. Be careful what you add or it can slow down decomposition. Watch out for labels, tape, etc.

### **Do you change how you manage composting in the winter?**

I didn't change anything and didn't cover the tumbler during the short freezes we had.

## *Results and Benefits*

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

If I want to harvest a lot of compost, I'll stop adding to the tumbler about 20 days prior. If I'm just getting a little, I'll grab some worms and all and put it in the garden. If there are any larger pieces, I'll just throw them back in the tumbler. I don't sift it other than by eye. I can usually get a good batch every 60-90 days. I like to leave a little (less than a quarter) of the compost and worms in the tumbler to start the next batch. I haven't had to buy new worms in over two years.

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

I use it mostly around flower beds or when building a new garden bed. For a new bed, I like to use a mix of equal parts leaf mold, garden soil, and compost. I do supplement with some commercial compost but prefer to use my own whenever possible.

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

Definitely! Three years ago, I was ready to give up, but now, using the worms, composting works well, and my garden has never been better.

## *Personal Reflection*

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

It's fun, it's life giving, it saves a little money, it is something for my family to do together in the garden, is better for the environment, and creates healthier soil. I enjoy not throwing things in the trash and not wasting. My son, Jacob, recently did a science project comparing four different worms breaking down a banana peel. He tested the red wigglers, mealworms,

## “Every little bit helps...”

super worms and wax worms; the red wigglers were by far the most efficient. It was a fun learning project to observe.

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

Yes, I would encourage anyone gardening to compost and especially to try out worms. They make me look like I know what I'm doing. I recommend getting your worms from a reputable source. If you use an online vendor, be sure to warn your family because the bag they mail might start moving!

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

Try it in a five-gallon bucket to learn what the worms like

and don't like. They reproduce quickly. Just try to regulate the temperature and keep the size of the materials fairly small. Before you know it, composting will be a way of life for you too.

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

Gardening is a journey of observation, and you just keep trying to improve on the observations that you make. It sounds cheesy, but it's the circle of life: plant matter we produce in the garden goes back to the earth to produce new plant matter.



Property showing gardens, greenhouse *Chris Sam*



Tumbler in place *Chris Sam*



Close up of tumbler *Chris Sam*



Worms enjoying banana peels *Chris Sam*

September-October

# Where Only the Tough Keep Blooming



Linda Steber  
GCMG 1991

This time of the year is the proving ground in my garden—the month where the weak fade and the strong keep putting on a show. Summer’s heat has taken its toll, but in this in-between season, a few standouts refuse to quit.

Firebush (*Hamelia patens*) is still blazing with color, feeding hummingbirds like it’s their last meal. Leopard Plant (*Farfugium japonicum*) holds its ground with bold, glossy leaves. Pentas (*Pentas lanceolata*) keep pushing out blooms, and Blue Trumpet Vine (*Thunbergia grandiflora*) climbs and sprawls. Yellow Bells (*Tecoma stans*) flash golden trumpets like they own the place. Powder Puff (*Calliandra emarginata*) throws out its feathery fireworks, daring the season to end. And Coleus, ever the chameleon, keeps its color game strong—thriving in shade, sun, or whatever the season throws its way. This is the garden’s gritty middle chapter. And these plants - they’re the survivors.

All photos by MG Linda Steber



# Gardening Help Line: Groundcovers and Rose Problem



Ralinda Fenton  
GCMG 2023

## Question: What are good ground cover plants for our area?

Several ground covers are suitable for Galveston County. There are many ground covers that have been used for a long time. Some of those are Vinca (*Vinca major*) which grows 6 to 18 inches tall and can be aggressive, mondo or monkey grass (*Ophiopogon japonicus*) which grows 4 to 8 inches tall in a clump, and ajuga (*Ajuga reptans*) which grows to 3 inches. There are also some great newer recommendations for our area which we will explore here.

A great groundcover that many are using now in their lawn is frog fruit (*Lippia nodiflora*). It grows vigorously from 3 to 8 inches tall. It is a great nectar plant as well as a great groundcover that tolerates foot traffic. It prefers sun to part shade. The small blooms range from white to purple and are present most of the warm months. It trails across the yard and can spill over things. It should not be mowed while it is blooming, but its petite size makes it very low maintenance.

