

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

# GULF COAST *Gardening*

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TEXAS

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Galveston County





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By Camille Goodwin  
MG 2008

*“Winter is the time for comfort, for good food and warmth, for the touch of a friendly hand and for a talk beside the fire: it is the time for home.” Edith Sitwell*

2021 has arrived -- let us hope it's a much better year for everyone and that we can move towards something that looks a little closer to normal; and hopefully get past the pandemic soon. Unfortunately, the new year begins with January and February – my least favorite months of any year. Usually too much rain and cold weather (for us), and my gardens look they belong to an abandoned property. Although for gardeners, these are the months to get our preparations done for the coming growing season.

The first edition of our newsletter, for this year, provides inspiration and education for us to get busy planning. Too bad the pandemic couldn't have attacked weeds and unwanted insects!! I suppose we will never run out of weeds or insects to profile. I'm wondering if a weed that attracts pollinators is good or bad?

Read about the Slender Aster and ways to eliminate it on page 4. Tropical Sod Webworms have been over-achieving in my yard for two years in a row now. Checkout ways to control them on page 5. On page 8, learn all about the beautiful, huge Polyphemus Moth. If you are considering or desiring new plants in your landscape, page 12 features tropical elephant ears. We will be selling one of the most amazing Royal Hawaiian EE, White Lava, at our February bulb sale. If you'd like to grow roses, but think they are too much trouble, checkout page 10 to see the different varieties of roses we grow in our Discovery Garden that are super performers in our Gulf Coast growing environment. You are bound to find a few that will work for you. I was amazed that I actually have several of these in my own landscape.



In addition to tropics and roses, if you want something truly “Southern,” how about a magnolia tree? The article on page 19 fills you in on why this is a spectacular option. With the pandemic many of our usual events have been cancelled or will look different this year. I enjoyed reading about Dickens on the Strand and the Victorian English holiday custom that was shared at the Discovery Garden (page 25). Hopefully some of you got to enjoy Tish's generosity of Wassail and Mince pies.

Several of our Master Gardeners (Helen Mabe, Tish Reustle and Mary Jane Fortney) share their stories on how they came about their “green genes” (page 20). This series of stories has been one of my favorite newsletter offerings and has allowed me to learn more about our Master Gardeners – virtually the best people I know! Dr. Johnson teaches us about citrus and freezing weather on page 27. A couple of years ago when we had a deep freeze for several days, the Meyer Lemons, remaining on my tree, turned into giant, translucent yellow orbs after the freeze. Quite a freaky science experiment.

Our Master Gardener plant sales will continue to look a little different, see page 18 for our online sale schedule for this year. The article on page 16 features some of the citrus, avocado trees, perennials, bulbs and veggies that will be available at the February online sale. There are still many ways you can volunteer to assist with these sales until we can do them in person again. Please consider volunteering – what if no one volunteered?

We will need your support. As always, if there is something you'd like to see in the newsletter or have comments good or bad, please let Linda Steber know so the newsletter team can be responsive.

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Thanks for your interest!

# Q&A ask a master gardener

## Broadleaf Weed Problems?



By Pat Forke  
MG 2010

If any of these photographs look like a plant in your lawn, then you have the broadleaf weed Slender Aster (also known as *Symphyotrichum subulatum*). This weed has simple, linear, and alternate leaves. When it blooms, it can be quite attractive with daisy-like yellow flowers. Some blooms may be pale pink to white. These flowers attract butterflies and are of special value to native bees. This weed is usually an annual, but with mild winters can be a perennial. It can grow one to three feet in height or can spread out horizontally. The root system (either taproot or rootstock) can make it difficult to remove.

Slender Aster reseeds prolifically and many times you will not notice it until it blooms. It can spread in the wind, on your shoes, and particularly from your lawnmower. It is well-suited to the Galveston soil and climate conditions.

How do you remove the asters from your lawn, and what are some preventive measures you can take to keep it from visiting your lawn in the future? To remove those unwanted wild asters from your lawn, when the soil is moist and wearing your gardening gloves, grasp the aster's base as close to the soil line as possible. Hold down the soil with your other hand and pull the entire plant out of the ground. Spot treating with a postemergence is also an option.

Preventive measures are a bit more complicated. Of course, you want to keep your lawn as healthy as possible by mowing, watering, and fertilizing. The next step would be choosing a preemergence herbicide and possibly a postemergence herbicide. When choosing a herbicide make sure it is for broadleaf weeds and will not harm your grass.

What is a preemergence herbicide? It is an herbicide that is designed to control weeds by interfering with seedling germination and emergence. These herbicides are commonly referred to in the lawn care industry as weed preventers. They essentially form a protective barrier on your lawn during critical seasons when weeds are most ac-

tively germinating. Conversely, postemergence herbicides will control established weeds that have already germinated and emerged. Some herbicides have both pre- and postemergence activity.

The preemergence herbicide should be applied prior to weed seed germination and will provide good control of many weeds. Be sure to apply your spring application when air temperatures reach 65-70 degrees for four consecutive days. These herbicides are generally available in either liquid or granular form and are effective for six to 12 weeks. You may need to consider a second application approximately nine weeks after your first application.

Another application of the preemergence herbicide should be considered for the fall. Nighttime lows should decrease to around 55-60 degrees for four consecutive days before your fall application. Again, you might want to consider a second application approximately nine weeks later.

Consider having available a postemergence herbicide to target those visible weeds between your fall and spring applications of preemergence herbicide. With all applications, you might want to not mow for several days both before and after applications to maximize the amount of herbicide that contacts the weed leaf surface areas.

Generally, a preemergence is broad-spread and a postemergence herbicide is spot treated. Be sure to read your directions and follow the manufacturer's instructions.

If you are using a weed and feed, you might want to verify that you are not duplicating with your preemergence herbicide. Application of separate preemergence herbicides in addition to your weed and feed product may lead to over application that could be harmful to your lawn. Also keep in mind that weed and feed products should not be used when turfgrass is not actively growing as this can lead to the application of nitrogen fertilizers at inappropriate times.

For more in-depth information on both herbicides and care and maintenance of St. Augustine grass, be sure to check out the *Aggie Horticulture* website at [aggieturf.tamu.edu/publications](http://aggieturf.tamu.edu/publications).



Slender Aster (also known as *Symphyotrichum subulatum*)



Photos by Dr. William M. Johnson



# Tropical Sod Webworms a pest for lawns



By Hedy Wolpa  
MG 2018

If COVID-19 wasn't enough of a problem for us in 2020, add an especially strong infestation of tropical sod webworms along the Gulf Coast to our misery. The sod webworm isn't an unusual pest for St. Augustine lawns, but its inclination to vary in intensity from year to year, in a rather unpredictable pattern, makes it a frustrating pest to manage.

Late summer and early fall are the months that we see damage to our lawn from the sod webworm. Its calling card might first appear as a fluttering mass of light brownish-gray moths (Fig. 1) that fly just above the turf line as we walk through the grass early in the morning. Next, we begin to see patches of brown, dry grass, with the tips of the blades looking slightly chewed upon, that no amount of irrigation can bring back the lovely deep, rich green we love about St. Augustine.

There are several species of sod webworm in Texas, but it's the tropical sod webworm, *Hepetogramma phaeopteralis*, that is the most damaging in our area, mainly because it's less tolerant of cooler temps, preferring the warmth of the Gulf Coast. The adult moths are about 3/4 inch in size and, as moths typically do, they hold their wings out alongside their body when at rest, giving them a triangular shape. The moths aren't feeding on your grass; they're busy laying clusters of eggs on grass blades, from which tiny caterpillars hatch after only one week.

The webworm larvae (Fig. 2), which are usually light green with numerous darker, raised spots along the body, feed primarily at night on grass blades, and within a matter of days, the damage can be extensive. They hide in the thatch (their "homes" resemble silken tunnels where they hide in the daytime). Several generations of tropical sod webworms can occur during the year but it is generally the late summer and fall generations that cause the most damage to our lawns.

If you're not sure that the problem is sod webworms, you might try soaking an area of your lawn with a highly diluted soapy solution and the larvae will rise to the surface. If you find 4 or more sod webworm larvae in a 6-inch square area, then it is advised that you proceed with a chemical treatment.

Our friends and experts at Texas A&M offer some effective tips for treating the infestation and recovering your turf. Both granular and spray products can be beneficial since there are larval and adult moths to contend with in a relatively short life cycle. It's recommended that granular products containing the ingredient bifenthrin, an insecticide in the pyrethroid family, or gamma-cyhalothrin, should be used first to achieve full coverage of the lawn. Watering before application may be helpful, as well as a deep watering after application to ensure that the granules penetrate the thatch to the soil level. Also apply liquid insecticides containing *Bacillus thuringiensis* or *Saccharopolyspora spinosa*.

And since this pest is active in the evening, spray in the afternoon. More than one application of both granular and liquid insecticide is recommended to help break the life cycle. Remember to read and follow all directions on insecticide labels and observe safety precautions during application of both the granular and liquid products!

Since sod webworms prefer hot, dry lawns, it's suggested that we water deeply (1 inch per week, including rainfall) early in the day and use the highest mower settings when mowing. Always gather the grass clippings and dispose of them properly instead of mulching and leaving them on your lawn because, you know....those sod webworm eggs are there on the grass blades! The dead-looking grass and thatch should be raked each time you mow. Actually, sod webworms don't eat the grass roots, so fresh green blades may emerge soon in lawns that are well cared for. Another suggestion is to turn off floodlights and porch/patio lights at night, as they attract moths to your yard.

