

THE SHADE GARDENING ISSUE

# GULF COAST *Gardening*

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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

## Successful Gardening



MG Kevin Lancon  
President,  
Galveston County  
Master Gardener  
Association

At GCMGA, our mission is to educate and inspire others with gardening and horticulture advice and information. In this edition of our newsletter, we are focused on another area of interest in many backyard gardens, shady areas. Gardening is certainly not easy but anyone can be successful with a few key tips and tricks, that should always begin with proper plant selection, particularly in shady areas.

Speaking of success, I am thrilled to report that we were recently awarded first place for Outstanding Master Gardener Association in the State of Texas. We are obviously delighted at the news of being recognized with this honor and it's an honor that we have achieved many times over the years. Working in partnership with our Galveston County Agent, Boone Holladay, and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, our dedicated Master Gardener volunteers continue to strive to share our knowledge and know-how with the residents of Galveston County.

We invite you visit us at our Discovery Garden in Carbide Park in La Marque on any Thursday morning from 9 to 11, where you can see many plants that grow particularly well in our area and speak to Master Gardeners who are eager to share their knowledge and passion for gardening. We also love to engage in public speaking opportunities, such as garden clubs, local nurseries, youth events and other public events, so keep us in mind if you have an event or gathering that we

can participate in. We also invite you to attend one of our exciting (free) educational seminars or give our Gardening Help Desk service a try by submitting a question on-line at [https://txmg.org/galveston/gcmga\\_hotline](https://txmg.org/galveston/gcmga_hotline), or by calling 281-309-5061 where we'll assist you with any of your gardening questions.

I hope you enjoy this issue of our newsletter, and invite you visit our web site at <https://txmg.org/galveston>, our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/galvcountymg/> and our new Instagram page at <https://www.instagram.com/galvcomastergardeners/> 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*



Kevin Lancon and Boone Holladay at Alfresco event  
MG Vicki Blythe

## Join Master Gardeners in the Shade



MG Karolyn Gephart  
Editor,  
Gulf Coast Gardening

When your yard throws you some shade, celebrate with the right plants who thrive when the sun is not there or has minimal time in that area. Partial, dappled, or full shade has a following of plants that request that environment. From ferns, begonias, gingers, and so much more, this issue offers you shady ideas that you will enjoy. Two Texas Superstar plant articles in this issue offer both a whopper and a dwarf selection. Photos offer readers a look at an educational high school tour, a visit to see where TSS plants are in Discovery Garden, Alfresco dining for MGs at their April meeting, and the outdoor classroom update. Learn about our adventurous MG Hazel Lampton and how the tomato trials are coming. This issue is FULL of information, news and volunteers in action. Congratulations to the Galves-

ton County Master Gardener Association with its three State Awards. Now, settle back and enjoy what many MGs put together for YOU!

*Karolyn Gephart*



MG Wendy Oalman at Alfresco MG Robin Collins

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Cover photo leopard plant in bloom in December  
*MG Karolyn Gephart*

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## Shade Gardening in Zone 9b



Amaris Wendelburg  
GCMG 2024

Spring is here and we are fast approaching those long hot summer days. What I wouldn't give for a lengthier spring season. One of the most asked gardening questions this time of year revolves around shade plants. If you are lucky enough to have a large tree with a canopy that sits like a giant umbrella over your front yard, or maybe you have an area of land that's

blocked by a tall structure, shade gardening is probably something you've researched. But what exactly is shade gardening, and how do some of the common shade tolerant plants handle our climate? These are frequent questions that we will explore throughout this publication.

### Types of Shade

Shade gardening is the process of selecting plants for areas that receive a limited amount of direct sunlight and subsequently plant according to the plant requirements. The second part of that definition is where things get tricky. This is because there are different kinds of shade, and not all shade is created equal.

Light or dappled shade consists of about three to six hours of direct sun. This is most likely due to a tree canopy that allows sunlight to filter through. It can be great for plants that tolerate sun to keep them from getting too hot as summer progresses. The amount of shade here is going to differ based on the type and size of tree.



Hosta 'Abiqua Drinking Gourd' an example of the thick curved leaves that can hold water  
MG Amaris Wendelburg

Partial shade has about two to four hours of direct sun. Generally, this occurs due to manmade structures like buildings or tall walls, but it can also be due to large hills in other areas. This type of shade can be best utilized in the morning hours, while the temperatures are still cooler and less intense. Granted, that will be determined by which direction the wall or structure is facing. If the structure has planting space facing east, you will have better success than if the planting space is facing west.

Full shade gives less than two hours of direct sunlight. This shade is generally found between structures such as a courtyard, against a north facing wall, or even an area covered by a barrier such as a roof overhang. It's important to keep in mind that sunlight could still be reflected off places like a painted white wall, or from a pool or body of water.

### Zone 9b

The USDA Plant Hardiness Zone defines our 9b zone by its minimum winter temperatures, 25-30 degrees. This zone includes areas from Florida all the way to California. As you can expect, plant varieties that thrive in areas like Naples, Florida will scorch in Laredo, Texas even though both cities fall within Zone 9b. It's important when selecting plants labeled as partial shade to make sure that they can tolerate the heat and humidity of our climate, in addition to the winter temperatures.



A variety of ferns MG Amaris Wendelburg

## “Not all shade is created equal...”

As an example, hostas (*Hostaceae*) are popular shade-friendly plants. However, not all hostas will survive in our area. Varieties that have a thicker leaf (often ribbed), are better equipped to withstand our heat and humidity. Their leaf structure allows them to store and retain moisture more than the thinner more delicate leafed hosta.

### Common Issues

Chances are, if you have a lightly shaded or dappled area, you are under the umbrella of a tree canopy. During our brutal late summer months, those tree roots are busy pulling as much water from the ground as possible. This is critical to take into consideration when selecting a plant for that area. Since an established tree root system will compete with your new plant for water, you'll need to allow extra watering on days without rainfall. Adding in a few inches of compost to your soil prior to planting will assist with water retention and provide better drainage. A layer of mulch will also help.

Consequently, you need to be careful not to over water. Excessive moisture combined with heat and humidity invites fungal growth. At relative humidity levels above 60 percent, fungal populations thrive. As the level increases, so does the rate of growth. The moisture levels within the soil also must be considered. Excess moisture promotes soilborne pathogens which can lead to root rot.

Watering early in the morning gives ample time for the plant and soil to dry. This water management technique is one you can utilize to combat the potential threat of fungal growth and soilborne pathogens. Additionally, removing infected leaves and debris, then adding mulch to the soil will help mitigate this issue.

Still, with utmost care and protection, when temperatures reach the upper 90 degrees, some plants can go into a heat dormancy. Symptoms include leaf browning and halted growth. The plant could even die back to the root.

### Selecting the Right Plants

Even with the challenges between shade and heat, there are several plant options that do well in our area. Think colorful foliage in hostas and ferns to ground covers like jasmine (*Trachelospermum asiaticum*). Generally, native plants will work best as they have adapted to our climate. Design a resilient shade garden incorporating these native plants as the backbone, then layer in some of the more tender varieties where you can closely monitor moisture. Prepare soil with organic matter to improve drainage, uti-

lize mulch (but not too much as it can retain excess moisture), and water deeply but infrequently, allowing the top layer of soil to dry slightly between waterings. Zone 9b does face its challenges when it comes to shade planting, but knowing these few things will allow you to create a beautiful garden space during this long growing season.

For references see [Shade Gardening page 46](#)



Example of Asian Jasmine as ground cover under mature oak tree  
MG Amaris Wendelburg

# Popular, Versatile Ferns



Karolyn Gephart  
GCMG 2017

I love ferns (*Polypodiopsida*) in all varieties and sizes. They can be strong and sturdy or ruffled and delicate. The green shades are magnificent and with shady areas in a landscape, a perfect plant for texture and beauty. Adding another plus, ferns need little care or maintenance. With over 10,500 different known ferns, it can be difficult to select just one.

Soil: Slightly acidic soil (pH of 5.5 – 6.5, rich in organic matter (like a forest floor) Tolerant of clay, sand, loam

Light: From filtered sunlight to dense shade

Hardiness zones: 8b through 11

Planting month: Year-round for 9b

Height: Depending on variety, .5 to 4 feet

Leaf: Emerges from the soil without a stem

Color: Green

Flower: None

Fruit: None

Fertilize: Lightly during growing season with balanced, water-soluble fertilizer with low nitrogen content

Reproduction: By spores

Propagation: Division of clumps

Here are a variety of ferns available in this area



Asparagus plumosa (*Asparagus setaceus*)



Fluffy Ruffles (*Nephrolepis exaltata*)



Boston 'Montana' (*Nephrolepis exaltata* x 'Montana')



Japanese Painted Fern (*Athyrium niponicum*)

“...a perfect plant for texture, beauty”



Silver Hair (*Adiantum* sp.)



Southern Wood Fern (*Dryopteris ludoviciana*)



Silver Ribbon (*Pteris parkeri*)



Kangaroo Paw (*Zealandia pustulata*)



Lace Fern (*Asparagus setaceus*)



Macho Fern (*Nephrolepis biserrata*)



Maidenhair (*Adiantum capillus-veneris*)



Rosy Maidenhair (*Adiantum hispidulum*)



Silver Brake (*Pteris ensiformis*)

## The Beauty of Azaleas



Bronia Michejenko  
GCMG 2015

Azaleas are popular plants that are relatively easy to grow and maintain in the right environment. Many parts of East Texas have shade, acid soil, and moisture. These are perfect conditions for azaleas as it matches the native Asian environment. Zone 9b includes Southern Texas and the Gulf Coast areas which has a humid environment that is perfect for growing certain azaleas, but may need soil amendment and some afternoon shade. Azaleas require acidic well-drained organically rich soil, morning sun, and dappled shade in the afternoons.

Azaleas are members of the Ericaceae family and belong to the Rhododendron genus. There are over 10,000 cultivars which originated in Asia, predominantly Japan, but there are limited numbers of varieties available for sale. There are many things to consider: plant size, colors, bloom sizes, blooming times, sun tolerance, and double blooms. There are even azaleas that will bloom again in the summer and fall. Azaleas can be grown in containers, as hedges, borders, around foundations, and in mass plantings. There are some native Texas azaleas, predominately *Rhododendron oblongifolium*, a white fragrant shrub 5-6 ft tall that thrives in sandy, moist, acidic and well-drained soil found in forested areas of East Texas. The native Texans call them honeysuckle because of their delightful scent. Native plants are deciduous whereas the Asian plants are evergreen.

Azaleas should be planted in the fall or early spring, giving the plant a chance to form a healthy root system before the heat of the summer. Many gardeners will buy plants when they are blooming in March which allows them to make choices based on the color and characteristics they prefer.

The soil pH should be acidic between 4.5 to 6.0. The soil must be well-draining and moist, with leafy organic material and a cover of mulch to keep the shallow roots moist. You can get soil pH tested at your local Texas A&M AgriLife Extension office, or you can use a pH meter. Adding organic material, leaves, compost, shredded pine bark and pine needles help with acidity and maintaining healthy plants. Choose a plant that is more than twelve inches tall, with healthy green leaves and a good root ball. I have had more success with larger plants than smaller ones. Plant shallowly, preferably under the umbrella of trees to provide dappled shade, with the top of the root ball one to two inches above the soil line. Apply up to three inches of mulch to retain moisture.

Fertilize with an acidic, high-nitrogen, slow-release fertilizer after blooming in the spring. Prune immediately after bloom-



All photos are azaleas grown and photographed by MG Bronia Michejenko  
ing as new flower buds set in early summer. Water them to keep soil moist, but avoid waterlogging which promotes root rot.

According to Smith County Horticulturist Emeritus Keith Hansen (2025), azalea varieties that do well in USDA Zone 9b in Texas are the Indica hybrid varieties which are hardy, heat tolerant, have vigorous upright growth, and large showy flowers. Examples include 'Formosa' with showy purple blooms and 'George Tabor' a soft magenta, lightly fragrancd butterfly magnet. 'Judge Solomon' is another variety known for its bright pink flowers that thrive in sunny environments. 'G.G. Gerbing' has huge showy white flowers. While we tend to

## *“...make choices on color, characteristics”*

think that all azaleas bloom once in the spring, there are cultivars that will bloom later in the season known as mid-season bloomers.

‘Fashion’ is a common dwarf azalea with salmon pink flowers that bloom twice a year in summer and fall. Reblooming Encore® azaleas are a trademarked variety that are a cross between a traditional blooming azalea and Taiwanese summer-blooming azalea. They offer 35 varieties and require four to six hours of sun. Popular hardy options are ‘Autumn Fire’, a dark red variety and ‘Autumn Royalty’, a large purple variegated variety. They will bloom spring, summer, and fall/winter. ‘Deja Bloom’ and ‘Bloom-A-Thon’ azaleas are also repeat bloomers. The main bloom of ‘Deja Bloom’ is in the spring and again in the summer and fall. ‘Bloom-A-Thon’ flowers are double and do well in more shade areas. ‘Tiara Red’ is the most compact plant even in heavy shade. Most rebloomers are more compact, and require less maintenance, with very little pruning.

Azaleas in southeast Texas typically display their breathtaking colors in February and March. Many places offer azalea tours to see the spectacle of dazzling red, pinks, purple and white azaleas amongst plants such as white spirea, and purple wisteria, with a background of spring green leaves. Tours are offered annually in Houston River Oaks district and Bayou Bend Gardens, which is a legacy of philanthropist Ima Hogg, who is credited for bringing azaleas to the Houston area. Other cities in Texas, such as Tyler, Lufkin, and Nacogdoches, also offer tours.

Fall in love with azaleas, and, if you have the right garden conditions, find a spot for these beauties.

