

TEXAS SUPERSTAR ISSUE

GULF COAST *Gardening*

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TEXAS A&M
AGRILIFE
EXTENSION

GALVESTON COUNTY

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

A New Year & a New Focus

We recently completed our yearly planning process and we have some exciting projects and areas that we intend to focus on in 2026 and beyond. One of our most exciting projects are the Texas Superstar® exhibits in the Discovery Garden. The Texas Superstar program is a collaborative effort between Texas A&M AgriLife Research, the AgriLife Extension Service, and the Texas Department of Agriculture, promoting tough, reliable plants that perform well in Texas conditions. We have highlighted this wonderful program, and we have many more ideas that we want to implement.

Going forward we intend to further develop a Texas Superstar walking trail throughout our Discovery Garden, recognizing the Texas Superstar plants and the program itself, including interpretive signage, plant signage, maps and other educational content. Additionally, we have new programs including seminars and of course this edition of Gulf Coast Gardening, featuring the Texas Superstar program and many of the Texas Superstar plants.

I hope you enjoy this issue and invite you visit our web site at <https://txmg.org/galveston>, our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/galvcountrymg/> and our new Instagram page at <https://www.instagram.com/galvcomaster-gardeners/> for more information of upcoming events and activities. We also thank you for supporting the Galveston County Master Gardeners and hope to see you soon.

Kevin Lancon



TSS Pride of Barbados Mary Kennedy



MG Carolyn Gephart
Editor,
Gulf Coast Gardening

Grow & Bloom in the New Year

It's a new year with a fresh calendar to fill in gardening events and opportunities. Take a tour of the Discovery Garden and walk the Texas Superstar Trail. How many TSS plants will you see? When you enter Carbide Park on your way to the Discovery Garden, notice the TSS Pride of Barbados planted to welcome you. The posted photo is the crew who planted them and made the arrangement a welcoming site. Volunteers include Extension Agent-Horticulture Boone Holladay and MGs Julie Massey, Alice Rodgers and Phil Haught. Another new site had quite a few MG volunteers recreating what once was a water feature (with high maintenance cleaning and weeding) into a dry creek bed. See the amazing redo in front of the extension office (and read all about the work on page 26). Find beauty in three rose articles and a new landscape plant of the month article on camellias by MG Stacey Phillips. MG Jamie Hart will be doing the What's Blooming in My Garden for 2026 after its inaugural year of 2025 by MG Linda Steber. Did I mention the issue is full of wonderful information on Texas Superstar plants? With spring around the corner, planning can begin for putting some Texas tough

plants in your landscape. I could go on and on... but better to let you turn the pages and see the wonderful gardening information to start the new year right!

Karoly Gephart



"Crew" who planted Pride of Barbados at park entry MG Denise Franke

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Texas Superstar identification MG Briana Etie



Belinda's Dream rose at the pergola GCMG Database



Intern at broccoli trial bed MG Ira Gervais



Cover photo of beautyberry by MG Stacy Mills



Contact Us

Extension Office

281.309.5065

txmg.org/galveston/gcmga_hotline/

Gardening Help Desk

281.309.5061

Speakers Bureau

txmg.org/galveston/speakers-bureau

and

gcmg.speakersbureau@gmail.com

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Texas Superstars: Purpose and History



Briana Etie
GCMG 2017

The Texas Superstar® program is a marketing assistance initiative that focuses on promoting plant varieties with demonstrated performance in most regions of Texas.

This program began as regional marketing promotions during the 1980s in the San Antonio area by Dr. Jerry Parsons. In the beginning, it was a partnership between Texas A&M

University Agriculture Program and the ornamental plant industry in Texas. The Coordinated Educational and Marketing Assistance Program (CEMAP), as it was named in the 1990s, with close cooperation of AgriLife Extension research and teaching personnel and members of the ornamental industry became a continued success. In 1989, the first statewide marketing promotion was accomplished featuring the Texas bluebonnet.

In 1997, the Executive Board was formed and introduced the term Texas Superstar. All plant promotions were retroactively designated as Texas Superstar plants. The logo was created, trademarked, and registered with rights assigned to the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station, which is now known as Texas AgriLife Research.

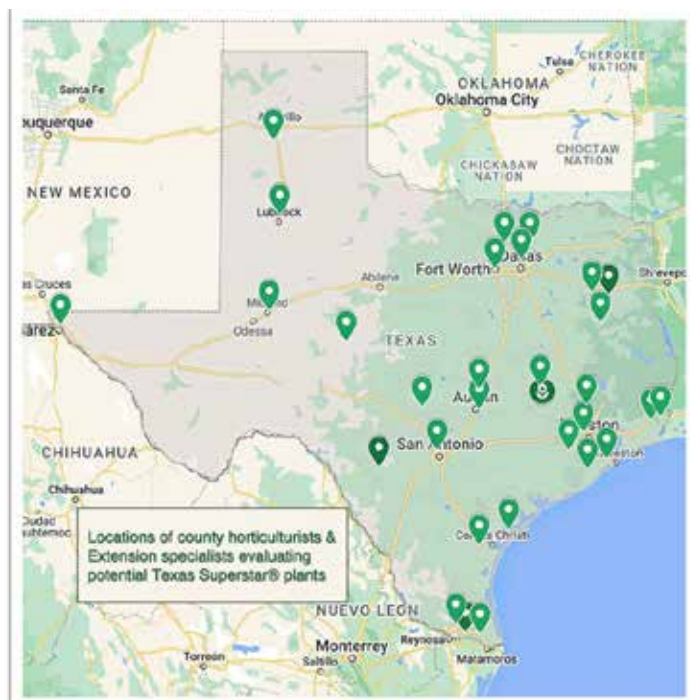
The Texas Superstar Executive Board is a group of horticulturalists connected with Texas A&M AgriLife Research, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, and Texas Tech University. The current Executive Board consists of members Greg Grant (Tyler), Tim Davis and Mike Arnold (College Station), Dr. Larry Stein (Uvalde), David Rodriguez (San Antonio), Paul Winski (Houston), Dan Lineberger (Emeritus), Dr. Brent Pemberton (Retired), Russ Plowman and Cynthia McKenny (Texas Tech University).

The Executive Board selects plants to highlight based on observations from demonstration trials statewide, occasionally considering recommendations from university horticulturists in other southern states.

Employees and faculty at Texas A&M University, Texas A&M AgriLife, Texas Tech University, along with county AgriLife Extension horticulturists, the Texas Nursery and Landscape Association, and the Texas Department of Agriculture, collaborate in evaluating the adaptability of potential Texas Superstar plants. Each candidate must demonstrate enduring superior performance, including heat and drought tolerance and resistance to common pests and diseases, across the state's tough and varied ecoregions. It must undergo several years of rigorous field trials. During testing, plants receive no pesti-

cides to ensure they are genuinely "Texas-tough." They must exhibit strong resistance to common pests and diseases, with deer resistance considered a bonus. The plants should be beautiful and useful to the average consumer for a variety of landscape uses. They must be easy to propagate and mass-produced in sufficient numbers to meet the consumer demand generated by the program. Finally, each plant should also be attractive in the sales container to consumers.

Texas Superstar plants are selected based on how well they perform during the extensive trials across our Texas ecoregions. Horticultural professionals growing these plants share reports on their results including Field Day results.



texasuperstar.com

These are locations of county horticulturists and Extension specialists that are evaluating potential Texas Superstar plants. The same plants are evaluated in the same season in all of these locations across Texas.

The 2025 East Texas Plant Trials and Horticulture Field Day in the city of Overton showcased over 200 varieties of annual, perennial and vegetable plants cultivated for growers, retailers, landscapers and home gardeners. More than 60 plants that thrive in the Houston area were on display in Brookshire.

The Field Day can be a good indicator as to how plants might look at this time of year, but the data is collected between planting and frost. The trials are about performance over the entire season.

“...extensive trials across our ecoregions.”



The brochure includes raindrop symbols to denote the level of water use that can be expected for a particular plant with the emphasis in choosing drought-tolerant plants. The following are my tips for watering those plants that were identified as such.

Low watering for plants is for those adapted to live through times of water scarcity without drastically changing the way they look. Watering is still necessary; let the substrate dry thoroughly between deep waterings.

Moderate “Medium” amount means wait for the top layer of soil to dry out before giving the plant more water.

High amount for plants that require “Keep Moist” but not water-logged or oversaturated. The roots still need access to air. A drought-tolerant plant can survive when the water is cut off. It doesn’t have to look good; it may survive by losing all its leaves, going dormant, and generally looking terrible in the garden.

Perennial Plants (Perennial means “through the years”) can live longer, more than 2 years.

Per-Annual Plants are tropical perennials used as annuals; can be perennials in our area.

Woody Shrubs—nine shrubs listed in this section.

Trees—seven trees listed in this section.

Specialty Plants are mainly fruit, vegetable, and herb plants.

For more than 20 years the Texas Superstar program has provided marketing assistance to the nursery industry by promoting the use of well adapted landscape plants with proven performance in most regions of Texas.

However, the future of the program is dependent on the continuing growth and strength of these partnerships. The partnerships with the Texas Nursery and Landscape Association continue to “spread the word” about the latest selections by providing information through their monthly publication and at the Growers Expo. The Texas Department of Agriculture through its Go Texan program provides beautiful full-color brochures of the Texas Superstar plants to the public and to retailers by request. The use of the brochure as an educational tool continues to raise awareness of this program.



A Texas Superstar plant can withstand drought but will possibly not look good at that time. *Mavink.com*



Texas Superstar website and brochure are divided into six sections:

Annual Plants usually complete their life cycle in one year.



According to announcements from AgriLife Today, the 2025 Texas Superstar additions are Mexican mint marigold (*Tagetes lucida*), viola (*Viola odorata*), Southern Sensation seedless grape (*Vitis* x ‘Southern Sensation’), and American beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*).

Reference:

<https://agrilifetoday.tamu.edu/lawn-garden/>

Creation of the Texas Superstar Trail/Walking Tour



Sue Bain
GCMG 2018

In November 2022, MG Karen Nelson and I attended the Texas Superstar® Advanced Training in Tyler. The powerhouse instructors were Greg Grant, Smith County Extension Agent-Horticulture, Tyler; David Rodriguez, Bexar County Extension Agent-Horticulture, San Antonio; and Dr. Larry Stein, Associate Department Head-Extension and Extension Specialist, Uvalde. We received two days of classroom instruction learning about the history and origin of Texas Superstars Program and the plants that have that designation. The third day, Greg Grant gave the class a tour of the Tyler Botanical Garden at the Tyler Rose Garden. The Tyler Master Gardeners are caretakers of four areas as demonstration gardens: The Heritage Garden known for their Tyler roses, the Shade Garden, the IDEA Garden and the Sunshine Garden. The IDEA (Innovate, Demonstrate, Educate and Apply) Garden included Texas Superstar plants.

Karen and I were inspired and immediately started to plan our project for our Advanced Training Certification on the road home from Tyler. If Tyler has a garden that includes Texas Superstars, why can't we include Texas Superstars in our Discovery Garden? That's when we came up with idea to have a Self-Guided Walking Tour.

The first thing we did was to walk through the Discovery Garden, identify plants that were Texas Superstars and take inventory. We were amazed and pleased that we had numerous plants that were already located in the Pergola, Earth Kind® garden and the Pollinator Habitat garden. Our goal became to expand the number of plants and areas of the garden. We wrote a proposal to include 10 areas of the Discovery Garden with an interpretive sign to begin the trail. After research and visiting sign shops, we came up with the idea to place signs of the state in the beds that have Texas Superstar plants. Each Texas Superstar plant in that bed would have a label with the common and scientific name with a gold star.

We met with all the Discovery team leads to share our knowledge of Texas Superstars and the plan to expand in all areas. Each team lead received a Texas Superstar booklet as a reference to consider what to plant. Soon after, Karen and I developed the Texas Superstar team. Each team member was assigned to an area and to connect with the Discovery Garden team lead to monitor Texas Superstar inventory and to encourage more plants to be planted.

The Superstar Team are superstars! They make sure all areas have a Texas sign and the plants have labels and stars. They have worked together in making six PowerPoint presentations as a Texas Superstar educational series and have presented

them to the public. After each presentation, the attendees are given a guided tour

in the Discovery Garden of the designated areas with Texas Superstar plants. The team is also involved in writing Texas Superstar of the Month articles for Gulf Coast Gardening issues. Our passionate team includes Bettye Vogler, Briana Etie, Hazel Lampton, Hedy Wolpa, Jamie Hart, Judy Anderson, Linda Crowston, Patty McElhany, Stacy Mills, Vickie Hall, Steve Holliday, Karen Nelson, Trish McDaniel, and Sue Bain.

An interpretive sign was designed and purchased to be placed in the Discovery Garden. This sign provides information and examples of Texas



The new interpretive sign MG Sue Bain

“...we planned to expand in all areas”

Superstars, as well as the description of the walking tour and the area beds. When the sign was made, the following beds were listed: Pergola, Vegetable Bed, Herb Bed, Rain Garden, Pollinator Habitat, Earth Kind®, Serenity, Orchard, Tree Area, and Grapevine. Once the walking trail and the interpretive sign are installed, the Texas Superstar Trail will be official, and the Discovery Garden map will be updated to show the trail for visitors.

There are plants that are grown seasonally such as herbs, vegetables and annuals, and there are plants that grow all year round such as perennials, woody shrubs, and trees. The following plants will give you an idea of what you can see on the Texas Superstar Trail during their season.