We're all spending lots more time at home due to COVID-19, but we don't need to share our yards with tropical sod webworms! Wishing both you AND your lawn a healthy and happy 2021!



Photos by Dr. William M. Johnson

# Thank Goodness for Spiders in the Garden



By Fran Brockington  
MG 2018

On warm days during vegetable growing time, there are many insects that munch on the Master Gardener produce. Hedy Wolpa (our MG 2018 class entomologist) thought many adults and children might enjoy investigating which insects may be lurking about at night in the Discovery Garden. She created and organized a night in October to attract and record what we found. The date was close to Halloween, so she thought — let's include spiders!

But spiders are not insects!!! Spiders are Arachnids. We decided it would be important to explain that during our presentation. I offered to talk about their importance, their differences, and discuss why both are important to our natural ecosystems.

There are many common spiders in our part of Texas. They are considered beneficial to humans because they help control the overpopulation of insects that are pests, such as flies, mosquitos, moths, roaches, even aphids, caterpillars, beetles and grasshoppers. Spiders have no interest in biting humans. They are not aggressive.

To tell spiders apart physically from insects you must look at their body.

- Spiders have 8 legs and they do not have antennae.
- Insects have 6 legs and do have antennae.
- Spiders have 2 body parts: a cephalothorax, and an abdomen (stomach).
- Insects have 3 body parts: a head, a separate thorax, and an abdomen.

Spiders must catch their prey, and they have various ways of accomplishing that. Some spiders can sense the vibration of an approaching insect. Most spiders have 8 eyes and have excellent vision. Some spiders make sticky webs; some use their silk like a lasso. Some spiders do not even make webs, they just run their prey down.

Most spiders have spinnerets in their body that they use to make silk. The silk that spiders make is extremely strong. Spider silk is actually stronger than steel! Often webs are sticky, and spiders catch their prey in the web. Spiders will then wrap their victims up until they are ready to eat them. Many spiders use their silk to suspend themselves and float through the air. Some mother spiders make their egg sac out of their silk and either leave the egg sac in their web or carry the sac on their back. When the babies, or spiderlings, hatch, they will use the silk to fly off and start their own lives.

A few of the more common spiders that live in our area are the following:



1

nature.mdc.mo.gov



2

**House spiders** make their webs in your windows and under your kitchen counters (Fig. 1). They eat indoor pests like roaches, mosquitos, flies, and moths. If you leave them alone, they can be an amazingly effective home pest control.

**Grass spiders** are small but live outside in the grass (Fig 2). They make funnel-shaped webs and catch insects in your yard.



3

newsbreak.



3

nature.mdc.

**Wolf spiders** do not spin webs (Fig 3). They make nests on the ground and wait to catch their prey. They can run after insects very fast. Wolf spiders are about an inch long, are dark brown and hairy. They also have big eyes and see very well. They carry their babies on their back until they hatch.

**Jumping spiders** have 8 eyes with excellent vision (Fig. 4). They live outside and jump to catch their prey. Often, they use their silk and bungee jump to catch their prey. They are only a half inch long, grayish, and are very hairy. The Green Lynx spider (Fig 4) doesn't have quite as good eyesight but makes up for that by darting and pouncing on their prey.



4

ExoPetGuides



4

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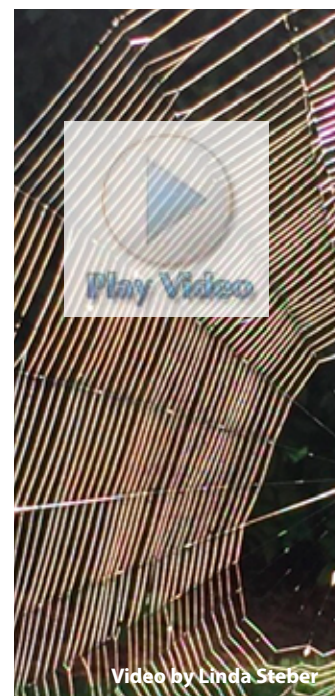
**Harvestmen or Granddaddy/Daddy Long Legs** are called pseudo-spiders (**Fig 5**). They have many differences from true spiders. They have tiny bodies that appear to have only one body part, and they have only two eyes. Harvestmen make no silk and lay their eggs in soil. Their leg span is over 6 inches. In addition to eating insects, they also eat vegetable matter and juices.

**The webs of Orb Weavers/Argiopes/Golden Orb Weavers/Banana spiders** are often seen on walking paths (**Fig 6**). Their webs are often over 3 feet wide. The strength of their silk, or dragline thread, surpasses that of Kevlar. Argiopes are black and yellow and often make a zigzag of white silk in their web. Golden Orb Weavers are also called Banana spiders (**Fig 7**) because they are mostly yellow. They are over an inch long. The Spiny Orb Weaver (**Fig 8**) is a crab-like spider because of its distinctive pointy spines. Orb weavers can make new webs overnight. Linda Steber has watched an orb weaver even repair a tear in its web.



**The Spotted Orbweaver** (*Neoscona crucifera*) is the basis for the character Charlotte of Charlotte's Web by American writer E. B. White. The orb weaver is sometimes called a barn spider (**Fig 9**). During the Insect Night presentation Tabatha Holt noticed an orb weaver at work in the pergola! The spider noticed us watching and stopped working. Tabatha took a few photos, and we left the weaver alone to finish the web.

There are 3 spiders in Texas which we seldom come in contact with but need to be aware of. These do not like to be near humans; they usually hide in hidden, dark areas. These three spiders are poisonous and may be aggressive. If you are bitten by one of these, you should go have the bite looked at by a doctor. The **Black Widow spiders** (**Fig 10**) are 1-1/2 inches long, black, with a red hourglass shape on their abdomens. The **Brown Recluse spiders** (**Fig 11**) are only 1/2 inch long, brown, with a darker brown violin shape on their cephalothorax. **Tarantulas** (**Fig 12**) can be over 5 inches long, brownish black and very hairy.



Please remember that most Arachnids are beneficial to humans. It is natural to fear spiders, but they have an important job to do.

For more information on spiders and insects go to <https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/>

# Serendipity and the Polyphemus Moth



By Kaye Corey  
MG 2001

When my friend, Lydia, discovered a large brown cocoon on her rose-bush (**Fig. 1**), she brought it to me with the expectation a Master Gardener knows everything. She wanted to know what insect made such a large cocoon. Of course, lacking the information, I promised Lydia to find the answer. After fruitless research, serendipity stepped in when I encountered Dr. Johnson and his treasure trove of knowledge. He immediately knew the source of the cocoon and provided me with the needed information and additional research sites. However, a good-natured price was in the making to be paid. I was requested to write this article! Knowledge is to be shared is Dr. Johnson's motto.

The Polyphemus Moth, *Antheraea polyphemus*, is one of the largest of the silk moths having a wingspan up to 6 inches, and being named after Polyphemus, the giant Cyclops from Greek mythology who had a single large round eye in the middle of his forehead. It fits since this moth has large eyespots on its hind wings, **Fig. 2**. It is believed these eyespots are a defense to startle predators. Moth colors are various shades of reddish brown to gray.

Polyphemus Moths can be found throughout the United States and Canada. In our area the caterpillars feed on the leaves of oaks, birch, maples, willows, and even pine needles and rose bush leaves. Luckily, these caterpillars are not found in large numbers to cause significant damage to our trees and shrubs.

The larva stage lasts 5 to 6 weeks. The newly hatched larvae are white with black banded stripes. Finally, after the fifth molting, they are green with yellow markings resembling a hornworm, **Fig 3**. If attacked by a predator they make a clicking noise accompanied by defensive regurgitation of distasteful fluids.

The silk moth caterpillar weaves its silk cocoon and attaches it to the host plant by a finely spun pad of single silk threads. After two weeks the adult Polyphemus Moth escapes the pupal case by splitting it at the end and pushing the top up.

Polyphemus Moths mate the same day they emerge from their cocoons. Females emit pheromones which can attract a male moth from miles away. Maximal attractiveness is during the last two hours before sunrise. Mating pairs remain coupled throughout the day and separate at dusk. Female moths begin laying eggs the evening after mating and continue for several nights, **Fig 4**. If she is unable to attract a male after two or three days, she will release her unfertilized eggs. The flat oval eggs are laid singly or in groups of two or three on the leaves of the host plant. The eggs hatch in about 10 days. The cycle begins again.

The entire life cycle of the Polyphemus Moth averages about 3 months. This includes 10 days as an egg, 5 or 6 weeks as a caterpillar, 2 weeks a pupa and 4 days as an adult.

Initially, I asked Dr. Johnson if the moths were pollinators. Unfortunately, they are not able to pollinate due to having vestigial mouthparts and thus unable to feed.

The serendipity (good fortune) of having the opportunity to learn and share information is always my pleasure as is being a member of Galveston County Master Gardeners. My friend Lydia said she knew I would find the answer for her.



Fig. 1 Cocoon of polyphemus moth, *Antheraea polyphemus*



Fig. 2 - Adult male polyphemus moth.



Fig 3 - Caterpillar of polyphemus moth.



