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WITH THE GALVESTON COUNTY OFFICE OF TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION SERVICE

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TEXAS

MASTER  GARDENER

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Galveston County



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By Camille Goodwin
MG 2008

*Autumn,
she beckons
With gorgeous
affirmation
Of life's full cycles
(Autumn Haiku,
author unknown)*

Welcome to Fall, Y'All!

As I sit down to write this article, my head is still full of our recent GCMGA Fall Plant Sale. It was a beautiful fall day for a plant sale. A tremendous amount of work was done by all involved in making the sale successful. We truly have an exceptional group of Master Gardeners. I did have a thought that we should publish some alternative routes to the fairgrounds for our next sales, while the unending Gulf Freeway construction and closures continue.

Your newsletter team has put together an-



other great issue of current horticultural information for you to experience while enjoying our fall along the Texas Gulf Coast. Weeds are the bane of most gardeners, but did you know purslane is edible? See page 4 for the scoop and some recipes! Another weed featured in this issue is Wavyleaf Basketgrass. My first thought when I saw this name was to wonder if you could make one of those lovely seagrass baskets? Wavyleaf Basket grass is more diabolical (page 6). Fall is the time of year we begin taking applications for the next Master Gardener Intern Class that begins in February of each year. See page 5 to learn about our program and to sign up. Courses are taught by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension specialists, agents, and local experts. Texas Master Gardeners are certified

by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service.

Learn about the Camphor tree on page 8 to see if it's a good choice for our region. I don't know anyone who is not thrilled to see hummingbirds in their yards. The Best Shots story on pages 14-15 provides ideas on how to attract them, build gardens for them and plant choices. For those who like fragrant, tropical, abundantly blooming plants in their gardens, maybe the magical Rangoon Creeper is just what you're looking for with it changing bloom colors (page 7).

Our Discovery Garden recently hosted the St. Matthews Baptist Church of Hitchcock. It was quite a day of educational activities for Pre-K through 8th grade students. See the story on page 12. For those looking for new ideas for focal point gardens in their landscapes, see the piece on Sensory Gardens (page 10). These gardens are designed for our five senses!

Donna Ward tells about garden activities we

should be working on now (page 16) and a way to work off Thanksgiving dinner!! Succulents have become very popular. Read about Agaves on page 20, along with a spectacular cocktail recipe. In our continuing series on where our Master Gardeners get their "green genes," enjoy hearing from Elayne Kouzounis, Kevin Lancon and Sandra Gervais (pages 18-19); and our Meet a Master Gardener series, two of my favorites are featured in this issue, Tom and Jan Fountain (page 17). Don't miss the Discovery Garden update on page 22, two wonderful recipes in Seasonal Bites (page 23), and Dr. Johnson's "Last Word" on page 29, where he tells us about planting fall vegetables. All our calendars, meeting dates, volunteer opportunities, and upcoming events have been updated in this issue.

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Cover:
Photo courtesy of Elayne Kouzounis



Galveston County Master Gardeners are on Facebook with information about upcoming programs, Dr. Johnson's weekly column and more.
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Thanks for your interest!

Q&A ask a master gardener

Purslane - Weed It or Eat It?



By Pat Forke
MG 2010

Is Purslane a curse or an edible treat with many health benefits? Yes, it is both.

Purslane (*Portulaca oleracea*) can grow almost anywhere and it is difficult to control. It is a summertime annual weed that grows throughout North America. It is drought tolerant and can even grow in a rock garden. The seeds will quickly germinate only 1/2-inch-deep and when soil temperatures are 90 degrees, pre-emergent herbicides will have lost their effectiveness by

the time the temperature is right for seed germination.

The fleshy succulent leaves and stems with yellow flowers are similar to a baby jade plant; the stems lay flat on the ground as they radiate from a single taproot. Seeds have been known to stay viable for 40 years. And, any plant or plant pieces that are uprooted but not removed can root back into the soil.

Mulching as well as a weed killing spray may help. But, once the tiny, black seeds develop, you have pretty much lost the battle. Your best plan of attack is to maintain a healthy lawn. A thick, lush lawn that is getting the nutrients and water it needs will help deter Purslane as well as other weeds.

On the bright side, you might consider having Purslane for lunch. Purslane is considered a succulent and probably arrived here from the Mediterranean; it appears in the cuisines of Spain, Greece and Italy. It is considered a superfood due to the number of vitamins and minerals it offers, being an excellent source of vitamin A, calcium, zinc, manganese, copper, potassium, iron and phosphorus. It contains five times higher omega-3 fatty acids than spinach and seven times the beta-carotene of carrot. It is also said to be a natural remedy for insomnia.

To harvest Purslane, it is a good idea to pull it up completely, cut off the smaller stems from the stem with the root. Make sure you wash the Purslane thoroughly and make sure no herbicides, insecticides or other pesticides have been applied to Purslane plants or the area they are growing in.

The taste of Purslane will be similar to watercress or spinach. It can be used in salads or on sandwiches. Purslane can also be steamed, stir fried or pureed. It can be substituted for spinach in soups, salads, omelets or casseroles.



Steamed Purslane Recipe

INGREDIENTS

2 cups Purslane
1 clove garlic
1 tbsp. olive oil
2 tbsp. Cotija cheese or Parmesan
Salt and pepper to taste

INSTRUCTIONS

Fill a small saucepan or wide skillet with one cup of water and add the garlic clove. Turn the heat to medium-high. Bring the water to a boil, add the Purslane, and reduce the heat to low. Cover the saucepan or skillet and keep cooking for six minutes. The cooking time will also depend on the tenderness of the Purslane. If it has long, woody stems, it will take more time to cook compared to tender small leaves and stems. Remove it from the heat and drain. Season to taste with olive oil, salt and pepper. To serve, dust with the Cotija cheese or Parmesan cheese.

Notes: Tender and young leaves have a higher amount of nutrients.



Fingerling-Potato and Purslane Salad with Grainy-Mustard Dressing

INGREDIENTS

2 pounds fingerling potatoes, scrubbed and halved lengthwise
1 cup Purslane leaves (or substitute watercress or arugula leaves)
2/3 cup plain Greek yogurt
1 generous tablespoon whole-grain mustard
1 tablespoon Banyuls, Champagne or other light vinegar
1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
Kosher or sea salt
Freshly ground black pepper

INSTRUCTIONS

In a medium-size saucepan over high heat, boil potatoes until tender, 10–15 minutes, depending on size. Rinse under cold water to stop cooking, then drain in a colander and let cool. Meanwhile, in a medium-size bowl, whisk together yogurt, mustard, vinegar, and olive oil; add salt and pepper to taste. When potatoes are cooled, mix with Purslane in a bowl. Add enough dressing to coat, and toss lightly. Serve at room temperature. YIELD: Six servings

Time to Become a Master Gardener?



By Karolyn Gephart
MG 2017

Take a moment and check off one or more of the following descriptions that fit your life and lifestyle.



Are you interested in....

- ☐ Growing things
- ☐ Flowers
- ☐ Having a vegetable garden
- ☐ Learning about gardening tips
- ☐ Native and low maintenance plants
- ☐ Landscaping and design
- ☐ Trees/fruit, citrus, ornamentals
- ☐ Container gardens
- ☐ Kitchen herb gardens
- ☐ Yard and lawn care
- ☐ Gardening: don't know much about it
- ☐ Rainwater conservation & gardening
- ☐ Serenity gardens
- ☐ Grafting

If you checked ONE or MORE of the above, YOU should seriously consider becoming a Galveston County Master Gardener. Master Gardeners come in all ages, interests, and backgrounds and they differ just as much in why they joined and what they enjoy doing once they become one.

Seventeen years before the time opened up for me, I knew I wanted to become one. When my time allowed me to pursue this, I applied, never stopping to wonder if I knew enough to join. Then I found out, it was determination, a desire to learn about horticulture and attitude that opened the door for me to be in the Class of 2017.

I had no idea what to expect but I knew I wanted that journey to begin because I was ready to do whatever it took to become a MG. I was amazed at what was presented, whom I met and how much of its own world of order and design plant life really was. Down to the tiniest seed, there is life and a plan.

You walk in to become a Master Gardener but what you reap is so much more.

What you gain is much more than just first-class education in gardening and horticulture information. You also make many new lifetime friends; gain insight into others' interests and expertise; meet and learn from

Texas A&M professors; work with and learn from our Galveston County Horticulture Extension Agent Dr. William M. Johnson; get first-hand experience in many areas at the outstanding Discovery Garden; enjoy both classroom as well as outdoor activities; and have a whole new world open up that makes your life better and fuller in experiences, service and enjoyment.

Classes begin in February and last approximately 10 weeks. Classes are usually, but not always, on Tuesdays and Thursdays in the afternoon. Following classroom activities, service hours in many different areas are performed by the MG interns.

Applications usually are posted online in November. The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension program, in which the Master Gardener program is associated, is at the Extension Office in La Marque in Carbide Park. This is the site for classes and the amazing Discovery Garden.

You can contact the office NOW by sending an email galvcountymgs@gmail.com and provide your contact information (name, address and phone number) in the body of your email to say you are interested in the program. You will get an acknowledgement email and an application when they become available.

Usually around 24 people are accepted into the program each year.

As a Master Gardener, you continue to have many opportunities to get involved in your areas of interest. The program offers residents in Galveston County helplines for plant dilemmas or questions, two huge annual Plant Sales with plants ideal for USDA Zone 9a & 9b and MG expertise to go with it, and continued education through MG led workshops offered each month.

Community service projects are available as well as gardening opportunities in the Discovery Garden.

It's a whole new world and YOU can be part of it.

The holidays are approaching. Wouldn't the Master Gardener Program be the PERFECT GIFT to give yourself?