Another great groundcover to consider is Texas Sedge (*Carex texensis*). It is drought tolerant and can grow in partial shade. It is a perfect choice under trees where grass varieties can be difficult to grow. It likes well-drained sandy soil and will grow up to 12 inches. It can adapt to other soils. Sedge does grow in clumps so choose wisely where to grow it. If it turns brown in an especially cold winter, just give the plant a “haircut” and it will bounce back in the spring.

A third groundcover is silver ponyfoot (*Dichondra argentea*). It is a trailing groundcover that grows to 3 or 4 inches in well-drained soil and forms a dense mat perfect for coverage. The leaves are a silvery color and can appear metallic in the sun. It requires very little water and is very drought tolerant. It does not need to be pruned so it is an excellent low maintenance ground cover.



Frog fruit <https://aggieturf.tamu.edu/>



Rose rosette virus Mary Ann Hansen, Virginia Tech

## Question: I believe my roses have Rose Rosette Virus. How can I treat it?

Unfortunately, rosette is caused by a viral pathogen and cannot be cured. You will have to remove the diseased plant. Some signs include leaf and stem reddening, rubbery thorns, leaves deformed leaves and clusters of stems from one node. Since it is easily spread and affects all rose types, identify it early and remove the plant. First, verify that it is not another problem that mimics the symptoms such as nutritional deficiencies or misapplying chemicals. If you suspect the virus and want confirmation before removing it, submit samples of symptoms for lab tests. TAMU has a Texas Plant Disease Diagnostic Lab. To submit, go to <https://plantclinic.tamu.edu/forms/d1178/>. Houston Rose Society is a great resource for visual identification. <https://www.houstonrose.org/rcompar.pdf>.

Gardening problem or question? Gardening Help Desk can help. 281-309-5061

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Silver ponyfoot Katie Duffy City of Austin



Texas sedge Courtesy Joseph A. Marcus, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

# A Peek in the Pergola



Pam Hunter  
MG 2018

Blooms in September and October each year bring a smile to the faces of working master gardeners and visitors alike in the Discovery Garden. MG Pam Hunter and her team maintain the plants and area offering welcoming color at the entrance to the pergola.

All photos by MG Pam Hunter



Four O'clocks (*Mirabilis jalapa*)



Begonia



Zinnia



Marigolds



Hidden Ginger (*Curcuma petiolata*)



Zinnia



Plumeria (*Frangipani*)

# Discovery Garden Update



Tom Fountain  
GCMG 2008

We are now entering the peak of the hurricane season for our area so activate your preparedness plan. This year has continued with warmer than normal weather across Galveston County. On the other hand, this year's rainfall is almost two inches above normal, despite the shortage of significant amounts of rain in mid-summer. Temperatures in June and July averaged one to two degrees above normal. The National Weather Service extended forecast indicates temperatures will likely continue above normal with rainfall near normal through the fall season.

Our dedicated group of master gardeners continued to stay busy in the garden despite hot days with "feels like" temperatures of triple digits. Aside from taking more frequent water breaks, MGs continued fighting weeds, harvesting summer produce, getting some beds ready to solarize, and preparing beds for the fall planting season.

Almost as soon as spring was over the weather turned HOT and humid. While outside MGs drink more water and rest often in the shade if possible. A good example is (1) Pam Hunter and Ann Ross catching up with garden news while trying to cool down in the shade of the pergola.

At this time of the year not much produce is left except a little okra, some peppers, and herbs. (2) Debbie Espinosa (2) was at Gene Speller's bed picking a few poblano peppers to stuff. She says they are much better stuffed than bell peppers. (Yes, she did ask Gene for permission first.)

Much debris is being created by cleaning and preparing beds. It was good to see Larry Brizendine enjoying "tractor time" and hauling off garden waste to be composted. (3)

Michelle Turner, Jamie Hart and Wendy Stratton are always working hard in the Serenity Garden. I caught them weeding in a shady area. (4) They always seem to be smiling. I also ran across Monica Martens and her husband Roy (5). They had the task of getting an empty bed cleaned out and solarized for the fall season.