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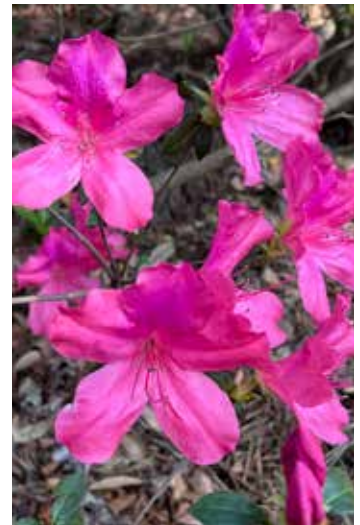
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All photos are azaleas grown and photographed by MG Bronia Michejenko

# Spicy Superstars: The Ginger Family



Anita Alvarez  
GCMG 2019

The **Zingiberaceae family**, commonly known as the ginger family, includes a variety of species with significant cultural, culinary, and medicinal importance. Some genera and species include:

**Alpinia:** Known for shell gingers like *Alpinia galanga* and *Alpinia zerumbet*

**Curcuma:** Recognized for turmeric (*Curcuma longa*) and zedoary (*Curcuma zedoaria*)

**Kaempferia:** Low growing, shade-loving plants, commonly known as peacock gingers

**Zingiber:** Home to true gingers like *Zingiber officinale* (common ginger)

For gardening, the warm, moist climate in USDA Zone 9b provides the perfect environment for gingers to flourish in a shade garden.

## *Alpinia zerumbet* ‘Variegata’

*Alpinia zerumbet* ‘Variegata’, also known as shell ginger, is the most common variegated ginger and with its striking striped yellow and green leaves can grow 6 to 10 feet tall. It produces clusters of white and pink shell-like flowers, earning its name, shell ginger. It is mostly used as a decorative, ornamental plant for landscaping and can also be grown in containers. It thrives in shade, and prefers high humidity and moist, acidic, well-draining soil. It is hardy in USDA Zones 8-11 and can tolerate temperatures to 25 degrees. It is low maintenance, requiring monthly fertilizer during the spring and summer, and consistent moisture.

While sometimes confused with the *Zingiber* species, the most common landscape variegated ginger is the *Alpinia zerumbet* ‘Variegata’.

## Turmeric (*Curcuma longa*)

*Curcuma longa*, better known as turmeric, is a tropical plant in the ginger family and grows well in landscaping in Zone 9b. The plant is characterized by its sizable, dark green leaves and prominent flowers. Commercially it is grown for its pungent orange-yellow rhizomes (underground stems) and is used as a spice or dye. It thrives in hot, humid climates. It prefers partial shade and requires well-draining soil, and moisture. It is grown from rhizomes, not seeds. You can plant pieces of the rhizome (each with at least two buds) in the spring, after the last frost, about two to three inches deep with the buds facing upward. It is considered a perennial in warm zones (USDA

Zone 8-11). Mature turmeric is ready to harvest when the leaves and stems start to die back in the fall, typically 8 to 10 months after planting. Fresh or dried, the rhizomes are a major component in curry powders and provide a warm, earthy flavor and vibrant yellow color to many dishes and drinks. It is also an effective natural food coloring and a common ingredient in dyes for cosmetics and fabrics. It has been used in medicine for thousands of years.

- A tropical, deciduous perennial
- Sun requirements: shade or morning sun
- Blooms appear in September
- Height 3-4 feet; Width 2-3 feet; Spacing 2 feet
- Soil requirements: well-drained, rich sandy loam
- Water requirements: even moisture when shoots are present and soil is warm
- Minimum temperature: 50 degrees; water less during these temperatures



Curcuma MG Database



Shell ginger MG Debby Brady



Peacock ginger MG Database

## “...gingers flourish in a shade garden”

### Peacock Ginger (*Kaempferia pulchra*)

This shade-loving plant is the perfect ground cover. They are best known for their lovely leaves which are typically green with overlays of silver, bronze, or purple markings. They produce small flowers, but their leaves are the main attraction. They spread easily and can be divided and passed along to your friends. They do lose their leaves in winter but reappear in the spring.

- Deciduous perennial
- Growth Habit: groundcover
- Height: less than 1 foot; Width: leaves can be 4 – 10 inches long
- Bloom Color: pink to purple
- Bloom Time: summer, but are mostly prized for their beautiful leaves
- Sun requirements and possible tolerance: shade to part shade
- Soil requirements and tolerance: rich well-drained soil
- Watering requirements: water regularly until established, then as needed
- Cold hardy USDA Zones 8 - 11
- Earth-Kind®  
<https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/earthkind/>



Pinecone or shampoo ginger  
MG Database



Closeup of shell ginger  
MG Debby Brady

### Bitter ginger (*Zingiber zerumbet*)

Bitter ginger is a tropical plant, native to Southern Asia. It is known for its pinecone-like flowers that release a soapy, fragrant liquid used as a natural shampoo and conditioner, earning it the name “shampoo ginger.” The flowers are initially green, gradually turning red as they fill with a creamy ginger scented sap-like liquid. This liquid can be “squeezed” from the cone and used as shampoo. The root can be used for culinary flavoring and herbal medicine. The leaves are used in some Asian cultures, often for wrapping food.

Common Name: bitter ginger, shampoo ginger, wild ginger, awapuhi

Herbaceous perennial

Growth Habit: rhizomatous clump forming perennial

Height: 4-6 feet; Width: 3-5 feet

Blooms: August – September

Sun: tolerates partial shade to partial sun

Soil: moist, well-drained

Water: medium, consistently moist

Fertilization: Early in the growing season, ginger appreciates more nitrogen to support leafy growth. In August and September when the rhizomes are forming, ginger benefits from added potassium.

Cold Hardiness: to 20 degrees or USDA Zones 8-10; dormant in winter

Care & Maintenance: medium

Earth-Kind® plant

Beautiful leaves and blooms make a variety of ginger a good choice for shade landscaping.

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# Shade Loving Begonias



Anita Alvarez  
GCMG 2019

Few plants can compete with the stunning season-long flowers of begonias, and even fewer bloom so abundantly in the shade. They can be grown outdoors year-round in tropical and subtropical climates. Their leaves are fleshy and thick to store water. This helps them survive in hot, humid conditions. With more than 1,800 species and hybrids, begonias generally fall into three groups: tuberous (*Begonia tuberhybrida*), fibrous-rooted (wax) (*Begonia semperflorens*), and rhizomatous.

USDA Plant Hardiness Zone 9b gardeners seeking shade-loving begonias should consider hardy begonia (*Begonia grandis*), tuberous varieties suited for filtered sunlight, and fibrous types such as wax or Dragon Wing (*Begonia x hybrid*) begonias. These plants thrive in partial to full shade, especially where they are protected from intense afternoon sun, and are well-suited for our hot, humid summers.

The hardy begonia (*Begonia grandis*), is a tuberous begonia and is the most reliable perennial choice for Zones 6-9. It grows from tubers to produce heart-shaped green leaves and fragrant pink or white flowers in the summer and fall. Consider using hardy begonia in pollinator gardens, planted along walkways, borders, in mass plantings, and in containers.

Tuberous begonias (*Begonia tuberhybrida*) are ideal for shady porches or spots with indirect, filtered light. They prefer cooler, shady, or dappled light conditions rather than intense, direct sunlight. The tuberous root system is what sets this type apart. They come in many beautiful colors and are impressive when blooming.

Wax begonias (*Begonia semperflorens*) are heat tolerant, versatile, and excellent for shady, humid areas. They produce continuous blooms. Their glossy, thick leaves can either be green or bronze, accompanied by small clusters of vibrant flowers in shades of pink, red, or white. They have a compact,

bushy growth habit, making them ideal for a variety of garden settings or containers.

## Caring For Begonias

**Light:** Prefers indirect light. Avoid direct, harsh sunlight, which can burn leaves.

**Watering:** Keep soil evenly moist but not waterlogged. Water directly onto the soil to avoid wetting leaves, which can cause fungal issues and leaf burn.

**Humidity:** High humidity is essential.

**Soil & Potting:** Use light, well-draining potting soil. Ensure pots have drainage holes to prevent root rot.

**Fertilizer:** Feed every four to six weeks with a balanced liquid fertilizer or controlled release variety during the growing season (spring and summer).

**Propagation:** From leaves, stems, rhizome or tuber cuttings, and by seed

**Pests:** Mites, mealybugs, scale, whiteflies, nematodes, and slugs/snails

**Diseases:** Bacterial leaf spot, powdery mildew, botrytis, Pythium root rot, and rhizoctonia crown rot

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The National Gardening Association: <https://garden.org>

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Space Age® Triton™ Begonia is known for shimmering leaves  
Courtesy of Jennifer Ramirez



Angel wing begonia has great shape and spots  
Courtesy of Jennifer Ramirez



Assorted pots of begonias  
Courtesy of Jennifer Ramirez



Begonias make great bedding plants  
MG Karolyn Gephart

# Elephant Ears and Leopard Plants, Oh My



Marilyn Haupt  
GCMG 2019

When thinking of a shade garden, what comes to mind? For me, I think of a peaceful and enchanting space where sunlight peaks through leaves highlighting plants and the ground below. I also think of the many interesting, shade-loving plants that thrive in the shadows. Two such plants are commonly known as the leopard plant and the elephant ear. Both are structurally unusual, yet appealing.

The leopard plant (*Farfugium japonicum*) is also referred to as the tractor seat plant. This name derives from the shape of the large, leathery leaves that can reach up to 8 inches wide and literally look like the seat of an old tractor. The leaves are evergreen with gold-colored spots, hence the rationale for the other common name, leopard plant. These plants themselves can grow up to 2 feet in height and 1 to 2 feet in width.

The leopard plant is a perennial and native to Asia, specifically Japan and Korea. It has become a much-desired plant in gardens in the United States where it is hardy in zones 7 through 10. It thrives in moist, rich, well-draining soils and it prefers shade to partial sun. Given proper care, the leopard plant will flourish in both gardens and in containers. Then, in the fall or early winter, it will send up shoots from which clusters of delicate, yellow flowers bloom and attract pollinators.

The plant spreads slowly through rhizomes and it grows in clusters making it possible to divide them easily for propagation. Division of the plant should be done while dormant in the winter or early spring, so it does not affect growth. This plant also produces seed from its spent flowers. The seeds can be collected and dried to sow later.

The elephant ear plant or wild taro (*Colocasia esculenta*) is also a perennial that originates from Asia. Known for its large, elephant ear shaped leaves, it can serve as a stunning backdrop to other plants and flowers in the garden. However, a cluster of these plants standing alone can make an impressive statement. They grow from tubers and form strong, fibrous stalks that support the large leaves that can reach up to two feet in width and length. The plants themselves can grow up to four feet in height.

The elephant ear grows best in moist, rich soil. They are hardy in USDA Zones 8 through 10. The plant itself is not tolerant of the cold, but its tubers can remain in the soil during the winter in those zones.



Elephant ears make a statement with size MG Karolyn Gephart



Leopard plant offers a stunning landscape piece  
Courtesy of Deanna Herrmann

Several factors should be considered. First, this plant prefers full to partial shade although it will tolerate full sun. Secondly, they should be planted in a protected area away from potentially heavy winds that could damage their large leaves. Finally, this plant spreads through rhizomes. In some states such as Texas and Florida, this plant is considered invasive. Avoid planting near waterways, wetlands and ditches.

Growing elephant ear plants in containers can alleviate unwanted expansion while showcasing amazingly large and interesting shaped leaves.

Both leopard plants and elephant ears can add attractive shapes and sizes to a garden.

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## Impatiens, Coleus and Caladiums



Karyl Norcross  
Mehlman  
GCMG 2022

A question I never asked myself before is “Why do some plants need a lot of sun and others do well in shade or partial shade?” The answer is simple: that’s where they grew up; it’s in their genes.

Millions of years ago, well before hominids walked on the earth, small precursors of seeds washed up on the waiting soil in areas around the equator where conditions were stable and friendly for their growth. And grow they did, nourished by the sun and nutrients washed up by the nearby rich tides. They grew, populated, and produced seeds of their own that were eaten and carried off to other regions by birds and other primitive creatures. From these early beginnings, clusters of green, nutrient rich foliage gave rise to trees and even forests through further mutations. They developed fruit as a way of reproduction and a source of food for other creatures developing in tandem. Some adapted to warm sunny areas while others thrived in the shady areas under trees and other obstacles limiting their exposure to the sun.

Plants that do well in the shade tend to have larger leaves to catch available sunlight, thicker stems to support them against ambient winds and other attacks, and deeper roots to save them from the elements and supply nutrients.

There are long lists of plants that thrive in the shade (see Texas A&M AgriLife Extension) and many are part of a genus named *Hosta* after 18<sup>th</sup> century botanist Nicolaus Thomas Host. *Hosta* is a genus of shade-tolerant, hardy plants originating from East Asia, widely grown for their ornamental, lush foliage. Known commonly as plantain lilies, these plants feature clustered leaves in a wide variety of colors and are prized for their versatility and ease of care. They thrive in partial to full shade and many can be harmed by full sun. They do best in USDA Zones 9 and 10.

One of the most popular shade-tolerant plants comprise the genus *Impatiens* with more than 1,000 species of flowering plants cultivated throughout North America and the tropics. Together with the genus *Hydrocera* (one species), *Impatiens* makes up the family *Balsaminaceae*. *Impatiens walleriana* (also called “busy Lizzie”) is a popular bedding plant that grows to one to two feet tall and can spread more than two feet wide. Pinching can produce dense plantings. This plant is available in a wide variety of colors. It is shade tolerant and listed as a perennial in USDA Zones 10 and 11 but is usually treated as an annual in more northern regions. *Impatiens* can

be propagated easily by stem or leaf cuttings or grown from seed and can winter over as an indoor plant until spring.

