

THE NOSTALGIA GARDENING ISSUE

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Galveston County

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OF TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION SERVICE



MG Kevin Lancon
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Nostalgic Gardening and the 'Creole' Tomato

When I think of nostalgia gardening, I think of early memories of gardening in Louisiana and my grandfather's excitement over his 'Creole' tomatoes in his garden. There was something magic about the 'Creole' tomato and it was as if he was the only one who could grow these magic jewels. After doing a little research to find out more about the Louisiana 'Creole' tomato, I found out that the history is rather mysterious. It seems that South Louisiana farmers referred to their tomatoes as 'Creole' simply to distinguish them from other tomatoes grown outside of the south Louisiana area. LSU did in fact develop a cultivar called 'Creole' in the 1960s but it is believed that the tomato most likely referred to by the farmers as 'Creole' was a Celebrity tomato, the same tomato variety that is still a favorite of many tomato growers. The Louisiana Department of Agriculture has not regulated how the name 'Creole' tomato can be used, but it's well accepted that any vine-ripened tomato grown in South Louisiana can be called 'Creole'.

My grandfather's excitement and the excitement that the entire family had around those tomatoes and gardening in general, made a big impression on me then and still does today. Fast forward a few generations and now I'm the one doing backflips over my homegrown tomatoes with the only

difference being that it's the 'Mortgage Lifter' tomato (my personal favorite) and not the 'Creole' that is creating the excitement. My daughter has taken note of my excitement and now is obsessed with the 'Mortgage Lifter' as well.

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/galvcountrymg/> 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



'Mortgage Lifter' tomato GCMG Database



MG Karolyn Gephart
Editor,
Gulf Coast Gardening

Plant Flowers Today with Old-Fashioned Histories

Foxgloves, delphinium, hollyhocks, pansies, forget-me-nots....all old-fashioned flowers that many remember in gardens during their childhood. Fragrant roses and beds of daisies, irises, geraniums and hydrangeas. Nostalgia Gardening is covered in this issue and the photos provide a closeup view of the lovely way they fit into garden beds. Luckily, these flowers from the past are selling in markets today. I recently had a basket next to me at a local grocery store that sells bedding plants that had three large potted (and blooming) delphiniums, a stunning bloom on each. Hydrangeas were in the spotlight for Mother's Day and beyond and their colors seem to be bolder and brighter, Clever yard art can make a picturesque setting among these lovely plants. This issue also offers more. Check out five varieties of potatoes that grow well in this area. See a closeup photo of a longhorned beetle spotted in the Discovery Garden, view photos of the new

certified Master Gardener Class of 2025 and read why 1000 worms will be part of a new program. Travel vicariously to Flamingo Gardens in Miami. Why go out in the heat? Stay inside in the AC with this new issue. Enjoy!

Karolyn Gephart



Dove lacecap hydrangea MG Vickie Hall

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Cover photo
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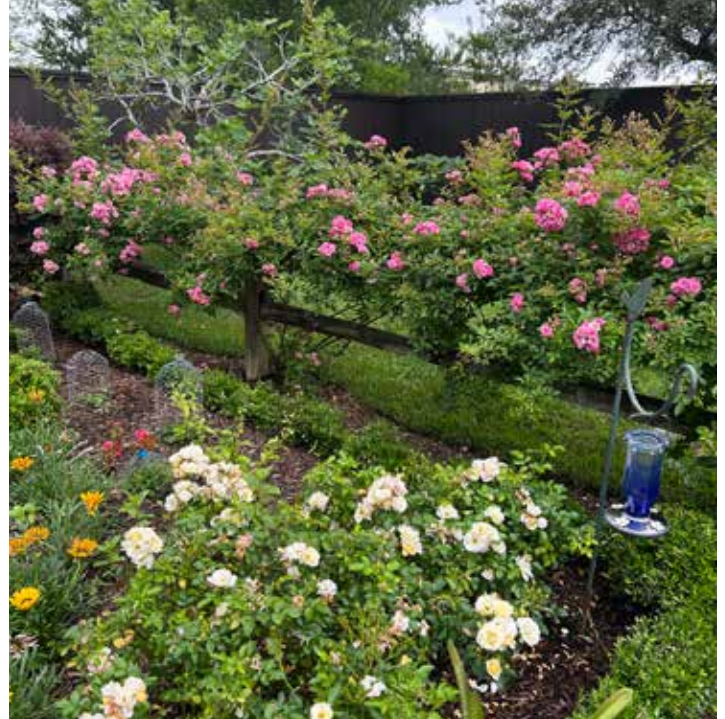
Memories of a Different Place, Time



Judy Anderson
GCMG 2012

Memories-what an impactful word. Memories can bring us comfort, distress, or glee. When applying them to a garden, it can remind us of a different place and time. It may have been during childhood when we felt the comfort of being in the garden of a beloved grandmother, mother, or neighbor. Perhaps we worked in the garden helping to plant vegetables, pull weeds, or harvest fruit. Other memories may include joyful times playing under the enclosed leaves of a weeping willow where imaginary worlds could be created. Gardens can connect us to our past and provide a sanctuary from any stress in our busy life.

While working at the Discovery Garden recently, several of us were taking a water break and began discussing nostalgia gardening. As a child, MG Vickie Hall remembers her grandmother deadheading petunias-then showing her how to save the tiny seeds so they could plant them next year. Living in Louisiana, she learned to love the Louisiana iris that her grandmother grew. Vickie was driving to work one morning in her suit and heels when she saw an iris on the side of the road in a color she had never seen. She had to pull over and grab it for her collection, a passion for Louisiana residents. MG Steve Holliday shared memories from his childhood in the garden with his grandparents pulling weeds and harvesting vegetables. Today, he spends time in his garden with his



Fragrant, beautiful roses at Antique Rose Emporium
MG Judy Anderson

grandchildren exploring the rudbeckia, watching the tomatoes grow, and harvesting some tasty treats.

As adults, many of us find comfort in creating gardens that reflect the memories from our childhood. This is such a popular trend it has been dubbed “nostalgia gardening.” Nostalgia may be looking at the past with “rose colored glasses” or the “good old days.” It can be a reassuring and comforting response to loneliness and stress. Nostalgia is a term created by Johannes Hofer, a Swiss physician, to describe the illness associated with soldiers living away from home during the late 17th century.

When creating a garden based on nostalgia, the goal is making it cozy by using vintage and rustic influences, fragrant blooms, and heirloom plants. A manicured landscape will not bring back the memories that have aged with time. Nostalgia gardening is where you will find old-fashioned plants like roses, hydrangeas, and peonies. It can include plants with a fragrance like lavender, wisteria, and lilacs. Often there will be a winding path, a fountain, or bird bath that brings back those memories of happier times. A beautiful example is the Antique Rose Emporium. Throughout the property are features designed with plants and rustic buildings found in Texas history - a cabin, a cottage, a windmill, and a church all landscaped with old roses and “passalong plants.”



Creative hardscapes MG Judy Anderson

“....rustic influences, fragrant blooms”

In the Master Gardener Green Thumb Book Club meeting in February, we were discussing *Second Nature* by Michael Pollan, who wrote about his grandfather's vegetable garden and his love of roses. As the author developed his own garden later in life, there were reflections of conversations with his grandfather about gardening. He also wrote about the two gardens we tend; the real one with weeds, pests, and “plagues” and the one that lives in our memory where we find joy, peace and no chores.

MG Briana Etie volunteered to bring vegetable soup to the meeting. It was her mother's recipe using whatever vegetables were in their garden. Briana said that when she makes the soup, she feels like her mother is peeking over one shoulder and her grandmother is peeking over the other, as the soup cooks.

I asked others what nostalgia gardening meant to them.

MG Joan Koritni is from Ottawa, Canada and she remembered her grandmother's lilacs and hydrangeas; she said they called it the snowball tree. She also commented on the early blooming crocus peeking through the snow as the first sign of spring.

Local Master Naturalist Karen Hazen reflected on her mother's sweet, fragrant, night-blooming jasmine. No matter where she is, the scent of a night-blooming jasmine will bring back memories of her mother.

As a child, MG Jamie Hart's family moved several times. Each time, her mother would plant a circle garden for her old roses. Perhaps all those rose gardens inspired Jamie's love for flowers.

In Felder Rushing's book, *Maverick Gardens*, he doesn't just mention his mother and grandmother, he includes a family tree with comments about their influence on his gardening.

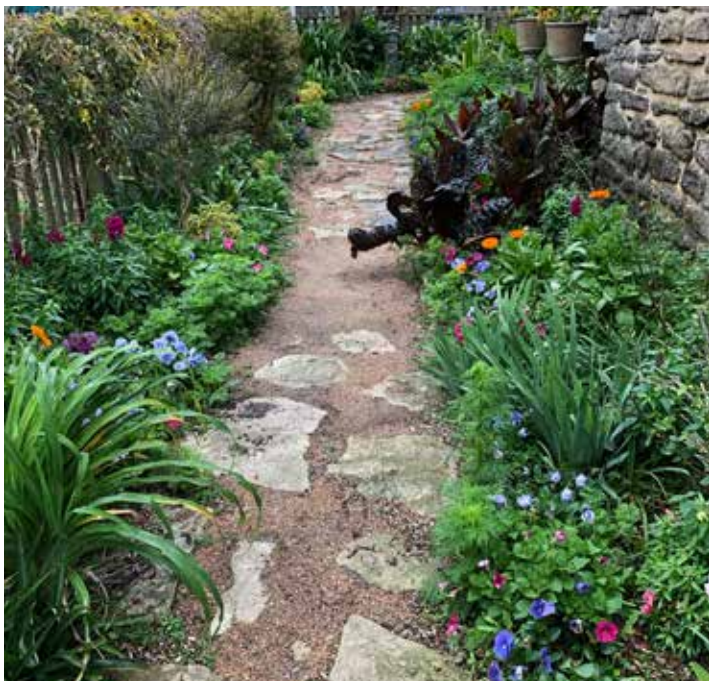
During recent local garden tours, nostalgia gardening was on display in several gardens. One of the gardens featured a rustic split rail fence covered with Peggy Martin roses. Within the garden were many smaller gardens dedicated to friends and family of the homeowner. In other gardens, vintage items were featured with colorful blooms in creative displays. It could be an old chair or swing that was passed down bringing a feeling of comfort when placed in the garden of a new home.

Nostalgia gardening may be including a grandmother's favorite flower, or recreating a garden remembered from childhood, or adding a cottage garden landscape. The garden can be created with plants discovered in childhood that brings a sense of connection and comfort. This can become a legacy garden that nurtures generations with the appreciation of plants and creates a connection with family and their daily lives.

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Planted pathway MG Judy Anderson



Repurposed antique MG Judy Anderson

The Historical Beauty of the Hydrangea



Vickie Hall
GCMG 2023

Imagine a garden with sunlight filtering through trees in early morning, with a rich, dark, moist soil, and dappled shade in the afternoon. Wait, partial shade, moist, fertile soil? You have just found the perfect spot for growing hydrangeas!

Hydrangeas originated in Asia and the Americas, although the earliest plants identified were bigleaf hydrangea (*Hydrangea alaskana*) fossils which date back 23-66 million years ago after the dinosaur extinction and during the rapid growth of life in North America. They were first introduced to Europe in the 1700s before becoming popular worldwide. By the 19th century hydrangeas became the quintessential English cottage garden shrub. Today there are over 70 species of hydrangeas that are both nostalgic and romantic with large, showy blooms. These plants are valued in gardens due to their color changing ability.

In Japan and Korea, the hydrangea is known as a symbol of apology, gratitude, emotion, resilience, and perseverance. Japan uses the mountain hydrangea (*Hydrangea serrata*) to make an herbal sweet tea used in a Buddha bathing ceremony. In Korea, the pink hydrangea symbolizes the beating of your heart. Hydrangeas are somewhat toxic if ingested or smoked and can cause illness and/or death.

According to historical accounts, there are three common species. The bigleaf hydrangea (*Hydrangea macrophylla*) a classic blue/pink shrub, known for its massive, color-changing mophead or lacecap blooms; the smooth leaf hydrangea (*Hydrangea arborescens*) native to the eastern coastal United

States and famous for the 'Annabelle' variety, a hardy, shade-tolerant shrub with large white or pink bloom clusters; and the panicle hydrangea (*Hydrangea paniculata*) native to Asia, is extremely hardy and thrives in full sun with cone shaped flowers of white that turn pink or red as they mature. Other popular varieties found in gardens include the oak-leaf (*Hydrangea quercifolia*), mountain (*Hydrangea serrata*), and climbing (*Hydrangea petiolaris*) hydrangeas.