Fig 4 Eggs of polyphemus moth.

Photo Credits: Donald W. Hall, University of Florida



# National Rose Trial Garden of Australia



By John Jons  
MG 2003

While on a tour of Australia I had the opportunity to visit the International Rose Garden that is located in Adelaide's Botanical Gardens. During that visit to the rose garden I discovered and learned about the National Rose Trial Garden of Australia that is a part of the International Rose Garden.

The National Rose Trial Garden of Australia Inc. was started in 1999. This organization is a joint venture between the Botanical Gardens of Adelaide, the Rose Introducers of Australia (RIAUS) consisting of major rose nurseries, most having overseas connections, the Australian Rose Breeders Association (ARBA), and the National Rose Society of Australia (NRSA). The organization is managed by a nine-person, unpaid council, consisting of representatives of each of the participating organizations.

The need for a National Rose Trial (evaluation) process was determined by the National Rose Society of Australia in 1992. It was noted that many of the new rose introductions (95% of all new roses introduced to Australia came from overseas) either did not perform well or performed too well (a rose that is a shrub in England was climber in Australia).

By trialing (evaluating) new roses before they are sold to the public and collecting objective data on how well the new roses perform in Australia provides the Australian rose gardener with accurate information on how a particular rose plant may perform in their garden. The trial ground also offers the opportunity to test and promote Australian bred roses.

The published intent of the rose trial evaluation criteria is:

"1) To identify and promote roses best suited to Australian growing conditions.

2) To develop and promote Australian Rose Breeding.

3) To provide general information on roses to the public.

4) To provide feedback to rose breeders, growers and retailers as to those roses judged by the public to be the most popular."

The trialing of a new rose cultivar consists of the rose candidate being objectively evaluated over a period of two years at determined intervals by ten gardening and rose knowledgeable, independent assessors. The evaluation criteria is based upon a maximum of 100 points:

General Impression - 30 points - plant, foliage, vigor, flowering and novelty; Flower - 30 points - blooms, buds, color, abundance of flowers, recurrent blooms, post flowering, novelty; Disease Resistance - 30 points - fungal diseases, pest tolerance; Fragrance - 10 points. Based upon the final evaluation point scores, successful roses are awarded gold, silver, or bronze medals.

A separate public judging event is also held each year. The public is asked to cast their vote on the trial roses that may soon be released for sale. The results of this public evaluation is valued by the rose breeders, rose growers and rose sellers as it indicates the roses that are likely to be the most popular with the home gardeners.

The rose with the highest score is named 'Australia Rose of the Year.' The results of this evaluative rose trial process is announced annually to the media and the public and also published on the National Rose Trial Garden of Australia Inc. website.

As a visiting rosarian and Master Gardener, the results of this rose trial effort appeared to be apparent in all the rose gardens that I visited in Australia. The displayed roses looked very healthy, there were lots of very large blooms and I saw minimal evidence of disease.

To see more pictures of the trial garden, go to YouTube - "A Visit to the National Rose Trial Garden of Australia, Adelaide Botanical Gardens, Australia" <https://youtu.be/9jSEfoS3M5I>



All photos by J. Jons © 2020

# Plant of the Month in the Pergola Earth-Kind Roses



By Lisa Davis  
M 2018

Most of us grew up with the cliché Valentine poem found in Gammer Gurton's Garland 1784 collection of English Nursery Rhymes,

*"The rose is red, the violet's blue,  
The honey's sweet, and so are you.  
Thou are my love and I am thine;  
I drew thee to my Valentine:  
The lot was cast and then I drew,  
And Fortune said it shou'd be you."*

Roses are known as the flowers of love and romance. Rather than purchase a dozen to give to your Valentine, or for yourself, grow your own! There are a large number of roses in the Pergola area of the Discovery Garden. Eight of them are Earth-Kind roses. Texas AgriLife Extension Service gives the special designation of Earth-Kind to rose cultivars that demonstrate superior pest tolerance and outstanding landscape performance following extensive research and field trials. They will do well in a variety of soil types, need few pesticides, fertilizers, and water. In addition, two of the roses are also Texas Superstar plants.

These roses have undergone several years of extensive field trials by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and the Texas A&M AgriLife Research. These plants must show superior performance under Texas' growing conditions. During the field trials, they receive minimal soil preparation, reasonable levels of water, and no pesticides. Texas Superstars are also known as "Texas Tough" plants. Plants earning the label Texas Superstar or Earth-Kind are all easy to find at local garden centers, big box stores, and even large grocery stores.

Polyantha roses are small, compact bushes that range in height from one to four feet. They bear large, dense clusters of small blossoms and rebloom prolifically. They do well in containers, mixed borders, and patio plantings. We have three Earth-Kind polyantha roses in the Discovery Garden.



Photos from GCMG Library

*Belinda's Dream in the Pergola at the Discovery Garden*

**Marie Daly**, our smallest Polyantha rose at a height and width of 3 feet by 3 feet, is considered a dwarf shrub rose. It is also one of the Texas Superstar roses in the Pergola. Marie Daly was first selected by Texas AgriLife agent Greg Grant. Marie Daly is a found rose that produces semi-double pink blooms from spring through fall. During periods of intense heat, the blooms turn almost white. It has few thorns, making it ideal for high traffic areas and places where children play.

**Cecile Brunner**, also known as Mme. Cecile Brunner and The Sweet-heart Rose, has a fragrant, light silvery pink double bloom. Michael Shoup, in Empress of the Garden, claims that Cecile Brunner may be the most romantic rose to ever come along because buds were a sentimental favorite given to loved ones from the early 1900s through the roaring 20s. He claims that dried flower buds can still be found pressed in old books or pinned on vintage dresses and hats. This antique rose was introduced in France in 1881 by Joseph Pernet-Ducher who crossed "Mignonette" and a tea rose named "Madame de Tartas." Cecile Brunner is one of the easiest roses to grow.

Our last polyantha rose, **Perle d'Or** (pearl of gold), is often referred to as the "Yellow Cecile Brunner" or "The Buttonhole Rose." Her blooms have salmon to orange tones that open to a golden buff pink and have a light fragrance. The double blooms have outer petals that fold back giving it a pompom look. Perle d'Or, also an antique rose, was bred in France and introduced in 1884. It was selected as the 2007 Earth-Kind Rose of the Year.

Shrub roses are attractive for their blooms as well as their use in the landscape due to their beautiful foliage, form, bright stems, and hips. They are hardy, vigorous, and require less pruning than other types of roses. We have four Earth-Kind shrub roses in the Pergola area.

**Caldwell Pink** is a rose Dr. Bill Welch, a retired emeritus horticulture professor from Texas A&M University, found in Caldwell, Texas. Some rosarians believe it could be "Pink Pet" or "Summer Carnation Rose." The rose produces shoots with 1-1/2 inch lilac pink double carnation-like blooms. Although it lacks in fragrance, its flowering is profuse and it is one of the few roses that has red, orange, yellow, and purple leaf color in October and November.

There is an interesting story about one of our other pink shrub roses. Dr. and Mrs. Stahl "found" a rose on Katy Road in Houston, Texas, and gave cuttings to The Antique Rose Emporium in Independence, Texas. There, the cuttings were propagated, and the rose became popular due to her large, hot pink flowers and resistance to disease. Within a few years, it was discovered that what had been called "**Katy Road Pink**" was actually a rose that had been introduced in 1977 by Dr. Griffin Buck and named "Carefree Beauty." This rose has semi-double blooms, up to 4" in diameter, with successive flushes from spring through fall. It is an ideal choice for gardeners with hot, dry summers. It was named the 2006 Earth-Kind Rose of the Year.

**Belinda's Dream** is another pink shrub rose that is also a Texas Superstar. It was developed by Dr. Robert Basye, a math professor at Texas A&M. He was on a quest for a perfect rose with disease resistance. He felt he could do better than Belinda's Dream and was going to destroy it. Dr. William Welch (of Caldwell Pink fame) intervened and shared it with the Antique Rose



Emporium in 1988 where it became popular due to the large, very double flowers with 100 plus petals. Blossoms make excellent cut flowers. Belinda's Dream was introduced in 1992, is disease tolerant, and withstands our hot Texas temperatures. Texas AgriLife Extension recommends Belinda's Dream as the rose to plant if you only have room for one rose in your landscape.

A relative newcomer to the world of roses is **Knock Out**, bred in the United States in 1999 by William J. Radler and introduced in 2000. Knock Out set a new standard for roses due to its high disease resistance with little to no maintenance needed. It has a medium-sized, single cherry red blossom with successive flushes of blooms from spring through fall. It is an ideal choice for gardeners just beginning with roses. Knock Out won the 2000 All American Rose Selection winner.

A third type of Earth-Kind rose in the Pergola area is a **China Rose**. Chinas are well suited to growing near the coast. They have loose, semi-double blooms on graceful, wiry stems. They have a compact growth pattern and rebloom throughout the growing season.

**Spice** is a "Mystery Rose" out of Bermuda. After America was colonized, Bermuda became a stopping-off point for travelers from Europe. Roses from Europe were planted in Bermuda. In order to survive on the island, the roses had to withstand the wind, drought, and salt spray. Only the hardiest survived the elements and Spice is one of them. Although their European names became lost over time, current research is now linking them with their pasts. The peppery fragrance is what probably gave rise to the name, Spice. The blooms are light pink in cooler weather and almost white in the heat of the summer. Spice is a good cutting flower. It is easy to grow, drought tolerant, and an evergreen in the south. It can be grown in the garden or in a pot and is a great choice for gardeners new to growing roses.