Another popular shade-loving plant is *Coleus* (*Solenostemon scutellarioides*), a genus of flowering plants in the family *Lamiaceae*, native to tropical regions of Asia and Africa. *Coleus* is a tender perennial that can grow up to three feet tall and is known for its vibrant, colorful leaves that come in a variety of shapes, sizes, and patterns. *Coleus* thrives in well-draining soil with a pH between 6.0 and 7.0 and requires consistent moisture but not over-watering. *Coleus* can be propagated through stem cuttings, leaf cuttings, or seed and is often used as an ornamental plant in gardens and indoor spaces. Its leaves can be used in floral arrangements.

Another shade-loving group with many of the growth characteristics and ability to grow well in shade are caladiums (*Caladium sp.*) grown for long-lasting, colorful foliage. Color combinations include various shades of red, pink, white, green, and yellow-green, with prominently colored midribs and contrasting margins. Large heart-shaped or semi-heart-



Caladiums Courtesy of Jennifer Ramirez

## “...add color and height to shady landscapes”

shaped leaves are borne on long petioles. Caladiums range in height from 12 to 30 inches and make striking plantings amid smaller plants, alone, or as border plants.

Caladiums are grown from dormant tubers (often called bulbs) of one to three inches in diameter surrounded by smaller bulbs. If the large central bud is permitted to grow, it will prevent the small surrounding bulbs from growing. The small buds can be removed with a sharp knife, planted, but will often produce a slightly smaller plant.

Caladiums can be left in the ground and treated as annuals that die in cold weather. To save tubers, they should be dug up in the fall before leaves have lost all their color, kept in a protected area, and allowed to dry for a week. Foliage should then be removed and bulbs stored loosely in sphagnum moss and kept in an area where temperatures do not fall below 60 degrees. If left in the ground, the bulbs can rot if winter brings much rain and cold. Surviving bulbs are usually smaller in number from original planting as well as in size.

These plants can thrive in the shade and produce foliage and blooms that add color and height to a wide variety of landscapes.

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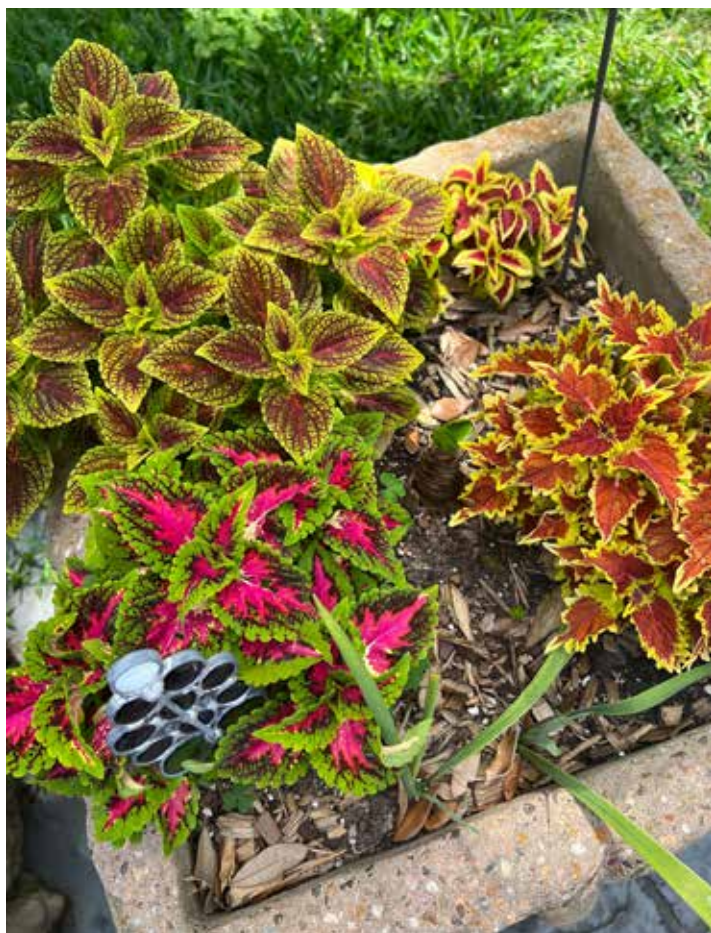
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For hosta see video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nFK1o-EXLCSk>



Coleus assortment MG Karolyn Gephart



Impatiens 'Hot Pink' double MG Karolyn Gephart

## Trees for a Shade Garden



Doris Durbin Heard  
GCMG 1990

If you have a garden with large, mature trees that create a shaded yard, you may be looking for ways to add color and visual interest to the understory. One effective solution is to introduce small trees that grow in partial shade. These trees can bring structure, seasonal beauty, and ecological benefits.

Many small understory trees offer flowers, berries, and attractive foliage that add color while also attracting butterflies, birds, bees, and other wildlife year-round. Below are 12 small trees that perform well in partially shaded gardens. Incorporating a diverse mix of trees not only enhances the beauty of your landscape but also strengthens it.



**Sweetbay Magnolia**  
(*Magnolia virginiana*)  
10–20 ft. tall, 10–15 ft. spread

Sweetbay is well sized for smaller yards and tolerates heavy rains. Thin semi-evergreen leaves have silvery white undersides and drop in winter before new growth emerges in spring. Fragrant, lemon-scented white flowers (4–6 inches wide) open over several days, followed by red seeds on small woody cones. It has smooth gray bark, multi-trunked form, and supports swallowtail butterflies and sweetbay silkmoths. *Courtesy Andy and Sally Wasowski, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center*

on-scented white flowers (4–6 inches wide) open over several days, followed by red seeds on small woody cones. It has smooth gray bark, multi-trunked form, and supports swallowtail butterflies and sweetbay silkmoths. *Courtesy Andy and Sally Wasowski, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center*



**Two-Wing Silverbell** (*Halesia diptera*)  
10–25 ft. tall, 10–15 ft. spread

This is a deciduous, rounded tree with yellow fall color. In spring, white, waxy, bell-shaped flowers hang from the branches, each with four petals surrounding a cluster of stamens. It prefers acidic, well-drained soil and grows at a moderate to fast rate. Wildlife enjoys the dangling fruits. *Courtesy Andy and Sally Wasowski, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center*

Wildlife enjoys the dangling fruits. *Courtesy Andy and Sally Wasowski, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center*



**Texas Wild Olive** (*Cordia boissieri*)  
12–24 ft. tall, up to 25 ft. spread

Fast-growing and evergreen

to semi-evergreen, with a rounded crown, this tree has large white flowers with yellow throats and bloom nearly year-round. It produces white berries that mature to purple and attract birds and small mammals. It is cold-sensitive and may freeze back below 20 degrees. *Courtesy Alan Cressler, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center*



**Mexican Buckeye** (*Ungnadia speciosa*)  
10–25 ft. tall, 12–15 ft. spread

This is a deciduous tree offering four-season interest. Fragrant pink spring flowers feature dark-tipped stamens. Glossy compound leaves turn yellow in fall. Decorative seed pods mature and may remain

on the tree for months. Winter reveals attractive speckled bark. Its seeds are poisonous. *Courtesy Andy and Sally Wasowski, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center*



**Texas Mountain Laurel** (*Dermatophyllum secundiflorum*)  
Up to 30 ft. tall, 6-12 ft. spread

Evergreen, slow-growing, and drought tolerant once established Texas mountain laurel has showy clusters of fragrant violet, pea-like flowers that appear in spring. It produces long seed pods contain-

ing bright red seeds, which are highly poisonous. This tree flowers best with more sun. *Courtesy Lynn Pyle, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center*



**Parsley Hawthorn** (*Crataegus marshallii*)  
10–25 ft. tall, 12–15 ft. spread

A deciduous tree with delicate white spring flowers with red stamens appear before the foliage, which resembles parsley, and red berries provide winter food for birds. Flaking gray bark reveals

orange tones beneath. Thorns offer protected nesting sites and the flowers attract butterflies. *Courtesy Stephanie Brundage, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center*

**Possumhaw Holly** (*Ilex decidua*)  
12–15 ft. tall, 8-15 ft. spread

## “...seasonal beauty, ecological benefits”



A deciduous holly with gray, twiggy branches and oval, toothed leaves. Female trees display brilliant red berries on bare branches throughout winter, attracting cedar waxwings and other birds. Best fruiting occurs with more sun.

*Courtesy Andy and Sally*

*Wasowski, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center*



### **Rusty Blackhaw Viburnum (*Viburnum rufidulum*)**

10–30 ft. tall, up to 35 ft. spread

Slow-growing and deciduous, eventually forming a single-trunk tree with a broad crown, this viburnum has green leaves that develop good fall color. Spring brings flat clusters of white flowers, followed by blue-black fruit in fall. Good drainage is key.

*Courtesy Andy and Sally Wasowski, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center*



### **Anacua (*Ehretia anacua*)**

Up to 50 ft. tall, 20–30 ft. spread

Anacua is evergreen with a rounded crown. It requires pruning early to develop strong trunks, and needs regular water

to establish but becomes drought tolerant over time. Fragrant white spring flowers are followed by small, edible orange fruit ripening from April to June. *Courtesy R.W. Smith, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center*



### **Southern Wax Myrtle (*Morella cerifera*)**

10–20 ft. tall, 10–15 ft. spread

This tree is evergreen and fast-growing, adaptable as a multi-trunk tree or large hedge. It is drought

tolerant once established. Female plants produce pale blue berries that attract wintering migratory birds and is a favorite of the yellow-rumped warbler. *Courtesy Joseph A. Marcus, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center*



### **Chalk Maple (*Acer leucoderme*)**

20–30 ft. tall, 15–25 ft. spread

A small, fast-growing deciduous maple with striking white bark and a rounded, often multi-trunked form. This tree prefers rich, well-drained soil. Small spring flowers give way to winged seeds, and fall color ranges from yellow to scarlet. *Courtesy of Carolyn Fannon*



### **Native Fringe Tree (*Chionanthus virginicus*)**

12–20 ft. tall and wide

Native fringe tree is deciduous and best suited to moist, acidic, sandy loam soils. Fragrant white flowers appear in drooping clusters in spring. It grows as a slender or multi-trunked tree with an irregular, rounded crown. Do not confuse this tree with the much larger Chinese Fringe

*Tree. Carolyn Fannon, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center*

### **Planting Tips**

Fall is the best time to plant trees, allowing roots to establish before summer heat. In heavy clay soils, amend with expanded shale to improve drainage and aeration, retain moisture. Plant at the proper depth, avoid piling mulch against the trunk, and choose locations based on mature size, root spread, and whether the tree is evergreen or deciduous. Most of these trees perform best with morning sun or filtered light.

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## Groundcovers for Low Light Areas



Donna Woodbury  
GCMG 2024

For those who have THAT area of their yard that is so shady that finding plants that will tolerate low light conditions is extremely difficult, this article is for you. Lawn grasses and many plants are especially difficult to grow in shade. They usually need at least six hours of sun daily. Shady areas under trees or around shrubs can be a problem to fill in with plants.

Groundcovers may be the answer.

Shade shifts daily, seasonally, and over time as trees or large shrubs grow. Carefully plan what to plant. Recognize types of shade to avoid problems. Many shade tolerant plants prefer the following conditions:

Four or fewer hours of full sun, preferably morning or evening

Dappled shade all day

High, shifting shade (for example, pine shade)

Difficult shade must be considered if:

Dense and dark (no sun reaches the ground)

In the shadow of buildings or fences

Dominated by tree roots

Poor soil conditions as in very wet or dry

Start by testing your soil's pH and nutrients. Most shade lovers like slightly acidic to neutral soil (pH 6.0-7.0). Mix in compost or leaf mulch to boost drainage and fertility, especially if your soil is heavy clay or sandy. Loosen the soil 6 to 8 inches deep.

Newly planted groundcovers need watering 2 to 3 times per week until established. After that, once a week during dry spells is usually adequate. Mulch to keep moisture in and temperatures steady.

Choosing the correct ground cover depends on your soil, moisture, and how much shade you have. The following options for groundcovers handle Texas heat and humidity while still filling in shade areas:

Asian Jasmine (*Trachelospermum asiaticum*). This fast-growing evergreen thrives in shade and is drought tolerant. It spreads rapidly, requires some pruning, and has small white flowers that bud in the spring and the summer. Jasmine creates a thick carpet of attractive interwoven vines. It does not require much water and heat is not a problem for this groundcover.

Frogfruit (*Phyla nodiflora*). This six-inch-tall native ground-

cover produces small purple and white flowers that attract pollinators. It tolerates foot traffic and various soil conditions. This plant does better in part-sun than in deep shade. It can be used to replace grass. It offers nectar to bees and a variety of butterflies.

Ajuga (*Ajuga reptans*), also called bugleweed. Ajuga exhibits leaves in shades of deep green, silver, purple, and bronze which can add drama to a shady area. This plant spreads quickly with rhizomes and forms dense mats in difficult soils. Ajuga grows well under trees with low-light conditions but thrives on moderate moisture. It puts off spikes with blue or purple flowers. This groundcover can grow from 4 to 12 inches tall. It spreads quickly with runners and helps keep weeds out of its area.

Liriope (*Liriope muscari*), or lily grass and liriope (*L. spicata*), or monkey grass, are tough and low maintenance. Liriope is a dark green evergreen groundcover and is drought tolerant. It needs well drained, sandy, acidic soil but will tolerate clay. Deep shade leads to leggy foliage and slow growth. Beauti-



Liriope MG Donna Woodbury

## “...depends on soil, moisture, how much shade”

ful borders can be designed using liriopse. This groundcover spreads with rhizomes and grows 9 to 18 inches tall. It can get leggy in deep shaded areas but makes a good border plant.

Dwarf lilyturf or mondo grass (*Ophiopogon japonicus*) This dark green groundcover loves part to full shade. It looks like liriopse but has thinner leaves. The soil needs to be rich and slightly acidic. It prefers consistent moisture and grows with rhizomes but spreads slowly. It can tolerate heavy shade and can grow up to 12 inches tall. It remains green year-round and grows in clumps.