Herbs/Vegetables/ Specialty Plants:

Balsamic Blooms Basil (*Ocimum hybrid* ‘Balsamic Blooms’)

Celebrity tomato (*Solanum lycopersicum* ‘Celebrity’)

Dwarf Cherry Surprise (*Solanum lycopersicum* ‘Dwarf Cherry Surprise’)

Green Magic broccoli (*Brassica oleracea* ‘Green Magic’)

Gorizia rosemary ‘Barbecue Skewers’ (*Salvia rosmarinus* ‘Gorizia’)

NuMex Twilight ornamental pepper (*Capsicum frutescens* ‘NuMex Twilight’)

Ruby Crush tomato (*Solanum lycopersicum* ‘Ruby Crush’)

Southern Sensation seedless grape (*Vitis* x ‘Southern Sensation’)

Tycoon tomato (*Solanum lycopersicum* ‘Tycoon’)

Victoria red grape (*Vitis species* ‘Victoria Red’)

Annuals: Life cycle that lasts for one year

Angelonia Serena™ Series (*Angelonia angustifolia* ‘Serena’)

Blue Daze (*Evolvulus glomeratus*)

Texas bluebonnets (*Lupinus texensis*)

Pentas (*Pentas lanceolata*)

Perennials: Lives more than two years

Dwarf Mexican petunia (*Ruelia brittoniana*)

Flare perennial hibiscus (*Hibiscus* x ‘Pink Flare’ and ‘Peppermint Flare’)

Henry Duelberg salvia (*Salvia farinacea* ‘Henry Duelberg’)



Gold stars are placed by the plants MG Sue Bain



The Texas sign placed by the plants MG Vicki Blythe

“Come see the Texas tough plants”

Lindheimer Muhly grass (*Muhlenbergia lindheimeri*)

Mexican Bush sage (*Salvia leucantha*)

Mexican Mint marigold (*Tagetes lucida*)

Mystic Spires Blue salvia (*Salvia longispicata* x *farinacea* ‘Mystic Spires Blue’)

Red Yucca (*Hesperaloe parviflora*)

Princess Caroline Napier grass (*Pennisetum* x ‘Princess Caroline’)

Tangerine Beauty Crossvine (*Bignonia capreolata* ‘Tangerine Beauty’)

Turk’s Cap (*Malvaviscus arboreus* var. *drummondii*)

Per-Annuals: Tropical perennials used as annuals

Firebush (*Hamelia patens*)

Pride of Barbados (*Caesalpinia pulcherrima*)

Thyrallis (*Galphimia glauca*)

Woody Shrubs: Perennial woody shrubs with stems above ground

American beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*)

Belinda’s Dream rose (*Rosa hybrida* ‘Belinda’s Dream’)

Blue Angel Althea (*Hibiscus syriacus* ‘Greta’)

Gold Star Esperanza (*Tecoma stans*)

Rock rose (*Pavonia lasiopetala*)

Vitex (*Vitex agnus-castus*)

Yellow rose. (*Rosa* ‘Nacogdoches’)

Trees: Woody perennial plant that has one stem/trunk and grows with height of lateral branches that have distance from the ground

Possum Haw Deciduous holly (*Ilex decidua*)

Come join us on the Texas Superstar Trail and see the Texas tough plants. The Discovery Garden is open to the public on Thursdays from 9 to 11 am. Enjoy the self-guided tour or ask for a Texas Superstar team member for a tour.

References:

<https://txmgsc.org>

www.texassuperstar.com



The trail takes viewers throughout the garden MG Sue Bain



The Texas sign placed by the plants MG Vicki Blythe

Texas Superstar Garden Favorite: Blue Daze



Hedy Wolpa
GCMG 2018

Its remarkable blue color, dainty flowers, and exceptional hardiness have made Blue Daze (*Evolvulus glomeratus*) a popular landscape plant since it was added to the Texas Superstar® list. Also known as Dwarf Morning Glory, Hawaiian Blue Eyes, or Brazilian Dwarf Morning Glory, it blooms prolifically from late spring throughout the heat of our long summers. Tolerating salt air and sandy soil conditions, Blue Daze is a garden favorite along the Gulf Coast.

Dr. Brent Pemberton of Texas A&M AgriLife Research, spoke with Adam Russell of *AgriLife Today* in 2020 about the introduction of Blue Daze as a Texas Superstar, stating that it “meets qualifications for a superstar because it is easy to propagate, performs well throughout the state, is widely available, and reasonably priced.”

Blue Daze can be grown as an annual in containers or as an herbaceous perennial in mass landscape plantings. But note, a hard freeze could possibly kill the plants. Growing 9 to 18 inches tall, it can spread to 36 inches wide, with some varieties developing a bushy profile. Leaves are oval shaped, silvery green, and can be smooth or textured with a velvety touch.

This plant is sun-loving, blooming thickly and profusely in USDA grow zones 9-13. It can be shade tolerant but will produce fewer flowers in less sunny locations. It's most beloved by gardeners because of its brilliant blue, funnel-shaped flowers. Flowers in shades of blue are less prevalent in the plant kingdom. The center of Blue Daze flowers, which are about 1/2 to 1-inch wide, is white. Flowers benefit from a regular fertilization schedule during the long flowering period. It needs 6 to 8 hours of sunshine daily; the blooms close at night and on cloudy days.



GCMG Database



GCMG Database

Originating in South America, the subtropical Blue Daze is drought tolerant once established. It is also disease tolerant, but very wet soil conditions may contribute to fungal disease. Plant Blue Daze in sandy, well-draining soil, although it will also perform in soil with low nutrient quality. You can easily propagate Blue Daze from stem cuttings. The cuttings can be grown indoors over winter and planted outdoors in spring. For established plants in ground, the stems running along the soil will easily root and make new plants. It will spread as ground cover or grow into mounding clumps, all the while producing gorgeous blue eye-candy for you. When planting more than one Blue Daze in any given area, the recommended spacing between plants is 18 to 24 inches.

Pollinating insects such as bees, wasps, flies, and butterflies are attracted to Blue Daze. The plant's flower structure consists of fused, funnel-like petals that insects with long tongues (proboscis) can probe for nectar. Insects see color on the ultra-violet end of the spectrum, unlike humans, and it's probable that nectar guides do appear on Blue Daze petals to aid in locating nectar.

Try Blue Daze as a border plant, a lush ground cover, or as a “spiller” in a mixed container.

As Dr. Pemberton has pointed out, “The combination of it being a prolific performer and its blue color are attributes that put Blue Daze over the top for a lot of gardeners and landscapers.”

References:

Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center- <https://www.wildflower.org>
Texas Superstars <https://texassuperstar.com>
AgriLife today <https://agrilifetoday.tamu.edu/2020/05/08/blue-daze-named-texas-superstar/>

Texas Superstar: Tough, Reliable Red Yucca



Judy Anderson
GCMG 2014

Texas Superstars are tough reliable plants that can be grown successfully throughout the state. Red yucca was selected as a Texas Superstar® in 2022. The red yucca (*Hesperaloe parviflora*) is a hardy evergreen that can grow from USDA zones 7 to 13, is drought tolerant after being established, does not need a feeding schedule, nor does it need regular pruning. *Parviflora* in botanical terms means small flowers. It is native in the Southwest United States and Northern Mexico and while not a true yucca, belonging to a different genus *Hesperaloe*, it is associated taxonomically within the same family of plants, the Asparagaceae.

Red yuccas are often seen in public places. They are extremely popular with state and local entities for use along streets and highways. Commercial landscape designers frequently use this plant in their landscaping for shopping centers and businesses. They can be used as a feature plant or grouped in mass plantings. Why is this plant so popular in high visibility areas? They don't need irrigation, need little maintenance, and are evergreen with a long bloom season. In addition, they have an open base that allows easy visibility around streets. I have seen medians in busy roads planted with native grass. Later, the grass was removed and replanted with red yucca plants. I asked why and was told the red yuccas are not as dense as the grasses which caused a visual safety issue, plus the yuccas provide blooms for a longer time.

Homeowners in the Gulf Coast area may not be using the red yucca as much as the residents in the western part of the state,

but that could be changing. As more gardeners are looking for low maintenance landscaping, the red yucca may be the answer. When thinking about companion plants for the red yucca, the Russian sage (*Salvia yangii*) and Mexican bush sage (*Salvia leucantha*) are good selections. Native grasses and xeriscape plants may be the most popular companion plants for the red yucca. A traditional hedge and annuals can also be considered, just remember appropriate spacing and water considerations.

With this plant, spacing is a priority when planting as a mass or with other companion plants. Two to three feet of space on all sides should be allowed. These plants lose their beauty when crowded with over-lapping leaves. The appearance of the plant is enhanced when the narrow leaves are allowed to fully arch from the trunk outward, with the white fibrous threads along the leaves adding texture and the coral pink bloom spires reaching upward. The gray green color of the plant is adaptable to many planting combinations. Red yuccas have 3 to 5 foot bloom stalks during the blooming season. When introducing the red yucca as a 2022 Texas Superstar, Greg Grant, [Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service](#) horticulturist, Smith County, described the blooms "as a natural fireworks display."



Fresh seed pods MG Judy Anderson



Roadside landscaping MG Judy Anderson

“...welcome addition to a pollinator garden”

The plant is called red yucca, but those with the true color red are rare. Most of the blooms are coral with yellow blooming plants available. The bloom season is throughout the summer with the 3-5 feet long shoots floating in the hot breeze. The plants are often described as architectural. They adapt to most types of soil and conditions. Good drainage is important. The yearly maintenance needed for the red yucca is removing the spent blooms and tidying up any dead leaves after winter. The easiest way to destroy a red yucca is to overwater it. Use in a variety of landscapes with bark mulch, pea gravel, or crushed granite. When paired with rocks, the red yucca can make a dramatic splash.

When working with the red yucca, safety concerns you would need for working with true yuccas and cacti are not necessary. There are no sharp barbs, hooks, or thorns, but it is always good to be safe with gloves, long sleeves, and safety glasses.

The red yucca is a welcome addition to a pollinator garden because it is a magnet for hummingbirds. However, the plant can be irritating to cats and dogs if digested.

Propagation is through the production of bright green seed pods on the bloom stalk. Leave the seed pods attached until dry when flat, black seeds appear for harvest or let them disperse naturally. The plants can also be separated into clumps.

The red yucca is available at most nurseries and garden centers. The true darker red yucca and the yellow blooming yucca are more difficult to find. A dwarf variety, Brakelights®, (*Hesperaloe parviflora*) is available. Named for offering brakelight-red blooms, this smaller yucca works well in containers, rock gardens, and mass plantings.



A yellow blooming variety MG Judy Anderson

Water requirements: Drought tolerant after it is established

Light: Full sun

Width: 4 feet

Height: 2 to 3 feet with bloom shoots up to 5 feet

Soil requirements: Tolerant of most soils but needs to be well drained

Perennial: Evergreen

Comments: Good for mass plantings or as a feature plant

Consider a red yucca to fit easily into your landscape.

References:

Russell, Adam. “Red yucca is latest Texas Superstar.” *Agrilife Today*. 26 May 2022. agrilifetoday.tamu.edu/2022/05/26/red-yucca-is-latest-texas-superstar/

Schalau, Jeff. “Red Yucca.” *University of Arizona Cooperative Extension*. 7 February 2024. <https://extension.arizona.edu>



Home landscape use MG Judy Anderson



Home landscape use MG Judy Anderson

Pentas: A Texas Superstar Pollinator Plant



Jamie Hart
GCMG 2023

Pentas are the ideal plant for Texas gardeners. Pentas are also known as Egyptian Star Cluster (*Pentas lanceolata*). They are vibrant, heat-loving annuals for our zone 9b, but considered perennials in zone 10 and 11. In coastal areas or the southern parts of Texas, they can sometimes overwinter as tender perennials, but most gardeners grow them as annuals. They are heat and drought tolerant once established, making them a most excellent choice for a low-maintenance landscape. They also resist most common pests and diseases, so no need to use chemicals. They earned the honored title of Texas Superstar® plants on April 23, 2020.

It is said that pink and deep pink perform the best, but I have had great success with all colors and varieties. The cultivar 'Butterfly Deep Pink' was first to be promoted a Texas Superstar®, and the varieties in the taller Butterfly series are very popular as they will get up to 24 inches tall. I have some now that are topping out at 26 inches. They will thrive all summer long and will continue to bloom late into fall. I will often cut them back in November and pot them to store in the greenhouse, then replant in the spring.

Once established pentas really need only minimal care. To grow them successfully, choose a location with full sun. They need at least six hours of direct sun a day to bloom their best. They prefer well-drained soil and like a well-balanced fertilizer. Pentas are one of my must haves in the garden. The flowers are clusters of small star-shaped flowers that make up huge showy, nonstop blooms. They come in shades of red, pink, lavender and white. The clusters sit on top of lush green foliage and are huge pollinator and hummingbird attractors. This alone makes them the perfect plants to have in a pollinator garden. I use them to border beds as they form a perfect rounded, bushy shape. They are also great stand-alone plants or in pots as thrillers. When planted in mass they are showstoppers and when mixed with other annuals like lantana and zinnias they make bold impacts ecologically. Besides their beauty, pentas offer edu-

cational and environmental benefits. Although pentas are not native to us they are such great pollinator plants, they provide an opportunity to teach the public about the importance of nectar plants for pollinators and hummingbirds. Many public gardens and schools have pentas in their gardens just for this reason. They are native to tropical East Africa and the Arabian Peninsula.

Pentas are a great choice for the Texas Superstar status. They are beautiful, resilient, easy to care for, and have great ecological value. Whether planted in a backyard bed, a container on a porch, or a community garden, pentas bring star power to our Texas landscapes and make us look good doing it. They make a good versatile choice for gardeners of all skill levels.

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Belogh, Anne. "How to Grow and Care for Pentas (Egyptian Star Flower)." *Garden Design*. 2025. <https://www.gardensign.com/annuals/pentas.html>

Dwyer, Mark. "Pentas – Egyptian Starcluster." *Rotary Botanical Gardens Horticulture Blog*. 8 January 2016. <https://rotarygardens.blogspot.com/2016/01/pentas-egyptian-starcluster.html>

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Pentas MG Jamie Hart



Grouping colors showcases pentas MG Jamie Hart

Pride of Barbados: Beautiful and Versatile



Vicki Hall
GCMG 2023

Pride of Barbados (*Caesalpinia pulcherrima*), meaning “very pretty,” is commonly also referred to as peacock flower, Mexican bird of paradise, Barbados flower fence, dwarf poinciana, and dwarf flamboyant. Widely known throughout the tropics, it is the national flower of Barbados—an island country in the Caribbean Sea—with historical records dating back to 1657. The flower appears on the country’s Coat of Arms, symbolizing “Pride and Industry.”