At the Discovery Garden we enjoy having visitors and giving them a tour. Visitors are welcome to stop by on Thursdays between 9 and 11 am. I'm hoping to see you in the Garden soon.



1



2



3



4



5

## A Day Trip Abroad to Monet's Garden



Vicki Hall  
MG 2023

*Je suis dans le ravissement, Giverny est un pays splendide pour moi*

*(I am in rapture. Giverny is a splendid country for me.) Claude Monet*

On a recent trip to Paris, I scheduled an outing to Monet's Gardens in Giverny. Upon arrival, I walked down a wooded path and stumbled on the entrance, completely overwhelmed by the colors, texture, movement of the plants, the bees, and butterflies all existing in harmony with the native landscape of this expansive and intoxicatingly beautiful garden. I couldn't take it all in. I gasped, swooned, and sat down!

Claude Monet left his life in Paris and rented a house in Giverny, France. Included on the property was a barn he used as a painting studio, an orchard and a small garden. There were also natural areas nearby that provided subject matter for his paintings. Monet and his family worked to expand the gardens which became his artistic inspiration. Using this landscape, his paintings began to sell, greatly increasing his wealth. In 1890, Monet purchased the house and expanded the property to include a greenhouse, an additional studio with skylights, and grassland with a water source.

Monet worked with gardeners daily, writing instructions and designing layouts to better enhance his paintings. He was the garden architect. He continued to increase his property, added water lilies to the pond in many colors, and placed easels around the property to allow different garden perspectives to be painted. Monet painted mostly from nature using his own garden, pond with water lilies, and the Japanese bridge. He used color combinations, hard structures, and plants, and mastered the reflection of light on the water.

The garden entrance is through a bayou that wraps around one side of the property leading to the water lily pond. The bayou is surrounded by bamboo, willow trees, and large native grasses. There are wooden bridges to navigate the area, as well as a Japanese bridge across the west end of the pond. The bridge railings are covered with clusters of purple Chinese Wisteria (*Wisteria sinensis*), and the white Japanese Wisteria (*Wisteria floribunda 'Alba'*) falling from above creates a curtain of flowers as you traverse the bridge. There was an old canoe casually resting on the bank of the pond that I imagined would have been used to closely view the water lilies. The pond is surrounded by native shrubs, trees, and flowers of all colors and textures. As you move around the perimeter of the pond you notice the flower colors blend in nature. The water

lilies, although not in bloom, were reflected on the water with the morning sunshine. As we left the pond, the vision of the garden was like his paintings, brightly colored splashes, with messy but balanced, controlled chaos.

Monet followed certain garden principles such as having no bare earth or dark flowers. He loved blue but hated single flowers and variegated foliage. The garden consists of hundreds of perennials intermingled with annuals. Each garden bed was laid in rectangular tracts with pathways between each starting at the house and running the length of the property. This design would allow Monet to walk through the garden so he could see the plants from all sides. Metal arches were placed over the center aisle and planted with climbing roses on either side. The colors of the roses mimicked the pink and green colors of the house, although in a slightly different tint. These colors draw your eye to the house, causing the image of the house and garden to blend together. Roses were planted throughout the perennial beds and pruned into "trees" so their blooms would show above the seasonal flowers.

Wanting no bare earth to show, all tracts were planted so as one plant fades, complimentary plants bloom. For example, as the irises bloom in spring and begin to fade after a few weeks, gladiolas sprout and bloom as the irises are going dormant. And there is always a flowering ground cover to merge



Arches covering the main walkways with climbing roses MG Vickie Hall

“...expansive, intoxicatingly beautiful garden”

the bed into the pathway. The greenhouse is the generator for the garden. Seeds and cuttings of the plants are collected and grown during their off-season to ensure plants are available as needed. Specimen trees are scattered throughout the perennial beds, along with grape vines and yard lilies planted on mounded grassy areas. Benches and gathering areas are abundant to sit and take in the beauty of the garden.