Hostas (*Hosta* spp.), also called plantain lilies. These are perennials with several hundreds of varieties, colors, and sizes. They range from a few inches to several feet tall. Hostas propagate with rhizomes and prefer well drained soil amended with organic matter such as compost or rotted animal manure. They do not tolerate wet conditions. Slugs and snails love hostas. These plants do well in shaded areas but choose varieties suitable for USDA Zone 9b, such as ‘Sun Hosta’, ‘Elegans’, or ‘Patriot’.

Shade tolerant flowers can be added in containers if there is dense root competition for the area you wish to have coverage. Some shade tolerant species include caladiums (*Caladium x hortulanum*), coleus (*Solenostemon scuttellarioides*), and toad lilies (*Tricyrtis hirta*) that can be used in spaces as groundcovers for shady areas.

If you are uncertain of your choice of groundcover, soil amendments and identifying the amount of available sunlight, contact your local Extension agent or helpline. In Galveston County, the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension office is located at 4102-B Main Street in La Marque (<https://galveston.agrilife.org> or 281-309-5065). They can give information about soil testing and have a Gardening Help Desk answering gardening questions (281-309-5061 or [gcmghotline@gmail.com](mailto:gcmghotline@gmail.com)).

Now you are ready to fill that shady area in your yard with shade tolerant groundcover. Enjoy!

*For references, see Groundcovers page 46 in the herb garden.*



Ajuga MG Donna Woodbury



Jasmine MG Donna Woodbury

## DIY: Your Own Meditation Garden



Karen Lehr  
GCMG 2008

In many residential properties there is space to busy ourselves with beautiful flowerbeds, and productive vegetable gardens, as well as fruit trees and berries. But what about a spot to stop the busyness of life with a quiet space for meditation, contemplation, prayer, or peace? Many a devoted gardener could use a little down time to refresh inner tranquility.

Nearly anyone can have that kind of space. It may be a side porch, a nook between the fence and the shed, a piece of a side yard, or a seat under a shade tree in a quiet corner of the yard. A gazebo or secluded patio would work as well. Your spot could have an entrance such as a gate, a turn around a corner, or a sheltering shrub to give the space of feeling of being set aside or enclosed.

Keep in mind control of the elements. Will your space be in the shade or sun and will it allow cooling breezes in summer yet be protected from cold winds in the winter. These are things to be considered as you choose the location.

Even an open area that can't really be set aside can become a meditation space by adding carefully chosen elements. For instance, a chair, bench, or cushion can provide a place to sit or kneel. Meaningful objects to look at, religious, beautiful, or meaningful, can help set a mood and provide focus.

Plants also enhance meditation space. Shrubs or trees can cast shade, and plants with treasured memories can be enjoyed at length. Even if the area is quite small, vines or hanging plants may fit. And, of course, many plants can also contribute scent, a very powerful sensory signal to provide transition for the chosen spot.

Water can be a great enhancement to your meditative practice. Naturally, a pond would be great, but even a small solar powered fountain can add soothing sounds. If using a fountain, aim for one with a noticeable sound. Along with providing beauty and sound, water will attract companions. Birds will certainly come, especially if there is a bird feeder nearby. And was there ever a feeder with seed that didn't attract squirrels?

Use the elements that work for you and enjoy a place to find focused mindfulness.



A quiet corner with bench MG Karen Lehr



A personal object and water feature MG Karen Lehr



Personalize an area just for you MG Karen Lehr

# Journey of an Accidental Shade Garden



Norma Torok  
GCMG 2022

The window of my home office faces a very small landscape space that is shaded from the west sun. About three quarters of the area never sees the sun. I wanted to have something pretty to occasionally rest my eyes on when in need of a break. Thus, begins the journey of an accidental shade garden.

A fountain was installed in the corner of the garden that receives the limited sunshine. A few unutilized flagstones were added to provide texture and movement to the garden. I then planted some impatiens between some of the flagstones. I added two whimsical plastic pink flamingos to give it a tropical flair. Finally, I transplanted some variegated tradescantia from another garden to add texture and color to the shade garden.

Goal accomplished, the garden was a lovely place to rest my eyes. Unfortunately, some months later, the garden endured hard and fast pouring rains. The black clay gumbo of that garden held water for weeks with no sun to dry the soil. The spring and summer season of that year brought one rainstorm after another. The garden was waterlogged and the impatiens had root rot and died. Tradescantia tolerates water very well, so they survived. However, a transition to substitute plants that allow for an occasional boggy garden was in order.

To begin the transition, the next trial plant would be calla lilies (*Zantedeschia*). Three calla lilies, one each red, white, and pink, were planted. The callas gave the garden additional height and the white one bloomed like a bright light amidst the pink and greens in the shade garden.

Over the years, several varieties of annuals have been planted in what is now named the Flamingo Garden: begonias,

Gerbera daisies (*Gerbera jamesonii*), pentas, lamium (*Viola × wittrockiana*) and pansies. Most have been a palate of pinks, whites, and greens. The microclimate established by the shade and sometime boggy earth certainly leads to the success of a tropical garden. One spring, two pots of ti plants (*Cordyline fruticosa*) were added. The tall pink and green tropical plants complement and give additional texture, height and contrast to the garden; they thrive in shade.

About three years ago, two accidentals or volunteers popped up in the shade garden. One is a Japanese climbing fern (*Lygodium japonicum*). It is a lovely frilly fern; it is also very invasive. It can grow into and tangle in plants. I remove 75 percent of the plant growth and leave the other 25 percent to add a tropical look. The other accidental fern is a Southern wood fern (*Dryopteris ludoviciana*). This noninvasive fern can grow 2 to 3 feet tall.

This garden has added a biodiverse element to the landscape. It has also accomplished its purpose to provide a beautiful view for a peaceful break. There is freedom in allowing nature to have a hand in designing our gardens. The accidental ferns give the garden texture and appeal at an unbeatable price! And yet, the journey continues. Every year brings more surprise and excitement to refresh this garden with other shade plants to enjoy. Accidental shade gardens, they are a good thing.

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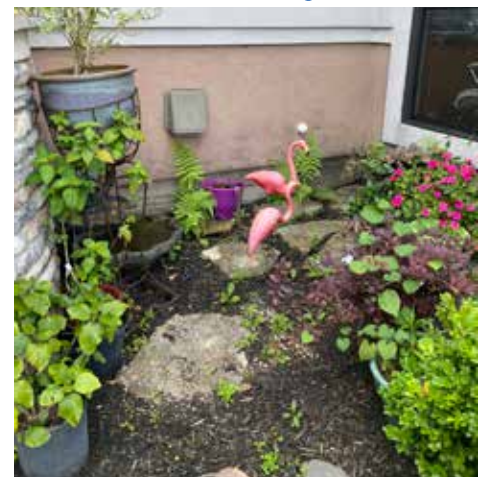
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Unexpected plants bring joy MG Norma Torok



Flamingos add a jazzy touch MG Norma Torok



View of the area MG Norma Torok

# Texas Superstar Plant: Whopper Begonia



Judy Anderson  
GCMG 2012

Begonias have been growing in Texas gardens for generations. You could visit anywhere in the state and see these colorful plants growing in the heat of summer. They are hardy and reliable bloomers, but they are small plants. That is until 2016 when the Texas Superstar® program introduced the Whopper begonia just in time for Mother's Day.

The Whopper (*Begonia x benariensis*) is a hybrid wax begonia and described as a “begonia on steroids.” It is a large plant with big leaves and big flowers that stand out from the plant creating a showy display. The plants are available in the traditional colors of red or pink with green or bronze leaves and are winners with gardeners for their versatility. In the garden bed they can be seen if planted in the middle or back while traditional begonias could only be seen if planted in the front. The Whopper does not have a problem with visibility in the landscape, and it also makes a striking container plant. One Whopper in a large container will be a beautiful addition to a patio as it has more blooms than other varieties of begonias.

Whoppers were trialed for three years around the state before earning the Texas Superstar recognition. They love getting in the ground early in the growing season and will thrive till frost. Whoppers will do best if their new roots are allowed to mature before the summer heat begins. They are hardy against disease and pests but can fall prey to overwatering. Prepare the planting area by adding organic matter and good drainage, but the Whopper is tolerant of most conditions.

Writer Katie Elzer-Peters reported the Whopper begonia variety was developed by Benary Seed Co. and licensed for sale with Ball Ingenuity. Benary, a European company, began a hybrid development program in 1995 and spent the following years with an active breeding program with the goal of creating big landscape begonias. Following the breeding program, extensive trials were conducted before marketing their successful Whopper begonia as a landscape plant.

The Whopper begonias are superstars wherever they are planted. Their big size, bright color, and love of heat make them an excellent choice for gardens on the Gulf Coast of Texas.

**Exposure:** Partial to full shade; can tolerate some sun.

**Fertilize:** Every two weeks during growing season.

**Height:** It reaches 24-30 inches with a 12 – 16 inch spread in the shade; the plant is shorter and more compact when grown in the sun.

**Plant Habit:** The plants grow in neat, rounded shapes easily filling borders, mass plantings, and containers.

**Planting time:** Plant early after any chance of frost. It will be hardier if it is established before the heat of summer.

**Spacing:** 10 – 14 inches.

**Soil type:** Ideally, prepare soil with organic matter and good drainage. The plant is tolerant of most conditions and moderately drought tolerant.

**Suggested uses:** Excellent for mass bedding, in mixed borders and containers.

**Special note:** Do not overwater. Water soil and not leaves to avoid leaf burn.

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A row of Whopper begonias at the Texas A&M AgriLife Research and Extension Service Center in Overton. Whopper begonias were tested in the field around the state for three years before being designated as a Texas Superstar plant. (Texas A&M AgriLife Research photo by Dr. Brent Pemberton)

# Texas Superstar Plant: Dwarf Mexican Petunia



Hazel Lampton  
GCMG 2019

My first experience with dwarf Mexican petunias began in the late 2010s. I was not a master gardener yet. I had just built a home and was looking for plants with bright color but not much height. It was spring and I went to my local big-box garden store to browse. There were so many plants that caught my eye, but I wanted something that would return every year. So, the salesperson pointed out the dwarf Mexican petunias and a few others. I liked this petunia right away. Sold! I planted them in the new front flower bed.

This bed had no sprinklers and received full sun. That summer we had a two-month drought. I was so busy watering my vegetable garden that I forgot about my petunias. When I finally checked on them, assuming they would be dead, they were okay. They looked a little distressed, but not dead. Since then, they have survived freezes, slight flooding, and additional droughts. They are resilient and I've loved them ever since.

The dwarf Mexican petunia is a small, hardy plant that is perfect for a groundcover and can be grown in Zones 8 to 11. Also known as *Ruellia brittoniana*, this petunia was named a Texas Superstar® by Texas A&M University in the spring 2002. It was first observed in a neglected space between a sidewalk and the street in San Antonio, where it was in full bloom despite being in a tough location. This plant is known for being adaptable, tolerating wet, dry and salty soils, and preferring full sun, although it can tolerate partial shade. It is disease, fungus, and insect resistant and rarely bothered by snails and caterpillars. Preferring warm temperatures, it will tolerate temperatures down to 25 degrees. In cold temperatures, the plant may go dormant and its leaves take on a reddish look.

## Soil

Plant dwarf Mexican petunias about 2 feet apart for best results. In spring and summer, fertilize the soil with a good slow-release fertilizer. The dwarf Mexican petunia likes well-drained soil, but will grow in wet, marshy soil as well. It should not be planted close to lakes, rivers, and the ocean due to its ability to become invasive. The soil should be neutral to a little acidic, though it will tolerate alkaline soil.

## Watering

Though the dwarf Mexican petunia is considered drought-tolerant, it prefers to be wet. The petunia will grow better if it is watered regularly. There is no need to wait for the soil to fully dry out between waterings.

## Trimming

When this plant's shoots start competing for light, trim back the older ones to let the new shoots thrive. Otherwise, the plant can become leggy. I have not trimmed mine much at all.

## Propagation

The dwarf Mexican petunia propagates both by dispersing seeds and through rhizomes underground. Planting this petunia next to a concrete or brick divider in your flower bed can help rein it in. Adding mulch to the flower bed makes it less likely to invade the rest of the space. Cutting off new shoots can be helpful in controlling the plant's size.

In conclusion it is easy to see why the resilient dwarf Mexican petunia is a Texas Superstar.

## Reference:

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



Pink bloom MG Carolyn Gephart



Purple blooms in Discovery Garden MG Jamie Hart

## Gardening Help Desk: Bugs on Tomatoes, Watering in the Heat



Ralinda Fenton  
GCMG 2023

**Question:** How do I eliminate pests on tomato plants?

Insects that cause the gardener grief when growing tomatoes include hornworms, psyllid, leaf footed bugs and whitefly. It is best to first identify the specific pest as that could change the approach. Sulfur and BT-based products are organic and will work on many of the insects. We recommend Integrated Pest Management (IPM) using the least amount of chemicals possible and encouraging natural practices when possible. Check plants regularly to keep damaging insects away. That is the best method of control. Many people will manually remove insects as they see them on their plants. If you aren't checking them daily, insects can easily ruin many tomatoes. It is necessary to look under leaves, in between growing fruit, around the stem and other hidden places or you will miss them. Watch for eggs and nymphs to keep the infestations at bay. Manual control for the leaf footed nymphs is to shake them off onto a tray with alcohol to kill them. Any bugs that miss the tray or cling to the tomatoes will need to be removed and squashed. The chemical in Sevin also works if all else fails. Please contact the help desk for specific pests from your garden.