This plant is both beautiful and versatile: It can be grown as a specimen plant, a large shrub or tree, or even maintained in a container. The flowers are spectacular, with vibrant shades of red and orange, and they are excellent for attracting birds and butterflies. Pride of Barbados is also deer resistant because the leaves, flowers, and seeds are all poisonous. While not highly toxic to humans, the seeds can be poisonous if eaten in large amounts by cats or dogs also.

Although native to Mexico and the Caribbean, Pride of Barbados was first documented by a 17th-century artist in the Dutch colony of Surinam in South America. There, indigenous populations spoke of the use of the peacock flower in their practice of traditional medicine.

In frost free climates, this heat-loving shrub or small tree is considered an evergreen in USDA Plant Hardiness Zones 9-10 and as a returning perennial in Zone 8. It will freeze to the ground each winter in the colder areas, regrowing 5 to 8 feet tall the following spring. Depending on the hardiness zone, it may reach up to 12 feet in height. After winter, Pride of Barbados is one of the last plants to sprout in spring because it thrives in sub-tropical heat. A hot, humid climate with full sun will help it recover quickly, ensuring beautiful spring blooms.



Blooming at the Houston Zoo MG Vickie Hall

Propagation can be done by seeds or cuttings. Seeds must be scarified enough to allow water to penetrate the hard seed coat. Soak the seeds for one hour in warm water, then plant them in well-draining soil about a quarter inch deep. The best time for seed planting in Zones 8-9 is between March and April. Proper scarification and soaking of seeds are both important for growth. It may take 7 to 21 days for them to sprout. Transplant the seedlings once they reach four to six inches tall. Ensure they have several sets of true leaves and the temperature outside is above 68 degrees. In the spring or summer, take a cutting, dip the ends in rooting hormone, plant in a moist, well-drained potting mix and place in a shady spot. Once roots develop, the plant can be moved to a permanent location.

Pride of Barbados was designated a Texas Superstar® plant in Spring 2008. The term Texas Superstar is a registered trademark of Texas A&M AgriLife Research, Texas A&M System. Visit texassuperstar.com for additional details.

As you come to the Master Gardener Association’s Discovery Garden, you’ll see this showy, eye-catcher Pride of Barbados at the entry area of Carbide Park, having been recently planted. More of these beautiful plants are inside the Garden.

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Blooms add pops of color Mary Kennedy

Duranta: A Texas Superstar to Love



Vicki Hall
GCMG 2023

I did not know duranta (*Duranta erecta*) existed until I was offered a cutting at a garden club meeting. That was the first time I saw one and I thought it was so beautiful with those lovely, delicate purple flowers and the contrasting yellow berry. I was told it could grow very large and would need to be pruned regularly, which meant it would probably not fit into my small suburban yard. After becoming a master gardener, I saw a duranta at a monthly meeting location that was perfectly pruned into a single stem tree that resembled a colorful umbrella of green, purple, and yellow. I was in love.

Many cultivated species of duranta are grown as ornamentals, with the most popular being the *Duranta erecta*, commonly known as the Brazilian sky flower, golden dewdrop, or pigeon berry.

Duranta grows quickly into a dense shrub with small glossy leaves. Delicate pale blue to purple flowers are produced in clusters along the branches giving an arching effect as the inflorescence droops. Duranta flowers are tubular and have a light vanilla scent. After the flowers fade, small golden yellow berries appear, each containing several seeds. The duranta's showy flowers and berries are not only a beautiful addition to any garden, but also attracts butterflies and hummingbirds. The leaves and unripened berries of the plant are very toxic, to dogs and cats although song birds eat them with no problem. Durantas bloom from early summer to the first frost in fall.

Since this plant can grow to a height and width of 12-15 feet, pruning should be done to keep this shrub at a manageable



Duranta blooms MG Sue Bain

size. Duranta plants form flowers on new growth so they should be pruned severely in the winter to prepare for the burst of growth and flowers in the spring. As it can be spreading, durantas can be shaped into a weeping shrub or tree. Durantas tolerate sun and shade but bloom best in full sun. They require moderate watering especially in our Texas heat. It is a root hardy perennial in south Texas, zones 9-11, but may be considered an annual or tender perennial in some cooler areas of north Texas, where the plant will grow two to four feet tall and wide and die back to the ground when temperatures drop below freezing. Durantas also do well in salty beach climates.

Durantas are adaptable to most soils, which allows this plant to be grown in containers or in the landscape. It can be used as a border plant, a foundation plant in warm climates, or as a bedding or container plant in cooler areas. Fertilizing is optional and unnecessary, but if using fertilizer, choose a slow-release type to encourage flowering.

Propagation is a great way to overwinter plants if the original specimen is too large to bring indoors. Duranta plants root easily from softwood stem cuttings. During the summer months, take a six-inch cutting from a woody stem and dip the end of the cutting in rooting compound. Plant in a container with well-draining potting mix and keep moist until roots are established or leaves develop.

It is no wonder that the duranta became a Texas Superstar® in 2006. It is a very attractive plant with many uses. It is unique and desirable for most landscapes, consistently performs for consumers, and is pest resistant.

Don't you want one in your garden?

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Texassuperstar.com



Duranta blooms MG Sue Bain

Balsamic Blooms Basil Performs Well in County



Karen Nelson
GCMG 2020



Steve Holliday
GCMG 2022

Balsamic Blooms Basil (*Ocimum hybrid* 'Balsamic Blooms') earned Texas Superstar status in 2017 after three years of field trials around the state. A Texas Superstars must not only "sell itself" but also must perform well for consumers, be easily propagated and widely available. This plant has been successfully grown in the Discovery Garden for the last two years with propagation from cuttings each winter. Seeds have also been collected and will be trialed in by Galveston County Master Gardeners in the spring.

This basil produces long-lasting flowers and leaves at the same time. Interestingly, the leaves and flowers have different flavors; the deep purple bloom has a minty flavor, and the bright green leaves have a sweet basil flavor. The minty purple blooms are perfect on a salad, and the sweet leaves can flavor fresh tomatoes, cooked sauces, or pesto.

Unfortunately, Balsamic Blooms did not become as available as initially expected. Therefore in 2024, Cardinal Basil was



Cluster of blooms Texas AgriLife Extension

named as a substitute Superstar for it. Cardinal Basil resembles Balsamic Blooms in appearance, growth habit and propagation; however, the Cardinal Basil leaves have a mild anise taste while the purple flowers have a spicier taste.

Both are lovely herbs grown not only for edible properties but also for the beautiful mounding growth habit that can grace walkway borders and tomato beds. Both reach 18-24 inches in height and prefer full sun with minimal water and average soil. They are not cold tolerant and require protection in a greenhouse or garage for overwintering. "Starts" can be taken to root over winter to plant in the spring. Propagation is done through cuttings or seed collection. Cardinal Basil seeds are widely available in many retail outlets or online. Cardinal Basil starts are offered often in the Galveston County Master Gardener's regular plant sales. See Balsamic Blooms and many other Texas Superstars in the Discovery Garden at Carbine Park in La Marque. The teaching garden is open to the public on Thursday mornings or by appointment. Texas Superstars are marked with the Texas State Flag and gold stars.



'Balsamic Blooms' basil growing in Discovery Garden MG Karen Nelson

Texas Superstar Tomato Trial



Karen Nelson
GCMG 2020



Steve Holliday
GCMG 2022

The Galveston County Master Gardeners are highlighting Texas Superstar® plants this year. These are plants that have tested well in field trials in diverse locations across Texas over the years. To earn the designation, they must perform well for typical homeowners with minimal chemical inputs needed. Most Texas Superstars® are flowers or ornamentals, but a few are herbs and vegetables. In this article, the focus will be on four Texas Superstar tomato varieties that were grown in a tomato trial program: Celebrity, Tycoon, Ruby Crush and Cherry Surprise.

Celebrity is a consistent top performer in the Discovery Garden and is a hybrid tomato with semi-determinate growth pattern. It matures in 70 days from transplant and is highly disease resistant. The fruit is medium sized 8-10 ounces and good for slicing, in salads, and for using in bruschetta recipes.

Tycoon tomato is a large beefsteak tomato with determinate growth pattern. It matures in 80 days from transplant and is known for heat setting ability. The plant requires support due to bushy and dense growth; it requires pruning leaves for air flow and sun. With a height of 3-4 feet tall and width 2-3 feet, Tycoon is resistant to viruses and nematodes.



'Tycoon' MG Karen Nelson

Ruby Crush is a determinate grape tomato with exceptional high yield and with resistance to pests and viruses. It forms trusses of grape tomatoes that are approximately the size of AAA batteries. The fruit matures 60 days after transplant and would be ideal in a fall garden. This tomato was the champion of the 2021 San Antonio rodeo as the "Rodeo Tomato." It's perfect for use in salsa, roasted for sauces, or eaten raw from the garden

Cherry Surprise or BHN 968 is also a cherry tomato with determinate growth pattern, a high yield, heat setting ability, and resistance to pests. It forms clusters of round cherry tomatoes with sizes one-half inch to three-fourths inches. Its flavor is very sweet, up to 4 times sweeter than regular cherry tomatoes (we snacked on more than a few while harvesting). They mature 69 days from transplant and would be perfect for kids to grow and enjoy. It is also versatile, used in salads, salsas and roasted in sauces.

We field-tested the four Texas Superstar tomato varieties in the Discovery Garden last Spring. The objectives were to determine how well they perform in our hot, humid, raised bed garden with possible insects in La Marque. We obtained seeds online and began growing in January for spring planting. Celebrity and Tycoon are easy to find as starts or seeds in local retail outlets, but the two cherry varieties will require some



'Ruby Crush' MG Karen Nelson

“all lived up to star billing”



'Cherry Surprise' MG Karen Nelson

Web browsing for seeds. Cherry Surprise is also sold as BHN 968, so try searching using that name as well.

On March 6, 2025, we planted 12 plants in a 4x20 foot raised bed. Three plants of each variety were planted. We augmented with Sam's Mix fertilizer and an organic slow-release fertilizer when planting. Sam's Mix, a starter blend of fertilizer created by an emeritus member of Galveston County Master Gardeners, contains all the trace minerals and micronutrients that tomatoes require and is applied only at planting. The Galveston County Master Gardeners produce and sell it at plant sales. Drip irrigation, pine straw mulch and 4-foot cages for support were used. We monitored them weekly for disease, pests, and any other problem/needs. We detected a small infestation of army worms and sprayed twice with BT (*Bacillus thuringiensis*) to control them. No other chemicals were used. The tomato vines were pruned lightly to improve ventilation and keep the bottom leaves off the ground. They began setting fruit at the end of April. Tomatoes were harvested about twice a week as they ripened with their counts and weight recorded for each variety. Only usable tomatoes were counted.

The yield was overwhelming, in fact harvest got ahead of us with many lying on the ground by the end. In all, the 12 plants produced 94.8 pounds of usable fruit. The six cherry



Tomato trial bed MG Karen Nelson

tomato plants produced 36.65 pounds. Celebrity yielded 31.15 pounds, Tycoon yielded 27 pounds, Ruby Crush yielded 20.05 pounds and Cherry Surprise yielded 16.6 pounds. The harvest was shared with local food banks and amongst our volunteers (Cherry Surprise was particularly popular). This is likely an underestimate of their potential productivity since we lost many tomatoes due to infrequent picking, stinkbug damage and gardener snacking.

All four Texas Superstar tomato varieties lived up to their star billing. They were highly productive, easy to grow and quite resistant to most diseases and pests. As good determinants should, they fruited quickly and produced heavy crops over the next month before the extreme heat of July kicked in. Their roots appeared healthy without any signs of nematode knots when we removed them in mid-July. The plants were small enough to work well in our limited garden space.

We plan to continue growing the two cherry superstars and offer them for sale in future plant sales. Check out the Texas Superstar Web Page (texassuperstar.com) for more information on these and other Texas-tested landscaping plants. Also, come visit the Discovery Garden on Thursday mornings to see and learn about all the Texas Superstars growing there; they are marked by a gold star.

Beautyberry Becomes Superstar in 2025



Stacy Mills
GCMG 2022

Drumroll please... introducing the newest Texas Superstar®

The American beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*), also known as French mulberry, sourbush, bunchberry and purple beautyberry, is a deciduous shrub admired for its clusters of vibrant purple berries. It is a Texas native, low maintenance, resilient and reliable shrub, readily available and beautiful.

Zones: Hardy in USDA zones 7-11, tolerating temperatures as low as minus 10 degrees and survives even during extreme Texas freezes.

Height and Width: Typically, 5 to 8 feet tall and wide.

Exposure: Grows best in full sun to partial shade; full sun produces more prolific berry production and more compact growth, while shade results in leggier form.

Soil: Prefers rich sandy, loam and clay soil but is extremely adaptable to a wide range of soil/pH.

Roots: Root spread will be closely equal to height and lies mainly within the top 12 inches of soil.

Water Needs: Young plants need to be watered regularly but is drought tolerant once established. Although they will wilt in extreme heat, it recovers quickly.

Blooms: In May, small, pale pink flowers appear in clusters that give way to magenta fruit in two-inch clusters from August to January. The clusters of vibrant purple berries and glossy, elliptical leaves create an ornamental appeal and a gardener's favorite. It is especially striking with its beautiful, clustered berries on bare winter stems.

Propagation: Propagate by traditional cuttings or germinating fully ripened seeds in pots or flats or scattering them. Birds and deer also disperse the seeds naturally.

Uses: Excellent in shrub borders or informal hedges with mass plantings or for naturalized areas. It is a food source for over forty species of birds, including cardinals, robins, brown thrashers, purple finches, and eastern towhees, as well as wildlife such as armadillos, foxes, opossums, raccoons, and squirrels. Berries are also edible for humans. The nectar-rich flowers attract pollinators.

Fertilizer: DO NOT fertilize. It causes leggy growth

Maintenance: With its low maintenance, prune 12 to 18 inches tall or remove 1/3 of the canes in late winter or early spring.