**USDA Hardiness Zones:** Carefree Beauty 4-9; Cecile Brunner, Belinda's Dream, Marie Daly, and Knockout 5-9; Perle d'Or and Caldwell Pink 6-9; Spice 7-9

### Culture

Exposure: Full, direct sun for at least eight hours each day

Air circulation: All roses need good air circulation to avoid foliar diseases. Allow at least a foot of open space around fully grown Earth-Kind roses.

**Drought Tolerance:** Yes, once established

**Maintenance:** Water thoroughly when the soil is dry in the root zone to a depth of one inch. Drip irrigation is best. If using a sprinkler irrigation, do not use it during the evening hours or at night. Mulch as needed with a three-inch layer. Earth-Kind plants do not need synthetic or organic fertilizers.

These roses are not only beautiful, but they are also easy to grow as well. If you have considered growing roses, give one of these a try! February is an ideal time to plant roses, and nurseries and garden centers will be well-stocked at that time too.



Marie Daly



Cecile Brunner



Perle d'Or



Caldwell Pink



Belinda's Dream



Knock Out Roses at the Pergola

# A Herd of Elephants

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



By Jan Brick  
MG 2001

A tropical plant seeker's dream, large-leaved plants that create a visually satisfying garden with their gutsy foliage display and a "punctuation" of the landscape with the juxtaposition of consistencies when placed among the normally finely textured species found in most gardens... think "a loudness of leaf."

Elephant Ears were introduced to the mainstream gardening market in the 1990s creating a new excitement in the genus. Often considered for sub-tropical use only, species have been cultivated to thrive in most planting zones. With varying leaf colors and sizes, elephant ears deliver sumptuous and lush summer time greenery. (For a stunning and unusual display, place an ear or two in tall weighted vases as a centerpiece.)

Elephant Ears are giant leafy tropical plants called *Colocasias* or *alocasias* (an upright species.) *Colocasias* has been used by humans since the time of the Byzantine Empire as witnessed in ancient mosaics from Israel and tribal traditions passed through generations expounding its culinary usefulness. (*Colocasias esculenta* and other members of the species are grown for their edible corms, a traditional starch staple in many tropical zones.)

Elephant Ears can be grown in the ground or as specimen plants in over-sized containers. They will thrive out-of-doors in the upper Texas Gulf Coast without difficulty. Dormant Elephant Ear plants are purchased as corms, a bulb-like structure that is actually a swollen underground stem. The corms mature over time with the original corn doubling or tripling in size. Offsets can be broken off and planted in different locations with ease reducing the need for the purchase of additional plants.

Plant the corm close to the surface in an enriched soil in shade or part shade; they will grow in average soil as long as adequate moisture is provided. An occasional addition of a slow release balanced fertilizer, blood meal or bone meal can be beneficial.

Plants will develop new leaves continuously. Remove wilted or browning leaves by cutting them off at the base. A layer of mulch will keep the soil moist and increase the chances of success with healthy and robust specimens.

**NOTE: Wear gloves when handling Elephant Ears as they do contain a natural chemical compound that can cause skin irritation.**

In warm climates, Elephant Ears are generally hardy and will need only a layer of mulch for winter protection except in times of extreme cold. In the event of frost and if damage is done, the plants will rebound with abundance and strong forceful growth when temperatures rise.



Diamond Head



Hilo Bay



Maui Magic



Now is the best time of the year to manage your herd; that is to separate the corms for replanting repotting or if necessary to bring the tender varieties inside for winter storage and safekeeping. Now is also a perfect opportunity to assess your collection and search websites for new and different species offered for sale in the marketplace expanding your assemblage perhaps generating a shared sigh of envy among your fellow gardeners.

### Dr. Cho & the Royal Hawaiians

Dr. John Cho spent much of his career as a plant pathologist at the University of Hawaii seeking to locate disease resistant strains of the important food crop, Taro a type of colocasia. When Tony Avent visited with Dr. Cho however, he envisioned innovative and up-to-the-minute pioneering advancements in tropical landscaping trends. Protocols for a breeding program began at Avent's nursery in North Carolina that led to the Royal Hawaiian Series introduced to the buying public in 2008. All hardy to tropical and sub-tropical zones up to USDA zone 7, these specimens are ideal for our area. Especially dramatic varieties include:

**“Diamond Head”** whose glossy green leaves change to a dark chocolate color and unlike some other dark varieties will maintain its deep shade while it grows to four or five feet tall.

**“Hilo Bay”** produces shiny emerald foliage with an underlying lavender veining on near-black three to four foot stems.

**“Maui Magic”** is a vigorous grower with dark violet leaves and mulberry wine colored stems.

### A Collector's Choice

Elephant Ears appear in a wide variety of colors and sizes. One collector that does not live in a tropical zone but in an area where the temperatures can drop significantly in fall and winter months has developed a recommendation for hardier types for all climates. The following choices are among those suggestions:

*R. palmatum* (hardy to zone 5) - two foot wide purple-red leaves and spires of five foot tall white blooms.

*Mukdenia rossii* (“Karasuba” is hardy to zone 4) - clump forming, full sun - cherry red six inch leaves – white flowers in early spring.

*Darmera peltata* (hardy to zone 5) - glossy leaves with willowy two-foot stems – heads of pink blooms appear before leaves form.



*Mukdenia rossii* - “Karasuba”

### Culinary Customs and Practices

Although elephant ears are magnificent landscaping plants, these plants have been cultivated for thousands of years as crop food as the entire plant is edible when properly prepared by cooking. Children and pets should be kept away from them as they can be poisonous, unless cooked. A chemical compound of calcium oxalate or oxalic acid in these plants can cause serious illness or death if consumed in large amounts.

*Colocasia esculenta* is the food crop variety. The young leaves are rich in vitamins C, B1, B2 and niacin while the tubers contain amino acids and are a good source of starch. When preparing colocasia as a meal, several steps are important to perform first...the leaves must be deveined and the skin removed from the corms, soak in cold water overnight then cook well. If these directions and precautions are properly followed, all parts of the plant are said to be edible.

After pre-boiling, the leaves and stalks can be cooked into curries, soups, stir-fries and casseroles. The corms may be eaten as a boiled vegetable or cut into chips (corms are often used in dessert recipes as well).

### Polynesian cuisine:

Poi, a popular dish is made from the cooked and mashed up corms of elephant ears and often served at luaus and plate lunch cafes in Hawaii. Used as a potato style vegetable, the dish is called Taro. Leaves boiled with coconut milk is a popular soup rich in iron. Olokasi is a recipe using the elephant ears cooked with celery, pork or chicken.

### Indian cuisine:

Leaves are used to make a sweet and sour curry with peanuts and cashews, popular at weddings.

Leaves are dried, powdered and kneaded into dough and baked into biscuits then burned and dissolved into boiling water to make gravy.

Leaves are used to wrap fish or prawns for steaming, while the roots make a thick creamy curry served with prawns. The stem may be grated with coconut for chutney.



*Darmera peltata*

# Let's Talk Bulbs



By Elayne Kouzounis  
MG 1998

TRUE bulbs are either tunicated or formed in rings or layers like hyacinths or onions, or scaly like those of the lilliums and amaryllis; however, for commercial purposes and to be properly understood, the term “bulb” applies to a very large class of plants besides the true bulb. These include solid corms such as crocus and gladiolus, tubers which are succulent and have buds or eyes near the surface such as the dahlia and the potato, rhizomes, or fleshy roots that creep underground like certain iris and ginger, pips or the flowering crown of the lily-of-the-valley, as well as other

fleshy roots or herbaceous tubers like the ranunculus.

The bulb is the store house for the plant, which is formed after producing the new stem, leaf, and flower. The bulb as you buy it contains a new plant that is protected and sustained within that bulb by the reserve food and energy collected during one season's growth. After the flowering period, the plant above the bulb and the roots beneath it ripen and die away. At this stage, the bulb enters its dormant state. If you must lift a bulb, please do not do it until the foliage is brown and dried-appearing or the new plant contained within the bulb will not fully develop.

A true bulb lives indefinitely as a single unit and reproduces by seed or by splitting. The corm dies after producing flowers for one season and is replaced by a new corm that forms either above, below, or alongside the old one. The rhizomes and tubers multiply through the roots and tubers.

I have found through process of trial and error that bulbs have certain locales in which they do their best. While it is very tempting, I do not advise ordering all the beautiful blooms from bulbs that you see in the catalogues. Instead, find out which ones do the best in your area and then choose accordingly. In our area with our mild winters, long hot summers, and humidity, we have to battle with the three-letter word that is the bulb's worst enemy, ROT.

Good drainage is very essential to successful bulb growth. Planting your bulbs in the right conditions will ensure a glorious show of colorful blooms. It is important to plant your bulbs correctly. The teardrop-shaped bulbs, including large bulbs such as daffodils and hyacinths, should be planted with their tips facing up. If their tips face down, they waste their energy trying to grow in the opposite direction. Some bulbs, such as irises, are flat or have claws. If a bulb has an obviously flat side, plant this side facing up. Plant all bulbs that have appendages or roots facing down. If you are unsure, plant the bulb sideways.