Albert Einstein summed it up well for me when I was thinking about becoming a Master Gardener: *Look deep into nature, and you will understand everything better.*

The Master Gardener Program offers you that opportunity. See you there?

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service
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4102-B Main Street (FM 519)
La Marque, Texas 77568
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Wavyleaf Basketgrass



By John Jones
MG 2012

About a year ago, I noticed that in many of my neighborhood's shade dominant areas, that were previously just barren soil with no plants, were now covered by a plant that provided an attractive rich thick carpet of dark blue green vegetation. Initially, I thought that it looked quite nice – until I discovered that this same plant was rapidly overgrowing my well-groomed St. Augustine lawn! This plant was smothering the grass and immediately replacing the dead grass. Needless to say, I wanted to eradicate this plant.

The search to identify this plant was very difficult. It was not a local native plant (weed). With the help of the Galveston Office of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, we identified this plant – Wavyleaf Basketgrass (*Oplismenus hirtellus* spp. *undulatifolius*). This grass is a fast-growing understory (shade area below trees) invasive South Asian grass. It was discovered in 1996 growing invasively in Maryland and has since spread to cover thousands of acres in Maryland and Virginia.

The plant has up to 18 inch long trailing stems that can root at the stem nodes. Along the stems are small flat green leaves about 0.5 inch wide and 1.5 inch long. The leaves and stems are hairy. It blooms from July to November (may be more or less in our area). The flowers are at the end of the stems. It spreads by both rhizomes and seeds. The seeds have 0.5 inch bristles (spikelets) that become sticky (sticking to animals, people, etc.), enabling long distance dispersal. This plant loves shady areas and (as I discovered) lawns that are not exposed to full sun.

Once it becomes established it can completely carpet cover an area displacing the previously existing plants. The significance of this invasive plant has caused some states (Maryland and Virginia), to form task forces focused on the plant's elimination. Most of the information on this plant is from the states of Maryland, Virginia and Pennsylvania (Eastern US) although 30% of the US is susceptible to the plant. I was unable to locate any Texas information on Wavyleaf Basketgrass.

I further discovered that eradicating this plant is very difficult. I initially tried pulling it out by hand. It came out of the ground quite easily. This left large patches of bare ground in my lawn, only to be replaced by yet more basketgrass. The herbicide clethodim (Envoy Plus) or a two percent solution of glyphosate (Roundup) will kill the basketgrass but these herbicides negatively impacted my lawn.

So far, I have not had much success using weed and feed lawn products to control the basketgrass, but I'll keep trying. The current literature on controlling the Wavyleaf Basketgrass suggests removing it from high traffic areas to control the spread of seeds.

The good news is that it appears to stop growing around November.



Wavyleaf Basketgrass.



Wavyleaf growing between the sidewalk and the road.



Wavyleaf Basketgrass growing in shady wooded area.

Rangoon Creeper



By Pam Hunter
MG 2018

We have a new addition to our Pergola at the Discovery Garden. It is called Rangoon Creeper, also known as Chinese Honeysuckle. The Latin name is *Quisqualis indica*. The genus name 'Quisqualis' means "what is this?" and for good reason. Rangoon Creeper has a form more closely resembling that of a shrub as a young plant, which gradually matures into a vine. It is not closely related to the honeysuckle.

In July of 1811, Thomas Jefferson wrote to his close friend Charles Wilson Peale, the famous painter and naturalist, a letter describing his farming and gardening efforts at Monticello in Virginia. Embedded in the letter is one of Jefferson's famous quotes: "But though I am an old man, I am but a young gardener."

With each passing year, I understand this more and more as I realize I will never know all the plants. One of my most memorable plants is the Rangoon Creeper. The sweet smell pulls you into the garden to find this wonderful plant. Once found, you are bound to want to put one in your own garden.

Rangoon Creeper is a woody climbing vine with green to yellow-green lance-shaped leaves. The stems have fine yellow hairs with occasional spines forming on the branches. Rangoon Creeper blooms white at the onset and gradually darkens to pink, then finally red as it reaches maturity.

Flowering in the spring through summer, the 4 inch to 5 inch star-shaped aromatic blossoms are clustered together. The fragrance of the bloom is most striking at night.

Rangoon Creeper is cold hardy only in the tropics and in USDA zones 10 and 11 and will defoliate with the lightest of frosts. In USDA zone 9, the plant will likely lose its foliage too; however, the roots are still viable, and the plant will return as an herbaceous perennial.

The Rangoon Creeper requires full sun to partial shade. The Rangoon Creeper survives in a variety of soil conditions provided they are well draining and is pH adaptable. Regular watering and full sun with afternoon shade will keep this vine thriving.

Avoid fertilizers that are high in nitrogen; they will only encourage foliage growth and not flower set.

This vine may occasionally be plagued by scale and caterpillars. The Rangoon Creeper can be propagated by cuttings, direct sown by seed or by root division. Your best bet will be by root propagation.

The Rangoon Creeper, which spends warm/hot months growing and blooming, needs substantial support. Prune after the last freeze in early spring, if needed or desired. You can trim spent blooms which can encourage more growth and eventually more flowers.

Horticulturist and former Mercer Botanic Gardens director Linda Gay offers this interesting tip on training the Rangoon Creeper:

"I have found if the Rangoon Creeper can be spiraled around a post and not allowed to grow and float in the air, it will flower more. Most vines if grown around a post and trained in a corkscrew fashion, will produce more flowers than their wild free cousins."

Uses: In tropical Africa and Southeast Asia, the species is cultivated as a popular leafy vegetable. The dried fruits are listed in the Chinese Pharmacopoeia. The species is used as a tea for various illnesses in Panama. Please note this plant contains toxic qualities and should not be used until consulting a physician.

Plant Rangoon Creeper in mid to late spring to early summer and once soil temperatures have begun to warm to help ensure strong establishment over summer before dormancy sets in to allow for strongest possible crown for overwinter hardiness. A full to mostly sunny location and a well-drained fertile soil will help to ensure vigorous growth and will help to maximize flowering.

The fragrant, light colored early morning flowers attract hummingbird moths and the flowers face outwardly. The darker, hanging flowers attract bees and other pollinators.



Rangoon Creeper



Rangoon Creeper

Tree Stories: Green Leaves of Winter



By **Margaret Canavan**
MG 2003

Editor's note: Hurricane Ike caused the loss of 40,000 trees on Galveston Island. The Galveston Island Tree Conservancy was formed to address that loss and has replaced over 16,000 through grant-funded plantings and giveaways.

Winter's shorter and cooler days are upon us and many of our trees have lost their leaves. Bare branches can be lovely, but we do miss the green. One very common local tree that provides greenery year-round is the camphor (*Cinnamomum camphora*). It is a deciduous tree that does not lose old

leaves until new ones emerge, resulting in a mix of light green and older, darker leaves for a few weeks each spring.

Camphor is a fast grower that generally reaches 25 to 40 feet tall and produces shade year-round. The leaves are thick and glossy with the distinctive smell of camphor when crushed. Spring brings bright green and rusty burgundy color foliage with masses of inconspicuous white flowers. Small berrylike fruits turn black in fall. Its pale bark is very rough and vertically fissured.

This Asian native was introduced to the United States around 1875 and is naturalized in many Southern states. However, it is considered invasive as it crowds out native vegetation due to its rapid growth rate and tolerance of a wide range of growing conditions.

Camphor prefers fertile, sandy and well-drained soil, and accepts full sun or partial shade. Established trees are quite drought tolerant. This sturdy storm-resistant tree also makes a good windbreak. Birds disperse seeds widely and you probably have seedlings in your garden as you read this. Be sure to pull them up before they grow large enough to be resistant to removal.

Camphor fruits, leaves, and roots are toxic to humans in large doses. However, birds enjoy the ripe berries, and bees and butterflies enjoy the spring blossoms. The tree serves as a host plant for the Spicebush Swallowtail butterfly.

Camphor has enjoyed a multitude of uses. It has served for centuries as a culinary spice, a component of incense, a medicine and an insect repellent. It is also used as a solvent, a fragrance in perfumes, as well as in cleansers, soaps, disinfectants and household cleaning products. It has been used to treat everything from parasites to toothaches, and from hysteria to epilepsy. Today, camphor is mainly used in creams and ointments for rheumatic pain, neuralgia, arthritis, sore muscles, sprains and bruises. In addition to all these uses, the wood is insect resistant. Its color and physical properties make it popular for woodworking and veneers in fine cabinetry.

While camphor may sound ideal for Galveston—and it does have many positives—there are far better choices. The tree's desirable traits are offset by its invasiveness, aggressive growth, and damaging effects on wildlife

and natural communities. If you already have a large camphor that produces shade, you will probably want to keep it as it would take years for a more desirable tree to reach that size. However, if you are planning to add a tree to your landscape, consult the Texas tree selector at texas-treeplanting.tamu.edu. Find one that is right for you and put the right tree in the right place.

This is a reprint of Margaret's article from The Daily News. She is a Galveston resident, a Galveston County Master Gardener, and a member of the Galveston Island Tree Conservancy Board.



New Composting Station to Aid Education and Continue a Legacy



By Karolyn Gephart
MG 2017



By Jim Waligora
MG 1998

The Discovery Garden is getting a new composting station and through it, a legacy of learning lives on.

Galveston County Master Gardeners received a bequest from the estate of Ken Steblein, a former Master Gardener who took composting to another level in the

county program. Steblein was a Master Composter with horticultural training who worked for UTMB. He taught others how to compost and why it is important to do, all the while “walking the talk” himself.

Current MGs began working on the concepts for the new composting project two years ago. Jim Waligora, Sharon Zaal, and Kevin Lancon worked with the Extension Agent Dr. William M. Johnson on the design.