Later in life, Monet, a great visionary, began to go blind with cataracts. Due to his loss of vision, he saw the landscape differently resulting in the true subject of the famous water lilies being the changing reflections of the color of the sky, clouds, and trees on the pond. Monet has been described as “the driving force behind impressionism through the understanding of the effects of light on the color of objects” (Jennings, Guy 1986)

In 1978, [Monet's garden](#) in Giverny, which was abandoned for over fifty years, was restored and opened to the public, where each season reveals ever-changing gardens.

Giverny is an hour north of Paris, and it takes several hours to fully enjoy the garden. Nearby is a great outdoor restaurant, La Parenthes, serving local food and wine.

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Perennials around the Water Garden (Lily Pond) MG Vickie Hall



Sweet rocket, poppies and giant allium blend well in the paintbox garden MG Vickie Hall



Japanese style bridge covered with Mauve Chinese Wisteria MG Vickie Hall



White Japanese wisteria adorns the bridge in spring MG Vickie Hall

# John Fairey Garden: A Magical Experience in Hempstead



Barbara Ann Lyons  
MG 2014

Near the end of April 2025, my husband and I visited a garden on the west side of Houston, one I had long wanted to see. When I first heard of the garden in the early 1990s it was a private facility called Peckerwood Garden. Though I eventually learned about its annual open garden days, I never managed to attend one. Today, the 39-acre garden is public and known as

**The John Fairey Garden** (20559 FM 359 Road, Hempstead, Texas [jfgarden.org](http://jfgarden.org)), named after its founder and planner-in-chief. The property is in the unincorporated Pine Island just outside the city of Hempstead. Much of the land is part of a preservation garden protected by a conservation easement. The Garden Conservancy holds the conservation easement on the property. The John Fairey Garden Conservation Foundation owns and maintains the garden and its related nursery operations where threatened and endangered Mexican plants continue to be cultivated. The two foundations work in concert providing oversight and ensuring the garden is preserved in the way Fairey envisioned.

John Fairey (1930-2020) was an architect, artist, plant collector, and more. He served as a professor of architecture at Texas A&M, but his passion was his garden. He made over 100 trips—mostly to Northern Mexico and South Texas—to collect specimens. Dying without direct descendants, this unique garden is his legacy.

Tours are available on the second and fourth Saturday of the month at 10 am, 11 am and 1 pm with online registration for docent-led experiences during the open season, September through mid-June, annually. The garden is closed to the public during the hot summer months.



Cypress lined creek MG Barbara Lyons

Our tour guide was Wally Wilkins, Director of Horticulture and Living Collections. After spending 30 plus years as an engineer for a major oil company, he retired to pursue a horticulture degree at Texas A&M. What an excellent guide he was! He is also Co-President of the Board of Directors of the John Fairey Garden Conservation Foundation.

The property is roughly split into two areas, one being the greenhouses and the second being for business operations (the former Yucca Do Nursery) and the preservation garden. The greenhouses house plants from the garden's collection—many succulents including cacti, agave, and yucca, along with salvia and more—many of which are for sale. Another part of this area includes several rustic buildings housing the garden offices, admissions desk, and restrooms. The second area of the property containing the preservation garden includes three buildings: a home, an art studio, and an art gallery. Surrounding the structures are acres of artistically designed gardens and works of art which make you feel as if an architect first sketched them on paper, then brought them to life to exact specifications...which is exactly what happened.

The garden is filled with unusual plant specimens. Many of the plants have interesting stories. One is a variety of agave from Mexico which lacks the specific needed pollinator in Texas so it cannot go through normal reproduction. Another requires a male tree for pollination, so it never reproduces. In this case it is probably a good thing since there are copious flowers on the female tree and would be producing an overabundance of seeds, requiring efforts to keep them from overwhelming the carefully curated garden space. Another is a rare oak with fuzzy undersides on its leaves. Yet another is an interesting tree variety: a weeping oak. Around another corner is a stand