Ideal growing conditions are needed, especially in our hot Texas summer. The two most important considerations prior to planting are sun exposure and water. In fact, the name hydrangea is Greek for "water vessel" due to their high-water needs. This plant prefers dappled or morning sun and shade in the afternoons. Plants in full afternoon sun must be watered consistently to ensure moist soil. The soil must be rich, organic, and well-draining, not waterlogged. Hydrangeas thrive in USDA Plant Hardiness Zones 3-9, with spring and fall as the best time for planting. Hydrangeas can be large and need enough space to spread, about three to 10 feet, for good air-flow and to prevent fungal diseases. Hydrangeas can be deciduous or evergreen depending on the species and grow 3 to 6 feet tall and wide. Propagation is achieved through cuttings.

The large, showy flowers of the hydrangea are most familiar but different flower configurations of different varieties exist. Flowers bloom from early spring to late fall. They often grow at the ends of the stem into mopheads or panicles. Mophead flowers are large, round, and ball shaped. The panicle is a multi-branched cluster of flowers. Lacecap flowers are round



Oakleaf hydrangea Courtesy of Jamie Perry



'Dove' lace cap MG Vickie Hall

“...bloom from early spring to late fall”

and flat with smaller flowers surrounding the center. Hydrangea flowers change colors based on the pH of the soil making the shrub a natural pH indicator. This phenomenon is caused by how the soil pH impacts the aluminum availability in the soil. It is called the Aluminum Factor in chemistry. Based on the pH of the soil, the flowers will be blue when the soil is acidic and pink when the soil is alkaline. White flowers generally do not change color. Adding organic materials such as coffee grounds will increase acidity, turning hydrangea flowers blue. For pink flowers add garden lime. It may take several years to change the flower color and the color change may not be permanent.

By providing correct sun exposure and consistent water, hydrangeas will bloom all summer. Mulching at the soil level will help to retain moisture and regulate the soil temperature. Deadheading faded flowers will encourage new blooms through spring and summer. Don't throw those spent flowers

away, dried hydrangea flowers are beautiful when used in arrangements with others summer favorites.

Pruning is also important when growing hydrangeas, to maintain plant health, shape, and to prevent disease. Pruning time and technique depends on the hydrangea variety. It is crucial to not over-prune and understand pruning depends on the type of hydrangea. Panicle and smooth types (bloom on new wood) can be pruned by one-third in early spring. Bigleaf and mountain types (bloom on old wood) should have dead stems removed or be lightly shaped after summer flowering. Start by cutting out a few of the oldest stems at the base to encourage new growth and eventually new flowers. Avoid late summer pruning as the plant will think it's time to bloom again!

Pruning tools are important as well. For a clean cut, bypass pruners have sharp, sliding blades and are the main tool for pruning hydrangeas. Loppers are used to prune thicker branches (up to 1 inch in diameter) and pruning shears are for trimming thin stems or spent flowers. For proper pruning techniques and more detailed information, go to <https://ag-gie-horticulture.tamu.edu/earthkind/landscape/proper-pruning-techniques/>

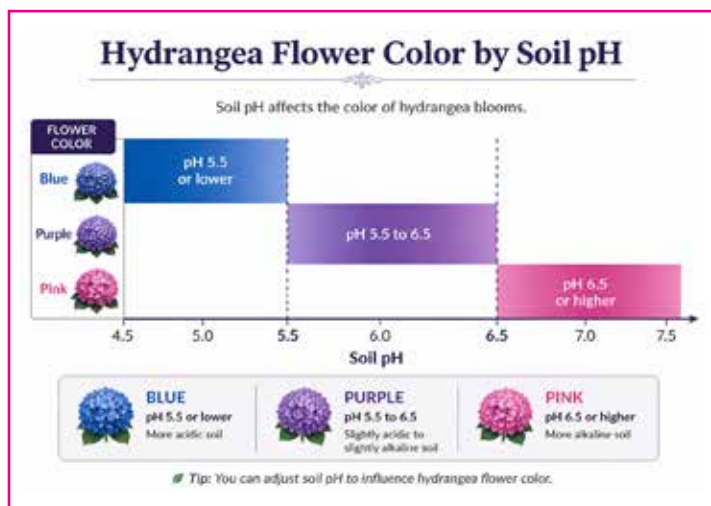
When we think about nostalgic gardening or old-fashioned plants our thoughts should immediately go to the hydrangea. Today, these plants are staples in gardens worldwide, valued for their ability to change color, beautifully fill garden spaces, and perform year after year. Who doesn't love a cottage garden?

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Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

“Create a chart of relationship between soil pH and hydrangea color.” ChatGPT, model GPT-4o, OpenAI, 3 May 2026. Chatgpt.com



MG Vickie Hall



'Limelight' Courtesy of Vickie Vicknair



'Orange Pride' MG Vickie Hall

Pelargoniums (Tender Geraniums)



Bronia Michejenko
GCMG 2015

I grew up loving geraniums and now grow pelargoniums. They are both in the Geraniaceae family, so they are related but different species. Carolus Linnaeus, father of modern botanical taxonomy, grouped all the species into one genus. They were later separated into two genera by Charles Heritier in 1789. According to the literature, true geraniums are hardy, can survive

cold temperatures, and have a seed capsule that is shaped like a crane's bill, whereas pelargoniums are tender and have stork-billed seed capsules. Most geranium societies classify them as hardy (true geraniums) and tender (pelargoniums). Pelargoniums are generally marketed as geraniums which only adds to the confusion. (For this article I will use the name tender geraniums to refer to pelargonium variety.)

Five hundred years ago, European sailors brought pelargoniums to Europe from South Africa. Growing up in the United Kingdom, I remember striking geraniums growing in home gardens and town squares displayed in window boxes or hanging baskets to brighten the sandstone and grey stone buildings. Local parks displayed large beds of color that lasted from late spring into fall. As people walked around the beds, a sense of tranquility and peace took over, giving them a chance to let go of the mundane grind of post-war living. My mother grew them in our home. Initially, they were thin and spindly with few flower heads. They often suffered from mold, probably from overwatering, which was my job. Over the years, her skills improved as she gained information from neighbors and friends. I remember dragging home bags of potting soil and compost from the market on a bus. We collected fall leaves from the forest, and horse manure from the cobblestone street in front of the house that had been deposited by the rag and bone man's horse. All this was added into the limestone soil of the garden. In the summer months, the potted pelargoniums were placed outside in the sun and thrived. To prevent the plants from freezing in the winter, they were brought inside and placed on every windowsill. It wasn't until I visited a stately home named Temple Newsam in Yorkshire, that I truly fell in love with geraniums. There were geraniums climbing up to 12 feet on a brick walled garden of a greenhouse, each plant bursting with flowers of various colors. That image imprinted on my brain and still delights me to this day.

Tender geraniums are usually classified into six hybrid types. Zonal, the most diverse commercial group, has fuzzy rounded leaves, thick succulent stems, and long flower stems. Zonal leaves can have colored stripes or have bands ranging from



All photos by MG Bronia Michejenko

cream, gold, bronze, red, to black. They are often just as colorful as the flowers which are large and can be striking with various shades of pinks, reds, orange, and white. Ivy-leaved have thick shiny leaves, thin trailing stems with umbels of three to five flowers. They are most commonly used in hanging baskets. Regal have fuzzy sharp-edged leaves, thick woody stems, and short flower stems topped by two to three flowers which are vibrant and multi-colored. I have had one for seven years. It puts out a spectacular show each spring and survives the hot Texas summers. I keep it in semi-shade in the very hot months and find it much easier to care for than the zonal variety. Angel types are smaller and are a cross between regals and zonal or ivy-leaved, with a large variation in flower colors. Scented varieties have strongly scented leaves with small and insignificant flowers. Many are used in the perfume industry. The most common in Texas is the citronella scented ones, marketed as a mosquito repellent. Unique pelargoniums are similar to the scented variety, but have a lighter fragrance.

In USDA Plant Hardiness Zones of 9B and 10, tender geraniums are considered to be annuals. Most pelargoniums cannot tolerate our summer heat and often turn white, limp, and then

“...nostalgic memories of family, childhood”

die. I have moved plants into shaded areas with very little success. David Rodriguez, Bexar County Extension Agent of Horticulture, reported on several heat tolerant zonal varieties that he tested. These are ‘Strawberry Sizzle’ and ‘Violet’ from Ball Flora Horticultural Company. The ‘Caliente’ and ‘Calliope’ series from Syngenta Flowers also are heat tolerant. Jenny Wegley, Research and Greenhouse Manager at the Dallas, Texas Arboretum and Botanical Garden, has seen major changes with heat tolerance and performance in pelargoniums. Her research found that during times with temperature rising to the 100-degree mark, it is best to keep all geraniums well-hydrated and the soil consistently moist. Those with automated drip systems stayed alive.

To grow tender geraniums successfully, they need six to eight hours of preferably morning sun and well-drained soil either in beds or pots. Water them thoroughly but allow them to dry out between waterings. Keep water off the leaves to prevent fungus. Fertilize every two to four weeks with a balanced fertilizer. Dead head spent flowers to promote continuous flowering. Pelargoniums need to be protected from freezes by bringing plants indoors.

What I learned from my mother in her care of geraniums was the love of gardening which improves with practice and education. I am encouraged by research about heat tolerant hybrid tender geraniums and will pay more attention to hybrid names in the future. Who knows, I may be able to eventually have perennials instead of annuals.

For many, geraniums evoke nostalgic memories of family members and childhood.

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All photos by MG Bronia Michejenko

When Old Roses Became New Again



John Jons
GCMG 2004

Tucked away in the English countryside, far from the usual tourist paths, lies one of the most influential places in modern rose history: the David Austin Rose Garden and Plant Center. I have had the opportunity to visit several times and even met both David Austin and his son, David J. C. Austin Jr., to discuss rose breeding.

The journey there feels like stepping into a quieter England. The nursery sits in the village of Albrighton near Wolverhampton, about 65 miles northwest of the American tourist magnet of Stratford-upon-Avon and roughly 150 miles from London. Driving there means navigating narrow, hedge-lined country lanes typical of rural England. In places the road becomes so tight that two cars can barely pass. If you stop and peer over the hedges, as many rose lovers eventually do, you will see broad fields filled with long rows of roses quietly growing, many destined for gardens around the world. This peaceful setting is where one man quietly reshaped the modern garden rose.



Author John Jons with David Austin MG John Jons

More than seventy years ago, David Austin began with a simple but radical idea. The roses he admired most were the historic “old garden roses.” Gallicas, Damasks, Albas, and Centifolias had been cultivated for centuries. Roses such as *Rosa gallica* and *Rosa damascena* possessed extraordinary fragrance and lush, many-petaled blooms that formed deeply cupped or quartered rosettes often seen in classical paintings. Yet these roses carried serious limitations: most bloomed only once each year, and their color palette was largely confined to whites, blush pinks, and crimsons.

By contrast, the modern roses that dominated gardens in the mid-twentieth century, particularly hybrid teas and floribundas, bloomed repeatedly throughout the season and offered a far broader range of colors. But many rosarians felt something had been lost. The flowers were often high-centered rather than cupped, the fragrance was inconsistent, and the plants themselves sometimes lacked the graceful, shrubby habit of the older roses.

Austin wondered whether it might be possible to reunite these two worlds. Beginning in the early 1950s, he started making controlled crosses between old garden roses and modern varieties. The process was painstaking. Pollen from one parent was transferred by hand to another. Rose hips were allowed to ripen, seeds were harvested and stratified, and thousands of seedlings were grown each year. Most were discarded quickly. Austin later remarked that from many thousands of seedlings, only a handful might show the combination of qualities he sought.

After nearly a decade of experimentation, his first real breakthrough came in 1961 with the introduction of Rosa ‘Constance Spry’. Bred from the old Gallica rose *Rosa gallica* officinalis crossed with a modern floribunda, it produced enormous soft-pink blooms with the rich fragrance and many-petaled form of an old rose. Although it bloomed only once each season, its beauty proved the concept could work.

From there, Austin refined the idea over the next several decades. By repeatedly crossing his early hybrids with modern repeat-blooming roses and selecting seedlings that retained the old-rose form and fragrance, he gradually created plants that combined:

- the full, many-petaled rosette form of historic roses
- strong “old-rose” fragrance
- vigorous, shrubby growth
- repeat flowering through the growing season

“...enjoy classic beauty, fragrance”

and a steadily expanding palette of colors—from soft apricots and yellows to deep crimsons.

By the 1980s and 1990s these roses were widely recognized as an entirely new class. Today they are known around the world as English Roses, or simply Austin Roses. Over his lifetime, David Austin introduced more than 240 cultivars, many now grown in gardens across Europe, North America, and beyond. Following his passing in 2018, the breeding program, with now almost 300 varieties continues under the direction of his family. The gardening world eventually recognized the significance of Austin’s work. In 2010 he was named a Great Rosarian of the World by the World Federation of Rose Societies.