The shrub blooms on new growth and is suited for hard pruning. Pruning encourages an abundant berry display.

Toxicity: Non-toxic to people, cats and dogs, and the berries are often eaten by birds and small mammals. For humans, moderation is the key as the berries can cause digestive upset if eaten in large quantities.

Fun Facts:

In Greek, the genus name *Callicarpa* means “callos” or beauty and “carpos” or fruit.

The shrub is tolerant of fire.

Benefits:

Natural insect repellent

Leaves contain natural chemical compounds, primarily calli-carpenal and intermedeol, that act as potent insect repellent. Research from the USDA found these extracts can be as effective as DEET against mosquitoes. Historically, people crushed the leaves and placed them in horse harnesses, clothing and animal bedding to repel mosquitoes, flies and ticks.

Berries can be used to make jellies, jams and wines.



Beauty berry at its best MG Jamie Hart

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Belinda's Dream Rose Offers Beauty, Fragrance



Sue Bain
GCMG 2018

My first encounter with Belinda's Dream rose (*Rosa* 'Belinda's Dream') was in 2020 when I was asked to be team lead for the Pollinator Habitat Garden. I was never a rose person, but Belinda's Dream has changed my mind. Even though it has thorns, its beauty with double pink blossoms, fruity fragrance, and minimal care outweighed the occasional poke. I also wondered what its function or purpose in a pollinator habitat garden was. Belinda's Dream attracts bees and on occasion, a chrysalis will be hanging on a limb.

Dr. Robert Bayse, a mathematics professor, developed Belinda's Dream by crossing 'Tiffany' and 'Jersey Beauty.' It was introduced in 1992 and was named after the daughter of one of Dr. Bayse's friends. Belinda's Dream was the first rose shrub to be designated Earth-Kind® by the Texas AgriLife Extension Service. The care of this rose follows Earth-Kind practices by limiting the use of pesticides, fertilizer, and water. With its wonderful Earth-Kind qualities and disease resistant and heat-tolerant nature, Belinda's Dream became a Texas Superstar® in 2002.

It is a fast-growing shrub with bluish green foliage and pink blossoms in a hybrid tea style. The rose will grow five feet tall and four feet wide and bloom best with up to eight hours of full sun. Belinda's Dream uses moderate water and enjoys well-drained soil. Keep the soil moist until it is fully established, which typically takes a month. Belinda's Dream can grow in various soils including high alkaline clay soil. Planting can be done in the fall or spring. Be sure the rose shrub has good air circulation. It makes a great specimen plant. Perhaps one can be planted as a singular shrub with surrounding annuals and perennials. Another idea is planting several rose shrubs as a hedge or being beautifully displayed in a large pot. However, when planting, be sure to place two to three inches of organic mulch to retain moisture, minimize weeds, reduce soil-borne plant diseases, and provide nutrients.

Let me describe how easy it is to take care of a Belinda's Dream rose. This rose will bloom in large clusters from spring until frost. As soon as the blooms are spent, deadhead and blooms will produce abundantly. The dried flowers can be used for potpourri. Belinda's Dream needs to be pruned back one third of the way on around February 14, Valentine's Day but not soon before any known potential freezes. On the same day, apply rose fertilizer. In my experience fertilizing has not been consistently done; maybe once in the last five years and Belinda's Dream continues to shine and bloom. Be sure to replenish

mulch as needed. On occasion with cool, damp weather, the roses may contract black spots, but this does not interfere with their growth and beauty. What else can I say. Prune back once a year, trim off spent blooms, and occasionally add organic mulch. Belinda is truly a dream!

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

www.texasuperstar.com



In the Discovery Garden MG Karen Nelson



Closeup of Belinda's Dream MG Sue Bain

The Beauty of Knock Out Roses



Bettye Vogler
GCMG 2020

The Knock Out® rose is celebrating 25 years as a Texas Superstar. After a quarter century, it is still the rose that blooms first and last in a garden. From the first flush of spring, Knock Out roses put on a spectacular show of vibrant color, cycling through bloom after bloom until frost. In autumn, some varieties offer a bonus as foliage turns to shades of burgundy or bronze, providing color even after the flowers have faded. It is like they have an endless supply of energy drinks hidden in their roots.

The Knock Out rose (*Rosa* 'Radrazz') was bred in the United States and introduced as a Texas Superstar in 2000. The rose was named an All-American Rose Selection winner also in 2000 for its outstanding garden performance as well as an Earth-Kind® rose that same year.

There are currently 11 additional Knock Out roses. The 11 along with the original *Rosa* 'Radrazz' are the rock stars of the rose world and divas of the garden. Whether it is the centerpiece of a flower bed or a stunning hedge, it always steals the spotlight and makes other plants seem like back-up singers. Their extended bloom period provides valuable forage for bees, butterflies and other pollinators, supporting garden biodiversity.

Knock Out roses can create a welcoming entryway, a dynamic border or a privacy screen. When planted in groups, they form flowering hedges that require little shaping. They can thrive in large pots and are perfect for patios and decks. Their ability to blend seamlessly or stand out as focal points is indispensable in both traditional and modern garden designs.

Knock Out roses have stunning flower power that provides an almost non-stop abundance of blossoms. In fact, these roses grow so vigorously that you might think you are playing a



Double Knock Out rose Texas A & M AgriLife Extension

never-ending game of Whac-a-Mole. Just when you have it under control, the rose will sprout new growth faster than you can say secateurs.

Knock Out roses thrive best in full sun with good air circulation. When planting, dig a hole twice the width of the root ball and just as deep. Mix compost or well-rotted manure into the soil to boost growth and retain moisture. Gently remove the plant from its container, teasing out densely packed roots if necessary. Set it in the hole so that the graft union is just at or slightly above soil level. Backfill with amended soil, water thoroughly, and mulch with 2 to 3 inches of organic material to conserve moisture and suppress weeds. Newly planted roses should be watered deeply once or twice a week, depending on weather. Feed the roses in early spring when new growth appears. Use a balanced, slow-release fertilizer formulated for roses. A second feeding after the first flush of blooms can encourage continued flowering.

Combining radiant beauty, resilience, and unrivaled ease of care, these roses have liberated countless gardeners from the high-maintenance routines of the past. They are resistant to common rose diseases such as black spot and powdery mildew. They are drought-tolerant and can thrive in a variety of soil conditions, making them a versatile choice for any garden.

As one of the defining roses of 21st-century gardens, Knock Out roses continue to knock out the competition—and win the hearts of rose lovers everywhere.

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Double Knock Out rose Texas A & M AgriLife Extension

Mexican White Oak: A Popular Tree for Landscapes



Stacy Mills
GCMG 2022

Mexican white oak (*Quercus polymorpha*) is also known as Mexican oak, Monterrey oak, Monterrey white oak, net-leaf white oak, and Coahuila oak. The Mexican white oak was named a Texas Superstar in 2023 after being recognized as a Texas native in 1992.

Anyone searching for a highly adaptable tree to plant in a yard might look at this beauty as a possible contender. It is an elegant semi-evergreen tree, with a beautiful canopy, remaining green in the warmer areas of the zone range and mostly deciduous in USDA zones 8 and colder.

HEIGHT: Typically grows 35 to 45 feet tall but can get as tall as 80 feet with the trunk up to 2 feet in diameter. The canopy is well proportioned and spreads two-thirds to equal its height. It is a relatively fast-growing oak tree.

WATER: Medium water use; as drought tolerant as the live oak. Once established there is no need to water the tree unless it is in a prolonged hot, dry spell.

SOIL: Does best in soil with good drainage and even in rocky soils. Grows in a wide range of soil pH and has tolerance to moderate salinity. Sensitive to being overly wet, clay soil is probably not the best soil for this tree. The tree prefers some soil depth but can adapt to thinner soils, too.

EXPOSURE: Best in full sun and part shade; known for braving the sweltering Texas heat as well as winter fluctuations. Adaptable to endure exposures to reflected heat, minimal irrigation and hot, dry, windy locations.

FOLIAGE: Dense, vibrant green foliage; canopy of green and blue hues. It is oval when young and matures into a medium-sized large tree perfect for shading.

LEAF: Simple, alternate, 2-5-inch-long leaves with shallow lobes or teeth toward the tip. The leaves have raised veins and are leathery and thick. In the spring the leaves are peach-colored.

BARK: Dark to light gray rough bark

FRUIT: Acorns, maturing in one year, grow up to one inch long.

PRUNING: Requires a little pruning to raise the canopy but does not need much shaping otherwise. Prioritize heavy pruning for the winter months, trying to avoid spring and summer.

BLOOM TIME: March to May; yellow male and female flowers grow in spring on the same tree

CARE: Seldom bothered by pests or diseases; although white oaks typically are not affected by oak wilt (as compared to the live oak and red oak trees). This tree has not extensively been evaluated yet for that disease resistance.

USDA PLANT HARDINESS ZONES: 7-10

BENEFITS: Aids in soil stabilization and provides an abundance of acorns for wildlife in the fall

USES: Excellent shade, street or park tree.

The Mexican white oak is increasingly the tree of choice for landscaping in Texas.

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Mexican white oak texassuperstar.com

Meet the Quiet Charm of Lacey Oak



Bettye Vogler
GCMG 2020

When we think about majestic sprawling trees, the mighty live oak always comes to mind. Most of us want the beauty and shade of trees without high maintenance. The lacey oak (*Quercus laceyi*) obliges. It is a quiet contender with so much charm and charisma; it could make a cactus swoon in Texas. The lacey oak does not scream for attention; it simply exists, making your backyard look cooler than your neighbors.

The lacey oak can stand in the face of drought, shrugs off poor soil, and generally acts like it was born to survive.

Native to the limestone hills of central and southwest Texas, the lacey oak was designated a Texas Superstar® on October 29, 2002. It is highly tolerant of heat and drought. Water the lacey oak the first year, then let nature take over. Its modest size makes it perfect for people who want shade but do not want their yard swallowed whole by an overambitious tree. With its delicate and dainty blue-green leaves, the lacey oak is the equivalent of a designer scarf, effortlessly chic and never out of style.

The cold tolerance of the lacey oak has not been fully documented but based on research it is suitable for USDA zones 7 through 10. It likes full sun to light afternoon shade. Fertilizer is not necessary so let this native tree grow and establish itself. It will mature at a steady pace so you will not wake up one morning with its branches knocking politely on your bedroom window.

In a world where trees can sometimes take themselves a bit too seriously (looking at you Sycamore) lacey oak is the unsung hero of the Texas landscape. It can live for over 100 years, becoming a majestic centerpiece in a garden. It has elegant branches, a graceful silhouette and small, fluttering leaves that filter sunlight in a way that is worthy of Instagram.

If you want a backyard bustling with birds and butterflies, lacey oak is ideal. Birds find shelter, nesting possibilities and butterfly caterpillars for food. The acorns are a favorite among local wildlife. Blue jays, deer, and squirrels, who are always looking for a snack, cannot resist them.

The open canopy of the lacey oak will not try to annex your patio or block the sun from your tomato plants. It will let sunlight stream through, encouraging plants such as wildflowers and native grasses to flourish beneath.

Forget the fussy, high-maintenance divas of the tree world—lacey oak is proof a tree can be gorgeous, resilient, and low

key all at once. In a place that is always vying for attention, sometimes the quietest tree makes the loudest impression.

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Comparing Commercial Compost: Cotton Burr vs. Mushroom



Christie McGrath
GCMG 2023

Even though I am a big proponent of making compost at home, there are reasons to purchase commercial compost for yards and gardens. You may not make enough compost for how much is needed or the homemade compost may not be ready when it is time to apply it for a specific project. Many types of compost are available at local garden centers but in Galveston

County Master Gardener plant sales, two types of commercial compost are offered: cotton burr compost and mushroom compost. Those two types will be the focus of this article.

Many may think all types of compost are basically the same. While there are some characteristics they all share, there are a few features of each that may steer the use of one over the other. At the Fall Festival for the last two years, MG John Ely and I have manned the compost booth offering education or sharing tips on composting at home and answering questions about the commercial compost we sell. One of the most frequent questions is, “What is the difference between cotton burr compost and mushroom compost?”

Before looking at the differences, let’s look at the similarities of the two. The Environmental Protection Agency defines compost as “a biologically stable soil amendment produced by the aerobic decomposition of organic materials.” Both cotton burr and mushroom compost fit that description perfectly. They both have excellent moisture retention qualities. They both increase soil organic material and fertility, helping plants grow and produce. They both redirect waste material that would otherwise end up in a landfill. As an added bonus: both commercial compost brands we offer are made in Texas and comply with all state and federal regulations.



Cotton Burr. MG Christie McGrath



Mushroom. MG Christie McGrath

Cotton burr compost is made from leftover plant material that remains after cotton is ginned. It helps break up or loosen tight clay soils because it has a coarser texture than other composts. This coarseness, however, may cause water to sit too long in containers, so it is not the best choice for pots.

Mushroom compost, on the other hand, is made from pasteurized mushroom substrate blended with the manufacturer’s organic compost. It is an excellent additive for both in-ground beds and container mixes. It helps raise soil pH (making things less acidic) with an average pH of around 6.6. Due to its porous texture, it also holds nutrients longer than many other soil amendments.

Which one should you use? For general use around yards and in garden beds, either cotton burr or mushroom compost would be an excellent addition to the soil. To improve clay soil, try using the cotton burr compost for a few growing seasons and see if you like the results. If adding compost to containers or working on making your soil less acidic, try using the mushroom compost and see if the plants show increased growth and health.

No endorsement of trade names or commercial products is implied by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service.

References:

- <https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food/composting>
- <https://www.americanmushroom.org/consumers/mushroom-compost-faq/>
- <https://www.tceq.texas.gov/p2/composting.html>
- <https://www.backtonaturecompost.com/CBC.html>
- <https://www.landscaperspride.com/individual>



Compost comparison. MG Christie McGrath

Growing Into the New Year



Amaris Wendelberg
GCMG 2024

If your New Year's resolutions include spending more time in your garden, then read on. Each month, Galveston County Master Gardeners (GCMG) put on informational sessions for garden enthusiasts. Whether you're new to getting your hands dirty or have a lucky spade attached at the hip, you are going to find a class that speaks to you. From presentations to

garden tours, you will find someone or something from which to learn. Here are some common questions we get regarding our programs and events.