## **The best planting depths are as follows:**

Hyacinths: 6-8 inches  
Tulips: 4-6 inches  
Dahlias: 3-4 inches  
Gladioli: 3-4 inches  
Daffodils: 3-4 inches

Crocuses: 0-2 inches  
Ranunculus: 0-2 inches  
Cyclamen: 0-2 inches  
Iris rhizomes: Surface



Hyacinth (l) and Tulip (r) • Photos courtesy of MG Margie Jenke



Dahlia • Photo courtesy of Dr. William Johnson



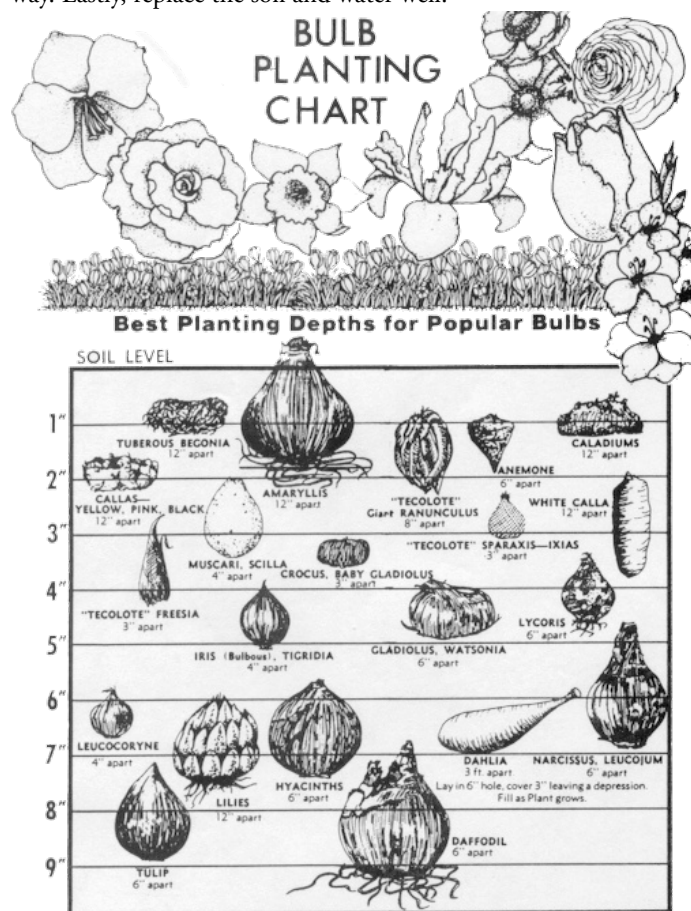
Daffodil • Photo courtesy of MG Margie Jenke



To plant a bright and vivid show of bulbs, you will need a kneeling mat and a garden spade, trowel or bulb planting trowel. You can create a dramatic effect by planting bulbs in large masses. Since bulbs are sold by color, you can choose vivid, contrasting colors, or more subtle combinations. My suggestion is to lay bulbs out on the ground before planting to get a sense of your color scheme.

To plant a full bed or wide border of bulbs, dig a trench, placing the soil nearby on a plastic sheet. Follow by placing the bulbs in the trench according to your design. Plant bulbs close together for impact, but do NOT let them touch. Replace the soil, being careful not to disturb the positioning of the bulbs. Then firm the soil once all the bulbs are covered. Lastly, water thoroughly if the soil is dry and add a thick layer of mulch, such as pine bark, to keep the bulbs moist.

If you are planting a few bulbs or one single bulb in your garden, there is no need to dig out a tray bed. An easier way to plant a small number of bulbs is with a special bulb planting tool. Excellent bulbs for small plantings include Emperor tulips, irises, daffodils, and hyacinths. First, sink the bulb planting tool straight down into the soil to the proper depth. Pull up the tool and squeeze its handle to remove the soil plug. Next, place the bulb in the hole, making sure that it faces the correct way. Lastly, replace the soil and water well.



*Gladiolus*, Photo courtesy of  
MG Margie Jenke



*Iris*, Photo courtesy of  
Dr. William Johnson

## Seasonal Tips

### Fall

Plant spring-flowering bulbs in the fall. Plant earlier in cold areas to avoid attack by frost.

### Spring

Plant summer-flowering bulbs in the spring. Plant in a cool but frost-free place.

### Early Summer

Pinch off the heads of faded flowers BEFORE they set seed. Let the leaves die naturally. After they've finished blooming, dig up spring-blooming bulbs (and some summer-blooming bulbs in cold climates) and store them in a dry, dark place for replanting the next year.

### Summer

Plant fall flowering bulbs during the summer months. Pertaining to tulips and other bulbs requiring cold days in their dormancy: In warmer areas, give bulbs an artificial cold period to simulate winter. Place the bulbs in the refrigerator for about eight weeks to trick them into dormancy so they can store energy for new growth. Keep fruit out of refrigerator during this time. Fresh fruit produces ethylene, a gas that will stop bulbs from flowering.

### After Care

Cut faded blooms before the flowers have started to seed. This will ensure that the bulb conserves and stores up all its energy ready to produce new blooms in the next season. Bulbs can be left in the ground. Some will, in time, spread out from their planting position and form new bulbs. This is called "naturalizing." After a few years, dig up and divide overcrowded bulbs. Bulbs need to be kept dry. To store them properly, clean and keep them in a cool, dry place, such as a garage. Plant or replant them in well-drained soil. Dig in a gritty draining material, such as sand, if the soil is very wet.

Rooting for you that good things happen!

# GCMGs to have 6 sales in 2021 that YOU are going to love



By Karolyn Gephart  
MG 2017

In 2021, Galveston County Master Gardeners will host SIX plant sales and all of them are ONLINE. You can order with no crowds, never leave your home, and a week before the online store opens for sales, you can window shop and make a list of every plant you want to order. You can even order in your pajamas!

It doesn't get any easier than that — PLUS the plants are either Master Gardener Grown or have been selected for the sale due to the plants' ability to grow well in Galveston County. Our county is situated in plant zone 9A and 9B (from clay soil on the mainland to sandy soil on the island). Let's look at Dates and Sale Items.

## February 19-20: The Spring Plant Sale

The Spring Plant Sale February 19-20 will offer outstanding citrus trees. MG Robert Marshall is a citrus specialist and selects citrus that not only will grow here but thrives in the county. Satsumas, mandarins, oranges, lemons, limes, grapefruit and more will be available to shoppers.

Avocado trees have been very popular in the GCMG sales. Shoppers will be amazed at the many varieties available.

The Spring Sale is always a hit with tomato growers. The tomato varieties go way beyond in number compared to big box store offerings. From cherry and patio size tomatoes to medium and big slicing tomatoes, this sale has it all.

MG Kevin Lancon presented a special workshop on Planting Potatoes. [Note: Sounded like giving a presentation was a fun thing to do] Seed potatoes ready for planting will be available at the sale. What a fun veggie to grow.

Lettuce, onions and sweet pepper plants will be offered and you can take them straight to your Spring garden and have some fresh ingredients for wonderful dishes to offer your family.



Caladiums

Fresh berries are such a delight to pick and eat at the garden's edge. They too will be offered.

Perennial selections will be offered. The varieties are too numerous to try to mention here. So many of them are plants you cannot find easily in the area and they are just a click away to being yours by ordering online.

Bulbs are always a show stopper and instant seller. It's time to get caladium bulbs and this sale offers a stunning selection. Their names give you a hint of their beauty: Sweetheart, Gingerland, Red Glamour, White Majesty, Moonlight, Restless Heart and Carousel.

Lily bulbs of extraordinary beauty — Pineapple Lily, Gloriosa Climbing Lily, Torch Lily, Oxblood Lily — will be available along with Elephant Ears, Prairie Gayfeather, and Tuberose.

## March 12-13: March Madness Sale

The March Madness Sale will run March 12-13 (noon to noon). This sale offers fruit trees, MG Grown plants of all types, herbs, hot peppers (outstanding varieties), eggplant, melons, cucumbers, and squash.

## April 30-May 1: May Day Sale

The May Day Sale will have plumeria, hibiscus, and okra. Additional plants, if remaining from the other two sales, will also be offered.

## About the Store & Ordering:

The online store is easy to use and you can buy all the plants on your list at one time or in multiple times as long as you fit it in each time between noon the first day and until noon the next.

The store offers photos of the plant/tree/shrub looking its best, blooming if it is applicable, to let you know what you will see at its maturity. The store also offers plant information that helps you determine if that plant is perfect for your environment. Planting and growing conditions for our plants are listed in the detailed



Gloriosa Lily



*Love plants but....*

*Hate crowds?* **No problem.**

*Safety concerns due to pandemic?* **No problem.**

*Sale is overwhelming due to amount of plants & people?* **Not this year!**

description of each plant. It is recommended that you print the pages of the items you order.

But Shoppers Beware: Items will be allocated to the first customer to complete an order and pay for the item. When you add an item to your shopping cart, it **WILL NOT BE RESERVED** for you. Therefore, it may happen that another customer has already bought the item before you can complete your order at the checkout.

If you leave items in your shopping cart and you are unable to finalize your purchase in one session, there is no guarantee that the items will still be available later for purchase.