When you stand today from the road overlooking the trial fields at Albrighton and look across the seemingly endless rows of roses, each seedling representing another attempt to capture fragrance, beauty, and garden performance, you see the continuation of Austin’s original experiment. What began as one rose breeder’s effort to restore the romance of the old garden roses ultimately reshaped modern rose breeding and returned fragrance and classic beauty to gardens around the world.

David Austin Rose in North America

The American introduction of these roses began in 1982 with several now-famous varieties including Rosa ‘Graham Thomas’, a rich yellow climber/shrub that remains one of the most widely grown Austin roses; Rosa ‘Mary Rose’, a reliable pink shrub celebrated for its repeat flowering and fragrance; and Rosa ‘Heritage’, a soft shell-pink rose with delicate cupped blooms and a strong fruity scent.

Their popularity surged after a breakthrough display at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show in 1983, which introduced many gardeners to the distinctive old-rose flower form combined with modern repeat bloom. By the 1990s the company had established a major American presence, including a distribution center in Tyler, Texas to serve North American gardeners.

Growing English Roses on the Texas Gulf Coast

For gardeners along the Texas Gulf Coast, including Houston and Galveston, growing English Roses presents both rewards and challenges. Our region sits in USDA Hardiness Zones 9b to 10a, where intense summer heat, high humidity, and occasional salt air can test even vigorous rose varieties. While many roses thrive in full sun in cooler climates, the delicate, many-petaled blooms of English roses can sometimes struggle in prolonged temperatures above 95–100 degrees.

Fortunately, several varieties from David Austin Roses have proven remarkably resilient in Gulf Coast gardens. With thoughtful selection and a few cultural adjustments, Houston and Galveston area gardeners can enjoy the classic beauty and fragrance of these roses for much of the year.

Among the varieties that have shown particularly good performance in the Gulf Coast climate are:

Rosa ‘The Spirit of Freedom’, A magnificent rose producing large, soft pink blooms with an exceptionally high petal count, often approaching 200 petals per flower. Despite this luxuriant bloom form, it performs surprisingly well in hot climates and develops into a strong shrub or climber. In Gulf Coast gardens it often produces impressive spring and fall displays, with lighter blooming during the hottest months.



Roses in the growing fields MG John Jons

“...remarkably resilient in Gulf Coast gardens”

Rosa ‘Olivia Rose Austin’. Frequently cited by Texas rosarians as one of the most dependable modern English roses. The plant forms a well-shaped shrub that produces a steady succession of soft pink rosette blooms. It is particularly valued for its excellent disease resistance and ability to flower reliably even in the heat and humidity typical of Houston summers.

Rosa ‘Lady of Shalott’. Often considered one of the toughest roses in the entire Austin collection. Its warm apricot-orange blooms appear in loose clusters and continue through the season. This variety tolerates heat, humidity, and occasional neglect better than many others, making it an excellent choice for gardeners new to English Roses.

Rosa ‘Gabriel Oak’. A vigorous shrub bearing rich deep-pink blooms with classic old-rose form. It is widely noted for strong resistance to common diseases and a robust growth habit that allows it to adapt well to challenging climates, including the humid Gulf Coast.

Rosa ‘Roald Dahl’. This cheerful peach-colored rose produces rounded, cupped blooms and tends to flower consistently even during warm weather. In South Texas gardens it often maintains good health and continues blooming when some heavier-petaled roses pause during peak summer heat.

Rosa ‘Boscobel’. Known for its striking coral-pink blooms and strong myrrh fragrance. In Zone 9 gardens it often improves with age, developing stronger repeat flowering as the shrub matures.

Rosa ‘Scepter’d Isle’. A graceful rose producing soft pink blooms surrounding a golden center of stamens. It is admired for its fragrance and relatively good tolerance of warm climates, making it a favorite among Gulf Coast rose enthusiasts.

While English Roses can thrive here, they benefit from a few adjustments to account for our region’s climate.

Provide afternoon relief from the sun. Morning sun is ideal, but protection from the intense late-afternoon heat can prevent delicate petals from scorching or “melting” during July and August.

Encourage air circulation. High humidity in coastal areas promotes fungal diseases such as blackspot. Spacing plants generously and pruning to maintain an open center helps keep foliage dry and healthy.

Mulch generously. A thick organic mulch helps moderate soil temperatures, retain moisture, and improve soil structure, especially important in Houston’s heavy clay soils.

Water deeply but less frequently. Deep watering encourages strong root systems that help plants withstand summer heat.

Manage salt exposure near the coast. In gardens closer to the bay or Gulf, occasional rinsing of foliage with fresh water can remove salt deposits carried by coastal winds.

With the right varieties and a bit of thoughtful care, English roses can reward Gulf Coast gardeners with something few other roses provide: the intoxicating fragrance, lush petal form, and romantic character of the old garden roses, combined with the repeat blooming and color diversity of modern varieties. Even in the challenging climate of Houston and Galveston, they can become some of the most beautiful and memorable plants in the garden.

To see more photos of the David Austin Rose Gardens, visit my video <https://youtu.be/vJXnsPHBh-U>



English roses MG John Jons



David Austin's rose nursery MG John Jons

Texas Superstar® Plant of the Month

Tangerine Beauty Crossvine



Bettye Vogler
GCMG 2020

I slowly realized there was something suspicious about the way nostalgia sneaks into gardening. I did not notice it at first. It started innocently, like buying one tomato plant because I suddenly remembered how tomatoes used to taste “better” from my mom’s garden. Not scientifically better. Emotionally better. That is why my small garden space turned into what can only be described as a sentimental crime scene.

It began with my mother’s sweet basil seeds, and I planted them with great ceremony. Three weeks later, I had something that smelled vaguely like basil but looked like it had trust issues. The leaves were small, uneven, and seemed to recoil when I got close.

Next came the roses so cinematic they had their own soundtrack. I planted one bush. What I got were tiny, grumpy flowers that appeared mildly inconvenienced by existence. That rose bloomed exactly once, then retired permanently.

Things escalated when I tried to recreate my grandpa’s carrots that grew the size of small baseball bats. I planted rows of carrots, imagining myself triumphantly pulling them like a victorious gardener in a documentary.

On harvest day, I pulled up orange punctuation marks. One carrot looked like a comma. Another carrot was shaped like it had tried to escape.

At this point, my garden patch had become less of a garden and more of a nostalgic reenactment gone wrong, but I stayed on course even in the face of difficulty and with little or no prospect of success.

Then my gardening ability changed abruptly. I was accepted into and graduated from a Texas Master Gardener Program.

What better way to start pursuing passions and interests that ignited joy and fulfillment than with a crossvine?

‘Tangerine Beauty’ (*Bignonia capreolata*) is known as crossvine due to the pattern inside its crosscut stem. The plant was named a Texas Superstar® on April 21, 2022.

It is pollinated by the ruby-throated hummingbird and can repeat bloom during the growing season. It tolerates a wide variety of conditions, but prefers organically rich, well-drained soil. It will grow well in shade to full sun, with better flower production in direct sunlight.

It makes a powerful addition to a colonial-style garden, a native garden, a pollinator garden, or a children’s garden. It is an outstanding selection for covering arches, fences, gazebos, pergolas, trellises, and walls. It is not considered toxic to humans or harmful to pets, but it is highly flammable and should not be planted within the defensible space of your home, roughly thirty feet.

There are no major pests of the crossvine. However, it spreads both by seed and by root suckers. To prevent the vine from spreading where it is not wanted, pull up the root suckers.

So somewhere between the failed expectations, the oddly shaped vegetables, and the beauty of the crossvine, something clicked. It was not about recreating the past perfectly. It was about chasing the feeling of it, the dirt under your nails, the quiet satisfaction of watering, the hope that someday something would taste or look like memory says it should.

And still, I love it. Crooked vegetables and flowers that celebrate life remind us to appreciate beauty and find joy in small moments, including the nostalgic memories of gardens long gone.

For references, see Crossvine page 41



Tangerine beauty provides evergreen foliage to go with its eye-catching blooms. photo by Mike Arnold, Texas A&M University



The native crossvine variety presents showy orange tubular blooms that cling to structures photo by Mike Arnold, Texas A&M University

Garden Memories: Stock, Zinnias, Dianthus



Marilyn Haupt
GCMG 2019

When my husband and I built a new home seven years ago, the landscape was a blank canvas. I excitedly planted gardens. I began to sow seeds and purchase plants from nurseries. Over time, as the plants matured and bloomed, I realized there was a great familiarity in my planting. I had, on many levels, recreated gardens of my youth where I spent countless hours being mentored by my much older and more learned neighbors. They were all women who lived alone with very different backgrounds and interests. These differences guided their approaches to gardening. Their gardens were distinctly varied and seemed to reflect the personality of each gardener. As a child, I found each yard a playground of beauty and fascination.

Next door lived Mrs. B. She always gardened in full makeup and wore a scarf to protect her beehive hairdo. She was always dressed impeccably in bright clothes with garden shoes to match even as she worked outside. Her front and back yards were a showplace of perfectly manicured garden beds. A multitude of bright, beautiful annuals and perennials were carefully planted in sunlight and shade. Everywhere you looked, your eyes would land on spectacular colors of hydrangea, iris, and stock. The soft, delicate blooms of the stock plants (*Matthiola incana*) were one of my favorites and remain so today. It is an heirloom plant, and I have had great success growing them. Hardy in USDA Hardiness Plant Zones 7-11, they bloom in the coolness of spring until the Texas heat rises above 80 degrees. Blooming may resume in the fall and into the winter when the temperatures become cool again. They prefer growing in full sun and even partial shade with soil remaining moist and draining well. These plants can grow up to three feet in height and are attractive to pollinators. Their leaves have a hairy appearance which adds to their uniqueness. Additionally, stock exudes a subtle smell of clove. To this day, when I catch a whiff of clove, I am immediately transported back in time to Mrs. B's fabulous garden. I have grown them from seeds which I sowed in winter. The color variety makes growing these so much fun.

Miss D. lived across the street. Born in 1897 in Missouri, she grew up in a challenging time. Trained as a physical therapist for wounded soldiers during WWI, she was a no-nonsense woman even in the mid to late 1970s when I spent time with her. Her neat and tidy home gardens were in a treeless yard. Here, I was introduced to the concept of collecting rainwater and using sundials as garden decoration. Her gardens were

filled with plants that today are known as drought tolerant. Miss D. was thrifty when it came to watering. Vinca and zinnias (*Zinnia elegans*) were her favorite plants, with low water and full sun requirements. It was the zinnias that grabbed my attention. There were many colors to enjoy, and I'd spend a great deal of time examining the detailed center of each flower. Today, I grow zinnias in every open spot in my gardens. Known also as the Common Zinnia, they are a simple annual to grow. Seeds can be scattered onto the garden bed and covered lightly with a quarter inch of soil and in 7-10 days, you will have seedlings. Zinnias are great self-seeders, if you choose not to deadhead the spent flowers. If seedlings grow in clumps, carefully thin them, so the remaining plants are at least eight inches apart. This allows good air flow and reduces fungal infection for the leaves. For this same reason, it is important to water the base of zinnias, so the leaves don't get wet. Zinnias thrive in a rich soil that is well drained. Regular deadheading will encourage the plant to produce more bloom even into November. Because of the attributes of this plant,



Stock blooms Canva

“...gardens were distinctly varied”

it has been named a Texas Superstar®. I will always grow zinnias. In this little way, I will remember Miss D., who was so impactful to my life.

Finally, Mrs. M. lived down the street. She was a private person as was her garden. Surrounded by tall, thick ligustrum bushes, her garden space was a concrete patio in her front yard. The garden space was not visible from the street, so it provided for privacy, peace, and quiet. Once her garden sanctuary was breached, it was a sight to behold. Painstakingly decorated with planters and garden decorations of all shapes and sizes, the space was home to a variety of colorful and unique plants. This was the place where I was first introduced to hibiscus, night-blooming cereus, and Sweet William *Dianthus barbatus*. I loved Sweet William with its tiny clusters of purple and white flowers. Mrs. M. was a huge fan

of them. They were planted in containers along with larger plants along the patio edge. Sweet William is easy to grow. They love full sun. They do not like wet, soggy soil. They are susceptible to root rot, so the soil must be well drained. In our climate, Sweet William, an annual, can grow up to a foot tall. As with most flowering plants, deadheading will promote more blooms. Sweet William is also a pollinator favorite. Currently, I grow it in my butterfly garden. I'm thrilled by the number of hummingbirds that are attracted to my space because of their presence. Sweet William is yet another plant that brings back fond memories from long ago.

My childhood experiences in these gardens and with these women created a life-long love for gardening. I firmly believe that sharing gardening knowledge and experiences is one of the greatest gifts we can pass onto our children. It was for me.