Unusual specimen with pinecones growing upward MG Barbara Lyons

## “...preserved in the way *Fairey* envisioned”



Greenhouse *MG Barbara Lyons*



Rare bamboo *MG Barbara Lyons*



Signage *MG Barbara Lyons*

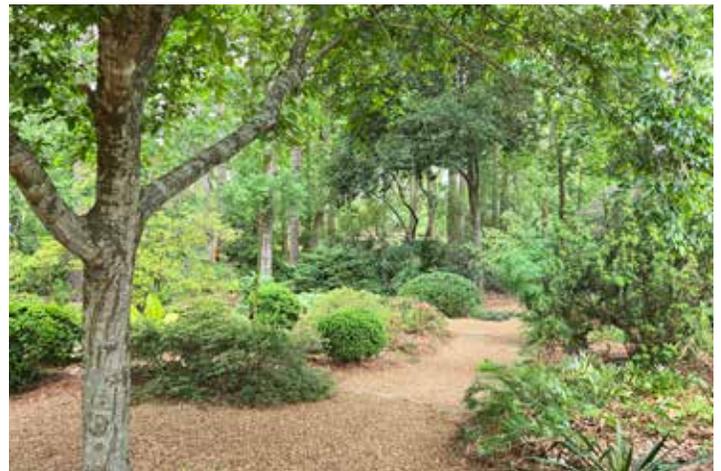
of majestic and rare blue palm trees. In another section there is an interesting formation of a rare species of bamboo.

The goal of a preservation garden is to keep a garden, as designed, in perpetuity. This poses some concerns for garden maintenance because as plants go through their normal life cycle they are affected by weather events of wind and cold. Overall, plants, especially trees, have grown to their mature heights and now block out much of the sunlight that once reached the ground.

One of the garden sections was intended to be covered in grass, however, it cannot support it. An experiment is underway to grow a shade-loving green ground cover which, if successful, will create the desired grassy appearance despite the lack of sunlight. The garden has also had plant damage and attrition due to cold weather events. The Houston derecho, a powerful, devastating windstorm in May 2024, was the most recent event requiring some garden reparation and plant replacement.

This garden was one of the most meticulously maintained gardens I have visited due to the dedicated work of the limited staff of gardeners. The head gardener worked for many years with John Fairey so undoubtedly understands the current mission and Fairey's perspective. Great efforts are made to replicate the garden.

Though there may be no fairies at John Fairey Garden, it remains a magical place. The essence of the man, the architect, the plant connoisseur, and artist is in full display and well worth a trip to the other side of Houston. Make it a full day of garden fun by adding a stop at the Antique Rose Emporium (Brenham, Texas [antiqueroseemporium.com](http://antiqueroseemporium.com)). It will make for enjoyable experiences.



Well-maintained pathways *MG Barbara Lyons*

# Dickinson JMGs Have Active Year



Tina Woods  
GCMG 2022

MG Tina Woods is the sponsor of a Junior Master Gardener group in Dickinson. Their new year began in August and ended in May. Meetings were held on Wednesday mornings from 10 until 12 pm. The photos on this page show the kids having fun learning about bunny care, building plant boxes and filling them with plants and taking a special canoe trip on Dickinson Bayou. The JMGs identified plants and flowers, ate mulberries and swam in the bayou. The program has its members learning to grow food, explore nature, and create garden inspired crafts.



The canoe trip MG Tina Woods



Learning about bunnies MG Tina Woods



The canoe trip MG Tina Woods



Building planter boxes MG Tina Woods



The canoe trip MG Tina Woods

## Book Review: *The Moonlight Gardening Club* by Rosie Hannigan



Cheryl Brueggeman  
GCMG 2014

The Green Thumb Book Club's fourth book of the year is *The Moonlight Gardening Club*, a charming and heartwarming story set in a seaside town in Ireland. The story is told through the eyes of the two main characters, Ruby and Frankie. The chapters alternate between the characters which is an interesting way to have the story unfold.

We learn in the first chapter, that Ruby, heartbroken over the loss of her husband, James, has moved from Dublin back to the holiday home James had purchased in Ruby's hometown. Even though James has left her well provided for, she wants nothing more than to be alone and try to figure out what she wants to do with her life.

Frankie is a single mother to six-year-old Dillon, who has a deep love and interest in insects. She works hard to provide a meager living for the two of them. They live in the ramshackle cottage of her grandmother, Aggie, who raised Frankie. Frankie is also grieving the love of her life, Dillon's father, who perished in a boating accident.

The first meeting between these two women does not go well. Harsh words are spoken and feelings are hurt.