If you have a shopping cart of items you definitely want, and if you need to leave your screen for a period, it is best to complete an order through completion of payment to secure the items in your cart.

Your confirmation email should be from "Galveston County Master Gardeners" with the subject line "Thank you for your Order!" If you cannot locate this email, please check your spam folder and if found there, please select the email and indicate that it is "Not Spam."

If you still do not find the email, you may contact us by calling our plant sale phone: (281) 786-6834. You may leave a voice mail or send a text message. Please be sure to include your contact information so that we may get back to you in a timely manner.

Your order will be ready for pickup during the pickup time you selected or were assigned at checkout. Please refer to the email you received from Galveston County Master Gardeners with the "Thank you for your Order!" subject line.

You can reach out to us to request a pickup schedule change. Please contact us by calling our plant sale phone: (281) 786-6834. You may leave a voice mail or send a text message. Please be sure to include your contact information so that we may get back to you in a timely manner.



*Lettuce*

## **Fall 2021**

Fall sales will be offered September 10-11, October 15-16, and November 5-6. More details on these sales will be offered later.



*Sweet Peppers*



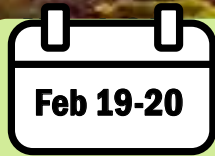
*Tomatoes*



*Ourari Frost*

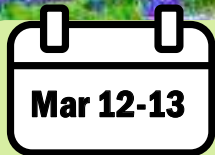
Galveston County Master Gardeners

# 2021 Online Plant Sales



## Spring Plant Sale

Citrus & avocado trees, perennials, bulbs, tomatoes, sweet peppers, lettuce & potatoes



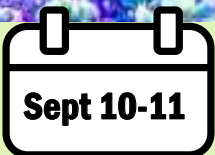
## March Madness Sale

Fruit trees, Master Gardener grown, herbs, hot peppers, eggplant, squash, melons, & cucumbers



## May Day Sale

Plumeria, hibiscus, & okra



## Summer Sundown Sale

Fruit trees, landscape trees, perennials, fall tomatoes, squash, cucumbers, & herbs



## Fall Plant Sale

Citrus trees, Master Gardener grown, onions, lettuce, greens, broccoli, cauliflower, & cabbage



## Bulb Sale

Amaryllis, various lilies, daffodils, summer snowflakes & more



All sales will be held online, for more information visit:

<https://galveston-county-master-gardener-assn.square.site/>



If you need special accommodations, please contact the Extension Office no later than seven days before the program so we can consider your request. Texas A&M AgriLife Extension provides equal opportunities in its programs and employment to all persons, regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, or gender identity. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating.



# Tree Stories: A Tree for all Seasons - Magnolia



By Margaret Canavan  
MG 2003

Spring is just around the corner, but the short, chilly days of winter have left only the “bones” of many of our trees showing. A notable exception is a local that stays green all year: the Magnolia, aka Southern Magnolia or *Magnolia grandiflora*. This tough broadleaf evergreen is native to the coastal plain of the southeastern US and thrives in Galveston.

We usually associate the Magnolia with its magnificent and fragrant white blossoms, sometimes measuring a foot in diameter, which grace us spring and summer with their citrus scent. But at this time of year, we admire the gorgeous, glossy green leaves.

We lost some of these beauties in Ike, but many survive and some were unaffected. They are visible all over town and you can view a remarkable example at 2620 52nd Street. The best estimate of its trunk circumference (measured at two feet above the ground) is close to 11 feet. The neighborhood was developed in the late 1950s and the tree has been there at least that long.

The Magnolia is prized for more than its beauty. Wildlife need the cover it provides as well as the bright red seeds which mature in fall. Florists use the leathery foliage. The leaves, fruits, bark, and wood yield a variety of extracts with potential applications as pharmaceuticals. The hard, heavy wood is used in the construction of furniture, pallets, venetian blinds, and other items.

Magnolias are recommended for seashore plantings in areas that are windy but have little salt spray. The leaves have a waxy coating that makes them resistant to damage from salt and air pollution. Once established it is drought tolerant if it has room for root expansion, as roots can extend from the trunk to as far away as four times the width of the canopy. It can withstand moist conditions but does not like standing water. This moderately fast-growing medium-sized tree can thrive in heat and full sun if a moist, peaty soil is available, and will also do well in partial shade. Under ideal conditions it can reach from 60 to 80 feet in height, with a spread of 30 to 50 feet, with a pyramidal crown.

So well-suited to the Island is the Magnolia that the Tree Conservancy recently planted a “Little Gem” variety as the “Juneteenth Tree” in Jack Johnson Park on 26th and M. This ‘small’ to ‘medium’ variety is pyramidal in growth habit and is often used for screens and in tight places. Planting during winter provides time for the tree to establish the root system prior to the onset of our scorching and often-dry summer. “Neighborhoods” plantings of streetside trees in recent years have included many Magnolias.

Downsides to using this durable ornamental can include the heavy leaves, potentially messy fruit, and roots that may block septic lines. Take a look at Magnolias around the Island and you will surely agree that the benefits are significant. Many thanks to those who care for these magnificent trees!

*Hurricane Ike caused the loss of 40,000 trees on Galveston Island. The Galveston Island Tree Conservancy was formed to address that loss and to date has replaced almost 13,000 through grant-funded plantings and giveaways, with more planned. “Tree Stories” is an ongoing series of articles intended to bring attention to outstanding Island trees, tree care, and tree issues. If you have or know of a special tree on Galveston Island that should be highlighted, please email [treesforgalveston@yahoo.com](mailto:treesforgalveston@yahoo.com). Margaret Canavan is a Galveston resident, a Galveston County Master Gardener, and a member of the Conservancy Board.*



# Green Genes

## Gardening instills sanity even in a pandemic



By Karolyn Gephart  
MG 2017

Gardening has kept sanity nearby for many during the long months of the pandemic.

Such is the case for Master Gardener **Tish Reustle**. Tish lives in Friendswood and spends many hours in her spacious yard as well as in the Discovery Garden in La Marque. “In the year of pandemic I have been particularly grateful for both my own garden and the garden at Carbide. The exercise has kept me fit and the companionship of both plants and people has kept me sane,”

she remarked.

Tish became a Master Gardener in 2008 (and she said it’s all MG Clyde Holt’s fault). “I had never seen bamboo growing except at Kew Gardens but participated in the development of the Serenity Garden and found myself hooked,” she said. But the love of gardening did not come from Holt or the pandemic. It came genetically it seems and from “across the pond.”

Tish trained to be a nurse in London and ended up being a teacher of nursing at San Jacinto College for 16 years. She is now in retirement.

Both her parents were keen gardeners as well as her uncles and aunts. Tish explained, “My father had what was known as an “allotment” when I was growing up where he grew vegetables and fruits. Allotments were

started during WW2 when there was a chronic shortage of food. Strips of waste land owned by the local government (think empty lots, strips by the side of railway lines, etc.) were allotted to anyone who wanted to grow food and share it. An early gardening memory is picking raspberries, blackberries and English peas and broad beans. As many went in my mouth as ever got to the table!” Her mother preferred flowers and took care of a backyard garden.

Tish remembers many family trips to stately homes with beautiful formal gardens. While the tearoom and ice cream attracted her mostly in those early years, she reflects that a love of landscape design must have seeped in somewhere.

With a great British accent and a calming presence, Tish represents the Serenity Garden exceptionally well and anyone with a bamboo question gravitates to her. She is an outstanding speaker and has explained what serenity gardens are and how to make one to area garden clubs. Her beautiful yard has been on Spring Garden tours in Friendswood. She had worked hard to make it ready for the 2020 tour...but the April tour was cancelled and no one was able to enjoy her work. But Tish did and it has kept her sane and definitely serene.

She and her husband have a large shaggy dog named Bruce, six children between them, five grandchildren and two great grandchildren — future gardeners, no doubt.



Photo by Jennifer Reynolds - Coast Monthly



**Helen Mabe's** mother was influential in her life. She always had a garden and the memories of it are pleasant ones as Helen grew up.

Houston born, Helen, a widow with two grown children, lives in Santa Fe. She and her husband had been self-employed with a sand pit/trucking business as well as a bulkhead business.

She became a Galveston County Master Gardener in 2019 but had taken a program to do this in the 1980's prior to GCMG being formed.

"I love people and I love being around plants," Helen said. GCMGs offer much opportunity for her to do those two things. Helen helped establish a new bulb garden in the Discovery Garden. She has also been an active participant with the online plant sales and her people skills shine when she is helping place plants and greeting buyers at the curbside pick ups.



Master Gardener **Mary Jane Fortney** came to Texas by way of Detroit. She and her husband Bryon currently live in the Clear Lake area of Houston.

MJ had a successful career in the banking industry working with several financial institutions. She had studied economics as well as banking at the American Institute of Banking and held several positions in commercial banking including a customer service consultant and a loss prevention auditor.

"Upon moving down south in 1981, I entered in the savings and loan industry. Upon acceptance into the management program, I traveled the great state of Texas as a statewide branch start up consultant. From there, I became a vice president and retail banking officer to several branches in the Houston region," she said.

While banking was her career, her green genes were in full power the whole time. During her Michigan years she designed an herb garden and grew kitchen herbs as well as scented herbs for facials for friends to enjoy.