Sweet William pixabay.com



Zinnia with hummingbird MG Marilyn Haupt

Morning Glories, Dahlias and Snapdragons



Donna Woodbury
GCMG 2024

Old-fashioned flowers can create a nostalgic atmosphere. Planting vintage flowers that have a meaningful history can add chapters to our own stories. Flowers that have been enjoyed for many years can be introduced to new gardeners and, as a result, can continue to offer timeless beauty where we plant them.

Morning glories, dahlias, and snapdragons are three examples of those flowers.

Morning glories

Seeds develop into a screen of two-to-three-inch, delicate, trumpet-shaped flowers and heart-shaped leaves that intertwine onto a fence, gate, or trellis. Morning glories belong to the Convolvulaceae plant family. Common morning glory (*Ipomoea purpurea*) is the largest and most well-known genus in the family.

As a child of a military father, we lived in several different states, but one thing we could depend on staying constant was that Dad always planted morning glories. It gave us continuity and nostalgic recall. It transcended state lines and grounded us.

Planting seeds: Soak seeds for 24 hours, then plant one-half inch deep six inches apart in rows 3 three feet apart.

Transplant: After 4-6 weeks (and after the last frost date), plant seedlings (or transfers from a nursery) outdoors six inches apart. Water lightly to keep moist until established.



Morning glories Courtesy of Jennifer Ramirez

Pruning encourages healthy growth and manages size. Pinch back the plant when it gets one foot tall to help it become bushier. Train vines on a trellis or support for airflow and reduced disease risk.

Pests: For aphids: use ladybugs (lady beetles) or insecticidal soap. For spider mites, mist to raise humidity, and use mulch to retain moisture. For powdery mildew, use a fungicide.

Light: Needs 6-8 hours of sun.

Harvesting seeds: Collect seeds after blooming in late summer.

Dahlias

Growing dahlias in our area of Texas can be difficult due to the extreme heat (temperatures above 100 degrees), the soil, and the varieties that will tolerate this environment. There are only a few varieties that can be grown successfully here. It is recommended to plant them in pots so they do not freeze over winter, and so the amount of moisture they receive can be controlled.

Dahlias in USDA Plant Hardiness Zone 9b are tender perennials, so it is best to choose heat-tolerant varieties such as 'Pompons and Balls', 'Cactus' selections, 'Texas Gold', 'Black Jack', and 'Bishop of Llandaff'. Plant tubers in late March to early May, after the last frost. Wake up tubers for a week in a warm spot before planting in full sun for six hours daily with good air circulation. Shelter from extreme wind and direct afternoon sun; morning sun is best. Use soil with good drain-



Snapdragons MG Karolyn Gephart

“...continue to offer timeless beauty”

age and plant the tubers with the ‘eye’ up to 4-6 inches deep. Space 18-24 inches apart.

Snapdragons

Snapdragons (*Antirrhinum majus*) are dragon-shaped flowers that “snap” open like a dragon’s mouth. They come in a multitude of colors and heights. There are four groups, each targeting different blooming periods: Groups one and two grow in the shorter days and cooler temperatures of spring and autumn. ‘Chantily’ and ‘Avignon’ snapdragons are in group one and two series. ‘Madame Butterfly’ series is in group 3 and 4. They have double blooms and thrive in mid-summer, blooming in the hottest months of the year. Snapdragons require full sun to partial shade, with at least six hours of sun per day. They will tolerate afternoon shade.

Growing from seed in Zone 9b:

Turn over 12 inches of soil and add amendments as indicated.

Seeds: indoors 8-10 weeks before the last freeze. Fill seed trays with seed-starting mix and keep them moist.

Light: grow lights or sunny windows 12 hours per day.

Germination: once seedlings have developed two true leaves (2-3 weeks), thin by snipping weaker seedlings at the base.

Transplanting outdoors: harden off by gradually exposing

them to outdoor conditions in shaded areas and out of the wind one week before transplanting. When temperatures are above freezing plant 6-12 inches apart.

Direct sowing: scatter seeds on prepared soil and lightly cover them with a thin layer of soil (1/8 inch deep). Press down gently.

Watering: Keep moist until seeds germinate (10-14 days). Water at the base every week if the top inch of soil is dry.

Fertilizer: Balanced fertilizer (10-10-10 NPK), fish emulsion or compost tea every 4-6 weeks during growing season.

These are three colorful old-fashioned flowers to enjoy in your garden.

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Closeup of snapdragon MG Donna Woodbury



Dahlias MG Donna Woodbury

Cottage Gardens with Foxgloves, Delphiniums and Hollyhocks



Pam Hunter
GCMG 2018

A cottage garden is a certain style of nostalgia gardening that has charm, abundance and while looking spontaneous, it is well planned. Main characteristics consist of dense plantings which help with deterring weeds. Herbs and vegetables are often planted directly into the beds as well. Vertical interests can be created by plants as well as adding arches or trellises for height and privacy.

Use structural plants if you want to add height to the area. Tall, spikey plants like foxgloves (*Digitalis purpurea*), delphiniums (*Delphinium elatum*) and hollyhocks (*Alcea rosea*) can furnish the perfect backdrops for a tiered garden.

Foxgloves are the perfect plant for height and beauty. They have an interesting history. The name comes from a myth that fairies gave foxes small gloves to wear on their paws so they could not be detected approaching poultry areas in rural communities. The Old English name, “fox glofa” grew on the hill-sides where foxes traveled. In 1542, Leonhard Fuchs chose the Latin name *Digitalis* for the plant as the blooms reminded him of fingers or digits. Two centuries later, Swedish biologist Carl Linnaeus chose the second part of the binomial nomenclature to be *purpurea*. Foxgloves offered medical applications before the creation of pharmacies and by 1775, it became an herbal remedy for heart related ailments. The drug digitalin was cre-

ated from the plant and now considered an old generic drug, it was used as the first line of defense for heart related problems.

Appearance: Foxgloves can grow up to 5 feet covered in blooms that often feature spots or freckling inside the bells. They are easy to grow from seeds as well as transfers.

Life Cycle: Most varieties are biennials, meaning they produce leaves in the first year and bloom in the second year. Foxgloves are prolific bloomers and can throw off seeds and will come up the following year. In hotter climates like USDA Plant Hardiness Zone 9b, foxgloves need more attention. They can take morning sun but must be protected from the afternoon sun. They also dislike humidity.

Another blooming plant with a stunning array of blooming spikes is the *Delphinium elatum*. Delphiniums offer a true blue blooms which is a rare color in horticulture. Nowadays the plant varieties available also offer cup-shaped flowers in white (Delphinium ‘Galahad’), yellow (‘Pacific Giant’), purple (‘King Arthur’ and ‘Black Knight’), and classic blue (‘Blue Bird’ and ‘Blue Lace’). With more than 300 varieties, some can grow as tall as 6 feet. They are pollinated by both butterflies and bumblebees. The name delphinium is derived from the Greek word *delphinion* which means “dolphin” due to the petals resembling the sea animal’s nose.

They enjoy “Goldilocks” moisture which means the balance



Foxgloves Courtesy of Judith Lisac



Delphinium Courtesy of Judith Lisac



Hollyhock Courtesy of Judith Lisac

“...perfect backdrops for a tiered garden”

between two extremes must be “just right.” They hate wet feet which can cause crown rot but need moist soil. They prefer cooler temperatures and do not like hot, humid weather.

Staking: The flower heads are heavy and a summer rainstorm could easily break the stocks. Stake them early so they can grow into their environment.

Because true delphiniums are so finicky in the south, horticulturists at Texas A&M frequently point gardeners toward the larkspur (*Consolida ajacis*) for a similar effect.

Hollyhocks are regal in size and history. They date back to ancient Egypt where they were used in funeral wreaths for mummies to aid them in the afterlife journey. Roman and Greek gardens used them for beauty. Seeds have been found in archaeological digs in Pompeii. In Old English, *holi* means holy and *hoc* refers to mallow. Another legend has the name came from the crusaders who created a cream from the plant to use for injuries to horses’ legs or “hocks.” Holy for the Holy Land where they had been and hocks for the horses’ legs. In Victorian times when bodily functions were not mentioned in polite conversation, hollyhocks were useful. Ladies could find outhouses without asking where they were since hollyhocks were planted in abundance at the site to serve as a visual map. A cottage garden is not complete without hollyhocks. They often grow 6 to 10 feet. They take up very little horizontal space, making them a perfect backdrop.

Bees and butterflies are attracted to them. They require

full sun and mulch. Hollyhocks are considered biennials, but there are varieties that bloom the first year. They will drop seeds that can sprout the following year. The biggest challenge of hollyhocks is rust, a fungus that makes orange spots on the underside. To prevent rust, care should be taken when watering to keep the leaves dry by watering at the soil level instead of above the plant. Texas A&M University recommends the figleaf hollyhock (*Alcea ficifolia*). It is more resistant to rust, has a long bloom period, and adapts well to hot, dry areas.

Planning a nostalgic cottage garden? Foxgloves, delphiniums, and hollyhocks are a perfect selection.

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Purple foxgloves Courtesy of Judith Lisac



Yellow shade of foxgloves Courtesy of Judith Lisac

Hardy, Colorful Bedding Plants: Pansies, Sweet Peas, Forget-me-nots



Karyl Norcross
Mehlman
GCMG 2022

Three perennial or nearly perennial plants that tolerate shade, cool weather, wet soil, and grow in beautifully colored clusters of bedding plants or in hanging baskets are pansies, hybrids of genus *Viola*, sweet peas (*Lathyrus odoratus*), and forget-me-nots (*Myosotis palustris*).

Pansies

Who doesn't smile at the colorful faces of pansies? Their perfect shape and varied colors appeal to all. Pansies are thought to be descended from the wild-flower of genus *Viola* and the hundreds of hybrids are named *Viola x wittrockiana* honoring Swedish horticulturalist Veit Brecher Wittrock who, in 1846, published an analysis of their origins. Pansies like cool weather and are one of the first colorful blooms of late spring. In late winter or early spring, nurseries, garden clubs and even big box stores recall last season's demand and supplies running out. Orders are placed and announcements sent to those eagerly awaiting the wondrous plants while planning their future home in the landscape or hanging basket. The day finally comes and pansies are put out for purchase or pickup. The Galveston Garden Club lawn is dominated by hundreds of flats, usually of one-color pansy each. One must choose all yellow, or purple or pink or mixed. Flats go into cars and trucks to their forever homes to be planted in big bunches, arranged under trees, filled into a barren stretch of soil, or be a spot of color in a hanging basket.

Pansies tolerate partial shade but do not do well in hot sun. For this reason, they are often replaced by flowering summer annuals. Pansies can also be planted in the fall, and certain varieties will over-winter and can tolerate a light frost and bounce back from cold snaps. They prefer full sun to partial shade and adapt to most well-drained soil types. They grow to six to twelve inches in height and spread to six to eight inches, especially if pinched. Addition of a general 1:1:1 ratio fertilizer upon planting is usually enough to carry the plant through life. Pansies require little care save for maintaining moisture. Pansies have few insect and disease problems. Slugs are the most common problem and are easy to control using slug and snail pellets. Pansy flowers can even be eaten and often adorn drinks and desserts.

The pansy was named a Texas Superstar® in 2024 because it was deemed to be "a versatile, tough, durable, cold-hardy ornamental that provides color during an



Colorful faces of pansies MG Carolyn Gephart



Sweet peas pixabay.com



Forget-me-nots pixabay.com

“...hardy, colorful bedding plants”

otherwise drab time of the year.” To be designated a Texas Superstar, a plant must perform well for growers throughout the state. Texas Superstars must also be easy to propagate, ensuring that plants are widely available and reasonably priced. Some pansy hybrids available at garden centers include the following: ‘Delta’, ‘Freefall’, ‘Colossus’™, ‘Matrix’, ‘Cool Wave’, ‘Crown’, ‘Ultima’, and ‘Majestic Giants II.’

Sweet peas (*Lathyrus odoratus*) are native to southern Italy and the Aegean islands. They have fragrant flowers that bloom from spring to early summer and prefer cool, moist soil. The pods can be collected and dried for planting the next season. They will also self-sow as the pods break open. Sweet peas can be started indoors. After soaking the seeds overnight, plant seeds one-half inch deep in soil and cover with plastic film to increase humidity and speed up germination. Plant seedlings outdoors when plants are two to three inches tall.

Sweet peas are susceptible to a variety of fungi, and an occasional application of fungicide during the growing season helps minimize the disease. Whitish spots or powdery mildew mark the beginning of disease, and affected plants should be removed and destroyed. Seeds should be taken only from healthy plants.