Here are some good links for tomato plants in particular: <https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2013/09/EHT-043.pdf>, <https://agrilifetoday.tamu.edu/2025/05/02/protect-your-garden-from-leaf-footed-bugs/>

Know which insects are beneficial. Learn what insects to eliminate and which to encourage. <https://extension.tamology.tamu.edu/garden-pests/>

A good document for basic pest control for the garden can be found through this link. <https://agrilifeextension.tamu.edu/asset-external/easy-gardening-insect-control/> or the Texas Vegetable Growers Handbook has information in Chapter VI. <https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/vegetable/guides/texas-vegetable-growers-handbook/chapter-vi-insect-management/>

**Question:** What is the best way to water my garden as the temperatures rise?

Gardens in Galveston County need about 1 inch of water a week for best production. It is better to water one time for a longer period instead of several times. Allow soil to get wet about 6 inches below the surface. Watering daily is not recommended for in-ground gardens. Some plants require more water. Water is especially important for plants with fruits and

berries to maintain growth and production. The drip irrigation system is the most efficient method and keeps water off plant foliage. If using a sprinkler system, water in the morning so the foliage has time to dry before night. This reduces risk of foliage diseases. Determine the amount of water your garden is getting from sprinklers by placing some shallow pans in your garden and measure the amount collected. Before and after watering your plants, check the moisture of the soil. If the soil has moisture to the depth of your index finger, it does not need to be watered yet. After watering, check again to be sure you have a good depth of damp soil. By watering less frequently, you are allowing the roots to grow deeper and develop a stronger plant. The objective is to establish a good, deep root system to support your plants.

To get help for watering your trees, please contact us.

Find additional information about watering your lawn and garden. <https://stories.tamu.edu/news/2023/07/07/know-when-and-how-to-water-your-lawn-and-garden-this-summer/>

Find details specifically about growing vegetables including watering guidelines <https://agrilifeextension.tamu.edu/library/gardening/texas-home-vegetable-gardening-guide/>

Many resources are available online through <https://agrilife-extension.tamu.edu/> and at our Gardening Help Desk (281-309-5061) or [gcmghotline@gmail.com](mailto:gcmghotline@gmail.com)



Catch leaf-footed bugs at the nymph stage to reduce damage to fruit and the chance of a larger infestation *MG Herman Auer*

# Getting Started with Composting



Christie McGrath  
GCMG 2023

## What inspired you to start composting at home?

I cook many vegetables creating scraps and didn't want them to go the landfill. Also, I was always buying compost from the store, so it made sense to try to make some of it myself.

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

It is a rolling barrel style compost unit I purchased that has two sides: one to feed and one to cook. It was a little expensive to purchase but that helped me to be more committed to using it.

### Composting Process

**What kinds of material do you add to your compost?** I add kitchen scraps and fruit peels, fallen leaves, twigs, pruning waste, and hay but no weeds.

### How do you balance greens and browns?

If I'm adding small amounts of kitchen scraps, I won't always add browns with it but if I'm cooking for a large group and have a bunch of green waste to add, I try to be more conscious of also adding browns and newspapers.

### Do you measure your compost temperature? Not usually

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

I turn it every day but if I miss a day I don't worry about it.

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

I add my kitchen scraps most days and will always turn the barrel whenever I add to it.

### Challenges and Solutions

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

Not really a pest but I had an interesting experience where one time I opened the barrel and it had a million worms in it but a month later they were gone. Also at my previous house I had

an open compost bin and the critters were getting in but now with the closed barrel composter and a better fenced location I haven't seen any animals.

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

Pretty much the same as the rest of the year.

### Results and Benefits

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

I'm not sure how long it takes, I just look at it until it looks broken down.

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

Yes, I added my compost to my herb garden.

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

My herbs grew huge in the bed where I added compost.

### Personal Reflection

### What do you enjoy most about composting?

I enjoy doing something for my garden. The benefits are long term and I know wherever I add compost, like my herb garden, the plants are going to be taken care of for the season.

**Would you encourage others to compost?** Yes absolutely!

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

If you are short on space or worried about critters, try the barrel style composter.

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

Starbucks and other coffee shops can be a good source of coffee grounds and those are great to add to your compost. Also eggshells and the paper egg cartons, just tear them up and throw them in.



MG Wendy Oalmann and her rolling barrel composting unit  
MG Wendy Oalmann

## Those Hairy Caterpillars



Hedy Wolpa  
GCMG 2018

Spring weather brings those hairy caterpillars into our landscape and yards, especially to trees and woody shrubs. I see many photos of these caterpillars, as well as some captured specimens in jars and baggies every year, all of them common to our East Texas and Gulf Coast communities. Homeowners want to know how (or if) they can (or should) be controlled. The

three we address most often are fall webworm (*Hyphantria cunea*); whitemarked tussock caterpillar (*Orgyia (Hemerocampa) leucostigma*); and forest tent caterpillar (*Malacosoma disstria*). All are insects in the Lepidoptera order, and they are all frequently confused with other hairy caterpillars because of their similar habits and appearance. While they don't bite humans, their hairs can cause skin irritations or allergic reactions for humans.

**Fall webworm** is about 1 inch long and is identified by its long whitish/pale yellow hairs and a double row of black bumps called tubercles down its back. Its head is black or reddish. The adult moth is typically white with dark dots on its wings. You will see these caterpillars in great numbers inside multiple webs in the crowns of shade trees and ornamentals. The webs can be quite large, consuming many branches. The adult female moth emerges from her winter cocoon in spring and then lays hundreds of eggs all at once in early spring on tree leaves. Larvae will hatch and begin eating, usually in trees such as oak, redbud, pecan, elm, hickory, sweetgum, persimmon, and other fruit trees, all the while inside the silken webs they've constructed. They then leave the webs to pupate in other desirable trees and the life cycle continues, sometimes with several generations in one year. Although the lives of trees are typically not endangered, infested trees will suffer from defoliation and stress from April through late summer in Texas. As with many hairy caterpillar species, they have lots of predatory insect enemies, which is helpful in keeping populations mostly under control. It's difficult to treat an entire large tree or several trees due to their size and the hazardous nature of chemical sprays on other vegetation and animals. If control is imperative, the webs can be brought down with poles or nets and destroyed.

The **whitemarked tussock caterpillar** is seen on a very wide range of trees and shrubs from spring through summer, with up to three generations per year. They have chewing mouth parts, and can be found on fruit trees, roses, woody shrubs, pecans, oaks, redbuds, and willows. These hairy caterpillars are about 1 ¼ inches long with four bristly tufts of light tan

hair and one black stripe along the back. They also have red dots at mid-abdomen, followed by a pair of longer white hairy tufts at the back of the abdomen, and a pair of black hairy tufts near the head. The head is red-orange. The adult male moth is identified as white to light gray with dark wavy bands; females have under-developed wings. Masses of eggs appear in early winter right on top of the cocoons from which the adult moths have emerged. Like other hairy moths, they feed extensively on leaves until the host plant is defoliated, but unlike other hairy moths, they don't create webs, silks, or nets, but instead form silky cocoons in which they pupate. They have many predators that help control infestations, and rarely cause the demise of plants. Larvae on smaller plants may be treated with *Bacillus thuringiensis* or spinosad.

The **forest tent caterpillar** is 2 inches long at maturity, dark blue-black in color with yellow lines along the sides. There is a row of keyhole-shaped or footprint-shaped spots down the center, and the head is blue. Its body is marked by short and bristly dark hairs. This caterpillar also defoliates trees such as oaks and gums. Their eating habits can stunt the size of otherwise healthy trees. They don't make webs or tents while feeding, but form silky masses along tree trunks. The adult female moth is unremarkably brownish in color with a few darker brown lines in the wings. She lays her eggs, only one generation a year, in a huge mass in the fall on the trunk of a tree, where they'll hatch in spring and begin eating. They then pupate in silky cocoons. MG Pam Hunter sent me the photo in



Fall webworm Milan Zubrik, Forest Research Institute, Slovakia, Bugwood.org

## “...easy to control, clustering on a tree”

this article of a mass of forest tent caterpillars on her oak tree. These caterpillars are easy to control because of their habit of clustering on a tree. They also have predators, including parasites, and often simply decline in wet, cold weather. Trees are unlikely to die if infested, but their appearance is temporarily compromised.

The main take-away information regarding hairy caterpillars is that their presence is often temporary, and that they have many predatory enemies that help keep them under control. They rarely kill their host plant, but can stunt growth and compromise appearance. Since some adult moths will lay eggs in leaf litter in fall, and the eggs overwinter to hatch in spring, it's a good idea to clean up fallen leaf debris if you've had a previous infestation. Generally, leaf litter makes excellent mulch for your flower beds, so be mindful about spreading it around if you've had a previous hairy caterpillar infestation in your trees and shrubs. And consider this....hairy caterpillars are an excellent food source in spring for our bird friends that are feeding their young.

### References:

[https://www.canr.msu.edu/resources/comparison\\_of\\_the\\_eastern\\_tent\\_caterpillar\\_forest\\_tent\\_caterpillar\\_and\\_gyps](https://www.canr.msu.edu/resources/comparison_of_the_eastern_tent_caterpillar_forest_tent_caterpillar_and_gyps)

<https://tfsweb.tamu.edu/elibrary-item/forest-tent-caterpillar-fact-sheet/>

<https://texasinsects.tamu.edu/whitemarked-tussock-moth/>

<https://texasinsects.tamu.edu/fall-webworm/>



Forest tent caterpillars MG Pam Hunter



Fall webworm damage Ronald F. Billings,  
Texas A & M Forest Service, Bugwood



Whitemarked tussock caterpillar  
MG Pam Hunter

# Gardening 101: Halftime



Carol Hairfield  
GCMG 2020

It's halftime in the Nature vs Your Garden game. It may seem that Mother Nature is playing nice so far. Plants are sprouting nicely. Weather is fair. But let's not get complacent. For Mother Nature has tricks up her sleeve. Her teams are deep after thousands of years of evolving. She has three main teams: weather, disease, or insects. She might send in hurricane rains, viruses or as Michael Pollan in his book *Second Nature* described, "a land invasion of cutworms or aphids or paratroopers-cabbage loopers or airborne attack-beetles."

But don't panic, take a breath. Let's look at some ways to make our gardens winners.

Maybe start with a cold glass of sweet tea. If you have notes on your garden from last year, now is the time to refresh your memory of what she threw at you last year while you sip.

Now while there isn't much we can do about the weather; we can work to make our gardens healthier and therefore it is harder for Mother Nature to attack with diseases. Here are some recommendations from Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Easy Gardening series that will keep your garden healthy. Check your garden regularly for potential problems. Thin out sick or infected plants and give plants room to grow. Remove weeds or volunteer plants that can harbor plant pathogens. Stake, cage or trellis plants when possible.

Don't water excessively and if possible, water before 10 am. When you do water, wet soil up to a depth of 6 inches. Avoid working with wet plants and walking through wet soil. Mulches also help with conserving moisture and weed control. Don't forget to fertilize. In the growing season, fruiting plants need fertilization every 3-4 weeks, leafy greens every 4-6 weeks, and root veggies 6-8 weeks.

Now if Mother Nature brings in the critter team, we may have to be creative.

Start with building a barrier around plants. If you have deer or armadillos a fence might be what you need. If it's insects, a row of marigolds or mints or society garlic. Their scents defend against many bugs. Think of them as players with no deodorant. Then there are "trap crops." Put plants such as nasturtiums and devil's trumpets around the edges of the garden before planting your main food crop. These plants lure insects away. The theory is if they are eating those plants, fewer will eat your garden.

If team insect makes an "end run" around the barrier, then the first step is identifying the insect.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension has a publication [Field Guide to Common Texas Insects](#) that has pictures of insects and information about them. Information is also available from the extension office on Integrated Pest Management (IPM).

Some gardeners are okay with picking off hornworms and squashing them. Aphids, on the other hand, deserve a good blast of water from the hose. Identify your opponent. If insecticide becomes a choice, choose the appropriate product. Then follow instructions on the product's label. Remember to write down notes.

Finally, while you are now on the way to a second half victory, please keep in mind, Mother Nature is truly not our enemy; she is going to do what she is going to do to keep the planet in balance. It benefits all to find ways to work with her to keep our planet and our gardens healthy.

Next time, hopefully we will be harvesting, problem solving, and planning for fall.

*For references, see Gardening 101 page 46*



Marigolds Pixabay.com



Society Garlic Pixabay.com



Mint Pixabay.com

## May in the Discovery Garden



Sue Bain  
GCMG 2018

### Pollinator Habitat Has Pink Pop

Pretty pink plants pop in the Pollinator Habitat Garden. These are a few of my favorite native plants. The **Rock Rose Pavonia** (*Pavonia lasiopetala*) from the Mallow Family has a small pink flower that blooms from April through November. It provides nectar for bees, butterflies, moths and hummingbirds. **Winecup** (*Callirhoe involucrate*) is a vibrant magenta color that hosts the gray hairstreak butterflies and provides nectar for bees and butterflies. The **Winecup** blooms from March to June. And last, the **Gulf Coast Penstemon** (*Penstemon tenuis*) has lavender and pink flowers that bloom from March through May. Blossoms are enjoyed by bees, butterflies, other insects and hummingbirds. When blooms are spent from the **Winecup** and **Gulf Coast Penstemon**, both plants provide beautiful green foliage as groundcover. The pink pop would look great in any pollinator garden.



Winecup MG Vicki Blythe



Penstemon MG Sue Bain



Rock rose MG Vicki Blythe



Judy Anderson  
GCMG 2012

### Earth-Kind Garden Focus on Wonderful Tree

In spring, when you approach the Earth-Kind Garden one of the first plants to get attention is the Desert Museum palo verde (*Parkinsonia* x 'Desert Museum'). It is the focus of the drought-tolerant area of the garden which receives no additional water.

The tree was donated to the E-K Garden as a memorial for MG Denice Franke's mother by the Class of 2011.