The new composting station was designed to include a new and improved composting system to handle the organic waste from the garden itself and the kitchen area. In addition, the new area would serve as an educational facility to provide information about composting to visitors to the garden and more generally to Master Gardeners.

“Since we had a working compost bin, the replacement of the main composting system did not have the highest priority. It was not long, however before we encountered some major failures in the existing compost bins which were built during the first year after we moved the garden to its current location about 13 years ago,” Waligora said.

Design work on the new facility began in earnest after rot in the underground portions of the posts that supported the bins combined with some design weaknesses left the bins in very poor condition.

The new design consists of four bins each four-foot wide, deep and tall with an attached shed at the end that will house the chipper shredder, its fuel and supplies. The bins are mounted on a 35-foot by 12-foot concrete pad which will make them more durable than the last ones. The bin posts are mounted on galvanized steel bases bolted into the concrete with stainless steel bolts and anchors.

The attached shed will be much more convenient and will free space in the tool shed. The previous system became infiltrated by roots from the trees behind the border fence and since the bins had been built over the remains of an old caliche road bed, rocks and shell mixing into the compost was a continuing problem. The concrete base will eliminate these concerns.

The old system had an advantage of transporting soil microorganisms into the compost, that will not occur with the concrete base, Waligora reported. Inoculation of fresh compost with shovels full of soil and/or finished compost will replace the direct contact with the soil. The new

system will incorporate wood framed wire panels to allow more aeration of the compost.

“The concrete pad is large enough so that we can collocate small home-owner sized compost systems. We plan on displaying on the pad a small drum type composter, a circular post and wire leaf bin on or adjacent to the pad and possibly a small bin type compost system,” Waligora said.

Signage is also planned to aid in the educational use of the composting station and to recognize the gift from the Steblein estate.

“Ken Steblein was a walking example of how to do composting and the importance of understanding and practicing recycling,” Dr. Johnson said. “He continuously taught others and that legacy will live on with this new system that will work well and can be used for educational purposes as well. It is a great example of the cycle of nature and we are excited and encouraged to be able to use this. It will be both utilitarian and esthetic.” Johnson estimates the project and its signage will be completed by the end of November 2019.



When Ken Steblein passed away, his family asked in lieu of flowers to send donations to the Galveston County Master Gardener Program for use with composting. Over \$4,000 has been collected. The following are donors to this project in memory of Steblein:

A&M Nut and Bolt
Ann Anderson
Anne & Lee Woodson
Christopher Zunner
Cindy, Kyle & Katie Weinheimer
David & Carol Neumann
David R. Hayner
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Sensory Gardens - Charm for Our Senses



By Camille Goodwin
MG 2008

Most gardens are visually appealing. Sensory Gardens, as opposed to just concentrating on eye-pleasing surroundings, are designed for all five senses: sight, taste, smell, sound and touch. Sensory Gardens are meant to be explored. They focus on providing different experiences within a garden or trail and can be passive or interactive. They provide an opportunity for disabled and non-disabled visitors, young, old, those with sensory processing disorders, visual impairment, or dementias to experience relaxation and joy in a

calm, safe, gentle and engaging environment that stimulates and teaches. Sensory Gardens are becoming popular in schools, businesses, hospitals and communities. Their contribution to physical and emotional health and therapeutic value notwithstanding, a Sensory Garden just might be the new and interesting focal point for your landscape as well!

General Design Thoughts for Sensory Gardens: Think about who will be using your garden, their ages and abilities when selecting your plantings and hardscape. In some cases, raised garden beds and hanging baskets are easier for visually impaired, elderly and disabled visitors than garden beds at ground level. Stable seating with arm rests is essential for elderly guests. Walkways that meander are more attractive than straight pathways and should have different textures as the path direction changes. If you have

young children, a shaded sandbox is a possibility. Plant flowers of varying colors, considering the season and different times of day. Group together plants of different shapes, sizes and colors. Prune bushes into interesting shapes. Use grasses and strap-leaved plants for movement. Install water features with bright fish or water plants with a nearby bench or seating; include plants that appeal to birds and butterflies.

Sight: Plant flowers with bold colors to attract birds and insects, bold-leaved and architectural plants, mulched with slate, pebbles or shells. Some ideas include sunflowers, coreopsis, salvia, yarrow, buddleia, Asiatic lilies, elephant ears and Swiss chard. Many trees have interesting bark such as river birch and some crape myrtles.

Sound: Include a birdbath and nectar plants for birds, wind chimes in breezy areas, crunching gravel on pathways, and a trickling water feature. Plant grasses that rustle in the breeze. Include plants that attract whizzing hummingbirds and buzzing bees.

Touch: Incorporate plants with large fleshy leaves, velvety or furry leaves and feathery ferns. Fuzzy lamb's ear, silver sage, Jerusalem sage, prickly cactus, artemisia, cassia, pussy willow, wooly thyme, chenille, hyacinth and lemon balm are ideas. Put hardier plants within reach and delicate flowers and plants in hard-to-reach spots. Use smooth pebble stones in one area and lichen-covered or lava rocks in another. Or use different surfaces on pathways like tile, crushed gravel, or stone slabs. Place plants



Bug Hotel Planters



Bugs on Wood

and trees along the path so visitors are brushed as they walk by. Either avoid prickly or thorny plants or place away from areas they could be brushed or touched.

Smell: Plant flowers with subtle fragrances like violets. Plant aromatic herbs, like mints, thyme, rosemary, chives, and basil near pathways and seating where they can be brushed when visitors walk by or crushed in their hands. Jasmine provides a wonderful scent that evokes memories. Space scented flowers in various areas of your garden so the different scents won't override each other. Other plants to consider for scent include honeysuckle, lavender, mint, chocolate cosmos, nicotiana, heliotrope and scented geraniums. These also attract hummingbirds and butterflies.

Taste: Grow vegetables and herbs in your Sensory Garden that you'd use cooking. Small berry and fruit trees complement these gardens. You can plant them in large pots. Edible flowers such as calendula, orange or yellow marigold, nasturtiums and violets can be used in salads. Edible plants should be placed separate from inedible plants.

It's not hard to transform your yard into a sensory delight to relax, reflect, meditate, contemplate and talk.

Thanks to Sensory Trust for the use of their beautiful photos. For more information about Sensory Trust, check out their website <https://www.rhs.org.uk/shows-events/rhs-hampton-court-palace-garden-festival/gardens/2019/year-of-green-action>



Cable Drum Planters

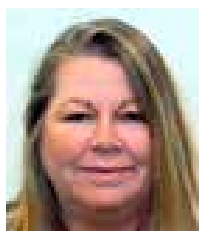


Mandala



Flower and Smell

Discovery Garden Explorers



By Briana Etie
MG 2017

"A day of fun and science for students in the Discovery Garden"

Galveston County Master Gardeners hosted a group of children from the Greater Saint Matthews Baptist Church of Hitchcock in July. A group of 60 children and 10 chaperones attended structured activities at the Discovery Garden and at the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Office of Galveston County in Carbide Park.

The Greater Saint Matthews Baptist Church hosts an annual Enrichment program in the summer months. The children enrolled in their program are in grade levels ranging from pre-kindergarten through 8th grade. Master Gardeners organized activities for the children in various garden areas. We sorted the children in groups close in age and named them Soil, Sun, Water and Plants.

Dr. William M. Johnson and Sharon Zaal welcomed the children and their chaperones to our garden at the front gate. Judy Anderson led our gardeners and guests in a beautiful prayer. Master Gardener Guides Kathy Maines, Nancy Greenfield, Jan Fountain, Gayle McAdoo, Crystal Truitt, Michelle Thompson, Mike Hazen and Marilyn Haupt guided the children and their chaperones through the Discovery Garden. As the children toured the garden our guides were able to assist the children to answer questions and find items that were on Scavenger Cards.

MG Pamela Hunter hosted a tour of the Pergola Garden. With the assistance of MGs Kat Tondra and Lynn Shook, she demonstrated how science and math was used in their area of the garden and highlighted the various pollinator plants and flowers in bloom.

MGs Judy Anderson and Tish Reustle hosted the children in the Seren-

ity Garden. Tish gave a hands-on class in making a rainmaker and Judy with the assistance of MG Sue Bain, instructed and led a rain dance. The children truly enjoyed this activity and you can click on the following link to watch. https://youtu.be/L_i7wvabGk

MGs Terry and Velda Cudlis offered samples of fruit in the Orchard. The children enjoyed eating portions of fig, pomegranate, orange and apple with lemonade and orange juice. We were surprised as they tried figs and enjoyed them. Terry explained the differences in the varieties of figs we have growing in the Orchard. MG Robert Marshall was also in the Orchard demonstrating how we graft some of our fruit trees to get the varieties of fruit that we love to eat on the rootstock of trees that grow well in our area.

MG Gene Speller showed groups of the children our Aquaponic Garden. He demonstrated how the water, in which the fish live, is circulated through the growing media and raft beds. He explained the symbiotic relationship the plants and fish have with the fish feeding the plants and the plants filtering the water before it returns to the fish. I assisted, ensuring all the children were able to feed the fish. Gene took time with the older groups to show them our weather station and explain how we use technology to measure and track rain, temperatures and wind to help us collect data to track the growth of our plants with the various weather factors.

MGs Kaye Corey and Lynn Shook manned our Nurse's Station in case an emergency should arise.

After an hour of activities at the Discovery Garden, the children walked to the AgriLife Extension Office, where our Master Gardeners had planned activities in two classrooms.

MG Betty Webb welcomed the children and gave a speech encouraging the children of their importance and value to their self and all the gardeners.

MG Mary Gonzalez demonstrated "hands on" propagation of seeds and



Welcoming and Prayer



Dr. Johnson with Gathering at the Pergola



Lynn Shook, Pam Hunter and Kat Tondra
Tour of the Pergola Garden

cuttings. MGs Lisa Belcher, Amy Williams and myself assisted the children with their propagation exercise.