Forget-me-nots (*Myosotis scorpiodes*) or (*Myosotis sylvatica*) and various other species including hybrids are a flowering perennial that grows to ten to eighteen inches, and has small, light sky blue flowers of one-fourth inch in diameter with yellow centers that appear in mid-summer on upright stems and bloom from mid-summer to early fall. Forget-me-nots have been symbols of love and constancy since the Middle Ages and have appeared in many works of art and poetry since that time. They were extremely popular on Victorian Valentine cards as the classic floral messenger.

Plants are found growing next to or in the shallow water of moist meadows and streams in Europe, Asia, and North America. Plants are disease resistant. Small butterflies and dance flies are attracted by their nectar. They are listed as a noxious weed in one or more Midwestern states. Plants spread by rhizomes and form dense colonies and can become a flowering ground cover. Plants can be propagated by dividing rhizomes in the spring and by stem cuttings in the summer.

Planting these hardy, disease-resistant colorful bedding

plants can add beauty to any landscape, especially in the spring when beds can be bereft of color.

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Deep purple pansies MG Karolyn Gephart

Irises, Bleeding Hearts, and Daisies



Ralinda Fenton
GCMG 2023

In a nostalgic garden, three popular flowers from the past appear in many homeowners' beds. They are irises, bleeding hearts, and daisies.

Irises come in a wide variety of colors. The most well-adapted iris is the Louisiana iris. It is native and thrives in our county. Although the original Louisiana irises preferred damp, swampy soil, the hybrids grow very well in standard garden beds. They can be grown in water gardens, at the edge of a pond, or in your very own garden with great success. They require full, direct sunshine for at least 6 hours to thrive. One of the lovely things about Louisiana irises is that they start to grow in the fall, showing beautiful greenery and bloom in early spring until July. It is recommended to prune the stalk after the bloom to keep seed pods from growing. The seed pods are heavy and pull the plant down, ruining the beauty of the plant. They go dormant after blooming. At that time, you will want to trim away the dead and dying parts of the plant. Irises that are grown in wetter areas usually have a shorter dormant period and may keep some of their greenery through the summer.

The Louisiana iris is a great pollinator attracting bees, butterflies and hummingbirds. Since there are many hybrids, I will just mention a couple of varieties native to our area. The Southern Blue Flag iris (*Iris virginica*) grows to 3 feet tall and blooms in white, blue, purple, yellow, and violet. For best results, it requires a large amount of water. Zigzag iris (*Iris brevicaulis*) is another good iris for our area that varies in color from purple to white and doesn't require as much water and sun to thrive. It still needs a moderate amount of water and does well in part shade as well as sun. It grows 1 to 2 feet tall.

The iris got its name in mythology from the Greek gods. Iris was a bearer of special messages from heaven to earth, traveling on a rainbow according to their legends. Many cultures attribute special significance to the iris; it is also associated with the fleur-de-lis. Biblical historians believe the lilies of the fields of which Christ spoke were most likely irises.

An old-fashioned flower that adds beauty to the landscape is the bleeding heart (*Lamprocapnos spectabilis*), formerly (*Dicentra spectabilis*). This is a shade-loving plant with beautiful, heart-shaped, two-toned flowers. Partial shade works wonderfully to protect the plant from our heat while allowing more blooms. The clustering flowers dangle from an arching stem. Plant in rich well-drained soil with moderate water. These plants can grow 18 to 36 inches in height and 12 to 36 inches in width but will go dormant in the summer. They attract

butterflies but beware as they are toxic to people and animals.

The bleeding heart is steeped in folklore. The tale has a prince who loved a girl. After wooing her repeatedly, she rejected him, and he took his own life with a sword. The flower symbolizes this unrequited love. Today, bleeding hearts represent deep love and compassion. The heart-shaped flowers seem to say love.

A common wildflower is the daisy. There are many varieties of daisies, and they grow all over the world. Daisies are drought-tolerant and require moderate to little water. They do prefer well-drained soil, but they can grow in most types of soil, even clay, and love to be in direct sun. They are frequently grown for use as cut flowers. Two popular varieties are the Shasta daisy (*Leucanthemum x superbum*) and the Ox-eye daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*). Size and coloring vary with variety. Most are yellow, white, or a combination of these colors.

The daisy represents innocence and love. Folklore has God scattering daisies when a child passes away. The Norse considered daisies the flower of the goddess of love and fertility, so they regarded them as a symbol of motherhood. In Roman



Bleeding Hearts MG Jim Bridgett

“...popular flowers from the past”

folklore, it was said that a girl changed herself into a daisy to avoid advances by one of their gods.

I think we can all agree that daisies bring a spot of cheer and sunshine wherever they are seen.

These three nostalgic varieties are beautiful additions to any garden.

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Irises MG Karolyn Gephart



Daisies Courtesy of Jennifer Ramirez

Hardscapes Can Add Beauty, Style, Theme



Donna Woodbury
GCMG 2024

It is not just what we plant inside of gardens that create beauty. It is also the presentation of plants with borders, trellises, fencing, pathways, gravel, mulches, art pieces, and fountains. A hardscape can make a mundane garden explode with meaning and exuberance when objects are placed strategically. Hardscapes can offer a nostalgic touch. It is frosting on the cake. It is jewelry in an ensemble. It is the epitome of elegance, the crowning touch.

Hardscapes have styles: modern, nostalgic, geometric, cottage, rustic, traditional, formal, and natural. A theme can be created with art pieces and objects. By choosing specific items, a mood can be set. For example, a statue of an angel can illicit feelings of peace and serenity. Art pieces from a specific country can cause reminiscence of journeys we have taken or places we have lived.

Pathways alone can create an atmosphere of intrigue. They can add mystery and interest. A path can lead us into intimate areas and offer coolness, the element of surprise, awe, and splendor. Further, they can lead to a place of solitude and reflection apart from the onslaught of the pressures of life to help replenish our spirits.

A pathway is a principal element to create movement in a garden to lead a viewer through a garden to see what comes next. Enjoyment of the plants immediately in front of the viewer is followed by anticipation of new plants that lay ahead. A main path can be engineered with side branches to encourage viewing of other various plants or art pieces. Benches can be strategically placed beside chimes, fountains and statues for rest stops and to give adequate time to enjoy the butterflies, birds, and foliage.

Colors alone can create feelings. Psychologically, color has an impact on our feelings. Blue is representative of coolness, calmness, and peacefulness. Red is representative of energy, vibrancy, warmth, and glow or light. Yellow is representative of light, warmth, joy, and enlightenment. Combinations of two or three colors result in appealing designs that add interest and contrast to an otherwise dull setting. It is common to use the complementary color, the opposite on a color wheel, to exaggerate the visual contrast between the two colors.

A garden designer can stop viewers with a striking focal point- a ceramic pot, elaborate brickwork, an elaborate etched or colored bench, a fanciful birdhouse, and a well-placed trellis. There is no end to delightful ideas to entertain our senses.

Hardscaping gives you the opportunity to create a functional and beautiful outdoor space that will provide years of enjoyment. Start with larger elements such as pools, pergolas, gazebos, outdoor kitchens, and water walls if it is within your budget to do so. Seek harmony of elements such as rocks, bricks, wood textures, colors, styles, and all visual elements to obtain a harmonious result. Plan for flow and connection to ensure your project creates smooth transitions between indoor and outdoor spaces. The goal is to create visual appeal. Treat your property like a painter treats his canvas. The options are unlimited. Design your space to fulfill your artistic flare.

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Nostalgic antique art MG Judy Anderson



Poolside signs MG Donna Woodbury

Longhorned Beetle Visits Discovery Garden



Hedy Wolpa
GCMG 2018

Take a good look at this beautiful longhorned beetle. It's not an insect you're likely to see in your own backyard. It was a recent visitor to the Discovery Garden orchard where it was seen on one of the peach trees. MG Debbie Espinosa, lead for the orchard, and MG intern Steve Wright took wonderful photos and shared them with me to help with identification.

Its full identity is long-jawed longhorned beetle, order Coleoptera, family Cerambycidae. The scientific name, *Trachyderes mandibularis*, refers to its massive lower mandible, larger in males than in females, and marks it distinctly as an insect that's really good at chewing.

Additional features that make it such a striking insect are the super-long antennae and bright orange patterned markings on its thorax. The antennae are the main sensory tools used to detect movement, smell, and touch (looking for food and locating a mate). They are segmented, and may be more than two or three times the length of a beetle's body. Like many beetles, the colorful markings serve either as camouflage or as a warning to predatory insect enemies and birds.

Look again at the large lower jaw on this male longhorned beetle. Adult beetles are attracted to diseased and wounded trees and shrubs that may have sap leaking. These are trees that are vulnerable to attack by beetles that are looking for a place to lay up to 100 eggs. Their strong jaws help them chew into outer bark, exposing softer inner wood where freshly-hatched larvae, known as "borers", will tunnel in to feed. From this stage, the larvae will pupate, then emerge as adults to continue the life cycle. As the borer larvae feed on soft inner wood, they weaken the vascular system and cause major damage or even death of the tree. If you see an adult longhorn beetle such as the long-jaw, you may have a tree that is in a stressed or diseased state and needs attention. The presence of small exit holes in the bark of the tree where the adult beetles have emerged after pupating is a sign that the damage has been done inside the tree.

There wasn't an abundance of information available about the long-jawed longhorned beetle, but as a member of the Cerambycidae family, we know that these beetles can be found, as noted, on diseased or wounded trees. They also show up in woody areas where trees and heavy branches have fallen to the ground, or in piles of fresh-cut firewood.

We wondered why this beetle appeared in the orchard, where most of the trees are young and free of disease (that we know).

MG Herman Auer provided some insight. He said that the peach trees have been in the orchard for a while. They've withstood some exceptional drought over the past few years, which can be stressful for even healthy trees. But he also noted that sometimes "insects just need a place to land." We're going to be hopeful that this long-jawed longhorned beetle was just passing through the Discovery Garden. Now that we know more about its behavior and life cycle, we can be vigilant in watching for it.

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Longhorned beetle large jaw MG Steve Wright



Longhorned beetle in Discovery Garden MG Steve Wright

Potato Trials in the Discovery Garden



Kevin Lancon
GCM 2018

The difference in taste between a store-bought potato and a home-grown potato is profound. Potatoes are generally easy to grow and highly productive making them a great choice for backyard gardeners.



Michael Reed
GCMG 2022

There are, however, a few critical things that you must do properly to be successful, the most important of which is choosing the proper potato variety for our area. Potatoes like tomatoes come in both determinate and indeterminate varieties and determinate

varieties perform best in the Gulf Coast region. With potatoes, determinate refers to early season or varieties with short days to maturity. Since potatoes are a cool weather crop, varieties with shorter days to maturity perform best, which generally refers to 70 to 95 days from planting to harvest. Most commercially grown potatoes are grown primarily in the north, where cooler weather lasts longer and many different varieties with longer maturities (100 to 135 days), such as those large Russet or Idaho potatoes can be grown.

We frequently trial various potato varieties in our Discovery Garden so that we can recommend varieties that perform well in Galveston County. This year we grew five different varieties.

Results:

All the varieties performed satisfactorily. Red La Soda and Yukon Gold produced as expected, since they are both tried and true varieties for our area. Peter Wilcox was a new variety for us, known for its very low Glycemic Index, and it produced similarly to Yukon Gold and Red La Soda in size, quantity harvested and quality. The surprise was how well both fingerling potatoes performed, particularly the Russian Fingerlings, given their higher days to maturity requirements.

In conclusion, all varieties performed adequately and we recommend any of these varieties for Galveston County.



Red La Soda

Developed at LSU and released in 1953
85 to 95 days to maturity
Known to produce high yields, and stores well
Widely adapted to varying weather conditions

All images by *MG Kevin Lancon*



Yukon Gold

Developed in Canada and released in 1981
70 to 90 days to maturity
A favorite variety among potato growers
Favored by chefs for making creamy mashed potatoes



Russian Fingerlings

Developed in Northeastern Europe in the 1700s
90 to 120 days to maturity
Very popular with fresh markets and chefs
Firm flesh, high yields and buttery flavor



French Fingerlings

Developed in France in the 1950s
80 to 100 days to maturity
Deep rose skin and yellow flesh
Superb flavor especially when roasted



Peter Wilcox

Developed by USDA and released in 2007
80 to 90 days to maturity
Deep purple skin and creamy white flesh
One of the lowest Glycemic Index potatoes

“...easy to grow, highly productive”

Harvesting Potatoes (Then What?)