Where can I find information on upcoming presentations?

The fastest way to get information is through the events calendar on our website (<https://txmg.org/galveston/events/>). Click on a class of interest and see a description along with other pertinent details. Scroll down to see the registration form and complete it if planning to attend. Registration usually closes two days before the event. This provides team members with time to prepare handouts, get the room properly set up, and find volunteers to assist. If the deadline has passed, call the extension office and they will determine if a spot is available. Note that some classes do have a maximum capacity, and these may have a waitlist. Here are some upcoming presentations that will be held at our office in Carbide Park in La Marque.

Saturday, January 10, 2026 - 9 am: **Wedge Grafting** presented by MG Hazel Lampton. This class is limited to 20 participants.

Saturday, January 10, 2026 - 1 pm: **Growing Great Tomatoes**, Part Two of Three presented by MG Ira Gervais

Saturday, February 7, 2026 - 9 am: **Spring Vegetables** presented by MG Kevin Lancon

Saturday, February 7, 2026 - 1 pm: **Designing and Growing an Herb Garden** presented by MG Donna Merritt

Each of these classes is free and will be held at the Galveston County AgriLife Extension office inside Carbide Park at 4102-B Main Street (FM 519), La Marque, 77568. Phone: 281-534-3413

Can I come check out the Discovery Garden, the research garden maintained by GCMG?

Yes! Every Thursday (unless there's severe weather or a holiday) from 9-11 am, the public is invited to tour the Discovery Garden. With four-acres of maintained garden space, you'll find everything from fruit trees to vegetable beds to fragrant florals. Our gardeners are always happy to answer questions

or find someone who can. It's truly a wonderful place to explore and learn. Bring your kids too! If you are interested in a group tour, just call our office to schedule.

Are there any plants for sale?

Yes, several times a year we host plant sales both online and in person. The next sale is our Ready, Set, Spring Sale which will be an online sale February 16 and 17 (noon to noon). Pickup dates will be February 26-27. If you'd like to get an idea of plants sold in the past, browse our online catalog at <https://galvestonmg.square.site/s/shop>. Word to the wise, set an alarm to be online right when the store opens. Some of the more popular plants go fast.

Saturday March 21, 2026, will be our March Madness in person sale. And Saturday, October 17, 2026, is our Fall Festival sale, also an in-person event.

Grow into the new year with Galveston County Master Gardeners, where you can attend free presentations, tour our expansive garden, and purchase new and exciting plants.



MG John Ely conducts a Thursday tour at the Discovery Garden.
MG Roxann Kriticos



Fall Festival plant sale of Master Gardener Grown items MG Marilyn Haupt

Gardening Help Desk: Mulching and Pruning Fruit Trees



Ralinda Fenton
GCMG 2023

Question: What is the best mulch for trees and how do I use it?

Mulching around trees has many benefits if properly applied and maintained. It helps retain moisture, it helps reduce the soil temperatures in the summer by trapping radiant heat, it can have a tidy appearance, and it can reduce weeds. Many varieties of mulches are available in today's market suitable to be used around trees. The more popular choices are bark and wood chips. Both are longer lasting mulches.

Important tips for mulching around trees are:

- Apply 2 to 3 inches of mulch, but never more than 3 inches. Too much mulch can keep enough water from getting to the tree and cause the growth of bacteria and fungi.
- Do not apply mulch all the way to the tree trunk. Do not pile mulch against the tree trunk, leaving a margin between the mulch and the tree.
- Apply mulch out to the edge of the dripline of the tree (the outermost edge of branches).
- Be sure to spread the mulch evenly.
- Avoid using white or black rocks, as they increase the strength of the sunshine. If you use rocks, choose more neutral colors instead. Stones, pebbles and gravel will not add nutrients and do not decompose.

Never use impermeable sheets for mulch. Plastic and other impermeable substances rob trees of water and air that are vital to their growth.

Here is some information about the different mulches available in our area.

Bark mulches that are mainly used in our area include pine, cypress and redwood. Cypress mulch isn't as likely to float, lessening the likelihood of your mulch floating downstream in heavy rain.

Chipper debris (often labeled as shredded wood) is not as uniform as bark mulches. It may be composed of shredded bark, wood chips, and even leaves, and can create issues of nitrogen deficiency if it hasn't aged long enough before its application.

Compost is a great mulch. Be aware, however, that compost can contain some weed seeds. It can be made at home or purchased. The master gardening program has educational courses and resources available to learn about making compost.

Inorganic matter like stones, pebbles and gravel should be used with caution. These mulches will not add nutrients and do not de-

compose. Remember, white or black rocks intensify the sunlight, creating heat under them.

Avoid using fresh mulches that have not had enough time to decompose because they will extract nutrients from your soil as they continue decomposition.

For more detailed information on mulches and the proper use of them, see these articles: <https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2010/10/mulch.pdf>

<https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2013/09/EHT-073.pdf>

References:

<https://tfsweb.tamu.edu/trees/tree-care/mulching/>

<https://thewoodlandstowshipblog-environment.com/2024/05/23/beat-the-heat-essential-tips-for-texas-summer-tree-care/>; <https://watersmart.tamu.edu/mulching/>

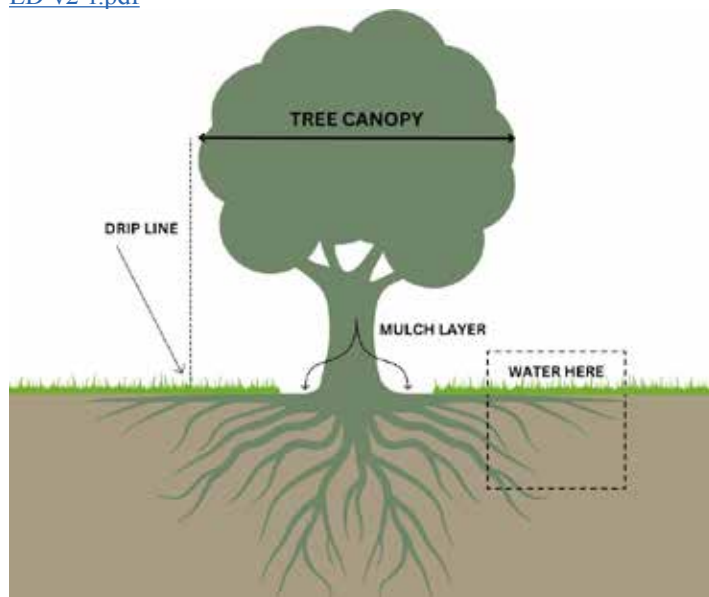
Question: When do I prune fruit trees in Galveston County?

Pruning fruit trees will enhance productivity, allow light to reach the inside areas of the tree, -manage production of fruit, and rid the tree of damage due to disease or insects. Fruit trees bloom in the spring, so you want to prune during months that minimize the loss of blooms. Pruning needs vary for each variety. Refer to individual fruit information sheets at <https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/fruit-nut/>. The references below will also provide pruning information and other important practices to increase fruit production.

References:

<https://travis-tx.tamu.edu/about-2/horticulture/ornamental-plants/pruning-trees-and-shrubs-with-a-purpose/>

<https://fbmg.org/files/2020/02/Care-of-Fruit-Trees-book-UPDAT-ED-v2-1.pdf>



Summer Tree Care Drip Line The Woodlands Township

From Broken Waterfall to Dry Creek Bed: Remodeling the Extension Office Garden



Christie McGrath
MG 2023

In May 2024, a group of master gardeners began to remodel what was known as the Waterfall Bed outside the Galveston County Extension Office. Originally installed after the new extension office was built at Carbide Park, the garden's water feature no longer worked, and the beds had fallen into disarray. We decided to turn the bed into a dry creek type design to make the garden more budget friendly and easier to maintain.

The master gardeners involved in the project included Donna Merritt (Project Lead), Briana Etie, John Mitchiner, Becky Jaschek, Jamie Hart, Lynne Slaton, Christie McGrath, Nancy Hiefner, Ralinda Fenton, Sven Bors-Koefoed, Tina Fincher and Vickie Hall. From the Extension Office, Ginger Benson, extension agent-Family and Community Health, was instrumental in advocating for this project and ordering needed supplies.

Our first step was removing the plants, many of which found homes in our gardens. We did leave the large plumbago (*Plumbago auriculata*) at the top of the feature as it looked nice and did a good job hiding some of the old water return structures. Next, we tackled the rocks. The current bed had a mix of flat stackable stones and round oddly shaped rocks. We wanted a more uniform look, so we removed most of the round rocks except those used to define the lower part of the garden (previously the pool at the end of the creek). We removed the soil and flattened out the area between the creek and the extension office sign. This area was not part of the original design, so we decided to let it fill in with turf grass. With the help of a lot of sand and a few pallets of flat rocks, we leveled, stabilized, and stacked the flat stones to define the tiers of the garden beds around the former waterfall. Not surprisingly, ants and nutsedge were enemies we fought in and around the entire garden.

Over the summer we met most weeks to move rocks and keep the area clear of weeds. As the tiers were completed, John Mitchner drove the tractor from the garden to assist us in filling them with fresh soil. Once the tiers were mostly finished, we flattened the berms along the creek sides from the waterfall to the lower pond. More rocks were moved, and the sand was smoothed out. The lower pond was cleared, prepped, and filled with soil. We also added pre-emergent herbicide to the soil to discourage weed growth. Over the winter months, John and Donna were able to remove the pump from the lower pool area, and we allowed the soil to settle.

Spring arrived and it was finally time to plant. Selections were chosen for their drought tolerance and full sun preference. Our initial plantings included: Blue Eyed grass (*Sisyrinchium angustifolium*), Graceful Pink gaura (*Oenothera lindheimeri*), Pink Fizz verbena (*Glandularia peruviana*), Endurascape™ Hot Pink verbena (*Glandularia peruviana*), Midnight rose (*Salvia nemorosa*), Summerlong™ peach (*Agastache mexicana*), Rock Candy® Ruby penstemon (*Penstemon barbatus*), Pyromania® Red Hot Poker (*Kniphofia hybrid*), Goodwin Creek Lavender (*Lavandula x gingsinsii*), Bandera Deep Purple lavender (*Lavandula stoechas*), La Diva Big Night lavender (*Lavandula stoechas*), Grafitti® Ultra violet (*Pentas lanceolata*), Estrella™ Peach verbena (*Verbena x hybrida*), and Cathedral® Blue Bicolor (*Salvia farinacea*).

The plants grew well over the spring with the members of our group hand watering as needed. We were all thrilled when John installed irrigation in the beds. Finally in August 2025, the final touches were added as we mulched the garden beds and placed blue tumbled glass in the dry creek part of the feature.

We are all happy with the results and glad to once again have a beautiful garden in front of the Extension office for everyone to enjoy.



Before: Front view MG Donna Merritt



After: Front view MG Donna Merritt

“...budget friendly, easier to maintain”



Before: Back view *MG Donna Merritt*



After: Back view *MG Donna Merritt*



MG Sven Bors-Koefoed digging out rocks *MG Donna Merritt*



Lower tiers in progress *MG Donna Merritt*



MG volunteers Tina Fincher, Sven Bors-Koefoed, Christie McGrath, Vickie Hall, Donna Merritt and Becky Jaschek *MG Briana Etie*



MG volunteers Nancy Hiefner, Jamie Hart, Ralinda Fenton, Donna Merritt, Becky Jaschek, Christie McGrath and Lynne Slaton *MG Jamie Hart*

For the Love of Climbing Roses



John Jons
GCMG 2003

A climbing rose in full bloom, reaching above all the other roses, is a spectacular standout sight, whether it is growing up a trellis, across a fence, up against a wall, or within a rose bed.

So, what is a climbing rose? Climbing roses are a captivating rose variety known for their ability to transform ordinary structures into living art. With their long, flexible canes adorned with fragrant blooms, they create stunning vertical displays. Whether draping over a trellis, adorning a wall, or weaving through a pergola, these roses are a gardener's delight.

Key characteristics of climbing roses:

- **Vigorous growth:** They exhibit strong growth habits enabling them to reach impressive vertical heights.
- **Beautiful blooms:** Many varieties boast fragrant, showy flowers in a wide range of colors and forms such as either large single flowers or clustered blooms. Some varieties produce a heavy bloom in the spring and then sporadically throughout the year. Some produce blooms repeatedly throughout the year, and some may only bloom once a year.
- **Versatility:** They can be trained to grow in various shapes and forms, adding a touch of color and elegance to any outdoor space.

Some climbing roses are climbing versions of popular bush or shrub roses. For example, 'Climbing Iceberg' and 'Climbing Cecile Brunner.' These climbing versions of a bush or shrub rose are called *sports*. A *sport* is when a new plant shoot displays different characteristics to the parent plant.



The Tyler Rose Garden, Tyler, Texas. MG John Jons

Climbing Rose Care: Climbing roses may require some specific care to thrive. Some climbing rose tips are the following:

- **Planting:** Choose a sunny location with well-drained soil. Plant them in the spring or fall.
- **Support:** Provide sturdy support for the canes as they grow. This could be a trellis, fence, or arbor. To achieve the best flowering results, tie the stems as close to horizontal as possible to encourage lots of flowering from the side shoots. If you let the cane grow (naturally) vertically, you will end up with most of the blooms just at the end of the cane.
- **Pruning:** Regular pruning is essential for shaping and encouraging blooms. Like most roses, prune in late winter or early spring. For climbers that only bloom once a year, prune after the climbing rose has bloomed.
- **Watering:** Deep, infrequent watering is preferred over shallow, frequent watering.
- **Fertilizing:** Feed with a balanced rose fertilizer in spring and summer.
- **Disease and Pest Control:** Monitor for common rose pests and diseases such as aphids, black spot, and powdery mildew. Treat promptly if necessary.