The tree is upright with bright green branches and fern like lime green foliage. The tree produces many bright yellow flowers beginning in spring and lasting until fall. The 'Desert Museum' is a thornless variety making it different from other palo verde trees.

All who tour the DG in May should take a close look at such a wonderful tree with the beautiful blooms.



Palo Verde blooms MG Hedy Wolpa



Palo Verde tree MG Hedy Wolpa

# Ball High School Students Tour Garden



Vickie Hall  
MG 2023

The Master Gardeners' Discovery Garden in Carbide Park welcomed 14 juniors and seniors from Ball High School in Galveston on March 24. This annual visit from the school's Environmental Science class continues to be a highlight for both students and master gardener volunteers.

Under the guidance of their teacher, Kaitlin Buhler, students arrive with a strong foundation in sustainability and an understanding for gardening to enhance both communities and ecosystems. "I teach my students about human and nutrition and agriculture, so I incorporate the garden to give the students a frame of reference for choosing crops that suit the climate of an area, integrated pest management, the importance of soil, the importance of native plants and pollinators, and just so they can see what food production can actually look like," Buhler said.

Each year, these students impress the Master Gardeners with their knowledge, curiosity, and eagerness to lend a hand and perform a task at the garden. Their enthusiasm and engagement make them a true pleasure to host, and the Discovery Garden team looks forward to their visit every spring.



Extension Agent Boone Holladay provides information for visitors MG Janice Simonet



Pollinator Habitat area is introduced to students by MG Hedy Wolpa MG Janice Simonet



Students learn about strawberry research bed MG Janice Simonet



Students work in pergola beds MG Pam Hunter



MG Ralinda Fenton discusses what is in the orchard MG Janice Simonet



Strawberry research bed MG Janice Simonet

## What's Blooming in My Garden: Althea



Jamie Hart  
MG 2023

Althea Rose of Sharon (*Hibiscus syriacus*).

These are varieties of althea that I have growing. The single purple is a Texas Superstar! They bloom late into the summer and are cold hardy. A deciduous shrub in the Malvaceae (mallow) family, altheas can grow as tall as 13 feet. I like to keep them pruned to a maximum of a 6-foot shrub. The plants like six hours of sun but will tolerate light shade.

All photos by MG Jamie Hart



## Research Underway: Tomato Trials



Jim Bridgett  
GCMG 2024

In early January, three Galveston County Master Gardeners met to plan the 2026 tomato trial. This small group, led by “Tomato Guru” Ira Gervais, wanted to continue the long-standing tradition of a tomato trial to ensure that the tomato varieties that would produce best in Galveston County were researched and could be recommended with confidence to Galveston County home gardeners. Previously, tomato trials were managed by Texas Master Gardener interns. With the change of intern training from the spring to the fall, we had to develop a team of existing members to keep this research moving forward. The 2026 trial has 16 plants. Two beds were divided equally between determinate and indeterminate varieties. The chosen varieties include determinates: ‘Borghese’, ‘Bush Early Girl II’, ‘Bella Rosa’, and ‘Bell of the Ball’. Indeterminates include the following: ‘Parks Whopper Improved’, ‘Ar-

letta’, ‘Boy Oh Boy’, and ‘Red Snapper’. Two plants of each variety were planted and all except ‘Red Snapper’ and ‘Bella Rosa’ were grown from seed by Gervais. These two were also Master Gardener grown but were obtained from Discovery Garden’s greenhouse stock.

The team is led by Gervais and supported by Bob Siml, Jim Bridgett, Janice Simonet and Robert Rodriguez. Soaker hoses on timers are being used to ensure the trial tomatoes receive adequate water. Transplanting was done on March 3; harvesting is expected beginning in late April to early May and lasting hopefully into mid-June or even early July if the weather and insects (typically the stink bugs and leaf-footed bugs) allow. As with previous trials, all tomatoes harvested will be donated to local food banks.

Stay tuned for a follow-up report documenting all the results, including tomato production and recommended varieties.



MG Janice Simonet checks the plants *MG Ira Gervais*



Tomatoes continue to grow *MG Ira Gervais*



Tomato beds 1 and 2 in the Discovery Garden *MG Ira Gervais*



MG Jim Bridgett plants the varieties *MG Ira Gervais*

## Safety: Hydration



Ann Ross  
GCMG 2020

Gardening is so much fun, so let's not have a heat-related illness dampen that fun! We need to put into practice measures that will decrease the risk of a heat-related illness while working outside in our garden. Understanding what increases the chance of experiencing a heat-related illness allows us to take preventive measures to avoid an occurrence.

### What is a heat-related illness?

Heat exhaustion symptoms can include heavy sweating, weakness, dizziness, nausea, and an increased heart rate. People experiencing heat stroke can exhibit a high body temperature (104 degrees), confusion, absence of sweating, rapid breathing, seizures, and loss of consciousness.

### Who has the highest risk?

People over the age of 65, those who are overweight, and those with chronic health concerns are at risk. People taking certain medications, like high blood pressure medicine, are also at increased risk of having a heat-related illness because they affect the body's ability to cool itself. Living and gardening in an area with high humidity can also slow down a body's ability to cool.

### How can I prevent this from happening?

Try to work in the garden early in the day and late in the evening when the temperature is coolest, especially avoiding the hours between 11 am and 2 pm.

Hydrate yourself by drinking 2-4 cups of water every hour, even more with increased physical exertion.

Wear lightweight, light colored, non-constrictive clothing and a hat, preferably with a wide brim.

Take frequent breaks and rest in the shade or try using a portable fan to aid the body in cooling.

Prevent sunburn by using sunscreen, which can also help keep the body from overheating.

Applying cool, wet cloths to your body can also prevent your temperature from rising.

### Yikes, I think I've gotten too hot!

If you think you are experiencing some effects of too much heat, relocate to a cooler, shady area, use a fan, apply cool, wet cloths, and drink cool water. These actions should bring your body's temperature down. If symptoms don't improve or if they worsen, seek medical care.

Gardening in hot, humid, weather does come with some risk, but with some knowledge and preparation, a heat-related illness can be prevented, and gardening can continue to be a fun, rewarding, and safe experience for all. So, take precautions, stay cool, and don't melt in the garden!

### References:

"The Heat is On ... And Gardeners should take Precautions." OSU Extension. 6 August 2023. <https://extension.okstate.edu/announcements/grow-gardening-columns/august-6-2023.html>

OSHA Heat Illness Prevention Plan <https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/2021-07/Model%20Heat%20Illness%20Prevention%20Plan.pdf>

Occupational Safety and Health Administration, U.S. Department of Labor



Guard against getting overheated  
MG Sven Bors-Koefoed



Use a fan  
MG Linda Crowston



Apply cool cloths  
MG Linda Crowston

# Alfresco in the Discovery Garden

The Alfresco Dinner event was a magical evening in the Discovery Garden on April 14, 2026. It celebrated the many diverse areas of the garden and encouraged those attending to explore and discover what Master Gardeners have done with four acres. Music, conversation, dinner and a silent auction were all part of the evening that brought joy. Much time and creative planning, organizing and hosting the event turned into the Alfresco adventure. The creative team members were led by MG Judy Anderson who had the vision for this event.



Auction MG Vicki Blythe



Serenity garden MG Robin Collins



Appetizers MG Stacy Mills



Chat on Bench MG Vicki Blythe



Foursome stroll MG Vicki Blythe



Herbal drinks MG Judy Anderson



Sign in MG Stacy Mills



Pergola view MG Vicki Blythe

## Outdoor Classroom under Construction

A large fully loaded 18-wheeler trailer rig carrying steel was a welcome sight when it appeared at the Discovery Garden gate recently. The Dr. William MaCray Johnson Outdoor Classroom was becoming a reality. The steel structure has been erected. As the classroom is being built, photos will appear on the Galveston County Master Gardener Facebook page so that all can watch its creation.

According to GCMGA President Sharon Zaal, the concept of building an outdoor classroom was first introduced in late 2021 after the passing of Dr. William Johnson, 35-year horticulture agent with the Galveston County Texas A&M AgriLife Extension. The Dr. J Legacy Committee chose the classroom to be built in the Discovery Garden to honor him by furthering his passion for education.



Truck arrives MG Kevin Lancon



Placement begins MG Kevin Lancon



Steel set in pattern for layout MG Kevin Lancon



The shape appears MG Judy Anderson



Underway MG Judy Anderson

## Fairchild Tropical Botanical Garden - A Tropical Treasure



Barbara Lyons  
GCMG 2014

Many of our trips are driven by our favorite football team, Texas Tech Red Raiders. In January 2026, my husband Ed and I made the commitment to follow the team as far as they went in the College Football Playoffs. This level of fandom led us to a weeklong vacation in the Miami, Florida area for the Orange Bowl. While the team did not do well in the game, we found joy by visiting two gardens on the American Horticulture Reciprocal Admissions Program (RAP).

While many Florida gardens are open year-round and have no down season, winter months are a favorable time to visit Florida gardens since the weather is cool, humidity is low, insect pests are at a minimum, and there is no threat of hurricanes. Sunscreen and hat are still required, though.

Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden, home of the American Orchid Society, (Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden 10901 Old Cutler Rd, Coral Gables, Florida 33156, [fairchildgarden.org](http://fairchildgarden.org)), just south of Miami, was one of the two RAP Gardens. The other garden, Flamingo Gardens and Wildlife Refuge will be the subject of a future article. Fairchild began in 1936 with a wealthy accountant, Col Robert H. Montgomery, and his wife, Eleanor, and named after a friend the horticulturist, Dr. David Fairchild, whose team made the plan come to life. Montgomery also collected rare species of cycads and palms which can be viewed at his former estate, Montgomery Botanical Center, a garden focusing on the conservation and research on the same. Fairchild and his team visited places worldwide not only procuring plants but also tropical diseases like malaria along the way. Fairchild also left a legacy at his personal home and former trial garden in nearby Coconut Grove section of Miami called The Kampong. Time did not allow for visiting these two other historically interlinked gardens which are not on the RAP garden list. Unlike many botanical gardens, Fairchild was never an estate with home and developed formal gardens. Its 83 acres were developed by carving a botanic garden out of a swamp full of mangrove and cypress trees to fulfill the missions of education, research, and conservation.

These missions were clearly demonstrated on our visit.

The educational tram ride through garden hosted by a volunteer docent gave an in-depth view of the expansive property. The tour lasts for 40 minutes. Make sure to arrive near the opening time and procure free tickets to this special tour while supplies last. Make this your first activity of the day to avoid disappointment. The docent was engaging and pointed out many features that might be missed on a casual walk. If a tram

tour is not possible, the next best way to manage a visit is by using the garden phone app, Fairchild Botanic Garden. Be sure to familiarize yourself with it prior to arriving. The bright sun can make phone screens difficult to see. As a last resort, use the map provided at check-in.

Research laboratories are prominent in one section of the garden, and visitors cannot help but see them along the pathway to the popular butterfly exhibit, Wings of the Tropics. We were greeted along the pathway by a coordinator of one of the research and education projects,

The Million Orchid Project, with the aim is to reintroduce native orchids into the environment of South Florida through engagement and conservation education of Florida middle school students. The children learn lessons about environmental conservation and help with the planting and care of the transplants. The project has had some varying success in part due to plant damage caused by

squirrels and an unchecked iguana population. Other research includes a study funded by NASA demonstrating vegetable growing for long space missions, and one sequencing plant genomes.

While some gardens state that research is a mission, this one prominently displays the research to garden visitors.

Conservation is key at this garden and is represented in many ways. While the entire garden is demonstrating conservation



Chihuly sculpture MG Barbara Lyons

## “...carving a botanic garden out of a swamp”

of native and other tropical plants, one outstanding feature is the outdoor rainforest demonstration area, a one-of-a-kind in the United States. Various tropical groundcovers, shrubs, vines, understory and mature trees make up the vegetation as pathways through the area. Fine mist sprays of water stimulate the humidity of a rainforest environment. The rainforest also features various epiphytes such as orchids, bromeliads, and ferns.

As the home of the American Orchid Society, orchids play a prominent role in the garden with displays including hanging baskets on tree branches, in planters, and even planted in the ground. The environment is conducive to year-round display of these tropical beauties.

Buildings are mostly modern and many of the buildings, walkways and garden buttresses are made from native limestone giving a cohesive look to the property. Some walkways have imprints of tropical tree leaves in them making something beautiful as well as functional. Mature trees, planted in the 1930s make for an overall impressive display. There are large green spaces throughout the garden perfect for a special after-hours private event.

Other areas of interest include the butterfly section which releases exotic non-native butterflies into a 10,000 sq ft, beautifully landscaped enclosure. The bonus is that the Greenhouse Restaurant shares a wall of windows with the butterfly enclosure so eat lunch in the restaurant and while taking in the view.

Fairchild Tropical Botanical Garden is one of the more memorable botanical gardens I have visited. If in Miami vicinity, make sure to see this tropical treasure.

### References:

[Fairchildgarden.org](http://Fairchildgarden.org) [MontgomeryBotanical.org](http://MontgomeryBotanical.org) [ntbg.org](http://ntbg.org)



Colorful entryway planter and limestone MG Barbara Lyons



Entry sign MG Barbara Lyons



General water view of garden MG Barbara Lyons

## Visiting New Zealand's Rose Gardens



John Jons  
GCMG 2003

Whenever I travel internationally, I try to visit a local botanical garden, especially its rose garden. These gardens offer far more than beautiful displays; they provide insight into regional plant selection, landscape design, and horticultural practices shaped by climate and culture. During a trip to New Zealand, I had the opportunity to visit three exceptional rose

gardens located in three different botanical gardens in three different cities.