Potatoes are ready for harvest when the tops begin to die back. (usually in mid-May in our area). Dig 10-12 inches away from the plant to loosen soil. Pull the plant up from the stem with potatoes attached. Lightly clean large clumps of soil from potatoes and allow them to dry in a shady area. DO NOT wash the potatoes immediately after harvest. Some soil should be left on the potatoes as this will allow the skins to toughen and store better. Any potatoes that are scarred from harvest

should be eaten shortly as they will not store. Potatoes should be cured for approximately 10 days in a cool, dry area away from direct sunlight. After curing, they can be cleaned and stored in a cool, dark location, i.e., pantry, garage, etc. A refrigerator is the best location for long-term storage but generally not practical. With proper curing potatoes can store for 3-6 months. Don't store potatoes near fruit such as bananas or apples as they may cause rapid sprouting.

Potato Trials 2026								
	Date Planted	Amount Planted (Lbs)	Date Harvested	Amount Harvested (Qty)	Amount Harvested (Lbs)	Harvest/Lb of Seed (Lbs)	Harvest /Lb of Seed (Qty)	Average weight/potato
Red La Soda	3/3/26	2	5/21/26	111	28	14	55.5	0.25
Yukon Gold	3/3/26	2	5/21/26	74	25	12.5	37	0.34
Russian Fingerling	3/3/26	1	5/21/26	131	18	18	131	0.14
French Fingerling	3/3/26	1	5/21/26	38	10	10	38	0.26
Peter Wicox	3/3/26	1	5/21/26	45	15	15	45	0.33



Basket of Yukons MG Kevin Lancon

Gardening Help Desk: Pesky Pests, Plant Perseverance



Sandy Klaud
GCMG 2023

July and August are the most demanding months for home gardeners in Galveston County. Extreme heat, humidity, and persistent pest pressure shift gardening priorities from active planting to plant survival, diagnosis, and preparation for fall. GCMG Help Desk inquiries during this period reveal widespread confusion about insect pests, lawn decline, and palm health. Success in these months depends on correct identification of problems, disciplined watering practices, and timely transition planning for fall gardens. Decisions made now strongly influence annual garden performance.

Gardening along the Gulf Coast in midsummer requires careful attention to environmental stressors. In Galveston County, July and August bring sustained high temperatures, heated nights, and high humidity, all of which place significant strain on plants while accelerating pest and disease cycles. For new and experienced gardeners, this period is less about expansion and more about maintenance, observation, and correction. Many of the challenges reported to the Master Gardener Help Desk stem not only from true plant stress, but also from difficulty interpreting what symptoms mean in extreme weather conditions.

A high volume of inquiries shows up reflecting both genuine landscape stress and frequent misdiagnosis of symptoms. Queries often described in general terms such as “sticky leaves,” or “something eating my plants,” indicate uncertainty about correct identification. This lack of specificity often leads to delayed or ineffective treatment. Photos and detailed descriptions help master gardeners get the answers callers need. Reported issues are usually happening throughout the county.

Flower and bud failure is another dominant concern, especially citrus. Many gardeners report blooms dropping or failing to open and assume disease or fertilization problems. However, a significant number of these cases are caused by internal feeders such as bud caterpillars or midge larvae, feeding inside developing buds and not visible until damage is advanced. Spider mite injury is also frequently mistaken. Photos here also would help.

At ground level, confusion continues with critters such as snails, slugs, and roly-polies causing plant damage. Roly-polies are generally decomposers rather than primary pests. The red velvet ant is actually a wasp and not harmful to plants.

Lawn-related questions report thinning areas are more com-

monly the result of heat stress, inconsistent irrigation, soil compaction, or thatch buildup.

Tree and palm concerns are rising. Homeowners may seek out a local arborist for advice (www.treesaregood.org) for declining trees and palms, often struggling to distinguish between environmental stress, nutrient deficiencies, and disease. This is particularly evident with palms, where past freeze damage and current stress symptoms are frequently misinterpreted.

Lethal Bronzing Disease (LBD) is currently active and spreading in Galveston County. It is caused by a spread by planthoppers and leads to rapid decline beginning with browning of older fronds and eventual death. With no cure, infected palms are identified and quarantined. Homeowners who suspect LBD should contact the Galveston County Master Gardener Help Desk for guidance.

July and August in Galveston County are defined by stress management, careful observation, and informed decision-making. Help Desk trends show that many gardening problems stem from misinterpretation rather than unusual conditions. Help Desk can assist with accurate diagnosis, proper cultural practices, and reliance on extension-based guidance.

Inquiries are supported via research-based guidance from the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension and other extension programs. Commercial products are not endorsed or always recommended by GCMG. Contact our Gardening Help Desk about these and other issues. 281-309-5061 gcmghotline@gmail.com Visit the Hall of Information for educational literature.



Photos help MGs determine answers to what gardeners want to know
MG Karolyn Gephart

Gardening 101: Third Quarter



Carol Hairfield
GCMG 2020

As we come out of the locker room to face Mother Nature for the third quarter, our goals will be: harvesting, managing problems, and planning for fall.

Harvesting:

Some plants, such as tomatoes, will stop producing when nighttime temp are above 76 degrees, while many greens will still produce in heat.

According to the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension publication *Easy Gardening: Harvesting, Handling and Storing Vegetables*, there are three keys to protecting your produce. First is temperature. Because some vegetables like peas and sweet corn convert sugar to starch, they need to be cooled immediately. Therefore, harvest them early in the morning or right before you intend to use them. Next is moisture. Some plants, like leafy vegetables, require high humidity, while others, such as onions, need to be stored in drier conditions. Finally, ventilation. Minimize wilting and tissue breakdown by ensuring that air can circulate properly. The article gives guidelines for help on a variety of vegetables. Don't forget to take notes. Which plants played well this year? Which ones gave up or were tackled long before reaching the finish line? These are things you will want to remember next year when you are choosing your new players.

Managing Problems:

Last time we talked about keeping gardens healthy. This can be done by removing weeds and dead plants. Don't over fertilize in dry weather. Water deeply and infrequently to encourage deep root growth. Mulching is good for retaining water and suppressing weeds. Also watch out for insects. Mississippi State Extension publication 2347 *Insects Pests and Home Vegetable Garden* has pictures of insects as well as insecticide recommendations for each.

Fall Plants:

Now is the time to collect the jerseys from spring players to prepare for the fall team. If the spring field did well then, the same field may be used by the fall team. Just be sure to pick up all the trash the spring team left behind. A&M recommends that you don't put plant residue from a spring garden into your compost bin because it is likely to be contaminated with insects and disease pathogen. If a fall garden follows a well-fertilized spring garden, Texas A&M recommends half the spring fertilizer rate at planting. Apply 1 to 2 pounds per 100 square feet. Now the fun part, choosing the new line up.

Think of it as the spring team is worn out. You need players with fresh legs.

Once again Texas A&M AgriLife Extension to the rescue. Their *Fall Vegetable Gardening Guide* has a table telling the planting dates and recommendations for fall vegetables. Personally, I'm going to plant a 'Jack-Be-Little' pumpkin or maybe a 'Big Max'. They come up with some of the best names for plants.

Fall is a great time to plant herbs. The gardening guide has a helpful chart discussing garden problems such as symptoms, causes, and cures. Are your plants dying young? Maybe it is fertilizer burn. Solution: check the amount you're using and mix the fertilizer thoroughly with the soil.

If you've taken notes, you can check to see when, how much, and how you applied the fertilizer. Taking notes when you're hot and dirty isn't easy but can be helpful next year. I planted watermelons on March 3. They were looking good. Then it frosted March 16. Next year I'll wait to plant. Sigh! September and October will present fun new challenges to wrap up this year's game.

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Original by MG Carol Hairfield

What's Blooming in My Garden?



Jamie Hart
MG 2023

My garden has lantana, passion flowers, and true indigo blooming for summer.

The Shamrock Butterscotch Glow lantana (*Lantana camara*) 'Balshamochl' is one of the dreamiest colored lantanas out there. I love having this for my pollinators and the fact that it grows no higher than about 12 inches. It behaves well and has tight mounding with a compact cluster of flowers. It's a super showy plant that looks like a glow of sunshine. This buttery colored beauty is a perfect ground cover and would work well as a spiller or in a hanging basket.

Our native purple passion flower vine (*Passiflora incarnata*) is the most marvelous, designed flower out there. I have several areas in my yard that have them. I grow them for the amazing alien flowers they produce and because they are the Gulf Fritillary butterflies' host plant. I love watching them flutter all over my yard every summer. Always happy to share, you must be a proactive gardener to catch and share the runners that it puts out, but a small price for a service plant that is so unique.

This precious pink grape-like cluster of flowers adorns about every corner of my yard. True Indigo (*Indigo tinctoria*) is about the coolest pink cascading flower you can find. It does well in the shade, but if it has more sun will grow taller, topping out at about 24 inches. You can give it the Chelsea Chop which will encourage it to grow more mounding and fuller. Roots run fairly shallow so it's very easy to pull up and relocate or share with a friend. The most wonderful thing is that she blooms from spring to frost.



True indigo MG Jamie Hart



Passion flower MG Jamie Hart



Lantana MG Jamie Hart

Worms are Coming to the Discovery Garden



Christie McGrath
MG 2023

Composting at the Discovery Garden is getting some new helpers: red wiggler composting worms (*Eisenia fetida*). The worms will be housed in a worm bin, a 17-gallon plastic tote fully prepared to maintain a healthy worm colony, generously donated by MG Becky Jaschek. Not only will the worm bin help break down fruit and vegetable waste from the garden, but it will also serve as a new educational opportunity on vermicomposting for visitors to the Discovery Garden.

Vermicomposting is the process of using worms along with microorganisms to break down organic waste and convert it into vermicompost, a valuable source of nutrients for plants. Vermicompost is made up of worm castings (their excrement and decomposed organic material). Worm bins can be maintained indoors or outdoors and use very little space, making this a good choice of composting for members of the community with smaller yards or who live in apartments.

The red wiggler is one of seven of the more than 9,000 earthworm species used for vermicomposting. They are not the same species we find while digging in our garden. *Eisenia fetida* are part of the Epigeic class of earthworms, meaning they live and eat closest to the surface in environments like a forest floors. They are tolerant of a wide range of temperatures and do not mind living in captivity, making them an ideal composting worm for home setups.

Our vermicomposting demonstration bin is approximately 27 inches long, 18 inches wide, and 12.5 inches tall. It has a raised area at the bottom to hold the bedding above the liquid, called leachate, that may accumulate. It also features a drainage hole to remove the leachate and several vent holes on the sides to allow airflow. Screening has been glued over the holes to hopefully keep the worms in and any flies out.

We will start the bin with one pound of red wigglers, approximately 1000 worms. Their bedding will consist of shredded newspapers, packing paper, cardboard, paper towel cores, and leaves. We will feed them once a week to start, using mostly fruit and vegetable waste from the garden and kitchen. They will eat the bedding as well as the food scraps. Red wigglers can eat 25-33 percent of their body weight per day. Our starting amount of one pound of worms will hopefully consume 1.75-2.3 pounds of food a week. As the colony increases, food consumption should also increase. Their food is our waste, so everything they eat might have ended up in the trash can headed to the landfill. We plan to measure the weight of bedding

and food and track the conditions of the bin so we can better understand how the worms behave in our local environment.

Be sure to stop by and visit our newest composting helpers in the coming months. In a future issue, we will follow up with how they are doing and how our first harvest of vermicompost goes.

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Vermicomposting demonstration bin MG Christie McGrath



Close up view of screened ventilation holes MG Christie McGrath

Meet a Master Gardener: Vickie Hall



Trish McDaniel
GCMG 2001

Vickie Hall, MG Class of 2023, is a familiar face in the Discovery Garden and Extension Office. Early on, Vickie was helping MG Briana Etie, at seminar sign-up tables. Briana, impressed with her organizational skills, asked if she would consider becoming lead of GCMG's Gulf Coast Gardening Seminars as then current lead, MG Pam Hunter was stepping down. She

now coordinates all the seminars, dedicating sizable swatches of her weekends to presentations. She is also a member of the Earth-Kind Garden team in the Discovery Garden, and organizes the MG Grown plant sales annually which provides a healthy boost to the organization's bottom line.

Vickie, a Louisiana girl, was raised in the state's capital, Baton Rouge. She was one of four daughters with her eldest sister 12 years her senior. Vickie speaks fondly of her father who served in the US Air Force and was often deployed overseas. With a laugh, she said, "Every time daddy came home, we had another baby!" Vickie's mother enjoyed container gardening, and her favorite flower was the iris. She said her mother could also keep year-round blooms on her Christmas cactus, another favorite.

Vickie began her career as an LPN and Radiation Therapist at Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center in Baton Rouge. Being a self-described "organization freak," she advanced to the position of VP of Operations of five regional facilities until her retirement in 2018. During her time at work, she met her husband, Will, a field engineer specializing in radiation therapy equipment used in cancer treatment. Will had previously served eight years in the US Navy as Fire Controlman-Missiles (FCM) prior to moving back to his hometown. He is also a talented blues man with a notable collection of fine guitars. They married in 2001 and honeymooned in Italy. Vickie's description of enjoying a meal there is priceless. "You could just taste the earth, the air, and the sun in every bite - everything about Italy - is right there - on your plate!"