Much of the rest of the book focuses on how these two women heal and become friends.

Ruby discovers the moonlight garden by accident one evening when she was restless and decided to take a walk to calm her

nerves. The moonlight garden club was started as a way to remind its members that beauty and light can be found even on the darkest of nights. All the plants in the garden have been carefully researched and chosen to be enjoyed in the waning darkness. It is through this garden club we are introduced to all the other delightful characters in this book and it is through this club that Ruby and

Frankie begin a friendship that is rocked to the core when a secret from their pasts is revealed.

Each chapter revealed more details about these two women. All of the characters in the book are believable and endearing. It speaks to the healing powers of gardening and made me wish I was part of the club. The book is about the power of love and friendship and how having a support system is so important. I found myself laughing and crying as I kept reading.

Both Ruby and Frankie experience life altering events in the book and help each other through them. It would have been easy to have a fairy tale happy ending, which is what I would have liked. The ending, however, never really tells the reader exactly what the outcome was, but it definitely left me feeling hopeful and wishing for a sequel.

Next up is *The Language of Flowers* by

Vanessa Diffenbaugh followed by *Beatrix Potter's Gardening Life: The Plants and Places That Inspired the Classic Children's Tales* by Marta McDowell. The Green Thumb Book Club meets on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 1:30 pm in the conference room at the extension office. All are welcome to join in the discussion.



# Seasonal Bites: 2 MG Favorites for Dinner and Dessert



Briana Etie  
GCMG 2017

Most of us are preparing our Fall gardens and some of us are still enjoying the bounties from our Spring Gardens. If you put up some squash or berries, I have a couple of recipes for you. One of the Kitchen Team members, Deb Brizendine, prepared this Squash Casserole for our lunch at the Discovery

House. It was a big hit! Lucky us, she shared it. Our next recipe was shared by 2024 Master Gardener, Jamie Hart. She prepared this dessert for one of our monthly meetings. We were impressed at this delicious, easy to prepare dessert. We hope everyone enjoys the recipes of the Galveston County Master Gardeners. We love to share.



## Deb's Southern Squash

From the kitchen of MG Deb Brizendine

### Ingredients

- 6 Tbsp. unsalted butter, divided
- 3 lbs. yellow squash, sliced 1/4-inch thick (about 5 medium squash)
- 1 medium-size yellow onion, chopped
- 2 tsp. salt, divided
- 2 large eggs, slightly beaten
- 1 (8-oz.) container of sour cream
- 8 oz. shredded Colby jack cheese
- 4 oz. shredded Swiss, Gruyere or Gouda cheese,
- 1/2 cup of mayonnaise
- 2 tsp. chopped fresh thyme or 1 tsp. of dried thyme
- 1/2 tsp. black pepper
- 2 sleeves of coarsely crushed buttery crackers
- 2 oz. of shredded or grated Parmesan cheese

### Directions

Preheat oven to 350°F. Butter an 11- x 7-inch baking dish. Melt 3 tablespoons of the butter in a large skillet over medium-high. Add squash, onion, and 1 teaspoon of the salt; cook, stirring often, until the center of squash is just tender and liquid has evaporated, about 10 minutes. Transfer mixture to a colander set over a bowl. Drain 5 minutes; discard any liquid.

Stir together eggs, sour cream, cheeses, mayonnaise, thyme, pepper, and remaining 1 teaspoon salt in a large bowl. Gently fold in squash mixture. Spoon it into the baking dish.

Microwave the remaining 3 tablespoons of butter in a medium-size bowl on HIGH until melted, about 25 seconds. Toss together crackers, Parmesan cheese, and melted butter until combined.

Sprinkle prepared cracker topping over casserole and bake until golden brown, about 20 minutes.



## Jamie's Summer Berry Pastries

From the kitchen of MG Jamie Hart

### Ingredients

- 1 package of puff pastry sheets
- 1 24 oz tub of no bake cheesecake filling
- 1 8 oz. tub of extra creamy whipped topping
- 1 cup of summer berries, blackberries and blueberries

### Directions

Preheat oven to 400 degrees  
Cut pastry into equal squares and place in greased shallow cupcake tins  
Bake as directed for light golden-brown pastry  
Allow them to cool, while mixing cheesecake filling and whipped topping  
Fill the pastries with a dollop of the cheesecake mixture.  
Top with fresh berries and garnish with mint or basil



# Annual Fish Fry Held



Extension Agent Boone Holladay, Kevin Lancon and Sue Bain introduced the programs.