MG Hedy Wolpa led an educational class with the younger children on beneficial insects. With MGs Fran Brockington and Nancy Greenfield assisting, Hedy showed the children our examples of preserved beneficial insects, named their physical characteristics and explained the importance of their role in our gardens.



Hedy Wolpa and Nancy Greenfield Teaching Beneficial Insects

Our photographers, MGs Herman Auer and Tom Fountain, were on location taking pictures. They captured some great pictures we wanted to share. We enjoy having children in the garden. An opportunity to teach and share our knowledge and watch their faces “light up” as they learn something new. It brings back childhood memories and feels rewarding that we can give children the experience of what our world in gardening has to offer. We hope to inspire and empower them to someday create their own discovery gardens.



-Mary Gonzalez Teaching Propagation



Mary Gonzalez Distributing Cuttings for Propagation



Judy Anderson in the Earth-Kind Garden with Importance of Water



Kaye Corey and Lynn Shook at our First Aid Station



Betty Web Addresses the Children at the Extension Office

Plants for our Migrating Hummers



By Elayne Kouzounis
MG 1998

Each September I wait for my native Firespike to bloom. That is when I know the hummers are on their way to my home. The Firespike plant is a very easy plant to grow. It is planted and grows all around my home. Hummers cannot live on sugar water alone; they must have protein which comes from the insects and spiders they eat. They must have flowers for their nectar. If possible, have flowers blooming when you know it is time for the hummers to come into your gardens. Flying from flower to flower, the hummingbird pollinates the

plants it feeds on. The hummingbird can hover for long periods of time and can effectively suck out all the nectar it needs from a flower with its long bill. Nectar is the hummingbird's main food which provides the essential high energy sugars. The flower's stamens touch the bird's head, depositing pollen that is then carried to the next plant.

We have hummingbird feeders because hummingbirds will feed on sugar water. Sugar water is like a dessert. The ratio: four cups water to one cup sugar. No red coloring and no honey. Use tap water and boil the water. I dissolve an effervescent tablet of dental cleaner in warm water. Soak the feeder overnight, swab out with a bristle brush and rinse well with fresh water. Before migrating, the ruby-throated hummingbird stores a layer of fat equal to half its body weight and needs to eat twice its body weight in food every day. In our area the ruby-throated hummingbird is the most prevalent. Once hummingbirds discover your garden, they are likely to return each year at about the same time as they are remarkable creatures

of habit. The number of hummingbirds that frequent your garden is closely linked to the abundance of food, water, nesting sites, and perches.

For a hummingbird garden, it is helpful to draw a sketch of your yard indicating the location of the house and outside buildings such as garages and toolsheds. Include trees, shrubs, existing flower beds, and other features likely to benefit your hummers. Work with what you already have, enhancing your yard with additional plantings. Using your landscape sketch, find a good spot to be the focus of your hummingbird garden. A site near a window or patio door will give you a front row seat on the action. Hummingbird gardens need not be large—even a flower box or trellis will do. Gardens planted exclusively with hummingbird plants will attract more birds, but even a few choice plants added to existing gardens will entice hummers.

Think vertically when planning your hummingbird garden. Use trellises, trees, sheds or other structures to support climbing vines; add window boxes, wooden tubs, or ceramic pots to create a terraced effect and provide growing places for a variety of plants. Learn which plants hummingbirds feed on in natural areas near your home. Native hummingbird plants serve as a reliable source of nectar at the same time each year. Choose plants with flowers that are red and or tubular—two qualities that add to a flower's value as a hummingbird food supply. Hummingbirds are also drawn to orange and pink flowers. They find yellow and white blooms less attractive. Red, non-tubular flowers such as roses and geraniums may lure hummingbirds to the garden with their blooms, but they offer little nectar, so the birds quickly reject them.



Firespike (*Odontonema strictum*)



Hamelia (*Hamelia patens*)



Esperanza (*Tecoma stans*) Yellowbells



Turks Cap (*Malvaviscus arboreus*)

Flowers that rely on sweet scents to attract insect pollinators usually do not provide a nectar source for hummingbirds.

Plant patches of the same species (three or more plants) to provide larger quantities of nectar, as well as bigger targets for roving hummers. Prune your plants to prevent excessive woody growth and instead encourage production of flowers. Learn about hummingbird habits and which species are likely to occur near your home. Study their migration dates, nesting season (I like to help the hummers with nest building so I save my dryer fluff for them), and seasonal presence. This knowledge will help you select plants that will bloom during the time that hummingbirds are likely to visit your yard.

Provide water baths. Like most birds, hummingbirds frequently bathe in shallow water even in the drops that collect on leaves. Hummingbirds may sit and preen or flit through the droplets generated by garden misters, drip fountain devices, and small waterfalls; these are available at many garden centers. If your garden does not include trees or shrubs and are none nearby, position perches within 10 to 20 feet of the garden. As a substitute for a live perch, use a dead branch with small twigs (keep in mind the tiny size of hummingbird toes). Large trees are often used for perches, as springboards for courtship displays, and for nesting.

The trunks of large trees also provide hummingbirds with a source of lichens—a camouflaging decoration that some species attach to the outside of their nest with spider silk. If space permits, plant large trees such as maples or oaks. Be persistent. Hummingbirds may appear minutes

after you set out inviting plants but sometimes it takes several weeks. A few of my favorite hummingbird plants:

Firespike (*Odontonema strictum*): Beautiful green foliage. Crimson-red blooms in the fall. Attracts butterflies and hummingbirds. Best of all, comes back after a freeze.

Hamelia (*Hamelia patens*): hummingbird bush. Hummingbirds love this plant. Blooms 9 months of the year. Drought tolerant. Evergreen during mild winters.

Esperanza (*Tecoma stans*): Also known as Yellowbells. Deciduous shrub; grows 3-6 feet. Showy yellow tubular flowers in clusters April to November.

Turks Cap (*Malvaviscus arboreus*): Red blooms resemble a man's Turkish hat. Can handle drought.

Jatrophia (*Jatropha integerrima*): Poisonous. Root-hardy tropical shrub of brilliant scarlet to coral-red blooms from spring to fall. Sun. Evergreen. Cypress Vine (*Ipomoea quamoclit*): Propagate from seed. Blooms May to October. Dense fern-like foliage.

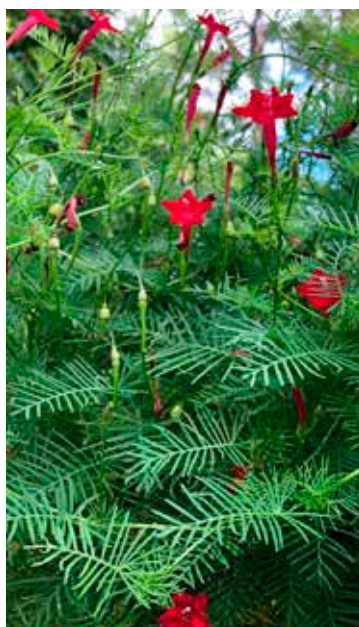
Porterweed (*Stachytarpheta jamaicensis*): Sun. Flowers appear at end of long drooping stems. Cut back to maintain shape. Transplants easily.

Cigar Plant (*Cuphea ignea*): Sun. Drought tolerant. Bright red blooms all summer. Transplant in spring.

Perhaps our guiding philosophy should be: If we put it out, they will come.



Jatrophia (*Jatropha integerrima*)



Cypress vine (*Ipomoea quamoclit*)



Porterweed (*Stachytarpheta jamaicensis*)



Cigar Plant (*Cuphea ignea*)

Trowels and Tribulations



By Donna Ward
MG 1996

A perfect November day reminds me of an English muffin - starts out crisp, softens in the middle, and when you get to the end, it's crisp again. November provides us with the incentive and energy to dig in the dirt. I've been waiting for that since the end of May!

Congratulations on using much restraint when visiting your favorite nursery. I know it's been tough to pass up those flats of smiley face pansies. No need to hold off any longer. It is cool enough

now to put them into the sunny raised bed you've prepared. Remember that pansies are heavy feeders, so if you want a spectacular performance from them, be prepared to do your part. Bone meal and blood meal are highly recommended, but in my yard it only seems to attract unwanted four-legged critters. I choose to use time-release fertilizer pellets in the bottom of the planting hole as one application can last as long as four months - and critters aren't attracted.

There seems to be no end to the leaves that flutter to the lawn this time of year, and the pine needles that didn't hit the ground hang like Christmas tinsel in the shrubbery. Both leaves and needles represent a super-rich source of nutrients for your whole landscape. Use a mulching blade on your mower, or mow over them repeatedly until you have chopped them as fine as possible. They will disintegrate quickly and the St. Augustine will take up the nutrients. If you don't care to leave them on the lawn bag them as you mow, and use them as mulch around the shrubbery and trees that you're going to plant this month. Did I mention that November is an ideal time to plant landscape trees?

If you have spent any time above the Mason-Dixon Line, you probably turn up your nose at the 'fall color' in this part of the country. But it is possible to incorporate some brilliant yellow, orange and red autumn color into your Gulf Coast landscape. Some trees to consider are the Drummond red maple, golden raintree, red oak, sweet gum, green ash, and crape myrtle to name just a few.

If your azaleas and camellias didn't perform up to your expectations this spring, there could be several reasons. Too much sun, not enough water, improper fertilization, flawed pruning schedule, or maybe they were just planted in the wrong place. If it's the latter - now is the time to make the move. In order to promote root development and prevent winter damage, keep them well watered and mulched.