Two sons' respective professional careers eventually brought them to Texas. As a result, Vickie and Will followed. Vickie explained, "The grandkids drug me here." As the happy center of their early childhood had been in Baton Rouge, the children couldn't bear to move without their beloved "Noni." The choice to live closer to their family was made easier because Will works remotely. Vickie's mother (and irises) joined them in the move to their new Texas home where Vickie



Vickie Hall
MG Trish McDaniel



Vickie Hall in action as a tour guide during the Texas Superstar Trail event
MG Judy Anderson

“...a self-described organization freak”

cared for her until she passed away two years later at the grand age of 96.

Vickie first learned of the Master Garden program in Baton Rouge through a doctor with whom she had worked. She wanted to participate but could never find the time. Upon their move to League City, she joined them dynamic League City Garden Club (LCGC), where she now serves as editor of the yearbook/directory. She was soon encouraged by then LCGC Vice President and MG Sue Bain to apply for the Galveston County Master Gardener (GCMG) program. Other dual members included Judy Anderson and Hedy Wolpa. Jamie Hart, who is now LCGC's current president, wanted to join program as well, and encouraged Vickie to carpool to the upcoming MG class of 2023 where they would both be interns.

Vickie's home sits on a shaded corner in the lovely Westover Park neighborhood in League City. An array of bluebonnets marks the pathway to the front door each spring. I enjoyed being welcomed by two beautiful and enthusiastic Springer Spaniels. We settled by the pool in her backyard. Vickie's garden has much to show off, including her mother's irises, which share a bed with a collection of plumerias. The beginning of an espalier of robust Peggy Martin roses is located on the side

fence, and will no doubt be a showstopper soon. One of Vickie's favorite plants is a vibrant bottlebrush tree (*Callistemon citrinus*) that she coaxed back to health after the winter storm, Uri, froze it back five years ago. It is now in full bloom and reaches nearly eighteen feet high and is abuzz with pollinators, qualifying her garden for a LCGC Pollinator Habitat plaque.

Vickie and her husband love to travel. In recent years they enjoyed two repositioning cruises -Vancouver to Hawaii, and Barcelona to the Bahamas. In true Type A fashion, Vickie already has their travel plans for 2026 and part of 2027 in the bag. June will find them at Disneyworld to celebrate three grandkids' birthdays, (one being a Sweet 16) and one high school graduation. In October, they will be cruising the Adriatic Sea and the Greek Isles. In 2027 a family cruise to the western Caribbean is scheduled for January, and in August, the British Isles.

In planning next year's MG educational agenda, Vickie said she is striving to “keep things fresh and keep people coming.” Upcoming opportunities will hopefully include educational seminars in the new outdoor classroom, more hands-on workshops in the garden and possibly the debut of a full day symposium. Stay tuned.



Vickie by the bottlebrush tree that survived Winter Storm Uri MG Trish McDaniel

Flamingo Gardens: Not Just for the Birds



Barbara Lyons
GCMG 2014

In a previous issue I reviewed one of the two gardens on the American Horticulture Society's Reciprocal Admissions Program (RAP) we visited in January 2026 during our weeklong trip to the Miami, Florida area. We were fortunate that there was more than one garden to visit on our trip.

Visiting two places made the sting of our Texas Tech team's loss in the Orange Bowl a little easier to take and these are now our predominant memories of our time in Florida. **Flamingo Gardens Botanical Gardens & Wildlife Sanctuary** (3750 S. Flamingo Rd, Davie, Florida; FlamingoGardens.org), is northwest of Fort Lauderdale and is open daily except for Christmas and Thanksgiving. Purchase entry tickets online to facilitate quick and easy park entry. Parking is free. There is a dual mission as a botanical garden and a wildlife sanctuary, each given near equal emphasis.

The 60-acre site was established in 1969 through the formation of the Floyd L. Wray Foundation by his wife, Jane, and was the main site of their former 2000-acre citrus orchard. The Wray Foundation owns the property, and the attraction is operated by a tax-exempt organization, Flamingo Gardens, Inc. Additional support comes from Broward County conservation and tourism agencies. Self-guided tours of the Wray's weekend home, decorated as it was in the 1930's and now a museum on the property, are included in the admission price.

There was something a bit rustic about the setting. Signage a bit worn, paint a bit faded and the animal displays, while adequate, are not at all fancy or modern. It has very shady areas and areas of full sun showcasing plants that thrive in the various light conditions and provide sheltered areas for animal habitats. It is how I imagine Florida was when I was a child which is befitting of a place that is one of the oldest tourist attractions in South Florida.

The botanical garden showcases over 3,000 tropical and subtropical plants. Orchids planted in the ground and in trees make for a showy display. Many varieties of Cycads also known as "dinosaur plants" are featured in one area. Other highlights include ferns, palms, and pollinator sections.

A major attraction is the garden's emphasis on trees. It is a large-tree lover's delight. The garden contains 23 Florida Champion Trees including an Indian Jujube (*Ziziphus mauritiana*) which is a National Champion tree. Cham-

pion trees are the largest specimen of tree species in the US or a state. At this time there are over 500 US Champion Trees which can be accessed at national-championtree.org. The Texas version of such a program is called The Texas A&M Forest Service Big Tree Registry (texasforestinfo.tamu.edu). Our state has 62 National Champion trees and 240 State Champion trees. This Florida garden hosts many Champion trees in an easy-to-access, small acreage setting.

The wildlife sanctuary provides rehabilitation for native species and displays only animals that cannot be released back into the environment due to their injuries. It also provides sanctuary for some surrendered animals. It touts that it is the largest display of native Florida wildlife in the state and includes many mammals including alligators, tortoises, river otters, panthers, bobcats, and a black bear. Also included are a host of exotic bird species such as parrots, macaws, and toucans as well as several species of birds of prey and wading birds. An interesting feature is the free-flight aviary, a half-acre space where several species of birds, mostly waterfowl varieties, reside in a large water feature covered by extensive netting many feet into the air to give the birds the opportunity to live in an expanded yet still confined environment. A paved pathway facilitates visitors traversing the area. Watch out for slick spots along the way as it is shared with the bird occupants. Other bird displays of wading birds such as the name-sake flamingos (*Phoenicopterus ruber*), are open air and paint a picture of how these birds lived in



Flamingos Ed Beazley

“...over 3,000 tropical and subtropical plants”

the native environment. Interestingly the environment attracts other free native birds such as American white ibis (*Eudocimus albus*), Muscovy ducks (*Cairina moschata*), and even non-native peafowl (*Pavo cristatus*).

A narrated 30-minute tram tour departs on a continuous schedule almost all day and provides narration of highlights of the property. A butterfly conservatory displaying only native species is small but in line with the overall goal of highlighting native fauna. Another activity is the Wildlife Encounter, a short demonstration about three of the animals which is scheduled three times per day. There are also daily wildlife talks about panthers, flamingos, and otters. A wedding gazebo and green space cordoned off by trees and gardens is perfect for a wedding or other special event. Other features include a snack bar, food truck, and gift shop. The scale of each of these amenities is quite small in comparison with other gardens in terms of the selection of items. No outside food or drink is allowed.

Flamingo Gardens is an interesting place to spend a few hours. It has a less formal feel to the property overall so that children might feel more at home due to the combination of plants and animals. After touring for a couple of hours, we spent the afternoon exploring a tour of a nearby part of the Everglades on an airboat, making for a full day of nature fun. January weather seemed nearly perfect for moderate temperatures and decreased insect populations making for a wonderful Florida experience.

References:

Flamingogardens.org, Flamingo Gardens brochure
nationalchampiontree.org
texasforestinfo.tamu.edu



The Wray Museum Ed Beazley



Orchids Ed Beazley



Park tram underway Ed Beazley

Seasonal Bites: Enjoy Fresh Summer Shrimp Recipes



Briana Etie
GCMG 2017

The Shrimp Ball recipe is one of my family's favorites, and the Shrimp Dip recipe is a cherished family recipe from Melissa Lancon, wife of GCMGA President Kevin Lancon. I suggest you use wild-caught fresh shrimp for these two recipes to ensure your family is enjoying delicious, high-quality shrimp.

My husband is a commercial fisherman. These days he harvests fresh bay shrimp, mostly sold as live or dead bait—not because they aren't high quality, but because imported, farm-raised shrimp has driven domestic shrimp prices to historic lows. These imported shrimp are often produced under environmental and regulatory conditions that would not

be legal in the U.S., including the use of antibiotics and chemicals banned in American seafood production.

Knowing you are buying wild caught shrimp is important. Our local white shrimp species is *Litopenaeus setiferus* and are native to the Atlantic Coast as well.

Companies are testing shrimp that are in our local markets and restaurants using genetics to determine which species is being sold. This will help in stopping the mislabeling of imported, farm-raised shrimp as local Gulf shrimp.

Local wild-caught shrimp will provide healthy ingredients for your family and buying locally helps our county economy. I hope you enjoy these two recipes.



Shrimp Dip *Melissa Lancon*

Shrimp Dip

Ingredients

2 lbs. of salad (small) shrimp or chopped medium shrimp (Boiled)
1 - 8 oz. package of softened cream cheese
½ cup of finely sliced green onions
Juice of one lemon
3 Tbsp. of mayonnaise

Your favorite hot sauce to taste

Mix cream cheese, lemon juice and mayonnaise together. Add shrimp and green onion. Add hot sauce to taste. Chill before serving. Serve with crackers, French bread toasts or sturdy chips.



Shrimp Ball *MG Briana Etie*

Shrimp Ball

Ingredients

2-3 lbs. of seasoned boiled shrimp (peeled)
1 package of softened cream cheese
8 oz of softened European or Irish butter
8 oz. of roasted and chopped pecans

Place cooled boiled peeled shrimp in a food processor and chop finely. Cream softened cheese and butter then fold in the chopped shrimp. Form a ball, and refrigerate. Roast and chop pecans. Allow them to cool. Roll Shrimp Ball in pecans and return to refrigeration until serving. Serve with crackers. I suggest nut or butter crackers.

GCMGA Award Night Held May 12

Galveston County Master Gardeners Association (GCMGA) members gathered in Galveston at the home of MG Mikey and Allen Isbell to celebrate accomplishments of the group. The annual outdoor event is held in the evening on the large lawn with dinner buffet set up in the greenhouse. Most award photos have the following people beside the winners: GCMGA President and VP, Kevin Lancon and Sue Bain, Extension Agent Boone Holladay, and guest Barbara Sanderson, Executive Director of Parks, Recreation, and Community Outreach.

12 Certified as Texas Master Gardeners

GCMGA welcomed 12 new MGs at the annual 'graduation' held at the event. Those certified that night include Janice Simonet, Kathy Hurst, Becky Risinger, Beth Carroll, Suzy Domingo, Erin Pollard, Stephanie Carmona, Steve Wright, Santos Montemayor, and Glena Shields. (Not pictured are Margaret Herrera and Theresa Cooper) Joining the new MGs are Association President Kevin Lancon, VP Sue Bain, and Extension Agent Boone Holladay.

GCMGA Wins 3 State Awards



12 New Master Gardener Graduates MG Vicki Blythe



First Place Outstanding Organization: GCMGA MG Vicki Blythe



First Place Outstanding Individual: Donna Merritt MG Vicki Blythe



First Place Outstanding Workshop Presentation: Herb Team MG Vicki Blythe

Individual Awards Presented to MGs



Becky Jaschek received a Making a Difference Award
MG Vicki Blythe



TMG Milestone Award was given to MG Eddie Cocetti for his 25 years in GCMGA.
MG Vicki Blythe



MG Tish Reustle was awarded Emeritus Member status. MG Vicki Blythe



Making a Difference Award: John Ely MG Vicki Blythe



Making a Difference Award: Lynne Slaton who also received Advanced Training Certificate for Herbs MG Vicki Blythe



MG Kathy Maines was presented Emeritus Member status posthumously. Her son and family were present to accept the award in her name. MG Vicki Blythe

“great attendance, good weather, well deserved awards”



Advanced Training in Propagation: Briana Etie MG Vicki Blythe



Advanced Training in Propagation: Norma Torok MG Vicki Blythe



Advanced Training in Texas Superstars: Stacy Mills.
MG Vicki Blythe



Special guests: The Honorable Joe Giusti, Commissioner, Precinct 2 and Executive Director of Parks, Recreation, and Community Outreach Barbara Sanderson MG Vicki Blythe



The event was held outdoors at the Isbell home in Galveston
MG Vicki Blythe



Boone Holladay and Ira Gervais at the podium
MG Vicki Blythe

Green Thumb Book Review:

The Pollinator Victory Garden by Kim Eierman



Cheryl Brueggeman
GCMG 2014

Pollinators are responsible for the pollination of most of the flowering plants on planet Earth. Bees come to mind first, but many other insects such as butterflies, moths, flies, beetles, wasps, and some mosquitoes also act as pollinators. Bats and some birds have a role in the pollination process. Many people, especially those of us who garden, know that pollinator decline is a reality that has been for years. It a topic that has been well publicized and researched. The Center for Biological Diversity studied and assessed native bee populations in Hawaii and North America. In 2017 they published a report of their findings which indicated that of the species of which enough accurate data could be collected, it was estimated that more than half were in a state of decline. The plight of the European honey bee has also been well documented in recent years. There are many reasons pollinators are in trouble, from climate change to the overuse of pesticides, and even habitat destruction. The fact remains that many of our landscapes have virtually nothing to offer these pollinators.