Patience is key when growing climbing roses. It may take a few years for them to establish and reach their full potential. With proper care, these magnificent rose plants will reward you with years of beauty.

As a long time rose gardener, an American Rose Society Master Consulting Rosarian, a rose hybridizer, and a certified Texas Master Gardener, I am constantly observing roses, where



Climbing Rose in the David Austin Gardens, Albrighton, England. MG John Jons

“patience is key....growing climbing roses”

ever I travel. Except for the tropics (close to equator), I have discovered that roses grow almost everywhere. While most roses are hidden behind walls or fences or in private gardens, I have continually observed climbing roses reaching over the garden walls and fences to display their blooms. Even within the often-well-manicured rose beds in private and public rose gardens climbing roses stand out as they are often trained to grow up trellis up above the normal garden rose bushes and shrubs. I have even observed climbing roses growing in a well-manicured and architectural pleasing manner up the front of buildings.

Suggested Climbing roses for Galveston/Harris Counties include the following: ‘Climbing Pinkie,’ ‘Sea Foam,’ ‘New

Dawn,’ ‘Rev d’Or,’ ‘Climbing Cecile Brunner,’ and ‘Don Juan.’

To see pictures of climbing roses in many different countries and growing in many different ways, please consider viewing my two YouTube videos called “For the Love of Climbing Roses” Part 1 https://youtu.be/14dfyCtQ_7Y and Part 2. <https://youtu.be/NwwNNrEJC3I>

References:

Royal Horticultural Society <https://www.rhs.org.uk>

American Rose Society <https://rose.org/>

Earth-Kind Roses Cultivars - Texas AgriLife Extension Service
<https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/earthkindroses>



Schonbrunn Palace, Vienna Austria. MG John Jons



Climbing Rose on a House in Rothenburg, Germany. MG John Jons



Yorkshire, England. MG John Jons

Safety in the Garden



Lynne Slaton
GCMG 2023

GCMGA recently created a safety team to enhance safety in the garden. Safety has been an established part of being a master gardener, therefore, safety is a factor in the Discovery Garden for GCMGA.

Pesticide use as mentioned in the guidelines:

1. General-use pesticides are allowed for application in the garden. Restricted-use pesticides require a licensed applicator approved by the extension agent and are not available for volunteer use.

2. Strict adherences to the manufacturer's label on any pesticides for application must be complied with. General-use pesticides are provided for all MGs' use in the Discovery Garden and in the chemical shed. Note: fertilizers are not classified as pesticides; a limited supply is available in the chemical shed.

3. General-use pesticides may not be applied during regularly scheduled volunteer days or in the presence of MG groups or the public. The exception includes spot application for fire ants.

4. Pesticide applications requiring delay of public re-entry must be clearly labeled and roped off by flagging or landscape



Chemical shed newly organized
MG Lynne Slaton



Safety glasses and hand washing supplies now in chemical shed
MG Lynne Slaton

tape indicating safe re-entry. Consult the Discovery Garden coordinator for spot application.

5. Training for general-use pesticides will be provided annually at the discretion of the extension agent.

Improvements for the use of chemicals in the Discovery Garden, established by the safety team and GCMGA leadership, include the following:

- A chemical approval process was established to evaluate pesticides and fertilizers for safe use, their precautions, and safe disposal. Labels and product information for the approved chemicals are available in the chemical shed. A safety training program will begin in 2026 to review safe procedures and chemical awareness.
- Only approved chemicals may be used in the garden. Restricted-use pesticides are not on the list. Should a gardener determine whether an alternative chemical is required, or intend to provide one from personal supply, they must obtain authorization for the chemical through the chemical approval process. A member of the safety team can help them with the process.
- Reading and following the label instructions, including the use of proper personal protective equipment (PPE), has always been a requirement. Impervious gloves, safety glasses, and dedicated-use sprayers are now available in the chemical shed.
- The use of any chemical in the garden should be documented on the pesticide application record. This applies to chemicals brought in by a master gardener and those offered by the organization. This allows the safety team to monitor pesticides and other chemicals used in the garden.

Personal protective equipment (PPE) is another essential safety practice for use throughout the garden. Eye protection should always be worn when operating weed trimmers, chemical sprayers, or leaf blowers. Wear gloves for hand protection; wear impervious gloves, if recommended, to avoid contamination. Safety glasses and nitrile gloves are available in the chemical shed.

The safety team members include co-chairs Lynne Slaton and Becky Jaschek, Ann Ross, John Mitchner, Donna Merritt, Briana Etie, Vickie Hall, Vicki Blythe, Michael Reed, Mark Dickason, Rachel Montemayor, Linda Crowston, Kaye Corey, and Kay Sandor. Their goals for 2026 include educating the organization on safe tool handling, proper PPE use, chemical safety, and health risks in the garden.

Discovery Garden Update



Tom Fountain
GCMG 2008

The Discovery Garden looks a little drab lately due to the lack of rain and the seasonal weather. Although, our average temperature over the last several months continues to average two to three degrees above normal. Rainfall on the other hand has been three to four inches below normal each month, and some locations have even reported their driest months of record. As

a result, our area will continue with moderate drought conditions for some time. The extended forecast from the National Weather Service continues to indicate our temperatures may continue a little above normal with rainfall slightly below normal into the spring.

Our Discovery Garden is always changing and growing with people trying to incorporate better gardening practices. The next step is to share knowledge with others. In (fig. 1) Phil Haught was busy with the tractor changing part of what was the orchard area into some more garden space.

With all the warm weather we have had, our first cold snap of the season had everyone scrambling to get things ready for the cold weather, particularly the green house. In (fig. 2). Sven Bors-Koefoed, Michael Reed, and Steve Holliday were hanging the windows while John Mitchiner (not pictured) was busy securing the side curtains. Inside the greenhouse (fig. 3) Santos Montemayor was busy cleaning out the heater and checking it out to make sure it was in proper working order.

Outside in the garden others were trying to do some thorough last-minute harvesting and cold weather prepping. In (fig. 4) Hazel Lampton was showing Vicki Blythe and Rachel Montemayor a giant cabbage she had harvested. She said she would have liked to see how large she could grow it but was afraid the weather might damage it. It turns out, the cabbage weighed in at 12.25 pounds.

The garden is always a great place to visit and exchange ideas. The other day I came across Ira Gervais in (fig. 5) describing to Tina Woods and Bob Siml what type of preparations he used to promote and keep that bed of greens growing so well. Ira has a wealth of knowledge and is always willing to share it.

Here's to a healthy and wonderful year ahead. I hope to see you in the garden soon. Until then be safe and enjoy your friends and family.

The Discovery Garden is open to the public each Thursday morning between 9 and 11 am.

Knowledge not shared is knowledge lost.



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Landscape Plant Camellias - a Proper Garden Guest



Stacey Phillips
MG 2017

As time goes by, I find I have a more sentimental attachment, call it romanticism, with certain plants. Now don't get me wrong, asking me to select my favorite plant is like asking someone to pick their favorite child. However, there is something to be said for growing garden classics, and today I'm focusing on a very proper garden guest, the camellia.

Like many garden favorites, camellias did not originate on the North American continent. They are native to Asia and made their way to the United States from Europe during the late 1700s. Classic additions to the southern garden, camellias are low maintenance additions to the garden once established.

Camellias are evergreen and can tolerate cold spells in our area but do need some protection from direct cold winds. One of the advantages to this old-fashioned favorite of mine is that the bloom period occurs when many of our plants have settled in for their winter's nap. Camellias, depending on the variety, bloom between October and March, so they offer some beautiful color and interest to the garden, while most other plants are going into dormancy.

While many species of camellias exist, there are two common garden varieties of camellias that are grown in the south: *Camellia japonica* and *Camellia sasanqua*. *Camellia japonica* tends to grow larger with both bigger leaves and blooms, while *Camellia sasanqua* has smaller leaves and blooms, but tends to bloom longer, and more prolifically. While *Camellia japonica* varieties are suitable for our area, sasanquas tend to tolerate high heat and humidity a bit better than japonicas, making it an excellent choice for Galveston County, but be sure to keep good air circulation to minimize fungal disease development.

General growth and care tips for camellias.

- Camellias should be planted from November through February so that the root system can develop well before the summer heat arrives. Camellias cannot tolerate being planted too deeply, so be sure to plant with the root ball sitting 1-2" above the soil level to allow for sinking.
- Camellias should be planted in well-drained soil and prefer a neutral to slightly acidic pH.
- While *Camellia sasanqua* can tolerate higher temperatures and humidity, they prefer to be sheltered from late afternoon sun. Location is key, as they will not produce



Camellia sasanqua 'Shi-Shi Gashira' almostedenplants.com



Camellia sasanqua 'Winter's Snowman' almostedenplants.com



Yuletide camellia MG Stacey Phillips

“...an old fashioned favorite of mine”



Camellia sasanqua 'High Fragrance' almostedenplants.com



Camellia sasanqua 'Cinnamon Cindy' almostedenplants.com



Camellia sasanqua 'Ack-Scent' almostedenplants.com



Camellia sasanqua 'Kanjiro' almostedenplants.com

optimal blooms if located in deep shade—they are a bit like Goldilocks in wanting to be “just right” as far as sun exposure goes.

- Camellias need minimal pruning, but selective removal of dead wood or limbs that are not desired can be done at any time. Heavy pruning or shaping should be done after the bloom cycle has ended in late winter/early spring, otherwise you could inadvertently remove forming buds.

- Camellias can be fertilized twice a year using a fertilizer with equal nitrogen and potassium numbers (the first and the third number on the fertilizer label). Always water in your plants before and after fertilization to avoid possible damage to the plant. Azalea and camellia fertilizers should only be used on well-established camellias; they should not be used on young/unestablished plants or containerized plants.

- Once established, camellias are fairly drought tolerant, but do require irrigation during long, dry periods. They also require regular watering (1 inch of water/week) during blooming.

- Camellias that are properly planted and maintained rarely have disease problems but known diseases of this plant include algal leaf spot, dieback, leaf and bud gall, and root rot.

- Camellias can be susceptible to certain pests, the most common being scale, aphids, and spider mites.

Similar to fragrant antique roses, some camellia varieties are more fragrant than others. These can be either *Camellia sasanqua*, *Camellia japonica* or even a hybrid of two different varieties. Three fragrant camellias are *Camellia* x 'Ack-Scent,' *Camellia* 'Cinnamon Cindy,' and *Camellia* x 'High Fragrance.'

I hope you'll give this little garden gem a try. I'll bet there's a gorgeous camellia just waiting to join your garden party.

References:

Brown, Sydney Park. "Camillias at a Glance." *Askifas*. 2024. <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/EP002>

"*Camellia sasanqua*." *NC State Extension*. <https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/camellisasanqua/> Accessed November 2025.

MG Stacey Phillips will be writing a new Landscape Plant article for each issue in 2026.

What's Blooming in My Garden



Jamie Hart
GCMG 2023

While many of our plants are dormant and relocated to garages and green houses for the winter, gardeners can still enjoy their “indoor gardens.” I am surrounded by the beauty of African violets (*Saintpaulia ionantha*), *Streptocarpus*, and *Primulina* (Chirita). Not familiar with *primulina*?

Primulina (Chirita)

It is in a genus of about 150 species, recently (2011) reclassified as *Primulina*. Many of these gesneriads are relatively

new to hobbyists with most in cultivation for less than 20 years. Because of their forgiving temperament, growth habit, and blooming they have quickly become popular--most violet growers have at least one.

More tolerant to neglect than African violets, *Primulinas* produce thick leaves in rosette, much like a violet, with trumpet-like blooms on upright stems above foliage. *Streptocarpus* and *Primulina* are cousins to the African Violet.



'Blue Boy' is a standard size Vintage- one of the original 10 African violets
MG Jamie Hart



Streptocarpus 'Sweet Sam' is also a Gesneriad and commonly called Cape Primrose although not a primrose at all. MG Jamie Hart



'Cabbage Patch' is a Semi-Miniature African violet
MG Jamie Hart



Primulina Chirita 'Crossroads' is in the Gesneriad family of the African Violet
MG Jamie Hart

Gardening 101: It All Starts with Planning



Carol Hairfield
GCMG 2020

Planning a Superbowl party? This football season may be wrapping up, but the coaches are already planning for next season. While they're strategizing for the next year's winning team, let's start strategizing for a winning garden. With teamwork, planning, and enthusiasm, we may not win a trophy but we can have a great garden. Whether you're a first-time gardener or an avid gardener, the steps to create a successful garden are the same.

Wait, hear that whistle? Time out. Don't buy plants yet. Tempting as it is, it's not the first step.

First up, create a plan.

Planning can save you from potential problems that can be expensive, time consuming, and exhausting. For right now let's think about why, what, and where.

Remember your high school English teacher telling you to make an outline? Groan. Now is when you need cheerleaders yelling, "You can do this. Yeah team."

Speaking of team, let's start there. Do you have help or are you all alone in this? Teamwork makes the dream work. Growing season is also vacation season. While you're relaxing in the sun, your plants are dying of thirst.

And the hornworms are devouring your plants. If you can find somebody or bodies to help, it lightens the load and gives you someone with whom to share ideas.

Getting your children or grandchildren involved can be a wonderful experience for all. You get help. They get an appreciation for their food and farmers and develop a sense of accomplishment. Plus, you get to see their surprised faces when they discover carrots grow underground.

Let's not forget, they get stories to tell their children. "We grew the biggest watermelon!" "Grandma made us get out in the blazing sun to weed her garden."

Next up is the why. This is your motivation. Why you are doing this to yourself? Remember this reason when times get tough. Home grown vegetables, in my humble opinion, are not only better for you but are tastier. There are also benefits such as reduced heart rate, muscle tension, increase in vitamin D to name a few.

What do you want to grow? Keep it simple. Know your growing zone (We are 9b.) What grows in Oklahoma won't necessarily grow in Texas. Each plant has space and light needs.

Look at the space available to you and what each plant is going to need. Also, how long are those plants going to need that space before they produce? Months? Years?