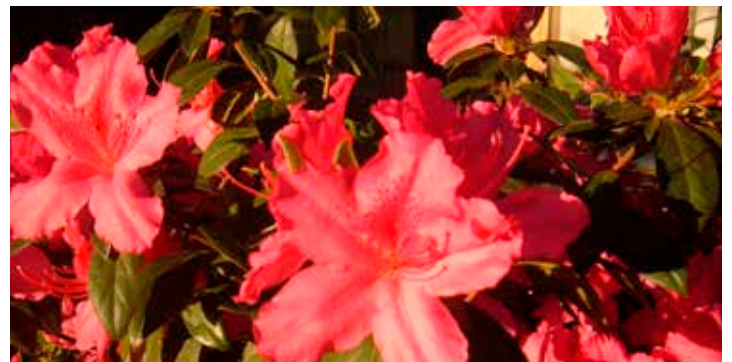
The plumeria that grows wild in Hawaii won't survive in your back yard unless it is in a really protected spot and we have a very mild winter. Even then, it's 'iffy.' If yours are planted in the ground lift them out and shake the dirt from the roots and over-winter them in the garage. If they are in a pot wheel them into the garage and ignore them until spring. If neither method is possible take plenty of cuttings, and hope for the

best. This might be a good time to think about building that greenhouse you've always wanted.

Show off your green thumb and give your neighbors a thrill at the same time. Let them see your bloomers - the floral kind of course. It's time to put in transplants of cool weather bloomers such as snapdragon, pansy, pinks, candytuft, calendula, alyssum, stock and many, many more are available right now at your favorite nursery. A mass planting of colorful cyclamens will stop the neighbors in their tracks.

If you're into vegetable gardening, why not share your skills with a small person? Most kids can't stand turnips, spinach, radishes, beets, cabbage or peas. But if they are involved in the planting and harvesting, they could possibly develop a taste for these veggies. All of the above can be planted this month. A good 'kid friendly' seed to start with would be English peas. The seeds are large and easy for small fingers to handle. They germinate readily, and quickly grab a support such as a trellis, tomato cage, or something as simple as chicken wire strung between two tall stakes. If kids are involved from the planting to the pot, it's possible that you could eliminate "Eat your vegetables" from the dinner table conversation. Notice I said "possible."

November means Thanksgiving - don't forget to plant the daffodils and hyacinths after dinner.



Azalea



Camellia, Professor Sargent

The Teacher and the Weatherman - Meet Jan and Tom Fountain



By Kaye Corey
MG 2001

Interviewing for this newsletter always leads to an adventure in getting to know our Master Gardener friends. Like at a high school class reunion, the often-asked question is “who were you?” Here is the “were” and “now” of Jan and Tom Fountain. I wondered why Tom referred to Jan as “cousin” Jan. They met at the Holmes Family Reunion on Lake Texoma in 2001. Tom, a widower, had been invited to the reunion, so he thought “what the heck, I will go and see who all these people are.” He did and met his distant cousin, Jan. They

discovered they both enjoyed traveling, family and outdoor adventures and ... their homes were in the Clear Lake area. They were married in 2002. Between them, they share four daughters, fourteen grandchildren and nine and one-half great-grandchildren.

Jan grew up in Sulphur, Oklahoma with teacher parents. They lived on a ranch and enjoyed traveling. After attending the University of Oklahoma, Jan began her teaching career, moving to Clear Lake in 1966. The last 10 years of her career were with University of Houston, Clear Lake as Curriculum Library Manager.

Tom grew up on a farm in Texarkana. He recently attended his 60th high school reunion. Wonder if he got the “who were you” question? Tom enlisted in the U.S. Air Force and attended the Air Force weather schools and attended Texas Tech after his military stint. He worked for the Army, Navy and eventually the National Weather Service. In 1978, Meteorologist Tom made his way to the Galveston Weather Office, then the Houston Weather Office in Alvin and in 1993 moved to the new League City Office where he remained until retirement in 2002. Tom says he had the privilege to spend over 40 years doing something he enjoyed and worked with a great group of people.

Both Jan and Tom have a history of outdoor activity. Tom says being a Master Gardener is in his DNA. He has fond memories of his granddad's garden and picking strawberries for breakfast. His family had a small farm and a very productive vegetable garden. When GCMG friends Bonner and Jerry Patterson suggested the MG program, Tom applied and became part of the class of 2008. He enjoys being in the garden taking pictures, visiting with fellow Master Gardeners and observing the growing plants. He likes helping with the construction, driving the tractor and helping out where needed.

Jan became a Master Gardener in 2012 after retirement. She began working with those who established Libbie's Place gardening group. At the Discovery Garden, Jan helps with the garden tours. Twice a year you will find her with our outstanding Master Gardener cooking team preparing meals for our MGs during our plant sales. Both Jan and Tom help with this newsletter, editing the Discovery Garden page and writing articles. Together they have traveled to all seven continents and many botanical gardens. Jan's list of gardens visited include Jerusalem, China, New

Zealand, South Africa, Canada, Azores, Australia and here in the US. Tom, being a photographer, could present a visual program for us all to enjoy. They are big OU football fans. They even went to the Rose Bowl in their many travels.

Jan enjoys her garden of low maintenance Texas Superstar plants. She manages her leased 758 acre ranch in Oklahoma as an absentee owner.

Tom enjoys their family activities including Boy Scouting with grandsons. Life is good being outdoors and most of all he enjoys helping others.



3 MGs Have Mothers who Gardened Sharing Plant Love that Grew



By Karolyn Gephart
MG 2017

When Master Gardeners examine their lives, it is not surprising to find loved ones in their past who had gardens, loved flowers or enjoyed watching things grow. This love is often shared with children and the garden attraction, like seeds, grow as the child does.

Elayne Kouzounis

Master Gardener Elayne Kouzounis was surrounded by love and gardening growing up as a child in Houston. Her mother had a beautiful garden and shared her love of it with her daughter.

After marrying the man she had known and loved most of her life, Elayne inherited a father-in-law who was the best gardener she had ever met.

"We always said in our family that my father-in-law could stick a broomstick in soil and make it blossom," Elayne said. "He had beautiful roses, flowers of all kinds and great vegetables, growing everything from seed."

Married 58 years to Demo, she still has many plants from cuttings her father-in-law had given her.

When Elayne's four children had grown and were off at school, she wanted to find a place for herself and decided to apply to be a Master Gardener. She knew about the Houston program but instead chose the Galveston County Master Gardener Program after hearing about all the wonderful things they did.

Elayne became a member of the Class of 1998 after interviewing with Dr. William M. Johnson to be accepted.



"I wasn't nervous at all. I found Dr. Johnson to be warm and friendly and I knew I had found a great program," Elayne said.

What she gained was more than she had hoped for.

"I love all the people and admire all that I have met along the way," Elayne said. "These are the kind of people I want to be around."

Elayne loves plants and her home is her palette for all the ones she loves to grow. She describes it as a jungle and is very animated with the many beautiful and unique plants and garden art she has collected.

Elayne also loves to write and not only has a column on plants in this Master Gardener newsletter, she also has a column in the Village newspaper. Each article she writes is a piece of her—her joy in sharing information, her expertise in horticulture and her effervescent personality that comes right through.

Kevin Lancon

Kevin Lancon, Class of 2018, brought his love of plants to Galveston County from his original home in Lafayette, Louisiana.

Kevin lives currently in League City and has retired after 30-plus years as an executive in the Oil and Gas industry.

Kevin credits his mother for his love of gardening.

"My grandfather had a large farm and grew lots of vegetables, citrus and sugarcane, but my mother was my primary garden influencer. She influenced me the most in gardening. She was particularly passionate about tomatoes," Kevin said.

Kevin puts what he learned as a child and now as a Master Gardener to good use.

"I've always loved gardening and the joy of growing something from just a seed but recently, we have changed our eating habits and are much more focused on healthy eating and much of what we now eat comes directly from our backyard," Kevin said. "We always have a vegetable garden and also have an assortment of fruit trees and herbs. Every morning we start the day with a veggie/fruit/herb drink from plants that we grow. It's a great way to start every day."

Since Kevin started the GCMG program, he became active in the Discovery Garden and in helping plan the GCMG program's future.

"I am currently the Discovery Garden Coordinator and enjoy the daily interaction with other MGs at the garden. I was also involved with developing the MG 5-year plan and really enjoyed that activity and creating a long-term vision for success and growth," Kevin said.



Sandra Gervais

Another Master Gardener from Louisiana (the southern part) is Sandra Gervais.

She and her husband Ira, also a Master Gardener, live in Friendswood.

Sandra became a Master Gardener in 2011. Like Kevin and Elayne, Sandra too gives her mother the credit for instilling a love of gardening in her.

"My mother had the proverbial 'green thumb' and made growing things look easy. Her family raised bananas and cattle in her home country," Sandra said.

Sandra was interested in gardening but it took others she watched to get her started. She and her husband lived abroad in several countries for many years. While in Scotland, gardening became a possibility as well as a challenge.

"Seeing the effort it took for my neighbors to grow tomatoes when we lived in Scotland was eye-opening. And watching the Scots work in their lovely flower gardens gave me the courage to start. It helped that neighbors were happy to visit while working in their gardens at 11:30 p.m. Remember, this was very close to the Land of the Midnight Sun, so summers were bright and fun while winters were cold and dark. It takes hard work to produce beautiful plants, no matter where you are," Sandra said.

Formerly an English/Language Arts teacher, Sandra has retired but hasn't stopped working. Her work appears in this newsletter in each issue. Sandra provides interesting, delicious and nutritious recipes from food items a gardener could grow. Sandra also is active wherever needed.

"I contribute to the MG newsletter and help behind the scenes for sales, events, etc. I enjoy learning about the many beautiful flowering plants we can grow here and how to help them thrive," Sandra said.