In this book, author Kim Eierman gives us advice and actionable steps to change that. Eierman is an environmental horticulturist and specializes in environmental landscaping and native plants. She is the founder of EcoBeneficial and teaches at various botanical gardens in the Westchester County area of New York.

She got the idea for the pollinator victory garden theme from the victory gardens that were popularized during WWI and WWII. These gardens were a way to help protect the food

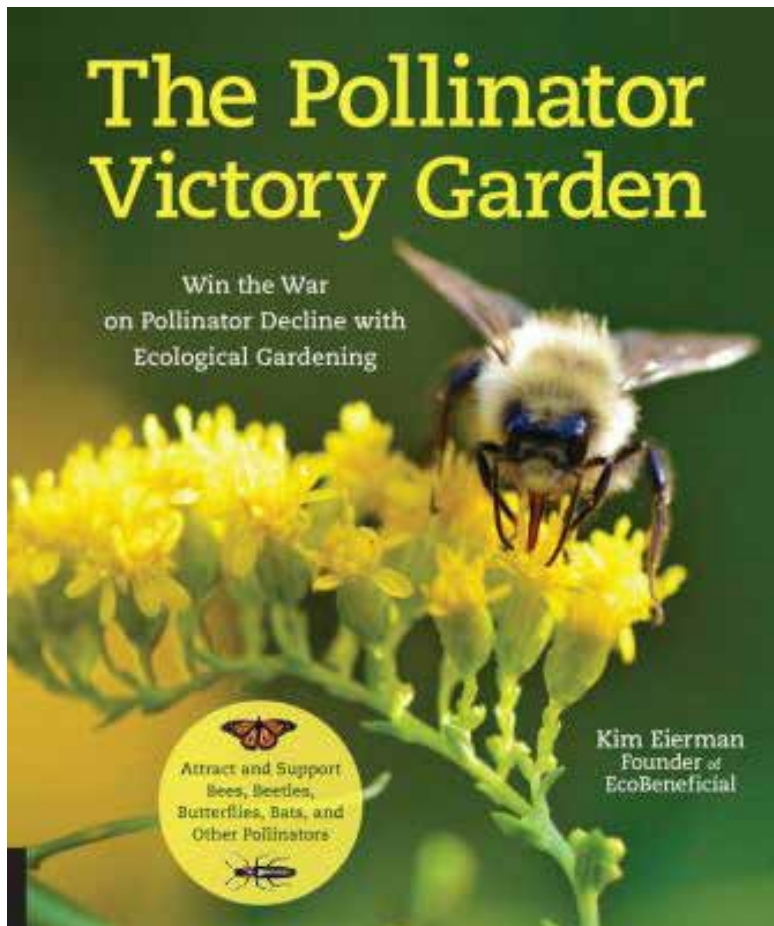
supplies in the U.S, Canada, U.K., and Australia. Just as humans were inspired to help bolster the food supply by planting their landscapes with vegetables, fruits, and herbs, Eierman is hoping to inspire us to do the same for pollinators.

The book is organized into five chapters. The first is an introduction which lays out the essentials to get the reader started. It is followed by chapters on how to create places for pollinators to live, what foods they eat, who the pollinators are, and a final chapter with tips and ideas to create and grow a pollinator victory garden.

She has also added an extremely helpful appendix full of information for the reader. There is a list of 10 tips for keeping a pollinator garden thriving. A garden checklist is included. This checklist is great for helping plan and implement the steps needed to keep the garden thriving. It is also meant to be shared with family, friends, and neighbors who are interested in helping pollinators. Next comes an extensive plant list complete with botanical and common names, whether the plant is a nectar or pollen plant, and notes on important characteristics

such as bloom period, benefit to wildlife, and whether it is a host plant. The reader can also access plants lists by region and a list of larval host plants by visiting www.ecobeneficial.com/PVG. Last of all, she has included a list of helpful books on the topic as well as several beneficial websites.

Even though I have read, studied, and tried to create my own pollinator garden, I found this book to be a useful guide with practical information, step-by-step instructions, beautiful photographs, and an evidence-based rationale for creating a pollinator victory garden. It has earned a place on my bookshelf.



MG Cheryl Brueggeman

2 Heritage Junior Master Gardeners Receive Texas A&M Certification



Karolyn Gephart
GCMG 2017

Two members of the Heritage Junior Master Gardeners were certified recently by the Galveston County Extension Agent in Horticulture, Boone Holladay during the May meeting of the Heritage Gardeners in Friendswood.

Isla Fontaine and Lorenzo Tamez became Certified JMGs on May 7, 2026 after several years of attending Junior Master Gardener workshops and study sessions under the tutelage of Galveston County Master Gardener and Heritage Gardener Kaye Corey and Heritage Gardener member Paula Matranga.

Fontaine, 12, has been active in the group for three years. When she is not gardening, she enjoys art. She has had several paintings in the JMG holiday booth sale. She is the daughter of Kristine Noe.

Tamez, 13, completed his JMG work after three years and was then certified during the meeting. He is the son of Valdemar and Sonia Tamez. He not only enjoys gardening but is also a talented musician. During the Christmas Home Tour hosted by the Heritage Gardeners, he not only worked in the JMG vendor booth but also played holiday carols for everyone on his cello.

Upon high school graduation in the future, the two will be eligible to apply for the Heritage Gardener scholarships.

Certification by Texas A&M AgriLife as Junior Master Gardeners represents approximately three years of creative and fun studies in horticultural and environmental science education. The program is unique in that the Heritage Junior Master Gardeners program is open to all children in Friendswood as well as nearby towns and parents participate in all meetings and activities with their children. This level of family involvement extends education to the entire family.

This year is the 25th anniversary of having the Heritage Junior Master Gardener program in Friendswood. Corey has been the key sponsor for the 25 years of participation



Current JMGs at April fundraiser in Friendswood MG Bob Siml



Certified JMG Lorenzo Tamez with Extension Agent Boone Holladay and JMG Coach Kaye Corey
Courtesy of Jennifer Ramirez



Certified JMG Isla Fontaine with Extension Agent Boone Holladay and JMG Coach Kaye Corey
Courtesy of Jennifer Ramirez

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
4/2/2026	Lunch & Learn - Fire Safety	La Marque Fire Dept	1.50	35
4/11/2026	Lethal Bronzing Disease in Palms	Unknown	2.00	14
4/11/2026	Seminar - Texas Superstar Trail & Talk	Sue Bain & team	2.00	1
4/11/2026	Seminar - Blackberry & Blueberry Talk & Tour	Monica Martens	2.00	7
4/14/2026	MGA Apr Mtg: Alfresco in the Garden	Judy Anderson	3.00	48
4/16/2026	Lunch & Learn - Strawberry Trial Update	Michael Reed	0.50	33
4/23/2026	Lunch & Learn - Texas Superstar Propagation	Briana Etie	0.50	33
5/7/2026	Lunch & Learn - Alfresco in the Garden Recap	Judy Anderson	0.75	31
5/9/2026	Seminar - Tomato Stress Management	Ira Gervias	2.25	8
5/9/2026	Seminar - Plumeria Propagation & Winterizing	Loretta Osteen	2.00	7
5/12/2026	MGA May Mtg: Graduation & Awards	Boone Holladay, K. Lancon	3.00	72
5/16/2026	Seminar - Pollinators & Natives Plants Talk/Tour	Sue Bain, Hedy Wolpa	2.50	3
5/21/2026	Lunch & Learn - Avoiding Injury in the Garden	Mark Dickason	0.25	28
5/28/2026	Lunch & Learn - Tomato Trial Update	Ira Gervias	0.50	34
2026 Recertification Hours for MGs		Total CEUs (Hours)	54.75	



June GCMGA meeting at Tookie's
MG Judy Anderson

Crossvine page 13 References:

Russell, Adam. "Tangerine Beauty crossvine named new Texas Superstar." AgriLife Today. 21 April 2022. Tangerine Beauty crossvine named new Texas Superstar - AgriLife Today

Scott. "32 Common Flowers that Attract Hummingbirds!" Bird Watching HG. 2026. Bird Watching HQ



MGs Marilyn Haupt and Christie McGrath at Herbs Advanced Training in Brazos County.
Courtesy of BCMGA



MGs Santos Montemayor and Larry Brizendine hard at work installing engraved pavers
MG Rachel Montemayor



MGs Robin Collins and Becky Risinger join Extension Agent Boone Holladay in installing irrigation in new rose beds MG Robin Collins

2026 HORTICULTURE JUL - AUG EVENTS

TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION

GALVESTON COUNTY

JUL
11

CONTAINER GARDENING

From Pots to Paradise - Container Gardening Success
Speaker: Galveston County Master Gardener
Karolyn Gephart

JUL
11

TURFGRASS

Healthy Lawns - From the Ground Up
Speaker: Galveston County Master Gardener
Phil Starks

AUG
8

VEGETABLE SERIES

Path to the Plate - Cool Season Veggies
Speakers: Galveston County Master Gardeners
Wendy Baldwin and John Mitchiner

AUG
8

SUPERSTAR® SERIES

Texas Superstar® Plants for Tough Texas Conditions
Speakers: Galveston County Master Gardeners
Sue Bain and Briana Etie

AUG
15

RHUBARB

Yes, You Can Grow Rhubarb Here!
Speaker: Galveston County Master Gardener
John Ely

AUG
22

EARTH KIND® SERIES

Landscaping in the Earth Kind® Garden
Speakers: Galveston County Master Gardeners
Judy Anderson and Steve Holliday

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

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



Judy Anderson
GCMG 2012

Monday July 13 GCMG Fish Fry

The Galveston County Master Gardeners will be meeting on Monday, July 13, 2026, for the annual Fish Fry. Thanks to the Fish Fry team of Kevin Lancon, John Mitchner, Briana and Adrian Etie and Tanya Padgett for catching the fish and creating a fabulous feast. Briana will provide her family's red sauce and along with the rest of the team will handle the cooking. Bring a potluck dish to share as we meet in the cool air-conditioned Extension Office. Tea and water will be provided.

Norma Torok will be leading the GCMG Passalong Plant Swap assisted by Bettye Vogler. More information will be provided for those wishing to participate. It is never too soon to get passalong plants ready for the swap. Look for the Passalong Swap near the entrance to the Extension Office. It will begin at 5 pm.

Following the buffet, Celina Gauthier Lowry, Extension Program Specialist with Green Infrastructure for Texas, Disaster Assessment and Recovery will speak. This Extension group specializes in stormwater management, coastal wetland restoration and flood mitigation. Their recent community projects include Dickinson Bayou and Hitchcock. They are part of the Extension umbrella and a group about which we should know more.

After the presentation from the GIFT team, there will be a short break before the GCMGA leadership provides an update with a brief mid-year business review.

July will be a fun, informative, meeting with a summer feast.



Fish Fry cooking team in 2025 MG Judy Anderson

Galveston County Master Gardeners 2026 Monthly Meetings

July 13	PM	Fish Fry and Plant Swap
August 11	PM	Sunshine Center, Dinner at Kritiko'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

Tuesday August 11

Sunshine Center Galveston & Kritikos Grill

The Sunshine Center of Galveston is a non-profit organization that provides programs for adults with intellectual and development disabilities. Their services include skills training, horticulture, ceramics, supportive employment, and family outreach. The Sunshine Center was recently on the Galveston Backyard Tour where their pollinator and vegetable gardens were featured. A shaded patio is available for the welcome and overview while an air-conditioned building and restroom will be available as needed. The Sunshine Center is a colorful building decorated with brightly painted murals at 1726 21st Street in Galveston.

Following the visit to the Sunshine Center, the meeting will continue at Kritikos Olympia Grill at 4908 Seawall Blvd. Visit www.info@kritikosgrill.com for the menu and more information. It will be self-pay dining.



Sunshine Center in Galveston MG Judy Anderson



Kritikos Grill MG Judy Anderson

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