When she moved to Texas, she found the gardening zones very different. With no internet in those days, she perused gardening information every week at the local library, studying every garden book and magazine she could find.

Her Texas gardening goes way beyond an herb garden. She and her husband have a tropical paradise in their backyard. "I have a total love of growing a garden of exotic plants in our backyard tropical oasis. Our garden is full of bold and exotic plants, intermixed with vines and climbers around our pebble pool, with double moss rock waterfalls, that rival the multiple vacations we had in tropical places like Hawaii, Belize, and Costa Rica," MJ said. "We use foliage in the garden to lengthen the season and deepen the pleasure that a garden can bring. With that being said, I also have a collection of 50+ large plumeria trees that I have grown for 35+ years. The allure of our tropical garden right outside of our back door is a fabulous playground for this gardener."

She became a GCMG in 2017. But gardening has always been in her blood along with her grandparents, parents, her brother Phil, and numerous cousins across the states. "From an early age, around 6 or so, I would actively help my parents and grandparents in their respective gardens and orchards. Every summer I would look forward to helping in the gardens. We also had 360 acres of beautiful property in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan," she said.

MJ learned much from Mother Nature. "I learned how plants, trees, and fruit grew in the wild. I learned from a young age that Mother Nature definitely had a plan for the trees to grow unassisted, flowers grow

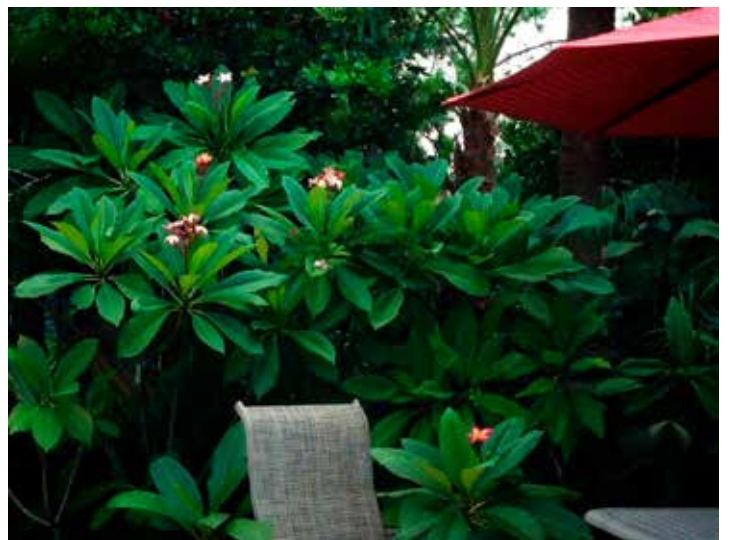
that were perennials and sown naturally from seed, and how berries could grow without man's assistance of chemicals and water. I definitely ate a lion's share of blueberries from what we referred to as Blueberry Hill."

From all her experiences and her research, she was still surprised about the GCMG program. "I thought I knew so much about gardening! As I have progressed in the Master Gardener Program, I have found out how much more there is to learn. Also...I have been in management for several years and it is one thing to manage paid employees. But I watch in amazement Dr. Johnson, the leader of this marvelous program, and the way that he plants the seed of enthusiasm in each and every one of us. He inspires everyone, who are mostly volunteers, to get involved," she said.

The genetic garden genes continue. MJ and her husband now watch as their sons show signs of it in their own lives. Their son, Ian, now landscaping his yard at his new place in the Heights, is potting up a huge container full of eye pleasing plants keeping in mind the thriller, spiller and filler format for his front porch, then maintaining two huge tropical containers in his backyard, and beginning to fill his new home with indoor trees and air purifying plants. Their youngest son, Sean, grows a variety of plants including succulents and plumeria on his balcony and is continuously increasing his cache of air purifying plants in his place, blocks off the Pacific Ocean, in sunny Santa Monica. "It makes me so proud," MJ said. The magic continues.



*MJ's Patio*



*MJ's Plumerias*



# The Discovery Garden Update



By Tom Fountain  
MG 2008

It is good to get past 2020. Although the COVID-19 virus pandemic is still with us, there is hope in this new year of 2021. Two vaccines have arrived, and it's time to step up and get ours so we can return to a more normal way of life and pursue our interests. However, we will still need to continue to wear a mask and take precautions for several more months to be safe for as long as it takes.

In the garden, fall-winter vegetable beds have started producing. In **Fig. 1** there are carrots, broccoli, cauliflower, turnips, and cabbages ready to go to one of the local food banks. In **Fig. 2** the beds that produced the vegetables headed for the food bank were getting readied for planting a new crop of potatoes by Kevin, Clyde, Maria, and Debbie. Pictured in **Fig. 3** Hedy, Sue, Hazel, and Vicki were getting ready to pull their fall tomatoes and were talking about what they wanted to try planting in the bed. In the orchard, I came across Robert and David who were picking off the remaining oranges, **Fig. 4**. By the way, you can tell it's real cold when you see David wearing long pants.

Even when it is cold in the Discovery Garden, there are always some chores to do. Cleaning up beds is one of those projects like Monica is doing in the iris bed (**Fig. 5**). Another project is selecting seeds to get started in the greenhouse for spring planting as Bronia is doing in **Fig. 6**. As Phil was moving mulch to different beds and filling in mud puddles, he found some time to stop for a quick chat with Phil in **Fig. 7**.

Just as our area was slipping into drought conditions, the cold fronts started coming through filling the bar ditches and providing us with 1 to 2 inches above normal rainfall. Despite the cold fronts and a light freeze, our average temperatures have continued 3 to 4 degrees warmer than normal. The long-range forecast expects the La Nina climate pattern to continue, so temperatures are likely to continue above normal into spring with rainfall becoming less than normal.

Spring is just around the corner and will be here before you know it. So, if you find you have a need to get out of the house and get a little fresh air, or have cabin fever, there are always things to do here in the Discovery Garden. Personally, I am looking forward to a time when we can all gather together in a more normal way and make use of that nice kitchen.



# Seasonal Bites

## easy recipes



By Sandra Gervais  
MG 2011

I love getting bouquets from my husband. Sometimes it's a bouquet of delicate, feathery double Confederate roses. Or maybe graceful white crinums with wine-colored stripes. Still, I think his smile is widest when I open the door to find him standing there proudly holding a huge, heart shaped Savoy cabbage looking like a giant green rose. Irresistible.

I have a Savoy now on the back patio and a new recipe to try. It's from a well-known Louisiana cookbook, "Talk About Good!" put together every few years since 1967 by the Junior League of Lafayette, LA. Hopefully it will live up to its name, Choux Glorieux, or "glorious cabbage."

While thumbing and drooling through this cookbook, I was surprised to find my Mother's recipe for Date Loaf. She always said it was the easiest thing to make and now I see why.

The hardest thing is to clean the tea towel used for wrapping and shaping it. Think I'll try parchment paper next time.



### Date Loaf

8 ounces moist, pitted dates, finely chopped  
2 cups sugar  
1 cup regular milk  
2-3 cups chopped pecans

Combine sugar and milk in saucepan.  
Cook to softball stage (234 degrees on candy thermometer).  
Add dates and allow them to "melt" a little.  
Cool slightly.  
Beat mixture until creamy.  
Add 1-2 cups nuts and beat again.  
Pour mixture onto a damp tea towel.  
Form a roll 1-1/2-to-2 inches in diameter.  
Roll in finely chopped remaining nuts.  
Cool for 2-3 hours.  
Slice into 1/2-inch slices.



### Choux Glorieux (simple method) 350 degree oven

1 medium head of cabbage (Or half of my husband's huge Savoy.)  
3/4 stick butter  
1 onion, finely chopped  
1 can cream of mushroom soup  
1/2 lb. Velveeta cheese  
1/4 to 1 cup breadcrumbs  
Salt and pepper to taste

Finely chop cabbage and rinse.  
Boil in salted water until tender.  
Drain well and set aside.

Wilt onion in butter.  
Add cheese in small chunks.  
Melt on low heat.  
Add mushroom soup and blend smooth over low heat.  
Add cabbage and mix well.  
Add breadcrumbs until of casserole consistency.  
Season with salt and pepper to taste.  
Place in 1-1/2-to-2-quart buttered casserole dish.  
Sprinkle top with breadcrumbs.  
Bake at 350 degrees for 20-30 minutes or until top is bubbly & hot.



*little known tidbits about a Master Gardener*

# Did you know



By Judy Anderson  
MG 2012

Did you miss “Dickens on the Strand” this year? Even if you are not a regular at the annual event, most area residents have visited the festival during its long history. Can you imagine what it was like before Galveston was a trendy tourist destination? When historical Victorian buildings on the Strand were being torn down and replaced by non-

descript, inexpensive stores. When a Dairy Queen was built next to Moody Mansion? Stores on the Strand were closed. The Galveston Historical Foundation was just beginning its work and they asked Evangeline Wharton to create something that would bring tourists to the Strand.

With the beautiful Victorian buildings unused and little traffic in the area, the city was glad to say “yes” to a request to close part of the Strand for an event the first weekend in December. Imagining the festival around the “Christmas Carol,” a strict adherence to Victorian period dress and activities, the Strand buildings were recreated as candlelit



shops with street vendors selling Victorian-era trinkets.