Agaves

Editor's Note: This is a reprint of Jan's article in the Galveston Monthly



**By Jan Brick
MG 2001**

In recent years there has been a renewed interest in succulents, both small (almost tiny and often called “air plants”) and large in the order of the Century Plant. Climate change and the lack of sufficient rainfall in many areas as well as a demand for less maintenance may have contributed to this fascination. Growers are also cognizant of gardeners’ attention and consideration of the importance of employing Xeriscape theories while planning their landscape needs, particularly native

or adapted vegetation with areas of creative loveliness that require little upkeep or constant care and tending. Succulents fill those requirements in many ways and agaves have gained a status of esteem in home gardens simply because of their attractive appearance and their predictable growth habits and routine needs or lack thereof.

Agaves are native to Mexico and the Southwestern United States and are generally listed as perennial plants as they require several years to mature and flower. Growing slowly, requiring little supplemental watering has made the agave a popular ornamental plant in hot and dry regions. Most agaves have sharp marginal teeth, an extremely sharp spine, with short stout stems and are fibrous inside. The agave is not a cactus though both have highly specialized features like thick fleshy leaves, spines, and roots with the capability of storing food and water.

The agave was a major food source for native indigenous people of the southwest as most parts of the agaves are edible. The leaves, shoots, and stalks can be eaten, leaves, collected in the winter and spring months are

rich in sap used for cooking and drinking, while the stalks (harvested in summer) are sweet when roasted and produce a type of sugar cane. A beverage can be squeezed from baked fibers, the heads can be boiled, roasted or baked and pounded into flat sheets, sun-dried and stored for future use or made into a paste for making soup. Sap collected from the base of a young flower stalk is used in cooking. Each plant will produce edible blooms during its final season. In some species of agave, the flower shoot may be cut out, the sap collected and fermented. By distillation, a spirit called mescal is prepared, a form of which is the drink known as tequila.

Agave americana is a familiar type of agave that is also labeled the Century Plant referring to its long life. This species takes years to become ready for the flowering process being dependent upon the health and vigor of the plant itself, the richness of the soil and the climate. Once flowering occurs, the primary shoot will die off as do the other agaves but the offsets at the base of the plant are easily propagated. This agave can grow to enormous proportions and is a handsome specimen plant on its own.

Agave attenuata is a native of central Mexico and is often called the foxtail agave; popular grown as a garden plant as it has no teeth or terminal spines and easily adapted to any setting where there may be foot traffic. As a succulent, it requires little maintenance or watering.

Agave tequilana also called blue agave is well known for its use in the production of tequila. The Mexican government has decreed that 100% blue agave tequila must be made using only *Agave tequilana* ‘Weber’s Blue’ agave planted to rigorous specifications and only in certain Mexican states.



Agave attenuata



Agave americana

“Bittersweet in the Spring Garden”

More than twenty years ago on a visit to a desert garden shop in Tuscon, Arizona, I purchased and had shipped to my home a young Queen Victoria Agave. Upon receipt of this marvel, I began years of nurturing, cherishing and fostering this curious variety of succulent. I would bask in the glory of its many compliments from visitors to my garden. It seems that everyone is as smitten by this rare beauty as much as I have been.

The Queen Victoria agave (*Agave victoriae-reginae*) is distinguished by its tight rosette shape, almost resembling an artichoke in form. The rosette is a group of numerous dark green leaves displaying distinctive white margins and stripes along the borders of the leaves. The edges of this succulent’s leaves are smooth (with none of the thorns that are a prominent feature of cacti) leading up to a single prominent spine at the top of each leaf. Originally from the Chihuahuan Desert region of Mexico, this variety of agave is especially prized by gardeners through the southwest United States for its charm, small size and easy care. Thriving in full sun in some very inhospitable conditions including hot desert landscapes but hardy to ten degrees Fahrenheit.

Drought tolerant, needing a deep watering only once or twice a month in the summer months since the arrangement of the leaves help to channel water to the base of the plant to take advantage of sporadic rainfall in arid regions. As a grand specimen plant, the Queen Victoria agave will bring grace and interest to the landscape; this Mexican native with its royal dignity and charisma deserves a prominent location where her elegance can be admired.



Agave tequilana



Agave victoriae

Now to my conundrum, like most agaves, the Queen Victoria will send up a flowering stalk, the “crowning” achievement of her many years of long life, sometimes after twenty years or more. This stalk can grow to fifteen feet in height and boasts creamy white blooms; the sight of the Queen Agave in full bloom is quite impressive and very dramatic. Unfortunately, shortly following this phenomenon, the Queen will slowly die. This is a natural process and nothing can be done to prevent her from flowering. I am saddened by her demise and unsure about replacing her beautiful simplicity, a star in my garden, with a mere understudy.

Mescal Sour

This tangy-sweet cocktail sports a fluffy foam froth from egg whites and a two-step mixing technique. The first shake, without ice, helps create the foam. Adding ice and shaking once again chills the drink and further aerates the whites.

1 1/2 oz. fresh lime juice
1 1/2 oz. Yola Mezcal
1 oz. Amaro Montenegro
1 tsp. light agave nectar
1 large egg white
Angostura bitters and a lime twist

Shake the lime juice, mescal, amaro, agave and egg white in a cocktail shaker until frothy. Fill shaker with ice, cover and shake again until outside is frosty. Strain into a martini glass and garnish with the bitters and top with the lime twist.



The Discovery Garden Update



By Tom Fountain
MG 2008

Officially fall has arrived in the garden and fall colors are starting to appear. Yet, temperatures have continued to be four to five degrees above normal for the past few months. Afternoon highs were near normal for this period; however, the overnight lows were above normal.

Our part of Texas was slipping into drought conditions until Tropical Storm Imelda produced heavy rains and flooding over southeast Texas. Rainfall in the Galveston County area during the storm ranged

from 8 to 12.5 inches.

The weather outlook for the remainder of the year indicates more of the same. The Weather Service predicts we can expect temperatures that will continue above normal with rainfall near normal barring any tropical development.

Our Discovery Garden group has been quite active lately as we have scrambled to deal with getting ready for the MG Fall Sale. We all work really hard making many preparations to put on a great plant sale. Pictured in Figure 1 are Helen, Kay and Clarence who are preparing wagons for a new coat of paint. A good part of the success of the sale is due to all the hard work done by the Greenhouse Crew. Pictured in Figure 2 are Lisa, Mary and Stewart, who are a part of the Greenhouse Crew, taking a short break after a busy morning of repotting plants.

Other activities in the garden this time of year include the harvesting of produce and getting the beds ready for fall and winter planting. Lester and Wes are seen grinning and picking peas (Fig. 3). One tired, but very determined Jenni (pictured left in Fig. 4) was noticed using the sit and plant method of putting seeds in the ground with Sue (pictured right in Fig. 4). It was a hot and humid day.

Judy and Tish are pictured together (Fig. 5) in the Serenity Garden. They are a major force in taking care of both the Serenity Garden and the Earth-Kind Garden. As usual, they were busy working. It's hard to catch them together and in upright positions. Nevertheless, it is well worth the walk to the north end to visit or lend a hand.

Construction in the garden continues. A new group of demonstration compost bins are being built and will be in operation soon. Clarence, Rachel and Jim were putting stain on the lumber for the bins (Fig. 6). As you might have noticed, our expansion at the multi-purpose building has been stalled for a while, but is expected to resume soon. You can see in Figure 7 that we have already started to make use of the porch (pictured are Wes, Clyde, Lester and Jim taking a water break and enjoying the shade).

Fall growing season is upon us. I hope your holidays are filled with joy, good fellowship, and your garden is productive. We'll see you in the Discovery Garden soon.



Photos courtesy of
MG Tom Fountain



By Sandra Gervais
MG 2011

Summer's grip is finally letting go of Galveston County. The TV weatherman is even talking about cooler temperatures heading our way in the next week or so. And that makes putting on the oven to bake something yummy sound like a good idea once again.

So when I looked at the heavy branches of our citrus trees, my mind started thinking of recipes for all the Meyer lemons that would soon be everywhere. One year a friend even bought a juicer

so that she could process her many lemons and enjoy them year round. For us, wildlife takes its share so we don't have her problem. Thankfully.

Here are two desserts that Meyer lemons are perfect in. One is an easy cake from Joy Edwards, long suffering wife of Master Gardener Jim Edwards and a longtime Master Gardener supporter. The second one is from a childhood friend in New Orleans and is a little offbeat. It uses the whole lemon, skin, pith and all. She swears by it so it's on my list when we pick those first Meyer lemons.



Joy's Lucious Lemon Cake 350°

4 eggs
3/4 cup oil
3/4 cup water (for more lemon flavor, can change to 1/2 cup water and 1/4 cup lemon juice)
4 ounce box of Jello lemon flavored instant pudding

Beat eggs until frothy.
Add oil, water, instant lemon pudding and mix well.
Add cake mix and mix until fully blended.
Pour into well greased 9 x 13 baking pan.
Bake at 350 degrees for 30-35 minutes, or until knife inserted in center comes out clean.

Topping

2 tablespoons melted butter
2 tablespoons water
1/3 cup lemon juice
2 cups powdered sugar

Mix melted butter, water and lemon juice in pan.
Add powdered sugar and heat until sugar dissolves.
Poke holes in cake and pour topping on while cake is still warm.
(Note: can add zest to pan for more lemon flavor.)



easy recipes Seasonal Bites



Susan's Lemon Bars 350°

Base

1 cup all-purpose flour
1/2 cup sugar
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup unsalted butter (1 stick) cut into chunks

Cover bottom and sides of 8 inch baking pan with parchment paper.
Butter or spray paper.

Blend together flour, sugar and salt.

Add butter chunks and work until mixture is powdery/crumblly but will hold a shape.

(Note: easy in food processor but can also be worked by hand) Turn out crumbly mixture into prepared baking pan and press evenly on bottom and about 1 inch up sides.