Where are you going to put your garden? Does that space get six to eight hours of sun? Are there obstacles to the sun such as a building or tall established plants? Where is the light exposure (east/west)? Does this space get shade in the morning or afternoon? Remember plants like okra grow tall and will cast shade on low-growing brethren such as watermelon. Does this plot drain well? Is it close to a water source? While plants don't like "wet feet," they do need regular watering and dragging a hose out can be a drag!

Finally, depending on where you live, you might need a fence. Deer will eat almost anything. Some plants are not safe for your pets. Some pets aren't safe for your plants.

Get your plans ready because next is final "team" preparation and taking the "field."

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Hornworm
MG Carol Hairfield



Grandchildren are great gardening helpers
MG Carol Hairfield

The Frogner Park Rose Garden, Oslo Norway



John Jons
GCMG 2003

Nestled in the heart of Oslo lies Frogner Park (Norwegian: *Frognerparken*), a sweeping expanse of green that has earned worldwide acclaim for its unique fusion of art and horticulture. Best known as the world's largest sculpture park, it has been dedicated to the works of a single artist, Gustav Vigeland. This urban oasis covers 111 acres (45 hectares) and attracts more than a million visitors each year. But for gardeners and rosarians, one of the park's most rewarding features is something far more ephemeral and fragrant: the Frogner Rose Garden.

While many come to marvel at the over 200 bronze, granite, and cast-iron sculptures throughout the park, what drew me personally was the garden's spectacular rose collection. Designed and planted during the 1920s and 1930s, the rose garden reflects the formal traditions of early 20th-century European garden design. It offers a striking contrast to the expressive human forms of Vigeland's sculptures and reveals the care and botanical sensibility of Oslo's public garden planners.

The Frogner Rose Garden covers approximately five acres (two hectares) and features more than 14,000 individual rose plants representing between 150 and 180 cultivars. This is not a sprawling wild display, but a beautifully ordered, symmetrical layout. Granite-tiled walkways frame square, round, and rectangular beds that encircle a formal central plaza. Each bed typically showcases roses of a single-color group, creating blocks of soft pinks, deep crimsons, pure whites, and golden yellows that visually echo the rhythm of the surrounding architecture and art.

The rose beds line the central boulevard leading toward the famous Vigeland Fountain and culminate at the monolith that towers atop the central hill. This progression pulls both eye and foot forward through a captivating interplay of sculp-

ture, space, and bloom. Additional rose plantings are scattered throughout the park. Some are nestled near fountains or sculpture groupings, while others quietly occupy sunlit lawn corners and tree-framed clearings.

Horticulturally, the garden is a showcase of rose types adapted to Nordic conditions. You will find robust hybrid teas, floriferous floribundas, graceful climbers, shrub roses, and select Old Garden Roses.

The selection of roses reflects thoughtful adaptation to the region's long winters and relatively short, mild summers. These cultivars are chosen for their hardiness (many in USDA Zones 4–6), disease resistance, and repeat blooming.

Beyond its beauty, the garden plays an important educational role. Oslo's parks department maintains the beds as a demonstration garden, which offers residents and visitors a living classroom in cold climate rose gardening. The emphasis is on sustainable, low-impact horticulture. Most of the rose care is done with biological controls and organic amendments. Pesticide use is limited, and integrated pest management is the norm. The result is a garden that feels vibrant and alive, not chemically preserved.

Though open to the public all year, the rose garden's full glory is seasonal. Visitors planning a trip to Oslo should time their visit between late June and mid-August, when the roses are in peak bloom.

Whether you are a rose enthusiast, a traveler with a green thumb, or someone looking to combine art and nature in one unforgettable stroll, the Frogner Park Rose Garden is a must-visit. It is a reminder that even in the most sculptural and structured public spaces, there is always room for petals, pollinators, and the enduring rose.

To view more pictures of the Frogner Park's Rose Garden go to <https://youtu.be/8jKwLQOeTqg>



Overview MG John Jons



Roses in Bloom MG John Jons

Gardeners Recognized for Culinary Skills



Linda Barnett
GCMG 2015

The GCMG annual cookie exchange was held in December to celebrate the holiday season. Master gardeners responded with an array of beautiful and delicious entries. According to the judges, the flavors and creativity were over the top. Judges included Ira Gervais, Reese Daily, and Ginger Benson. They reported they enjoyed tasting all of the wonderful treats made by members. The cookies were judged based on presentation, taste, and creativity. Winners by category: Presentation- 1st place Christie McGrath, 2nd place Kevin & Melissa Lancon, 3rd place Bettye Vogler; Taste- 1st place Kathy Hurst, 2nd place Pam Hunter, 3rd place Christina Reynolds; and Creativity- 1st place Briana Etie, 2nd place Jamie Hart, 3rd place Hedy Wolpa. MG Linda Barnett coordinates the popular event each year.



Judges Ira Gervais, Reese Daily and Ginger Benson MG Linda Barnett



Creativity winners MG Linda Barnett



Presentation winners MG Linda Barnett



Cookie Display MG Linda Barnett



Taste winners MG Linda Barnett



Display MG Linda Barnett

Meet a Master Gardener: Sue Bain



Trish McDaniel
GCMG 2001

As the Vice President of the Galveston County Master Gardeners Association, (GCMCA), Sue Bain, MG class 2018, wears many hats within the organization, and is in constant motion tending to executive duties, special projects, and organizational meetings. It is no wonder that in May 2025, Sue was awarded the Outstanding Individual Master Gardener

of 2024 by Texas Master Gardener Association, (TMGA), for her robust and lasting contributions to the GCMG program. Using knowledge gained from the Texas Superstar® Advanced Training from Texas Master Gardener Association (TMGA), and the Native Landscape Certification Program via the Texas Native Plant Society, Sue continues to demonstrate her motto, “plant with intention.”

In the Discovery Garden in La Marque, she is the lead of the Pollinator Habitat Garden and co-lead with MG Karen Nelson of the Texas Superstar program. She is also co-lead with MG Kevin Lancon for all MG plant sales. Add to this Sue’s willingness and acceptance to serve as Vice President, when VP Kevin Lancon became GCMGA president unexpectedly.

As current VP, Sue serves on the Education and Outreach Committee. Recently she presented a program with MG Hedy Wolpa on Native Plants and Beneficial Insects on November 1 at the Extension Center in La Marque. The two shared with the public varieties of native plants and the beneficial insects that each attracts. Their audience learned that native plants are hardy, require minimal care, and help conserve water in a garden. A variety of native flowers, shrubs, and grasses were presented, with information about where and when to plant natives, bloom colors and sizes, and care requirements. Information was offered on which beneficial butterflies, moths, bees, and other insects are attracted to specific native host plants for food and safe habitat while helping to pollinate a garden and control other garden pests.

Born in Waco, Sue’s family moved to Ponca City, Oklahoma when she was two years old. Her father served as CEO of the Boy Scouts of America. Her mother was a secretary and systems analyst with Conoco and had a passion for flower gardening. One day, Sue thought of bringing home a beautiful bouquet to surprise her mother. Instead, she earned a memorable scolding as she had taken the blooms from a neighbor’s garden on her way home from school. As a child, Sue loved being outdoors and being a bit of a tomboy, she loved to climb trees, to play with ‘roly poly’(pill) bugs and to have frog races with friends. It was a time when a child could play outside and



As vice president, Sue assists the president with meetings.
MG Sue Bain



Sue with Extension Agent Horticulture Boone Holladay with her State award.
MG Sue Bain

“...wears many hats, in constant motion”

go home when the streetlights turned on their light. When she was 12, her family moved to Spring Branch in Houston. Being a rural stone's throw from rice fields and coastal prairie, this neighborhood offered plenty to ponder for a self-described nature girl.

Sue absorbed many practical skills growing up. Every summer, her parents took Sue and her three siblings on tent camping adventures throughout the US. Her father's advice for snake encounters was to “act like a tree.” This came in handy on a camping trip years later with her own young family. While climbing rocks upstream in the Llano River, Sue suddenly felt something wrap itself around her calf. She looked down to discover it was a rattlesnake. Though horrified, she yelled at her husband and remarkably stood stock-still as he walked in a large loop slowly around her. Like a charm, the snake's head followed his slow movement, unwound from her calf, and headed downstream. Sue said she continued to feel the gut-sinking compression and decompression of the snake long into the night.

Growing up, Sue always had a heart for helping people. This led her to pursue a BS in Education at Stephen F. Austin in Nacogdoches. For the next 15 years she taught Special Education to all ages of students in both Fort Bend ISD (elementary) and Midland ISD (high school and elementary counseling). When working with high school students with disabilities in Midland, Sue also counseled grieving parents not knowing what life held for their children after graduation. While she was working and helping raise a two-year-old, Sue headed back to school where she earned her master's degree at UT Permian Basin in Odessa. Until her retirement in 2016 after 39 years in education, Sue worked in the public school system as a School Counselor and Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) helping elementary and intermediate students in Clear Creek ISD and counseling both students and parents.

Sue and her husband, Robert, wed in 1981 and moved to Midland for job opportunities. Living in Midland, they both worked while raising their two children, a boy and a girl, seven years apart. They both transferred to positions in Houston in 1998, where they both retired from work in 2016.

One of Robert's great pleasures after retirement was to read on their backyard deck while enjoying the garden's showy ornamental plants. After the Great Texas Freeze in February 2021, Sue viewed the total loss of landscaping as an important lesson, and to Robert's great dismay, she installed a sustainable landscape of purely native plants and Texas Superstars. When spring arrived, Robert enthusiastically called her to the

backyard one day to see all the bee and butterfly action, Sue replied, “So, how do you like my garden now?”

Regarding her current vice president position, Sue says she remains committed to goals established in the 2025 five-year plan. This includes increasing membership engagement within all current committees and teams, and identifying members who may serve as leads, and co-leads, for upcoming special projects. Sue says she has always been a team player.

With that philosophy, our association will only be stronger by working together.



Sue in her garden BEFORE natives were planted. MG Sue Bain



Sue under the tree with her trumpets. MG Sue Bain

Book Review: *Beatrix Potter's Gardening Life*



Cheryl Brueggeman
GCMG 2014

I have a confession to make. Of course, I have heard of Beatrix Potter and am familiar with Peter Rabbit and Mr. McGregor, but I don't actually remember reading any of Potter's stories in my youth. When *Beatrix Potter's Gardening Life* by Marta McDowell showed up on the Green Thumb book club list, I was excited to read it. It promised two things I really enjoy-information on plants and gardening as well as a chance to revisit memories from the Lake District of England. I was not disappointed.

The book is divided into three sections and is full of photographs of gardens, delightful illustrations from her books, botanical sketches plus quotations from her books, journals, and letters. The first section is more or less a biography of Potter's life. It chronicles her early love of flora and fauna and her developing passion for gardening which she weaves into all her stories. It highlights key places and moments throughout her life which include pursuing her goals as an artist and author as well as becoming an estate farmer and naturalist in her later years. She grew up in Victorian times when women did not enjoy the same freedoms as we do now, such as owning property. With the earnings from her first

several books, she purchased Hill Top Farm, in England's Lake District. It is now preserved as part of the National Trust as are several other properties that she purchased over time.

The second part of her book is devoted to a year in her garden. Since she left instructions to destroy any of her personal materials upon her death, this section relies on published works, artwork, photographs, and letters. Each season is highlighted by informing the reader of what is blooming at the time. These seasonal blooms inspired the illustrations in her books.

The third section is devoted to information about visiting Potter's gardens. It is followed by an extensive list of plants she grew in her many gardens as well as a list of plants that she used in her books. The author also includes an extensive list of citations and acknowledgements.

I found this book to be charming and enlightening. McDowell has given us a vivid account of Beatrix Potter that fills in so many details of her rich life. I came away with an appreciation for her knowledge and talent as well as a desire to go back and read her multitude of books.

2026 Green Thumb Book Club Reading List

January - *Thyme of Death* by Susan Witting Albert

February - *Second Nature: A Gardener's Education* by Michael Pollan

March - *The Potting Shed Murder* by Paula Sutton

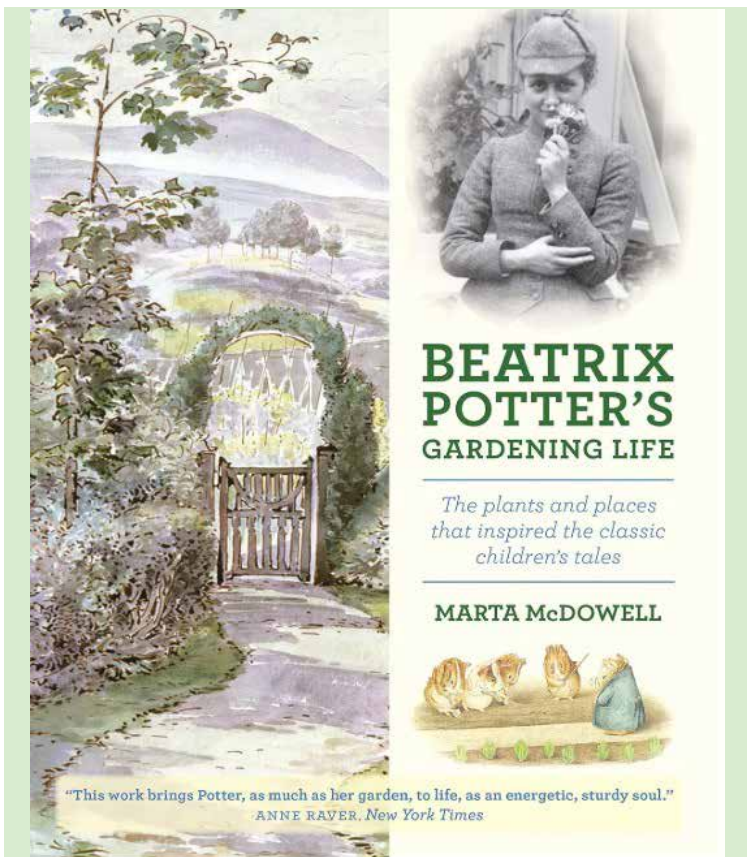
April/May - *The Pollinator Victory Garden: Win the War on Pollinator Decline with Ecological Gardening; Attract and Support Bees, Beetles, Butterflies, Bats, and Other Pollinators* by Kiim Eierman

June - *Gardening Can Be Murder: How Poisonous Poppies, Sinister Shovels, and Grim Gardens Have Inspired Mystery Writers* by Marta McDowell

July/August - *One Garden Against the World: In Search of Hope in a Changing Climate* by Kate Bradbury

September/October - *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer

November - *Botanists Guide to Parties and Poisons* by Kate Khavari



Seasonal Bites: Soups Perfect for Winter Weather



Briana Etie
GCMG 2017

Now that we can feel the cold weather, I love a one pot meal of soups and stews, and they can be enjoyed for more than one meal. Soups and stews can be versatile. My mom made a soup called Poor Boy soup. She would use bacon drippings to sauté the aromatics and would add

her canned vegetables from our garden or leftover vegetables from the refrigerator. She started making a cabbage soup from WeightWatchers® and I have been making this soup since I was a teenager. I have added a few calories from its original recipe. I started adding the black-eyed peas and ham for our New Year's Eve parties. I hope you enjoy them.