When I departed Houston, Texas, spring was just beginning, with plants emerging from dormancy and entering their annual cycle of growth and bloom. Upon arriving in New Zealand, however, I found myself stepping into the opposite season. Because the country lies in the Southern Hemisphere, it was early autumn, and many plants were slowing their growth as the main flowering season was ending. Even so, the gardens remained vibrant and well maintained, and the roses, though past peak bloom, were still impressive in their health, structure, and garden presentation.

One particularly noteworthy observation was that each garden proudly highlighted its commitment to environmentally responsible horticulture. Rather than relying on routine chemical sprays to control insects and fungal diseases, the gardens emphasized the use of Integrated Pest Management (IPM), a holistic approach that combines careful plant selection, proper cultural practices, and ecological balance to maintain plant health. The result was rose plantings that appeared both vigorous and resilient, even late in the season.

### Auckland Botanic Gardens – The Reflective Rose Garden

The first garden I visited was the Reflective Rose Garden located within the Auckland Botanic Gardens in Auckland.

Positioned along the edge of one of the garden's expansive open landscapes, the setting is peaceful and contemplative, allowing visitors to experience the roses within a broader horticultural context. The collection features New Zealand-bred roses, species roses, and heritage or old garden roses, reflecting both regional breeding achievements and the historical diversity of the genus *Rosa*.

A particularly appealing design feature is the integration of companion plantings. Annuals and herbaceous perennials are woven throughout the rose beds, softening the formal structure of the plantings while extending seasonal interest. These companion plants also attract pollinators and beneficial insects, illustrating how ornamental gardens can support broader ecological functions.

My video, "A Visit to the Reflective Rose Garden at the Auckland Botanic Gardens," illustrates this garden: <https://youtu.be/0aEXXRrL3eY>

A broader overview of the entire botanical garden can be seen here: "A Visit to the Auckland Botanic Garden, Auckland, New Zealand" <https://youtu.be/NYHRq5uON98>

### Wellington Botanic Garden – Lady Norwood Rose Garden

The second rose garden I visited was the Lady Norwood Rose Garden at the Wellington Botanic Garden in Wellington.

Set within a natural amphitheater and surrounded by forested hillsides, the garden is framed on three sides by elegant colonnades that enhance its formal character. My first view came from a hillside vantage point high above the garden, revealing the striking geometry of the design.

The garden contains 110 formally arranged beds, each planted with a single rose cultivar. The layout is a classic geometric design that creates both visual order and a clear framework for



Lady Norwood Rose Garden. MG John Jons

## *“...careful planning, sound horticultural practices”*

showcasing individual varieties.

Perhaps the most impressive horticultural aspect of the garden is its rigorous rose evaluation program. Before a rose is added to the permanent display, it undergoes a three-year trial period to determine whether it performs well under the garden's low-maintenance growing conditions. Only those roses that demonstrate strong vigor, disease resistance, and consistent flowering are ultimately selected.

In recognition of its outstanding design and horticultural standards, the garden received an Award of Excellence in 2015 from the World Federation of Rose Societies.

My video “A Visit to the Lady Norwood Rose Garden” illustrates the garden:

<https://youtu.be/nwQYaEuiT0c>

### **Queenstown Gardens – Roses Above Lake Wakatipu**

The third rose garden I visited was in the Queenstown Gardens in Queenstown. This garden occupies a small rise overlooking the stunning alpine waters of Lake Wakatipu.

The centerpiece of the garden is a magnificent Horizontal Elm, planted by members of the GirlGuiding New Zealand to commemorate the coronation of King George VI on May 12, 1937. The broad, graceful canopy of this historic tree provides both structure and shade, anchoring the rose garden within the larger landscape.

Individual rose beds are planted within a manicured lawn surrounding the tree, creating a relaxed yet elegant garden composition. The setting, framed by mountain scenery and lake views, illustrates how roses can be incorporated beautifully into a broader landscape rather than confined strictly to formal beds.



Queenstown Rose Garden *MG John Jons*

My video “A Visit to the Queenstown Garden's Rose Garden” illustrates this garden:

<https://youtu.be/IEAVkSUOqzQ>

### **Lessons for North American Gardeners**

Although my visit occurred near the end of the blooming season, these gardens offered several valuable lessons for gardeners in North America. Perhaps the most important takeaway is the emphasis on plant selection and sustainability. By choosing disease-resistant varieties and trialing roses carefully before planting them widely, these gardens reduce their dependence on chemical treatments while still maintaining exceptional displays.

Equally notable was the thoughtful integration of roses into the broader landscape. Companion plantings, well-designed garden structure, and strong horticultural fundamentals, healthy soil, proper spacing, and appropriate cultivar selection, allowed the roses to thrive naturally.

For gardeners in climates like ours in Texas, these gardens serve as a reminder that successful rose gardening is not simply about fertilizers or sprays. Instead, it begins with the timeless principles of horticulture: the right plant in the right place, supported by good soil stewardship and thoughtful design. When these fundamentals are followed, roses can remain not only one of the most beautiful plants in the garden, but also one of the most sustainable.

And perhaps that is the greatest inspiration these New Zealand gardens offer: proof that with careful planning and sound horticultural practices, rose gardens can be both spectacular and environmentally responsible for generations of gardeners to enjoy.



The Reflective Rose Garden *MG John Jons*

## Meet a Master Gardener: Hazel Lampton



Trish McDaniel  
GCMG 2001

Hazel Lampton declares that she is one to stay busy. This was made clear by trying to tuck this interview into her jam-packed schedule. It also became clear that she is highly competitive, boldly adventurous, and she possesses one passionate soul.

Born in Galveston, Hazel enjoyed growing up with her brother, two sisters, and various cousins. The family enjoyed crabbing off the rock groins, riding bikes, and exploring the island's beaches. Her father worked for Southwestern Bell, and her mother was a school bus driver, later retiring from Aramco Blind company as bookkeeper. An interesting note is that her maternal grandmother was also a bus driver on the island, back when the bus engines were crank started!

Her grandmother's island home, a high-raised cottage, received a marker from the Texas Historical Commission, and is known as the Victor Gustafson Home. It is now headquarters for the East End Historic District Association. Hazel's paternal grandfather was Virgil Jewell. He and his brother owned the Jewell Brothers Painting Company. They painted many landmark buildings, historical homes, and churches in Galveston, including St Patrick Catholic Church, Sacred Heart Catholic Church, and St. Mary's Cathedral Basilica.

Hazel credits her father as the inspiration for her adventurous spirit and her initial gardening chops. She remembers him growing an abundance of peppers, tomatoes, and cucumbers. The garden expanded greatly when he moved the family to two acres in Sante Fe, Texas when Hazel was 10 years old. At that time, Sante Fe had no pavement for bicycles, and she soon enjoyed her adventures via horseback. When she turned 12, she got her own horse - a responsibility which would inspire much of her future.

In her 30's, Hazel embarked on another passion, competitive jet skiing. Locally, she joined a group that raced the perimeter of Galveston Island on weekends. She later joined the International Jet Sports Boating Association, where she competed throughout the US. In 2003, Hazel captured the national championship on Lake Havasu, Arizona. She later traded in her jet ski for a Harley Davidson® motorcycle and toured the back roads of Texas for the next several years. Her favorite rides were the breathtaking routes through the Hill Country.

Hazel was an operator at Dow Chemical for 36 years until her retirement in 2017. Enjoying twelve-hour shifts throughout her career, Hazel immersed herself in training to become a member of the Product and Safety crew, serving 10 years as a medic and fire brigade member. Further embracing the work culture, she was an active member of the Dow barbecue team, the Engine One Cookers, specializing in brisket and ribs.

In 2007, Hazel purchased a large parcel of land on State Highway 3 in Texas City. Here she established Angel Country Horse Ranch, a Western riding outfit, where she continues to train horses and riders in techni-



Young Hazel on horseback *Courtesy of Hazel Lampton*

*“...highly competitive, boldly adventurous”*

cal and obstacle riding. She also boards horses and lends her arena to the Galveston County Sheriff's Department for practice and training for their mounted patrol. Included on the ranch are two donkeys, and nearly 40 chickens from which she has delivered over 200 dozen fresh eggs to local food banks. The ranch also serves as home, where she and her husband reside in their barndominium where her many awards are on display, including 18 championship belt buckles won in various riding competitions.

In 2010, Hazel took a four-month hiatus from work to hike the Appalachian Trail with two cousins. Practicing the nickname tradition on the trail, the trio was known as Hazelnut, Side Show, and Stick Man. They began their pilgrimage on a wooded summit in Amicalola Falls State Park, in north Georgia. Hiking over the connecting ridges of 14 states, their hard-earned finale was celebrated at the trail's end above the timberline on Mount Katahdin in northern Maine. Their completion of the 2187-mile trek earned them membership into the vaunted "2000-Milers Club. She laughed, recalling a mid-trail phone call to her sister, exclaiming, "I only have 700 miles left to go!" That same year, Hazel was featured in an issue of Hiker's Magazine.

The following year, Hazel met and married her one true love, Robert Lampton, a retired chemical engineer. She lit up while talking about him and said she remains head-over-heels grateful for this special gentleman. Yin to her yang, she said Robert prefers "glamping," to roughing it, though he did indulge her on their 300-mile raft trip through the Grand Canyon, sleeping on sand banks under the stars. Among his other attributes, Robert is a talented craftsman. One of his first projects on the ranch was to build an expansive roof to cover her open arena - providing great relief to both horse and rider.

Hazel first heard of the MG program while volunteering for a Galveston 4-H horsemanship project. As her property is host to many fruit and nut trees, plus a vegetable garden, she was eager for the in-depth study of their care and maintenance. She is part of the MG Class of 2019. In the Discovery Garden, she is a team member in the fruit orchard and Pollinator Habitat. Under the tutelage of MG Herman Auer, Hazel studied fruit and nut tree care, including T-bud and wedge grafting techniques. Serving on the Speaker's Bureau, she teaches grafting classes to the public.

As you can see, it just doesn't stop with her. As her mighty journey continues, here's to the future adventures of Hazel.



One of her many buckles MG Trish McDaniel



Hazel grafting in one of her presentations MG Database

## Green Thumb Book Review: *Second Nature: A Gardener's Education* by Michael Pollan



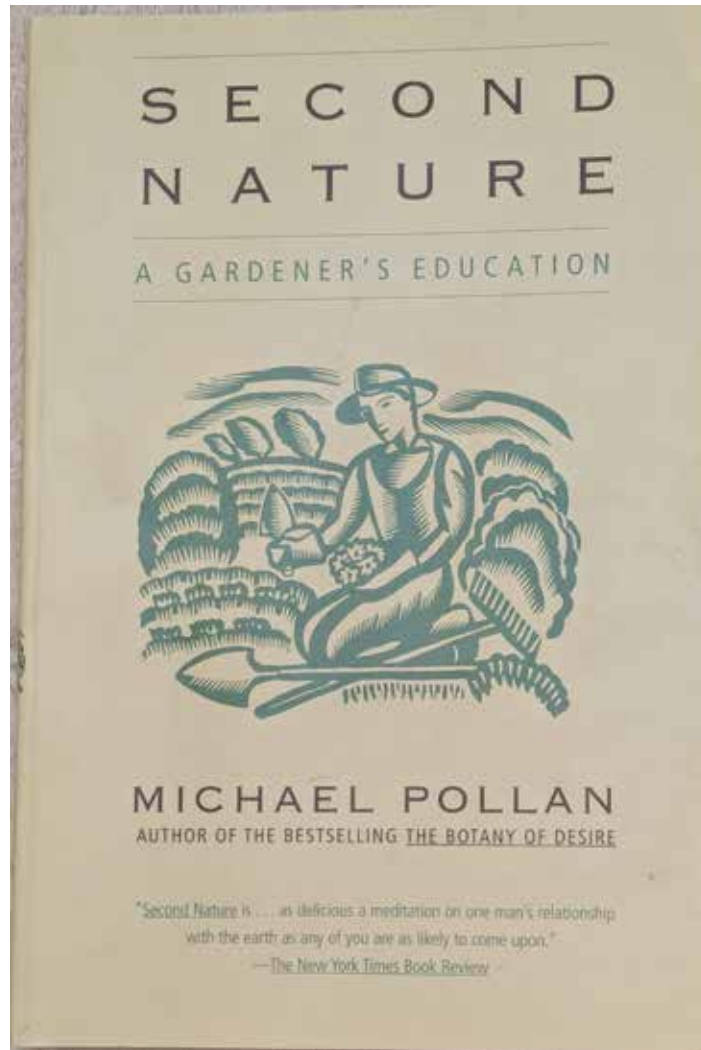
Cheryl Brueggeman  
GCMG 2014

Michael Pollan is a well-known American writer, journalist, professor of journalism, and activist. He has written eight books, six that were New York Times bestsellers, plus numerous essays and articles for various publications. Many people are familiar with his more recent books, *Food Rules* and *The Omnivore's Dilemma*. I was excited to find one of his earlier books, *Second Nature*, on this year's book list.

If you are looking for a traditional gardening book with information on specific plants and how to care for them, you will be disappointed. This is a series of essays that provide a sociological and philosophical examination of the relationship between nature and humans throughout various times in history. The essays are arranged by season and offer a look into how Pollan's ideas and beliefs in gardening practices evolves through the years as he attempts to shape his newly acquired property, a former dairy farm in Connecticut.

The book begins with an introductory paragraph as well as a chapter on some of his childhood gardening experiences in which he lays out the differences between his maternal grandfather's philosophy of gardening and his own father's more radical approach. His grandfather, who emigrated to New York from Russia after WWI, had more of a rigid way of gardening. He valued good soil and orderly rows. He grew for production and considered land a valuable source of wealth. Pollan's father, however, ascribed more to the wilderness theory of gardening. He didn't particularly care about the outdoors and wasn't overly concerned with keeping a tidy

landscape. He quit mowing his lawn one summer, much to the horror of his neighbors. The community coerced a next-door neighbor to try to convince him to conform. Pollan's father responded by revving up the mower, mowing strips in the grass to make his initials, then putting the mower back in the garage never to be used again.