Prick all over with fork.

Bake for 20 minutes or until lightly browned. Prick any bubbles with fork to flatten.

Lemon Filling

1 Meyer lemon, seeds removed and sliced into very thin rings
1 cup sugar
1/2 cup unsalted butter (1 stick) cut into chunks
4 large eggs at room temperature
2 tablespoons cornstarch
1/4 teaspoon salt

Place lemon rings and sugar in food processor, blender or even mixer bowl.
Run machine until lemon is practically puréed.

Add butter chunks and mix until smooth, scraping sides as needed.

Add eggs, cornstarch, and salt and mix until everything is evenly combined.

Pour mixture evenly over crust.

Bake 35-40 minutes, until filling is set and barely jiggles.

Cool completely before cutting and removing from pan.

Makes 16 squares.

(Note: recipe can be doubled and baked in 9 x 13 pan.)

Meeting Minutes



By Briana Etie
MG 2017

August Master Gardener Monthly Meeting

On Tuesday, August 6, our organization met at the Butler Museum in League City, TX. GCMGA President Sharon Zaal called the meeting to order. The venue was an excellent choice. The historical artifacts and delicious food made a wonderful evening during a very hot month this summer. As a member of the hospitality team, I enjoy our catered August meetings the most. We enjoyed our speaker Heather McKnight, City Arborist for the City of League City.



Fran and Hedy



Heather McKnight



Upstairs Upsteers

September Master Gardener Monthly Meeting

On Tuesday, September 10, our association met at the Galvestonian, on the East end of Galveston, for our monthly meeting. GCMGA President Sharon Zaal called the meeting to order. We gathered at the patio with our host Master Gardener Carol Jean Mulrain. Carol Jean had the tables beautifully decorated. Larry Craft led us in prayer. Our host and Master Gardeners set a beautiful table of food. Our dinner with friends and guests was fabulous. After dinner we enjoyed the nice Galveston breezes and beautiful sunset.



GULF COAST GARDENING EDUCATIONAL SEMINARS

Upcoming Events - November - December 2019

Galveston County Master Gardener Educational Programs for Interested Gardeners

The following 2019 Master Gardener Programs are free to the public.

Location: **Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office in Carbide Park • 4102 - B Main Street (FM 519), La Marque, Texas 77568**

GPS location: **29.359705, -95.003591**

For course reservations, call 281-309-5065 or email galvcountymgs@gmail.com

<http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/index.html>



WHAT IS A GALVESTON COUNTY MASTER GARDENER

Saturday, November 2, 2019
1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

galvcountymgs@gmail.com to pre-register

Galveston County Master Gardener Diane Schenke will explain who Master Gardeners (MG) are and how to become one. MGs are members of the local community who take an active interest in lawns, trees, shrubs, flowers, and gardens. They are enthusiastic, willing to learn and help others, and able to communicate with diverse groups of people. MGs contribute time as volunteers, working through the Galveston County Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Office to provide horticulture-related information to their communities. What sets MGs apart from other home gardeners is their special training and teamwork in horticulture. In addition to the presentation, Schenke and other MGs will answer questions and facilitate a discussion. At the end of the class attendees will have the opportunity to complete an application to become a member of the 2020 Galveston County Master Gardener training class. Location of presentation: Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office in Carbide Park, 4102-B Main Street (FM 519), La Marque 77568.



THE GREAT PEPPER EXTRAVAGANZA

Saturday, November 23, 2019
1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

galvcountymgs@gmail.com to pre-register

Peppers are perhaps the most diverse of all the vegetables grown in home gardens. They may be sweet and mellow or fiery hot, depending on the variety, and are easy to grow. This presentation by Galveston County Master Gardener Gene Speller includes backgrounds and origins of pepper plants, heat value classification (Scoville Units), how to start them from seeds, culture and growing tips, recommended varieties for this area, insect and disease control, and pepper uses. Speller will have a tasting display of salsa, pickled peppers, and pepper vinegar that he has prepared. He will also have his homegrown peppers available for tasting and comparisons. The general public is encouraged to bring their own un-sliced peppers for taste comparisons. Location of presentation: Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office in Carbide Park, 4102-B Main Street (FM 519), La Marque 77568

A little rain didn't keep Hedy and Sue from washing dishes after a Thursday lunch and workday at The Discovery Garden. Linda Barnett mentioned that every week she asks for dishwashers and every week they appear. Linda would like to thank all of the dishwashers, past and present, for helping out.

Photo by Tim Jahnke



REMEMBER

In order to maintain your status as a certified Texas Master Gardener, each year you must complete a minimum of 6 hours continuing education, as well as 12 service hours. Additionally, those hours must be reported through the online Volunteer Management System or other approved means. Contact MG Wayne Elliott at gcmghours@gmail.com for more information.



2019 Master Gardener Recertification Hours

2019 Master Gardener Recertification Hours

Date	Name of Program	Speaker	MG CEUs
1/8/2019	MGA Jan. Meeting - The Year Ahead for GCMG	Sharon Zaal, Kevin Lancon	1.00
1/12/2019	Growing Blueberries	Dr. David Cohen	1.25
1/12/2019	Backyard Citrus - Crystal Beach Fire & Rescue	Robert Marshall	1.75
1/19/2019	Kitchen Gardening	Mary Demeny	2.25
1/26/2019	Wedge Grafting	Sue Jeffco	1.75
1/26/2019	"Texas Tuff" Plants	Marie Leal	2.00
1/26/2019	Herbs for the Gulf Coast	Nancy Langston-Noh & Briana Etie	2.00
2/2/2019	Growing Great Tomatoes	Ira Gervais	2.25
2/2/2019	Spring Plant Sale Overview	Karolyn Gephart	1.25
2/2/2019	Growing Peaches in Galveston County	Herman Auer	2.00
2/2/2019	Successful Spring Vegetables	Jenni Hudgins	2.00
2/5/2019	MG Training Class - Class Orientation	Dr. William M. Johnson	4.00
2/7/2019	MG Training Class - Botany	Jayla Fry	3.00
2/9/2019	Growing & Using Herbs	Tricia Bradbury	2.50
2/9/2019	Planting Fruit Trees	Herman Auer	2.00
2/12/2019	MG Training Class - Vegetables	Tom LeRoy	4.00
2/12/2019	MGA Feb. Meeting - Spring Plant Sale Overview	Karolyn Gephart	0.75
2/19/2019	MG Training Class - Plant Pathology	Dr. David Appel	4.00
2/19/2019	Homeowner's Guide to Weed Control	John Jons	1.50
2/21/2019	Peach Pruning - hands-on demonstration	Robert Marshall	1.00
2/21/2019	Rose Pruning - hands-on demonstration	John Jons	1.25
2/26/2019	MG Training Class - Home Fruit & Citrus Production	Herman Auer	4.00
2/28/2019	Grape Pruning - hands-on demonstration	David Cooper	1.00

Use this link to see the entire list.

https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/2019_MG_Recertification_Educational_Credit_Hours.pdf



TMGA 2020

REGISTRATION WEBSITE COMING HERE SOON!

**Proudly hosted by the
McLennan County Master Gardener Association
in Waco Texas**

**May 12-14, 2020
at the Waco Convention Center**

Keep up to date on our conference Facebook page.



LODGING

- We have contracted with two great hotels for you!
- The host hotel, and it's partner hotel directly across the street, are now accepting reservations.
- Our agenda will have Leadership Training May 11th
- Conference registration opening at 7:00am on May 12th
- Conference will close at 5:00pm on the 14th.
- Special hotel rates are valid for three days before and three days post-conference

Come, enjoy all that Waco has to offer!

Hilton Waco

- This riverside hotel is connected by a covered walkway to the Waco Convention Center
- \$149 / night
- Phone 254-754-8484

<https://www.hilton.com/en/hi/groups/personalized/A/ACTWHHF-MGA20-20200510/index.jhtml>

Courtyard Marriott

- This newly remodeled hotel is immediately adjacent to the Waco Convention Center
- \$145 / night
- Phone 254-752-8686

<https://www.marriott.com/event-reservations/reservation-link.mi?id=1558020957260&key=GRP&app=resvlink>

NOTE

If you wish to stay longer, both hotels will honor the above three days BEFORE and three days AFTER our conference block, however, you must make these reservations by phoning the Reservations Desk directly at the hotel using the phone numbers provided above.





bulletin board



Volunteer Opportunities

For the **Master Gardener Hotline** contact Ginger Benson by email at galvcountrymgs@gmail.com or call the office at 281-309-5065.

Volunteer Opportunities

Tideway is a program of the Transitional Learning Center

Dr. Johnson has approved Tideway Transitional Learning Center (644 Central City Blvd., Galveston, Texas 77551) as a location where Master Gardener service hours may be earned. Plans to prepare the gardens at Tideway for spring planting are ready and volunteers are needed. Volunteers can contact Jennifer Pinard at jpinard@tlc-tideway.org. The focus is on the long-term needs of individuals with an acquired brain injury. The program offers accessible horticultural experiences, through which individuals with a brain injury can improve sensory awareness, motor skills, range of motion, endurance and flexibility as well as regain confidence, and learn new skills. This provides the opportunity for our residents to develop the necessary skills to gain and maintain a productive lifestyle whether it is on site or volunteering in the community. The residents at Tideway are very much "hands on" in building the different garden beds, in fact some of the residents came up with the designs.

And they have chickens!

Volunteer Opportunities

Libbie's Place Adult Day Care has been designated as a Demonstration Garden for the Master Gardener Association. It is located at 5402 Avenue U in Galveston and is part of Moody Methodist Church outreach ministries <http://www.moody.org/libbie-s-place-senior-day>. A crew is needed to maintain and upgrade the garden as needed with your time spent counting towards MG volunteer hours. MG Pam Windus is heading up the crew and will determine the day, time and frequency of the work days. If you are interested, or have any questions, please contact Pam at 409.771.5620, email DrPGilbert@aol.com to let her know the day/times (AM/PM) that would work best for you. Thank you for your time and consideration in this great new endeavor for the Master Gardeners.