MGs Becky Jaschek and Lynn Slaton present a safety program.



The cooking team



Shelly Scimeca, Class of 2024, gets her certification



All photos by MGs Karolyn Gephart and Judy Anderson



# Horticulture

## September Events

### T-Bud Grafting

9/6/25 9:00am - 11:00am

#### Gulf Coast Gardening Seminar

Hands-on workshop for t-bud grafting. Explore methods used on peach, plum, apple, and other fruit trees. Limited to 20 persons.

To register, visit: <https://txmg.org/galveston/events/month/2025-09/>



### Growing Strawberries

9/6/25 1:00pm - 3:00pm

#### Gulf Coast Gardening Seminar

Learn what types of strawberries grown in Texas are best for the Gulf Coast. Discussion will include plugs vs. bare root, growing methods and common pests.

To register, visit: <https://txmg.org/galveston/events/month/2025-09/>

### Backyard Composting

9/20/25 9:00am - 11:00am

#### Gulf Coast Gardening Seminar

Learn how to turn yard waste and kitchen scraps into a valuable addition to your soil. Discussion will include the science behind composting, compostable materials, and the various composting methods.

To register, visit: <https://txmg.org/galveston/events/month/2025-09/>



### Open Public Garden Days

Every Thursday, 9:00am - 11:00am (excludes holidays)

#### Gulf Coast Gardening Seminar

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

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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

## October Events

### Crafting with Herbs

10/4/25 9:00am - 11:00am

#### Gulf Coast Gardening Seminar

Hands-on workshop instructs participants how to use herbs to create various hand-made crafts. These handmade crafts offer a variety of interesting and delightful uses such as gift-giving or for hobby.

To register, visit: <https://txmg.org/galveston/events/month/2025-10/>



### Plumeria Care in Winter

10/4/25 1:00pm - 3:00pm

#### Gulf Coast Gardening Seminar

Learn how to cultivate and care for plumeria during the winter months in the Gulf Coast area. These techniques will help to ensure healthy trees and continual production of breathtaking flowers.

To register, visit: <https://txmg.org/galveston/events/month/2025-10/>



### 4th Annual Fall Festival & Plant Sale

Saturday, 9:00am - 2:00pm

#### Discovery Garden in Carbide Park

Fun, food and discovery. Offering garden tours and garden presentations, Extension program booths, youth activities, plant sale, gardening questions, and more!

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



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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/>

5/13/2025	MGA May Mtg: Graduation & Awards Ceremony	Boone Holladay, Kevin Lancon, Sue Bain	1.00	72
5/15/2025	Lunch & Learn - Paprika Pepper Trial Review	Donna Merritt	0.50	32
5/21/2025	TMG Search for Excellence Virtual Awards Ceremony	Jayla Fry	1.00	
5/22/2025	Lunch & Learn - Bug Eyes (insects)	Hedy Wolpa	0.50	24
5/29/2025	Lunch & Learn - Safety Review/ Chemical Shed	Lynne Slaton	0.50	32
6/5/2025	GCMGA Board of Directors Meeting	GCMGA BOD	1.50	14
6/14/2025	Successful Container Gardening	Karolyn Gephart, Kaye Corey	2.00	14
6/19/2025	Lunch & Learn - Epiphytes	Jamie Hart	0.50	40
6/26/2025	Lunch & Learn - Cucuzza Squash	Bobbie Ivey, Roxann Kriticos	0.50	42
6/28/2025	Be a Superstar w/ Woody Shrubs & Trees	Briana Etie	2.00	5
6/28/2025	Be a Superstar w/ Specialty Plants	Steve Holliday, Karen Nelson	2.00	3
7/12/2025	Amazing Succulent Plants	Patricia Martin	2.00	3
7/12/2025	Tropical Hibiscus	Marti Graves	2.00	7
7/15/2025	MGA July Mtg: Fish Fry & Membership Updates	Kevin Lancon, Sue Bain	1.50	54
7/17/2025	Lunch & Learn - Compost Composition	John Ely	0.50	40
7/24/2025	Lunch & Learn - Tomato Root System	Ira Gervias	0.50	40
7/28/2025	Herbs for the Health of It	Donna Merritt, Briana Etie	2.00	48
7/31/2025	Lunch & Learn - Heat Exhaustion	Lynne Slaton, Mark Dickason	0.50	34