Cabbage Soup

Ingredients:

1 tablespoon of butter, avocado oil or bacon drippings
5 stalks celery, chopped
2-3 carrots, chopped
1-2 onions, chopped
1 poblano pepper slivered
½ large head cabbage, chopped
15 oz. can Italian green beans, drained or 1 frozen bag Kentucky Wonder
15 oz. can of black-eyed peas
1 quart roasted red pepper and tomato soup or tomato juice
16 oz. can whole peeled paste tomatoes, with liquid
14 oz. of broth or bouillon broth in beef, chicken or ham
½ lb. of diced smoked ham
½ of a bunch of parsley, chopped
2 - 4 sprigs of thyme, stems removed
Cold water to cover

Directions:

In a soup pot or enameled cast iron Dutch oven add oil, celery, carrots, onions, and peppers cook over medium heat for 6 or 7-minutes. Add tomato soup or juice, tomatoes, broth, ham, cabbage, beans, peas and enough water to cover the vegetables and ham. Bring to a boil over medium heat; reduce heat to low, add thyme and parsley. Simmer until vegetables are tender, about 25 minutes.



Court Bouillon "koo-bee-on"

Ingredients

1 1/2 pounds snapper, redfish, black drum or catfish fillets
1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon of favorite Cajun seasoning
2 tablespoons Avocado oil, bacon drippings or butter
of 1/3 cup parched flour (or dry roux, ie Kary's)
3-4 ribs of chopped celery
2- chopped poblano or bell peppers
2 green -serrano, jalapeno or banana peppers, chopped and seeded
2 bay leaves
3-4 cloves garlic minced or 1 tablespoon
2 cups chopped, peeled, and seeded tomatoes, or 2 cups chopped canned tomatoes
1 cup water
1 3/4 cups chicken broth or bouillon broth
1/4 teaspoon cayenne
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
1/4 cup or 2-3 chopped green onions
2 tablespoons chopped parsley (half of a bunch)
Directions

Cut the fish fillets into 3-inch pieces. Season with 1 tablespoon of Old Bay or Cajun seasoning. Set aside in the refrigerator.

In a large soup pot or enameled cast-iron Dutch oven over medium heat add oil, celery, onions, and peppers. Cook, stirring often, for about 5 or 6 minutes.

Add garlic and cook for about 2 minutes. Add the tomatoes, water, remaining teaspoon of Old Bay and the bay leaves.

Reduce the heat to medium-low and cook, uncovered, for about 1 hour, stir occasionally to prevent the mixture from sticking.

Increase the heat to medium, add the broth, black pepper, cayenne and parched flour (dry roux) and cook for about 15 minutes. Add the fish pieces in the mixture and cook for 10 to 15 minutes, or until the fish flakes easily with a fork. During the last 5 minutes of cooking time, taste, add salt, if necessary, add green onions and parsley. Serve over rice.

Intern Research Trial: Broccoli - Heading for Success



Bob Siml
GCMG 2025

The Intern Research Trials are an important contribution to the Galveston County Master Gardeners. They are part of the core objectives to develop and disseminate research-based horticulture to individuals and groups in Texas. It also serves as a team building exercise. The interns with a group of mentors for support organized and planned the entire project including planting, watering, fertilizing, monitoring the development of the plants, treating pests/diseases, and harvesting.

Interns included Erin Alofoje, Stephanie Carmona, Beth Carroll, Theresa Cooper, Suzy Domingo, Margaret Herrera, Kathy Hurst, Dewana Jackson, Santos Montemayor, Becky Risinger, Glenna Shields, Janice Simonet, and Stephen Wright. Mentors included Ira Gervais, Wendy Baldwin Oalman, Jim Bridgett, John Ely, Bob Siml, and Gene Speller.

The interns planted the following broccoli varieties: Castle Dome, Pack-Pro, Imperial, Lieutenant, and Green Magic which has been named a Texas Superstar. A broccoli trial would determine how these varieties perform in Galveston County.

The findings from the trials will be reported in a future issue.



Interns Suzy Domingo and Santos Montemayor in growing beds



Frost protection was put on plants during cold weather in December



Interns planting broccoli



Harvest with interns Santos Montemayor, Suzy Domingo and Becky Risinger



Interns with Ira Gervais showing a perfect head of broccoli All photos by MGs Bob Siml and Ira Gervais

MGs hold December Meeting at Holiday Event

Master gardeners gathered in celebration of the Christmas holidays and a chance to get together for the last meeting of the year. The December meeting and dinner were held in the Galveston home of MG Mikey and Allen Isbell.



Tropical Santa was joined by Soni and Boone Holladay. *MG Karolyn Gephart*



GCMGA President Kevin Lancon called the meeting to order and thanked outgoing officers and welcomed new members. *MG Karolyn Gephart*



A game of passing the gifts was played by MGs under the direction of MG Judy Anderson. *MG Robert Rodriguez*



MG Lucy Brown and MG Robert Rodriguez. *MG Karolyn Gephart*



Jamie Hart, Mikey Isbell and Judy Anderson. *MG Karolyn Gephart*



Melissa Terrell, Hedy Wolpa, and Nancy Greenfield. *MG Karolyn Gephart*

GALVESTON COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS

2026 PLANT SALES

TEXAS A&M
AGRILIFE
EXTENSION

GALVESTON COUNTY

**FEB
16-17**

SPRING FLING! SALE

Online

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

**MAR
21**

SPRING GARDEN FEST

In-Person

Perennials, spring vegetables, peppers & herbs

**OCT
17**

FALL FESTIVAL & PLANT SALE

In-Person

Master Gardener grown, fall vegetables, herbs, bulbs & plumerias

ONE LINK | ALL ONLINE SALES

<https://galvestonmg.square.site>

IN-PERSON SALES: DISCOVERY GARDEN

4102 Main St (FM 519) La Marque TX 77568

If you need special accommodations, please contact the Extension Office no later than seven days before the program so we can consider your request. Extension programs of Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or any other classification protected by federal, state or local law. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating.



2026 HORTICULTURE JAN-FEB EVENTS

TEXAS A&M
AGRILIFE
EXTENSION

GALVESTON COUNTY

JAN
10

URBAN ORCHARD SERIES

Wedge Grafting

Speaker: Galveston County Master Gardener,
Hazel Lampton

JAN
10

GROWING GREAT TOMATOES PART 2

Growing Tomatoes in Galveston County

Speaker: Galveston County Master Gardener,
Ira Gervais

FEB
07

VEGETABLE SERIES

Spring Vegetables

Speaker: Galveston County Master Gardener,
Kevin Lancon

FEB
07

HERB SERIES

Designing and Growing an Herb Garden

Speaker: Galveston County Master Gardener,
Donna Merritt

FEB
14

URBAN ORCHARD SERIES

Figs

Speaker: Galveston County Master Gardener,
Barbara Canetti

ONE LINK | ALL EVENTS

See the full lineup of horticulture events and register for any seminar using this single link:

<https://txmg.org/galveston/events/>

QR CODE

Open your camera and scan the QR code to explore all horticulture events and sign up for seminars in seconds.



TEXAS
MASTER GARDENER

TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

Galveston County

If you need special accommodations, please contact the Extension Office no later than seven days before the program so we can consider your request. Extension programs of Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or any other classification protected by federal, state or local law. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating.

MGs Volunteer, Share Knowledge

From presentations to garden clubs to posing with vegetables and working special shows, MGs are volunteering and sharing knowledge around the county on a daily basis.



Santa joined MGs Doreen Hughes, Donna Woodsbury, Herman Auer and Karyl Mehlman for Ask an MG booth at the Texas City Garden Club Festival. *Courtesy of Texas City Garden Club*



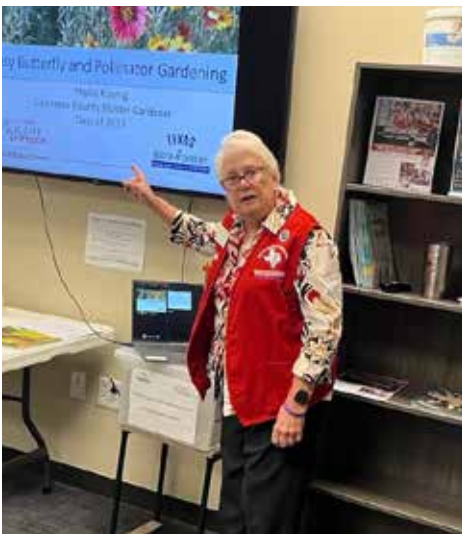
Heritage Junior Master Gardeners (JMGs) manned their own booth in Friendswood for a holiday market selling plants. MG Kaye Corey coordinated the event. *Courtesy of Heritage JMGs.*



A giant Chinese cabbage was joined by MGs Hedy Wolpa, Sue Bain, Hazel Lampton and Vicki Blythe. *MG Lynne Slaton*



MG Judy Anderson spoke on native plants at Garden Emporium in Friendswood. *MG Karolyn Gephart*



MG Phyllis Koenig presented a program on pollinator gardening recently. *George Koenig*



MG Julie Massey was one of the volunteers who worked on Carbide Park entry beautification. *MG Alice Rodgers*

New Slates of Leadership Positions

New Slate of Officers – 2026

Board of Directors – 3-year terms

Sharon Zaal – expires 12/31/2028
(replacing Frank Resch's seat on the BOD)

Linda Steber – expires 12/31/2028
(re-elected to continue to serve)

Judy Anderson

Ira Gervais

Ed Klein

Officers of the Association - 2-year terms

Kevin Lancon - President – expires 12/31/2027
(re-elected to continue to serve)

Sue Bain – Sr. Vice-President

Becky Jaschek – Treasurer – expires 12/31/27

Debbie Brizendine – Assistant Treasurer – expires 12/31/2026

Hedy Wolpa – Secretary – expires 12/31/27

Melissa Terrell – Assistant Secretary – expires 12/31/2026

Rachel Montemayor – TMGA State Delegate

Ira & Sandra Gervais – Alternate State Delegates



GCMGA Board MG Karolyn Gephart



GCMGA Officers MG Karolyn Gephart



Green Thumb Book Club members at the farewell tea for leader Lisa Belcher
Reese Daily



Frank Resch was honored for his service as Board director. He has retired. MG Karolyn Gephart

Judy's Corner: Galveston County Monthly Meetings



Judy Anderson
GCMG 2012

January 13, 2026

Happy New Year

The Galveston County Master Gardeners will kick off the new year with a luncheon meeting Tuesday, January 13, 2026. Many exciting events are planned for the upcoming year. President Kevin Lancon and Vice President Sue Bains will be sharing the plans including the new interns and their rotations in the Discovery Garden; preparations for the upcoming sales; implementation of the Discovery Garden safety procedures; and review of the requirements for reporting hours for certification in VMS.

Boone Holladay, Galveston County Extension Agent-Horticulture, will provide the latest Texas A&M AgriLife Extension news for the year ahead.



Boone Holladay MG Karolyn Gephart

All master gardeners are encouraged to attend. The meeting will qualify for continuing education hours.

The luncheon will begin with a traditional New Year's potluck meal. Please plan to join us and bring a favorite dish. Coffee, tea, and water will be provided. Social will begin at 11 am, with lunch served at 11:30. The program will begin at noon. Happy New Year to the Galveston County master gardener family.

February 10, 2026

Laissez Les Bons Temps Rouler

The February meeting will be a double feature with the social beginning at 10:45 am, lunch at 11:15, and the first program at 11:30. Briana Etie, MG 2017, will be providing gumbo for a Mardi Gras luncheon. Please bring a side, salad, or dessert for a fun, festive luncheon.

The first program will be a review of VMS and important updates that all MGs will need for the new year. This program will be followed by a break where all the lunch items will be removed. Everyone is invited to help with the quick clean up.

The second program, beginning at 1 pm, will be presented by Janis Teas, regional inspector with Texas Department of Agriculture. She will be giving a citrus update. This program will be open to area nurseries and home orchardists in addition to master gardeners.



Janis Teas on citrus MG Karolyn Gephart

This information is important for master gardeners, but it is essential to those working with citrus. Let's extend a friendly welcome to the visitors.

Both programs will qualify for continuing education hours.



Kevin Lancon MG Karolyn Gephart

Galveston County Master Gardeners 2026 Monthly Meetings

January 13	lunch	Year Ahead with potluck
February 10	lunch	VMS with GCMG Officers; Janis Teas; potluck
March 10	lunch	Kat Grier, Living Classroom: Utilizing the Gardens for Educational Programming (ZOOM); potluck
April 14	PM	Alfresco in the Garden; An Evening in the Discovery Garden
May 12	PM	Graduation hosted by Mikey and Allen Isbell; potluck
June 9	PM	Backyard with Steve and Robin Holliday; potluck
July 14	PM	Fish Fry and Plant Swap
August 11	PM	TBA
September 8	PM	TBA
October 13	PM	Backyard with Trish McDaniel; potluck
November 10	lunch	Annual Meeting and potluck
December 8	PM	Holiday Party hosted by Mikey and Allen Isbell