GalvCity Master Gardener Discovery Garden
Conditions as of: 04:58 PM Monday, Oct 31, 2019

76°F HIGH: 81°F at 12:26 AM
LOW: 67°F at 10:20 AM

Wind: 3 mph N High gust 23 mph at 06:58 AM

Humidity: 75% Feels like 77°F

Rain: 1.83 in Seasonal Total 43.63 in

Barometer: 29.81 in Hg Falling Slowly

Vantage Pro2 Plus via IP
Shop Weather Stations at www.davisinstruments.com **DAVIS**

Don't forget to put the link for our weather station on your smart phone and computer:

<https://www.weatherlink.com/embeddablePage/show/269c8db099654c0fa522d3420104b173/wide>

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Tour Guides for Thursday Public Access and Tour of our Discovery Garden

Our Demonstration Garden is open for touring by the general public on each Thursday from 9:00 - 11:00 am. MGs are needed to serve as tour guides for our Discovery Garden.

Contact MG Denny Noh at 281.723.2830 or dnoh@aol.com to volunteer.

Volunteers are needed to develop and deliver presentations on various horticulture topics of interest to the public in our surrounding communities and our Master Gardeners. Classes are given at the Extension Office on Tuesday evenings and on Saturday. This is an excellent opportunity to contribute, develop and use skills from life experiences as well as contribute to one of the main GCMG missions of Education. We have experienced GCMG Mentors and Specialist available to guide and support. Please contact if you have any questions and so we can get you scheduled to present a class. Volunteers are also needed to help with the Saturday programs and the Tuesday evening programs. If you can help, please contact

Denny Noh @ 281-723-2830 or dnoh@aol.com
Nancy Langston Noh @ 832-289-7087 or nancylnoh@aol.com

AgriLife Extension Office Discovery Garden needs volunteers!

The gardens around the AgriLife Extension Office are maintained by Master Gardeners under the team leadership of MG Ginger Benson. This is an opportunity to make a good impression on the many visitors to the AgriLife Extension Office. Come out and have a good time while learning more about ornamentals. Please contact Ginger at 281-309-5065,

email galvcountrymgs@gmail.com to find out the schedule and join her team.

Save the Dates!

TMGA State Conference
Waco-McLennan County
May 12-14, 2020
Waco Convention Center
<https://txmg.org/conference/2020-conference>

Please see the

Texas Master Gardeners Website for details.

By visiting the website you can find up-to-date

information on Advanced Training Programs that were added in

between editions of the newsletter. txmg.org. You may download

the application forms from that website. **Note** all applications for

the Advanced Training Programs must be approved and signed by

Dr. William M. Johnson. **Note** fees do not include lodging

or food unless specified otherwise.



Here is a great way to support our GCMGA. Amazon will donate 0.5% of our personal purchases to Galveston County Master Gardener Association. All you have to do is: Go to smile.amazon.com - Choose Galveston County Master Gardener Association as your charity. Save smile.amazon.com to your favorites. - Always start from this site to do your Amazon shopping. - You should see your chosen charity in the top bar on Amazon's website. - If you have any problems, search smile on Amazon's website



Now is the Time to Plant Fall Vegetables

Editor's Note: This article is a reprint of Dr. Johnson's Weekly Gardening Column in *The Daily News*



By Dr. William M. Johnson
CEA-HORT & MG
Program Coordinator

At last, real fall weather conditions arrived over the past weekend —temperatures dipping into the upper 50s on a Saturday morning provided for the start of a pleasant weekend.

Even though daytime temperatures for the week will likely be in the mid-70s to mid-80s, I am ready to believe the cooler temperatures of the fall season will prevail over the coming weeks. Cooler mornings in November will make it a joy to get out and work in the home vegetable garden.

Experienced gardeners know that an amazing variety of vegetables can be grown here during the cool season from October through early April. And these cool-season vegetables include some of the most delicious, nutritious and popular ones around.

Broccoli is an easy-to-grow and productive fall vegetable. Transplants can be planted now through mid-November. Space plants 12 to 18 inches apart in rows or beds. The 12-inch spacing will produce smaller heads, but total production is greater because you have more plants.

Broccoli heads are harvested when the largest flower buds in the head are about the size of the head of a kitchen match. After the main head is harvested, the plant will produce side florets, and harvesting can continue for several weeks, often doubling the production of each plant.

Based on purchases of cauliflower transplants at our Fall Plant Sale over the weekend, home gardeners are becoming more aware that cauliflower can be grown in our area. Four varieties of cauliflowers were available including Cheddar Purple (orange color), Purple Graffiti (Yes, the head is purple in color.)

Cauliflower should be spaced 18 to 24 inches apart; spacing closer than 18 inches will greatly reduce the size of the head. Cauliflower produces only one head, so after harvest, remove the entire plant to make way for something else.

Cauliflower and broccoli transplants will also be available at the next Fall Plant Sale to be conducted by Master Gardeners on Thursday from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. at the Discovery Garden located in Carbide Park (see at a glance).

Other related vegetables include cabbage, kale, kohlrabi and collards. All of these can be planted from seed or transplants now through February.

Garlic may be planted now through November. Break the bulb into individual cloves and plant them by pressing the big end down, pointy end up into a prepared bed. The tip of the garlic should be about one-quarter inch below the soil surface. Space the cloves 4-to-6 inches apart in rows spaced about 15 inches apart. Garlic is a slow growing plant and the 15-inch space between rows can be used for intercropping.

Intercropping is a term used when two or more different vegetables are grown in the same space at the same time. Garlic plants will not need the 15 inches between the rows for several months, so a quick-growing vegetable can be grown in that area and harvested before the garlic needs it.

Good choices would include radishes, leaf lettuce, beets and spinach. These vegetables are not large growers and will be harvested long before the garlic is ready next May.

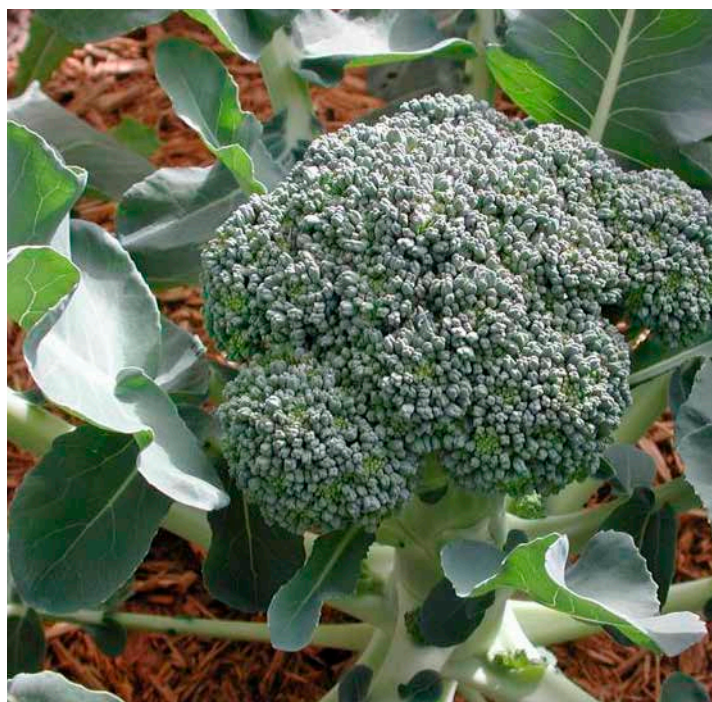
Intercropping may also be done with other vegetables that are initially spaced far apart, such as cabbage and cauliflower.

Root crops are also excellent for the cool-season vegetable garden. Plant the seeds rather closely to make sure you get a good stand. Once the seeds of root crops come up, the seedlings must be thinned to the right spacing, or the roots will not develop properly.

Some commonly planted root crops and the proper spacing are beets (3-to-4 inches); radishes (2-to-3 inches); turnips (3 inches); carrots (2 inches); and rutabagas (4 inches).

If you seek rapid gratification or feel gardening is a challenge, try radishes — they are easy to grow, and some varieties can be harvested just 22 days from planting.

Dr. William Johnson is a horticulturist with the Galveston County Office of Texas AgriLife Extension Service, The Texas A&M System. Visit his website at aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston



2019 GCMGA Monthly Meetings



By Judy Anderson
MG 2012

You're Invited - Monthly Backyard Meetings

November

Each year the Galveston County Master Gardener Association holds their Annual Meeting in November at the Extension Office. This is where the business of the MG Association is reported. It is very important for all Master Gardeners to attend. If you have questions about any part of the MG program, this is where you can get those questions answered. You will hear reports about finances, the education programs, the Discovery Garden, and what will be happening in the future. A pot luck dinner will be held

before the meeting with the social beginning at 5:30. Please join the MG family for this evening of MG information.

December

Make your plans to attend the Master Gardener Holiday Celebration at the home of Allen and Mikey Isbell in Galveston. It will be a festive occasion with a White Elephant Gift Exchange and a donation drop off for children's unwrapped gifts for a Galveston shelter. For the White Elephant Gift Exchange, bring a wrapped gardening gift for a man or woman valued at \$5.00-\$10.00. Dress in your festive attire and bring your favorite holiday dish for the pot luck dinner. It is always a feast and we hope you will be there to celebrate with us.

You may contact Judy at jande10198@aol.com for information.



FEEDBACK



We Want Your Feedback

We would love to hear from you. Send us your comments or suggestions for future articles, or just let us know how you are using our newsletter. To make sending feedback easy, just click on the button with your response