MG Cheryl Brueggeman

Most of the chapters are light-hearted musings. I especially enjoyed reading about his encounters with a pesky woodchuck who seemed to think that the vegetables that were planted were for his benefit. You will find chapters on mowing, composting, weeds, harvesting, and planting a tree. Some chapters were a bit more tedious, such as the one that detailed some of the history of roses. There were references throughout the book to Emerson and Thoreau. I also found myself using the dictionary frequently to look up words I had rarely encountered before. Concatenation was one such word. In case you are curious, some synonyms include connecting, joining, combining, and merging.

On the whole, I believe this book makes for a good read and is certainly relatable to those that have ever gardened. However, one doesn't need to be a gardener to appreciate the questions and curiosity

of a person who is trying to understand and strike a balance between nature and the human tendency to want to tame it. There is just enough humor in it to soften the sometimes-lofty ideals Pollan hopes to achieve. It may just evoke some early gardening memories of your own.

*Green Thumb Book Club is a Galveston County Master Gardener group who selects, reads and discusses books with gardening themes.*

## Seasonal Bites: Fresh Dressing Makes A Great Salad Better



Briana Etie  
GCMG 2017

In this “Shade” issue, I wanted to remind gardeners that leafy greens grow best in partial shade, which helps keep them tender and prevents early bolting. Give your lettuce plants some evening shade.

I also wanted to “throw shade” on store bought salad dressings. Many store-bought salad dressings rely on cheap, highly processed seed oils like soybean, canola, and sunflower oil. These oils are often high in inflammatory omega-6 fatty acids and may contain artificial additives and preservatives, which can undermine the nutritional value of your salad.

Making your own vinaigrette can be very satisfying. I don’t keep store-bought salad dressing bottles in the refrigerator door anymore, nor do I have to worry about checking their expiration dates. Most of the ingredients in homemade dressings are staples in our pantries and the fresh ingredients are items I grow or buy often. The standard, classic ratio for a well-balanced vinaigrette salad dressing is 3 parts oil to 1 part acid (3:1). This ratio ensures the dressing is not too greasy or too acidic. For a more intense, brighter, or more acidic dressing, many chefs prefer a two to one



### Italian Dressing

#### Ingredients:

6 tablespoons cold-pressed extra virgin olive oil  
3 tablespoons red or white wine vinegar  
1 teaspoon Dijon mustard  
1–2 teaspoons honey (agave may be substituted)  
1 finely chopped shallot  
1 grated garlic clove  
1½ teaspoons dried oregano  
¾ teaspoon dried thyme  
1½ tablespoons finely chopped fresh parsley or basil  
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste  
Two teaspoons of Italian seasoning may be substituted for the dried herbs./

**Note:** Emulsification is the process of combining two liquids that do not naturally mix—such as oil and vinegar—into a stable, uniform mixture. This is achieved through agitation (whisking or blending) and the use of an emulsifier. Dijon mustard and honey support emulsification; honey alone may result in separation after approximately 30 minutes. Mayonnaise may be used as an alternative emulsifier if desired.

**Directions:** In a bowl, whisk together the vinegar, Dijon mustard, and honey. Slowly drizzle in the olive oil while whisking continuously until the dressing is fully emulsified and creamy. A blender may also be used for this step. Once emulsified, stir in the dried herbs, shallot, garlic, and fresh herbs. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

For best results, use immediately. If necessary, refrigerate leftovers for up to one week. Yields enough for 3–4 side salads

or one to one. A two to one ratio is better for milder acids, such as aged balsamic, rice vinegar, or citrus juices.

I use extra virgin olive, avocado or walnut oils. The acids most often used are lemon juice, lime juice, red or white wine vinegar, balsamic, apple cider and white vinegar. Sweeteners, such as sugar, honey, maple syrup, or agave are used to balance the acidity and harshness of the vinegar. Asian Vinaigrettes often use a 3:3:1:1 ratio (3 parts oil, 3 parts soy sauce, 1 part vinegar and 1 part sweetener). My favorite Asian vinaigrette contains walnut oil, rice wine vinegar, low sodium soy sauce with a dash of sesame oil and a splash of orange juice. Adding garnishes of mandarin oranges and wonton strips give Asian salads the textures I love. *I hope you enjoy these recipes.*



### Golden Girl Salad Makes 2 dozen

#### Ingredients:

2 Tbsp. fine sea salt  
4 ears corn, shucked  
1/2 head green cabbage, finely shredded  
3 to 4 multicolored carrots, finely chopped  
1 yellow bell pepper, seeds and ribs removed, finely chopped  
1 bunch green onions, white and light green parts finely chopped  
1 bunch chives, finely sliced  
1 c. cherry tomatoes, halved lengthwise, cut into thirds  
1 c. Sungold tomatoes, halved lengthwise, cut into thirds  
2 cloves garlic  
1/4 c. extra-virgin olive oil  
Juice of 2 lemons  
2 Tbsp. distilled white vinegar (or white wine vinegar)  
1 tsp. garlic powder  
1 tsp. kosher salt  
1/2 tsp. freshly ground black pepper  
1/4 tsp. ground turmeric  
Corn tortilla chips, for serving

#### Directions:

Fill a large pot with cold water and stir in sea salt. Heat over high heat and add corn. Bring to a rapid boil, then remove from heat and cover pot; set aside until ready to use.

Meanwhile, in a large bowl, toss cabbage, carrots, bell pepper, scallions, chives, cherry tomatoes, and Sungold tomatoes to combine.

Carefully remove corn from pot and cut kernels off cob (I like to use a fork to anchor it and cut it inside a bowl, so it doesn’t go flying); reserve ½ cup corn for the dressing. Add remaining corn to bowl with vegetables.

In a high-powered blender, blend reserved ½ cup corn, garlic, oil, lemon juice, vinegar, garlic powder, kosher salt, pepper, and turmeric until smooth. Pour dressing over salad and toss to combine. Serve with chips alongside.

# Texas Superstar Plants Introduced During Tour



Sue Bain  
GCMG 2018

The Texas Superstar Trail Tour was held April 11 with members of the TSS team showing attendees the wide variety of TSS plants in the Discovery Garden. After the tour the group was given a hands-on activity in propagation. Those participating took home their new plants. The TSS team who developed and presented the tour included (see group photo)

Briana Etie, Trish McDaniel, Sue Bain, Karen Nelson, Judy Anderson and Bettye Vogler. (Second row) Vickie Hall, Jamie Hart, Steve Holliday, Hedy Wolpa and Hazel Lampton.



TSS group MG Steve Wright



MG Sue Bain discusses TSS characteristics MG Jamie Hart



Propagation activity MG Steve Wright



MG Karen Nelson points out superstar plants in the pergola area MG Steve Wright



Superstar plants in the Earth-Kind® Garden were pointed out by MG Judy Anderson  
MG Steve Wright

# GCMGA Wins 3 State Awards



Sue Bain  
GCMG 2018

Congratulations to the Galveston County Master Gardener Association for being awarded first place in the following categories during the Texas Master Gardener Association Search for Excellence Award Ceremony:

### Outstanding Association

(Recognized for programs and/or projects of significant educational value to the community).

### Outstanding Individual: MG Donna Merritt

(Recognized for important involvement and contributions).

### Outstanding Workshop/Presentation: Herb Seminar Series

(Recognized for an educational program which is a teaching opportunity presented by Master Gardeners to the community to provide educational information about a horticultural topic).



Four Galveston County Master Gardeners were awarded Shining Star Awards at the Volunteer Appreciation Celebration April 20, 2026. The recipients are MGs Hedy Wolpa, Alice Rodgers, Marilyn Haupt, and Pam West (not pictured) shown with Extension Agent Boone Holladay. Courtesy of MG Brandi Keller



MGs Eddie Cocetti and Bob Siml worked the Ask an MG booth for Heritage Gardeners in Friendswood April 25. MG Karolyn Gephart



MG Joyce McMillan spoke on growing orchids successfully at the Heritage Gardeners Spring Garden Presentations. She was joined by Larry Baker. Both McMillan and Baker are officers in the Galveston Bay Orchid Society. MG Karolyn Gephart

# 2026 Master Gardener Recertification Hours

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

Date	Name of Program	Speaker	MG CEUs	# MGs
1/8/2026	Lunch & Learn - Sunflower Project	Hedy Wolpa & Team	0.50	41
1/10/2026	Wedge Grafting	Hazel Lampton	2.00	6
1/10/2026	Growing Great Tomatoes, Pt. 2	Ira Gervias	1.00	7
1/13/2026	MGA Jan. Mtg: Looking Ahead	Kevin Lancon, Sue Bain	2.00	47
1/15/2026	Safety Day in the Discovery Garden	MG Safety Team	3.00	44
1/22/2026	Lunch & Learn - Junior Master Gardeners	Tina Woods	0.50	27
1/29/2026	Lunch & Learn - Texas Superstar Program	Judy Anderson	0.50	40
2/7/2026	Seminar - Spring Vegetables	Kevin Lancon	2.25	14
2/7/2026	Seminar - Designing & Growing an Herb Garden	Donna Merritt, Briana Etie	2.00	7
2/10/2026	MGA Feb Mtg: VMS Update	Hedy Wolpa, Melissa Terrell	3.00	45
2/10/2026	Citrus Problems in Texas	Janice Teas	1.00	25
2/12/2026	Lunch & Learn - VMS Update	Hedy Wolpa	0.25	33
2/14/2026	Seminar - Figs Garden Tour and Q&A	Barbara Canetti	1.50	2
3/5/2026	Lunch & Learn - Spring Fling Plant Sale Review	Kevin Lancon	1.00	38
3/7/2026	Seminar - Plant Propagation	Briana Etie, Donna Merritt	2.00	7
3/7/2026	Seminar - Growing Avocados	Hazel Lampton	2.00	6
3/10/2026	MGA Mar Mtg: Living Classroom	Kat Grier	2.25	38
3/10/2026	GCMGA BOD Mtg	BOD	1.25	12
3/12/2026	Lunch & Learn - Texas Superstars Sold in Sales	Sue Bain	0.50	31
3/19/2026	Lunch & Learn - Butterfly Pea Vine	C. McGrath, D. Merritt	0.50	31
3/24/2026	Training - Speaker Education Protocol	Vickie Hall, Angela Farris	2.00	27
3/26/2026	Lunch & Learn - March Madness Plant Sale Review	Kevin Lancon	0.50	37
4/2/2026	Lunch & Learn - Fire Safety	La Marque Fire Dept	1.50	35
4/11/2026	Seminar - Texas Superstar Trail & Talk	Sue Bain & team	2.00	
4/11/2026	Seminar - Blackberry & Blueberry Talk & Tour	Monica Martens	2.00	
<b>2026 Recertification Hours for MGs</b>			<b>Total CEUs (Hours)</b>	<b>37.00</b>
Last Updated: April 13, 2026			MG Only Activities (# of MGs)	600

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

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# 2026 HORTICULTURE MAY - JUNE EVENTS

TEXAS A&M  
**AGRI**LIFE  
EXTENSION

GALVESTON COUNTY

MAY  
9

## GROWING GREAT TOMATOES PART 3

*Stress Management*

Speaker: Galveston County Master Gardener,  
Ira Gervais

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MAY  
9

## PLUMERIA

*Propagation & Winterizing*

Speaker: Galveston County Master Gardener,  
Loretta Osteen

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MAY  
16

## NATIVE PLANTS & BENEFICIAL INSECTS

*Talk & Tour*

Speakers: Galveston County Master Gardeners,  
Sue Bain and Hedy Wolpa

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JUN  
13

## VEGETABLE SERIES

*Growing Okra*

Speakers: Galveston County Master Gardeners,  
Wendy Baldwin and John Mitchiner

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JUN  
13

## HERB SERIES

*Herbs for Beauty*

Speakers: Galveston County Master Gardeners,  
Donna Merritt and Briana Etie

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## 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.



# Judy's Corner: Galveston County Master Gardener Monthly Membership Meetings



Judy Anderson  
GCMG 2012

**May 12, 2026**

## Galveston County Master Gardeners Graduation and Recognition

It is time for the graduation of the 2025 Class of Master Gardeners and recognition of Master Gardeners. It is always a festive gathering for this event at the home of Mikey and Allen Isbell. Mark your calendar for May 12 when the social will begin at 5:30 pm followed by dinner. The graduation and recognition will be an opportunity to honor our friends.

Bring a potluck dish to share for the event. Appetizers, salads, sides and desserts brought by MGs will accompany brisquet provided by the hosts. The gazebo will be set up with beverages and appetizers.

The garden will be blooming, and guests can enjoy the koi pond, plumerias and daylilies.

Enjoy a tropical evening in Galveston with the new Master Gardeners from the Class of 2025.



The beverage tub MG Linda Crowston

**June 9, 2026**

## Backyard Meeting

### Home of Steve Holliday and Robin Brey

June will be the first backyard meeting this year and it will be a fun opportunity to observe Steve Holliday's Earth-Kind gardening practices at work. According to Steve, he uses his front yard to grow vegetables in raised beds. He also has an area for rainwater harvesting and a composting area. The potluck dinner will be enjoyed on the patio. Steve and Robin live in El Lago. There will be a few twists and turns, but it will be a destination well worth the drive.



Host MG Mikey Isbell MG Linda Crowston



MG Steve Holliday and grands Courtesy of Steve Holliday



Raised beds in the front yard with rain barrels MG Steve Holliday

### Galveston County Master Gardeners 2026 Monthly Meetings

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	Sunshine Center, Dinner at Kritico's afterwards
September 8	PM	Paul Winski, Presentation of Earth Kind Program Updates; potluck
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

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