Costumed characters brought the old Dickens story to life. In the early years, these strict guidelines were followed with books available to ensure authenticity. As the festival became more popular, strict observance of the Victorian guidelines were eventually relaxed allowing non-Victorian concessions.

When Master Gardener Tish Reustle moved to Galveston in the early 80’s, she worked for the Galveston Historical Foundation recruiting volunteers for “Dickens on the Strand.” She would help them develop their character’s costume and coach them as various characters. She said, “If you have an old straw hat, I can show you how to turn it into a Victorian bonnet.” This was temporary work she did several months for a couple of years.

Though this work was long ago, she shares an English holiday custom with the Discovery Garden each year. She brings Wassail, a mulled cider beverage and fresh fruit, to the Master Gardeners. This year she made individual Mince pies with a Christmas Star on each one. We may not have had Dicken’s this year, but we did have the Victorian spirit with Wassail and Mince pies.

## November Minutes



By Briana Etie  
MG 2017

The Galveston County Master Gardeners held its Annual Meeting and Election of Officers at the monthly meeting on Tuesday, November 10, 2020, 6:00 p.m. at the Extension Office with in-person attendance and online attendance via Microsoft Teams.

Frank Resch, President of the Board of Directors, called the meeting to order. Other board members present in person were Tish Reustle, Ira Gervais, and Linda Steber with Tim Janke joining online.

Election of officers ensued with in-person and online voting by raise of hand. Ira Gervais and Tish Reustle were re-elected to the two positions on the Board of Directors, both to serve 2-year terms. Kathy Maines was re-elected as Vice President and Nancy Langston-Noh was re-elected Assistant Secretary, both to serve 2-year terms. Having been recommended to the nomination committee by GCMGA members, Keith Reed was elected for a 2-year term as Assistant Treasurer. Terry Cuclis was re-elected representative to serve a 2-year term as State Delegate II to the TMGA.

Next on the agenda, Assistant Treasurer Ed Klein provided the financial update. President Sharon Zaal then highlighted 2020 with a history lesson of the “black swan event” that changed our year and our lives. She reminded us of how we have persevered with the completion of Discovery House construction/expansion, the 2020 Intern Tomato Trials, the Class of 2019 Graduation, the TMGA 2019 Search for Excellence Awards, and our successful Online Plant Sales. An outlook of 2021 activities was delivered.

Before closing we paused to remember GCMG members we lost in 2020 who were Skipper Cullison MG 2007, Fard Abdullah MG 2015, and Claire Rhoads MG 2009. Claire had left us an amusing message - “To my Master Gardening friends, heads down, bottoms up!”

The meeting was adjourned.



# bulletin board



## Volunteer Opportunities

For the **Master Gardener Hotline** contact Ginger Benson by email at [galvcountrymgs@gmail.com](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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.

## 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 Herman Auer - 409-655-5362 or [hauersmga@yahoo.com](mailto:hauersmga@yahoo.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

Contact Herman Auer - 409-655-5362 or [hauersmga@yahoo.com](mailto:hauersmga@yahoo.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](mailto:galvcountrymgs@gmail.com) to find out the schedule and join her team.



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>



To see lots of photos of what the Galveston County Master Gardeners are up to, we now have access to browse and search photos in SmugMug. Use the following link in your favorite web browser to access: <https://gcmg.smugmug.com/>



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](https://smile.amazon.com) - Choose Galveston County Master Gardener Association as your charity.

Save [smile.amazon.com](https://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



# Most citrus is pretty hardy, but beware of the freezing weather

Editor's Note: This is a reprint of Dr. William M. Johnson's article in the *The Daily News*.



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

One of my friends in College Station sent me an email at 6:59 p.m. Sunday that contained a photo of a backyard adorned with a light covering of snow, and snow was still falling. Even with the low probability of receiving snowfall in our area, many folks were understandably excited about it.

However, if you grow citrus in our subtropical growing region, you would likely be concerned about how well your citrus would fare if freezing weather conditions were to occur. It is important to understand how cold temperatures impact citrus trees.

Among the citrus types that are most easily killed or damaged by freezing weather are citrons, lemons, and limes. Temperatures in the high 20s will kill or severely damage these plants. Sweet oranges and grapefruits are somewhat more cold hardy and usually require temperatures in the mid-20s before incurring major damage to large branches. Tangerines and mandarins are quite cold hardy, usually withstanding temperatures into the low 20s without significant wood damage.

But among the edible types of sweet citrus, the satsuma and kumquats have the greatest degree of cold hardiness. Properly hardened bearing trees will withstand temperatures as low as 20 degrees Fahrenheit without appreciable wood damage. Temperatures at ground level can be several degrees lower than temperatures around the canopy of the tree, especially if there is no wind.

Keep in mind that the temperature ranges given above refer only to leaf or wood damage. Citrus fruits easily freeze at 26 to 28 degrees Fahrenheit when these temperatures occur for several hours. A longer duration of freezing temperatures is required to freeze grapefruit compared to sweet oranges. And tangerines and satsumas are the most easily frozen of the common citrus fruits.

The particular temperature at which the tissue of a given plant will freeze and the degree of the damage sustained are functions of a number of factors in addition to the species and variety involved. Some of the more important are:

- The freezing temperature reached
  - The duration of the minimal temperature
  - How well the plant became hardened or conditioned before freezing temperatures occurred (the freezing point of tissue of a hardened citrus plant may be 5 degrees to 6 degrees lower than an unhardened plant)
    - Age of plant (young plants are more cold sensitive than mature plants)
    - Healthy trees are harder than diseased trees.
- Another complicating factor contributing to observations by some that citrus plants seem to freeze at higher temperatures in some years

than others is the difference between air (ambient) temperatures and leaf (tissue) temperature.

On a windy night with clear or cloudy skies, leaf temperature will be approximately the same as air temperature. On a cold, clear night with little or no wind movement, however, leaf temperature can easily drop several degrees (3 degrees to 4 degrees Fahrenheit) below the air temperature because of super-cooling caused by frost.

Thus, under the latter circumstances, while the minimum air temperature on a given night may have only been 25 degrees Fahrenheit, actual leaf temperature of the plants may have reached 2 degrees to 22 degrees Fahrenheit.

The critical temperature is that of the leaf or fruit and not the ambient air temperature itself. Trees with a good fruit crop are less hardy than those with no fruit.

Research data provided by Louisiana State University indicate trees growing on bare ground have a higher probability of survival than trees growing in turf areas. The heat from the ground can radiate upwards into the canopy of trees. The difference in the canopy can be up to 5 degrees Fahrenheit.

In general, it is recommended citrus trees be protected when the temperatures are expected to go below 27 degrees Fahrenheit for an extended period.

The good news is temperatures have been on the cool side for a while, and citrus trees have hardened off and are fairly dormant. Citrus trees can better withstand cold weather when they are dormant.

Should freezing weather conditions occur, no immediate action is needed when freeze injury is suspected. There is no benefit to pruning the plant until spring growth commences, and the full extent of injury is manifested. Pruning may actually be counterproductive by stimulating faster bud activity before the danger of additional frost/freeze events has truly passed.



Home gardeners grow a remarkably wide range of citrus. Winters are typically mild, but freezing temperatures do occur on occasion. It is prudent for home citrus growers to protect their plants when freezing weather conditions are expected.

# 2021 GCMGA Monthly Meetings



By Judy Anderson  
MG 2012

## February

Please join the Master Gardener Monthly Meeting, Tuesday, February 9 at 2:00 pm, when Lauren Simpson, of St. Julian's Crossing, presents Wildscaping. Lauren has transformed her Houston garden into a pollinator friendly garden. She has suggestions for creating a welcoming environment for butterflies, bees, moths and beetles. Plan for year-round needs of the pollinators that visit your garden. Join the February ZOOM to hear this inspiring presentation.

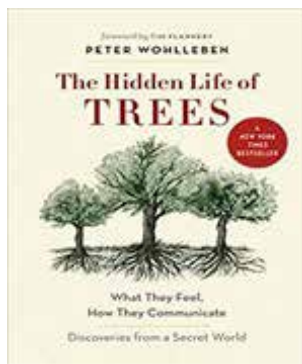


The Green Thumb Book Club with begin January 27 at 1:00 pm. We will meet virtually until it is safe to meet in person. Our first book is The Hidden Life of Trees. If you care to join us, contact Lisa Davis at llnicklow@sbcglobal.net or 281-450-3169 to receive a Zoom invitation to join the discussion. There are two versions of the book, illustrated and unabridged text. You may purchase either one and follow the schedule below to match the readings.

January 27, 1-3 pm - Illustrated version: Chapters 1-3 - Original, unabridged (white cover) version: Chapters 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 14, 20, 21

February 24, 1-3 pm - Illustrated version: Chapters 4-6 - Original, unabridged (white cover) version: Chapters 15, 16, 17, 18, 22, 23, 24, 27, 30, 35, 36

We are looking forward to growing as gardeners by reading horticulture related books this new year. We would be happy to have you join us.



You may contact Judy at  
[jande10198@aol.com](mailto:jande10198@aol.com) for information.



### We Want Your Feedback

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Be **KIND**,  
Be **RESPECTFUL**,  
Be **HEALTHY**  
the Master Gardener Way.

**Facemasks  
REQUIRED**  
When Visiting  
Our Discovery Garden

• Wash with  
soap  
and water.



OR

• Clean with  
alcohol based  
hand cleaner.