## 2025 Recertification Hours for MGs

**Total CEUs (Hours) 69.75**

Last Updated: July 31, 2025

MG Only Activities (# of MGs)

1363

**Reminder: In order to maintain your status as a certified Texas Master Gardener, each year you must complete a minimum of 10 hours continuing education, as well as 20 service hours. Additionally, those hours must be reported through the online Volunteer Management System or other means.**

GCMGs who want to see any hours listed prior to May 13, 2025 should check the Educational Hours for Recertification located in the Members Only section of the website [www.txmg.org/galveston](http://www.txmg.org/galveston)



Tina Woods and Emil Woods busy at work in the Discovery Garden MG Tom Fountain



Phil Starks in the Discovery Garden MG Tom Fountain

Galveston County Master Gardener

# 4th Annual Fall Festival and Plant Sale

**SATURDAY** **18** **OCTOBER**

9:00 am to 2:00 pm



## ACTIVITIES

- Galveston County Extension Educational Booths
- Garden Presentations
- Children's Activities
- Plant Sale
- Food
- Ask A Master Gardener
- Antique Tractors by Bluebonnet Antique Tractor Club

## PUMPKIN CARVING CONTEST

It's time to show off your pumpkin skills - Paint, Carve, Decorate, be Creative

PRIZES AWARDED FOR  
Scariest - Prettiest -  
Most Creative -  
People's Choice



## PLANT SALE

- Tomatoes
- Fall Vegetables
- Herbs
- Snaptinis
- MG Grown Plants
- Bulbs
- Crafts
- Tomato Cages
- Compost/Fertilizer

People's Choice Award  
Jimbo's Gift Certificate

**JIMBO'S NURSERY**  
EST 1975  
Family Owned Nursery & Landscaping

15019 8th Street West  
Santa Fe, TX 77517  
409-925-6933

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# Judy's Corner: Galveston County Monthly Meetings



Judy Anderson  
GCMG 2012

## September

September finds the Galveston County Master Gardeners visiting Carothers Community Gardens in Seabrook located east of Maas Nursery and west of Pine Gully Park. Parking for the visit will be in the Pine Gully parking area next to the entrance. MGs Jesse Jones and Nemo Jackson are the garden managers and will be hosting the visit. The garden is a community garden for the Seabrook neighborhood that welcomes seniors, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, families and individuals to join in the gardening experience. A new greenhouse is currently under construction, with a composting station nearby. Many of the gardening practices of the GCMG are utilized at Carothers. Jesse and Nemo will lead tours of the garden and provide more information about their activities.

After touring the garden, a self-pay dinner is planned at Tookie's Seafood in Seabrook. We will be ordering from the menu, and it can be viewed at [www.tookieseafood.com](http://www.tookieseafood.com). We will be meeting in the Treehouse Room that will be reserved for the GCMG.

To provide an estimate of attendance for both events, an RSVP will be included in the invitation. A visit to Maas Nursery prior to the garden visit could enhance the visit.



## October

October will bring cooler temperatures and a return to Central Standard Time. MG Pam and Darrell Hunter will be hosting the final backyard meeting at their home in Hitchcock. They enjoy entertaining and will welcome the Master Gardeners for an evening at their rural retreat. Plan on a relaxing visit with friends with no weeding, no moving plants, and no aches and pains.

All photo by MG Judy Anderson



# Galveston County 2025 Monthly Meetings

September, 9 PM

October 14 PM

November 10, lunch

December, 9 PM

Caruthers Garden and Dinner in Seabrook

Backyard with MG Pam Hunter and potluck

Annual Meeting and potluck

Holiday Party hosted by

Mikey and Allen Isbell